

Phase 2 Engagement Report

Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan Update

February 21, 2025, to December 3, 2025

Parks & Recreation Division
City of Toronto





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Overview

About the Parks & Recreation Facilities Plan Update

The City owns and maintains hundreds of recreational facilities in buildings and parks. The [Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan](#) and its [Implementation Strategy](#) help prioritize investments in indoor and outdoor recreation facilities across Toronto, like new basketball courts, cricket fields, skateparks, splash pads, and community recreation centres. These documents also help the City to assess new opportunities for partnerships and community proposals for new or improved recreation facilities.

The City is updating the Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan to ensure it reflects:

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

How we engaged

Between February 21, 2025, and December 5, 2025, the City's Parks and Recreation Division conducted a multi-phase, city-wide community engagement process to inform joint updates to the City of Toronto's Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan (PRFP) and the Parkland Strategy (PLS), as well as to create the City's new Ice Facilities Strategy (IFS). The following list provides an overview of the different ways the public were invited to participate in this process. Individual reports will be available that summarize the input received through the various engagement activities, which provide a greater level of detail on the themes covered in this report. This report does not cover most of

the local Indigenous engagement covered in Phase 2. A report on local Indigenous engagement in Phase 2 can be found on the [project webpage](#).

The PLS and PRFP project team conducted the following engagement activities in Phase 2 of engagement:

Virtual Public meetings: Two virtual public meetings were held to provide feedback on the updates to the PLS and PRFP. The PLS meeting took place on July 15, and the PRFP meeting took place on July 16. A total of 60 members of the public attended.

Online Survey: From July 22 to September 14, over 6,500 members of the public participated in an online survey to collect feedback to help shape updates to both the PLS and PRFP.

Visits to existing City Advisory Bodies: From Summer to Fall 2025, the following existing City Advisory Bodies were consulted:

- City of Toronto Seniors' Forum
- P&R Community Disability Steering Committee
- 2SLGBTQ+ Council Advisory Committee
- Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Confronting Anti-Black Racism Advisory Committee
- Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee

DIY community-led workshops: Between October 14 to November 30, 2025, 13 organizations engaged community members in discussions about the future of their recreation spaces and parks using a do-it-yourself workshop kit.

Of the 13 organizations, 12 were part of the City's Social Development Division's Community Coordination Plan Cluster partnerships. This model ensures communication with more than 400 community-based organizations and implements localized solutions to meet the needs of Toronto's equity-deserving communities. The clusters include 10 geographic cluster areas and two city-wide clusters that focus on newcomers and Black resilience. Self-selected organizations in each cluster were paid to host their own community-led engagements. Learn more about the [Community Coordination Plan Clusters](#).

Equity-Deserving Advisory Group (EDAG) meetings: The EDAG met on June 25, 2025, to contribute questions and comments to the proposed directions, and on January 22, 2026, to provide feedback on proposed updates to both strategies based on what we heard in the previous phase.

The EDAG was formed to ensure the Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan and Parkland Strategy updates are informed by and reflective of the needs and interests of equity-deserving communities. These communities include: racialized communities; Black communities; women, girls, and gender-diverse people; children and youth; seniors; people with disabilities; 2SLGBTQ+ communities; newcomers; and people with low income. It is understood that these and other identities are often overlapping and intersecting, and people often identify as part of multiple communities.

- The EDAG consists of the following organizations:
 - 8 80 Cities
 - Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services
 - Building Roots
 - For Youth Initiative
 - Girls', Youth & Family Programs, YWCA Toronto
 - Harriett Tubman Community Organization
 - Hijabi Ballers
 - Holland Bloorview
 - Lived Experience Advisory Group – Poverty Reduction Strategy
 - North York Community House
 - OutSport Toronto
 - Parasport Ontario
 - Park People
 - Parks and Recreation Disability Steering Committee
 - Seniors Forum
 - Social Planning Toronto
 - The Neighbourhood Link
 - The 519
 - Toronto Accessible Sports Council
 - Tropicana Community Services
 - United Way Greater Toronto
 - Variety Village
 - YMCA
 - YWCA

Indigenous Legacy Gathering Pop-up: On September 29 and 30, 2025, the project team attended the Indigenous Legacy Gathering hosted by Council Fire at Nathan Phillips Square to engage with local Indigenous communities on draft reconciliation ideas to be incorporated into the PRFP. Approximately 150 community members were engaged.

About this report

This report provides a high-level overview of community input received across all engagement channels during Phase 2 of public engagement for the Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan update. It summarizes what we have heard in the update process about the public's experiences with City of Toronto parks and recreation facilities and the public's priorities for future investments in improving and creating new facilities.

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

Individual summary reports are being prepared for each type of engagement that has occurred, including a summary report focused on Indigenous engagement. These reports will be available on the [Parkland & Recreation Facilities Strategies: Community Engagement](#) webpages.

Acronyms frequently used in this report include:

- **PLS** – referring to the Parkland Strategy.
- **PRFP** – referring to the Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan.
- **EDAG** – the Equity-Deserving Advisory Group, established to help inform the update process for the Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan and Parkland Strategy.
- **2SLGBTQ+** – referring to Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and other non-cisgender and non-straight identifies and communities.

How we reached people

The project team promoted community engagement activities to audiences across the city through the following channels:

- **Organic social media promotion**
From July to September 2025, video and image posts were shared on Parks and Recreation social media channels (Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn) to promote the online survey, and public meetings.
- **Paid social media promotion**
From July to September 2025, paid social media advertisements ran on Parks

and Recreation Instagram and Facebook to boost promotion of public meetings and the online survey.

- **Communications through Councillor Offices**

Promotional material was provided to all 25 Councillor Offices, with a request that they share it via their respective newsletters and email distribution.

- **Posters in community locations**

Community recreation centres and EarlyON centres across the city displayed posters promoting the engagement process.

- **Email notifications**

Email notifications were sent to the project listserv containing over 500 registrants. As well, emails were sent to members of the public through City email distribution lists, including recreation program registrants, community organizations, schoolboards, Business Improvement Areas, and more. Email promotions were also distributed through broader networks, including EDAG members, and participating City Advisory Bodies.

What We Heard

Emerging Directions and Actions

The Phase 1 community feedback and the City's update of existing recreation facility use led to the development of the following four key directions for the Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan.

Emerging Direction One

Emerging Direction One is to 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.

- Maintain facilities in a state of good repair and continue to improve accessibility, to ensure all residents can enjoy existing facilities, regardless of the age of the facility.
- Co-locate Community Recreation Centres with other facilities and services to bring in a wider range of community members (e.g., libraries, schools, employment services, seniors' services, newcomer services, etc.) and where appropriate, build housing on top of new Community Recreation Centres. Engage with communities and partners to keep recreation facilities in use at all times of the day and in all seasons (e.g., working with local community groups or schools to program arenas during the day, when use is typically low).
- Maximize year-round access (e.g., increase use of facilities in their "off" season, such as pickleball or skateboarding on outdoor ice rinks in the summer).
- Upgrade facilities to serve more community members and respond to new recreation needs.
- Proactively assess facility use to identify under-used facilities. Connect with communities to understand reasons for low use and revitalize, reprogram, or convert the facilities to meet current community needs and maximize use.
- Develop design and facility standards for each type of recreation facility to provide more reliable facilities for residents across the city.

Feedback Related to Emerging Direction One

From the virtual public meeting, online survey, EDAG and DIY Workshops, members of the public generally supported Emerging Direction One. In the online survey, out of approximately 2,400 responses, 47% strongly supported, 33% supported, 7% opposed, and 9% felt neutrally about Emerging Direction One. 75% of DIY Workshop participants strongly supported, 17% supported, and 8% felt neutrally about Emerging Direction One.

Heat Protection and Shade as Preconditions for Year-Round Use

Across engagement activities, respondents commonly emphasized that extreme heat and inadequate climate protection are already limiting safe use of parks, playgrounds, and recreation facilities. Multiple participants described summer conditions as dangerous, particularly for children and seniors, noting that playground surfaces become unusable during peak heat hours. It was noted that some community recreation centres lack sufficient cooling stations (existing systems are frequently outdated or non-functional), undermining their ability to serve as reliable cooling spaces during heat events. Respondents across groups called for significantly more shade structures, tree canopy, rain coverage, and heat-resilient surface materials, alongside safer winter materials that reduce slipping risks, underscoring that climate comfort is foundational to enable residents to use facilities for longer periods of time.

Improving Winter Maintenance for Year-Round Use

Many respondents shared that public spaces should function safely and meaningfully in all seasons. Participants called for improved snow clearance, winter-safe surfaces, and better lighting to support year-round use and safety, particularly during early mornings and evenings. A lack of winter maintenance in spaces can create safety hazards and discourages use, reinforcing the need to operationalize “maximizing year-round access” as a core implementation priority. Respondents also suggested expanding winter amenities such as maintained toboggan hills and fire pits as warm-up spaces. Indigenous participants specifically emphasized the importance of year-round cultural access, including gathering spaces for teaching, language revitalization, ceremonies, and community-led events, noting that seasonal closures may limit cultural continuity and community wellbeing.

Indoor Spaces for Climate Comfort

Respondents widely supported expanding indoor and semi-indoor recreational options as part of a climate resilient park and recreation system. Several suggested fully indoor playgrounds co-located with libraries or other public facilities to enable safe, year-round play regardless of weather. Recreation centres were repeatedly described as potential

climate resilience hubs that could provide cooling during heat waves, warmth in winter, safe indoor gathering, and continuous programming.

Year-Round Access to Public Washrooms

The most consistent feedback concerned the lack of access to year-round public washrooms across Toronto's parks, trails, and recreation spaces. Respondents described washrooms as a basic requirement for equity, safety, and public health, particularly for seniors, parents with young children, pregnant people, unhoused residents, and people with medical or chronic health needs. Many participants shared that they avoid facilities or leave early because washrooms are closed, or closed too early, with several recounting experiences of humiliation, including a parent stating, "My child had to relieve herself in the bushes... because the washrooms were locked." Respondents also noted that private businesses are increasingly restricting bathroom access, increasing the need for dependable public alternatives. Participants echoed these concerns, calling for accessible, gender-neutral, well-maintained washrooms as part of making facilities safer and more welcoming year-round.

Year-Round Social Programming

Respondents frequently mentioned the need for year-round programming that supports social connection, especially for seniors and people with mobility limitations. Many expressed a desire for low-intensity activities that combine movement with social interaction, such as indoor walking programs, or informal gathering spaces where people can "have a cup of tea with others." Clubs capable of operating year-round were seen as well-positioned to meet growing demand. Indoor pools were repeatedly identified as essential for seniors, families, and residents who cannot travel far, with respondents calling for a mix of 50-metre pools, leisure pools, and smaller neighbourhood facilities to distribute access more equitably. Requests also included expanded prime-time access to indoor turf for activities like walking soccer and other non-competitive sports, reinforcing the request for multi-use indoor spaces.

All-Season Design of Sports Facilities

Participants expressed a strong need for inclusive, year-round action sports infrastructure, including skateboarding, BMX, scooters, and pump tracks. Respondents supported building more paved, all-season pump tracks designed for use across age groups and skill levels, including winter conditions. Participants were critical of modular skatepark designs, describing them as unsafe and poorly suited to real use, and instead called for permanent, beginner-friendly facilities. Respondents also requested that some indoor skating rinks remain open during spring and summer to support leisure skating and non-competitive use.

Emerging Direction Two

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

- Supporting emergency response and public health (Example: Community Recreation Centres as places to gather in emergencies, space for vaccination clinics, cooling stations, access to water and shade, etc.).
- Adapting and responding to climate change (Example: Build new facilities with sustainability and carbon emissions in mind. Achieve high green building standards and include features like green roofs and on-site green-energy production).
- Encouraging community gathering and improving resident experience at facilities that offer food services (e.g., in Arenas and community centres).
- Responding to the City's Reconciliation Action Plan, and work towards Reconciliation by meeting local Indigenous communities' needs through recreation facilities (Example: Visual representation of Indigenous communities and cultures, including treaties; art and signage for celebration, Placekeeping*, and education; access to lands and waters for Indigenous ceremonial, cultural, and community practices, including Pow Wows).
 - Some Indigenous Legacy Gathering participants proposed creating dedicated spaces that support ceremony, gathering, and cultural practices in CRCs. Ideas included establishing Spirit Gardens or healing gardens, as well as spaces where Indigenous ceremonies and cultural gatherings could take place respectfully. Participants also suggested areas in recreation centres designed for quiet reflection, storytelling, and community gathering, potentially incorporating natural materials that align with Indigenous cultural values. These spaces were envisioned as welcoming environments where Indigenous community members could connect with culture, land, and one another.
- Supporting food security at recreation facilities (Example: Community Centres that include teaching gardens, community kitchens, and food banks).
 - Indigenous Legacy Gathering participants highlighted the importance of strengthening relationships with the land through ecological restoration and traditional plantings. Participants suggested community food gardens to prioritize ecological health and biodiversity. Participants explained that this idea reflects an interest in supporting Indigenous approaches to land stewardship and recognizing the land as a living system that should be cared for and restored.

**Note: Details regarding Indigenous Placekeeping work are not included in this survey as they are still being developed in consultation with Indigenous communities.*

Feedback Related to Emerging Direction Two

From the virtual public meeting, online survey, and DIY Workshops, members of the public generally supported Emerging Direction Two. In the online survey, out of approximately 2,400 responses, 37% strongly supported, 30% supported, 8% opposed, and 20% felt neutrally about Emerging Direction Two. 67% of DIY Workshop participants strongly supported, 25% supported, and 8% felt neutrally about Emerging Direction Two.

Strong Support for Community Centres Addressing Food Security and Health Needs

Across engagement activities, there was strong support for Emerging Direction Two, particularly where it framed community recreation centres as multi-purpose community hubs that respond to food insecurity, public health, and climate pressures. Groups that participated through the City's Community Coordination plan clusters expressed high support for expanding community food banks, community kitchens, and community gardens, alongside access to more green space. They noted that supporting food security through community-based initiatives is critical, particularly given the sharp increase in food insecurity and financial hardship observed since the COVID-19 pandemic. The EDAG specifically supported affordable food and beverage options in community recreation centres to support longer stays.

Participants also supported co-located emergency services and vaccination clinics. Some suggested that expanding recreation spaces to deliver broader community benefits such as advancing public health, responding to climate change, and supporting reconciliation is essential. There was particular appreciation for multi-purpose hubs that foster inclusion, cultural connection, and accessibility. Some suggested that settlement services and ESL programming be offered within community recreation centres, highlighting the value of co-location in supporting newcomer integration, language learning, social interaction, and community belonging.

There was strong support for farmers' markets, affordable fresh produce, and food programming in parks and community centres as tools to address food insecurity and improve public health. These initiatives were viewed not only as service provision, but as opportunities to engage residents and strengthen community wellbeing.

Participants across groups emphasized that food should be considered part of a complete recreation experience. Many respondents requested cafés, snack bars, food carts, or small food services integrated into community recreation centres to support longer visits, social interaction, and informal gathering. Others suggested creative partnerships with aspiring chefs, local restaurants, technology companies, and community groups, such as using community centres as test kitchens for new food

businesses. At the same time, some respondents expressed concern about noise, crowding, or disruption, particularly in naturalized spaces like beaches, indicating the need for context-sensitive facility design.

There was also strong interest in healthy, sustainable, and culturally inclusive food. Some respondents called for clear healthy eating guidelines, reduced reliance on vending machines selling pop and junk food, and greater availability of plant-based options to support sustainability, allergy needs, and cultural or religious dietary practices. Food-centred events combining music, games, and social activities were seen as effective ways to activate spaces and build community.

Community Gardens and Greenhouses

Respondents expressed strong support for expanding community gardens and greenhouses as multi-purpose spaces that address food security and climate resilience. Demand for gardens was especially strong in the downtown core. However, several respondents raised concerns about mismanagement and inequitable access in existing garden systems, where access was perceived as restricted to certain groups. Participants noted the need for fair, transparent, and inclusive governance of these spaces.

Greenhouses were repeatedly suggested as features within community recreation centres, including co-location with pools to improve energy efficiency and support year-round learning. Respondents highlighted opportunities to use greenhouses to teach hydroponics, vertical farming, pollination, and food production, as well as to support mental wellbeing, especially during winter months.

Climate Resilience

Climate resilience was a dominant theme throughout the feedback on Emerging Direction Two. Some participants expressed interest in incorporating green energy features such as solar panels and more eco-friendly amenities like water-filling stations. Waterplay, splash pads, community gardens, and other climate-resilient amenities were widely seen as essential to heat equity, particularly as summers become hotter. Many respondents highlighted growing demand for splash pads and linked these amenities to public health for residents without air conditioning or private outdoor space.

Shade was consistently identified as one of the most critical missing elements in parks, playgrounds, and seating areas. Respondents emphasized tree planting, fabric canopies, awnings, and removable seasonal shade, with specific requests for shade over metal slides and other playground equipment that can become dangerously hot. Shade was framed not only as a comfort feature, but as a matter of heat safety, particularly for condo and apartment dwellers who rely on public space for outdoor relief during heat waves.

Ecological Stewardship

Many respondents supported expanding climate and energy initiatives within recreation facilities, including community solar power, battery storage hubs, bladeless wind turbines, and EV bi-directional charging. Recreation centres were frequently described as ideal climate resilience hubs, offering cooling, warmth, safe indoor gathering, and year-round programming during extreme weather.

Recreation and Social Belonging

Respondents, particularly seniors, people with disabilities, caregivers, and participants in adapted or low-impact sports, emphasized the need for recreation facilities to be accessible and inclusively designed. Recreation was widely described as supporting physical and mental health, social connection, aging in place, and intergenerational use. Curling, lawn bowling, and swimming were repeatedly cited as affordable, inclusive, lifelong activities, across age, gender, and ability.

Pools were often framed not just as recreational amenities, but as essential city infrastructure that supports cooling. Some respondents suggested extended or 24-hour pool operations during heat waves to serve shift workers, unhoused residents, and people living in overcrowded housing without air conditioning. Many pools were described as outdated or poorly maintained, lacking accessible changerooms, clean washrooms, seating, or modern filtration systems, with calls to ensure new and upgraded pools meet both recreational and competitive needs.

Community centres were described as the “pride of the neighbourhood,” especially in areas with few public spaces. Participants called for more indoor and outdoor gathering areas such as squares, gardens, fountains, and seating to support non-sport programming like book clubs, music nights, tea times, picnics, and youth-curated events. Recreation spaces were also framed as public safety tools, providing healthy alternatives for youth to gather and socialize, particularly in neighbourhoods lacking indoor options.

Co-Location Spaces as Community Living Rooms

Reinforcing the value of co-location, the EDAG emphasized the importance of connecting libraries, recreation, cultural spaces, and community “living rooms” that offer food, free Wi-Fi, places to plug in devices, access books, attend free programs, and simply be in community.

Emerging Direction Three

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

- Prioritize the needs of Indigenous, Black, equity-deserving*, and underserved communities when deciding where to place new facilities, and when to improve or upgrade facilities.
- Accelerate facility upgrades to meet modern accessibility standards.
- Invest in flexible facilities that serve diverse communities' needs, including people of all ages, abilities, races, cultures, genders, and incomes.
- Develop new approaches to assess and serve areas of very high population and growth (e.g., the downtown core) to ensure residents have equitable access to facility spaces.

**Note: The City refers to equity-deserving communities as communities that face significant collective challenges in participating in society because of barriers to equal access, opportunities and resources due to disadvantage and discrimination, and, therefore, deserve social justice and reparation including but not limited to, women, persons with low income, immigrants, refugees and undocumented people, 2SLGBTQ+ communities, persons with disabilities, racialized group(s), seniors and youth.*

Indigenous communities are not included under the term equity-deserving because more than equity, Indigenous communities deserve prosperity that is characterized by economic and social well-being, inclusion and self-determination, which were eroded through historical and ongoing colonization. Black communities are also recognized as unique and separate from other equity-deserving groups because people of African descent who commonly self-identify as Black people have a unique experience of centuries of enslavement (with ongoing socio-economic impact) in what is now Canada.

Feedback Related to Emerging Direction Three

From the virtual public meeting, online survey, and DIY Workshops, members of the public generally supported Emerging Direction Three. In the online survey, out of approximately 2,400 responses, 40% strongly supported, 29% supported, 7% opposed, and 18% felt neutrally about Emerging Direction Three. 50% of DIY Workshop participants strongly supported, 42% supported, and 8% felt neutrally about Emerging Direction Three.

Using Data to Meet the Demands of Population Growth

Feedback from virtual public meetings and DIY workshops emphasized the importance of using data to anticipate population change, growth, and displacement. Participants noted that facility planning must keep pace with population growth while recognizing that future populations may have different needs than existing residents. Participants

raised questions about how the City accounts for gentrification when determining where social supports and Community Recreation Centre (CRC) resources are most needed

Participants supported the recommendation to use the Equity Index to allocate facilities, determine where maintenance and upgrades are most urgently needed, and respond to population growth in a way that reflects community conditions rather than historical investment patterns.

Accessibility as a Foundational Requirement

Support for providing accessible facilities emerged as one of the most consistent themes across DIY Workshops, the online survey and the public meeting. Community voices expressed that accessibility is increasingly top of mind in future planning. Survey respondents echoed this sentiment, emphasizing that accessibility remains inconsistent across parks, pools, rinks, trails, and CRCs, and calling for accessibility retrofits, and for universal design to be a standard requirement whenever facilities are repaired or upgraded.

Participants with disabilities described difficulty navigating accessible fitness and recreation programs, both physically and while using the online booking system. Community voices echoed this, highlighting examples where investments focused on (e.g., landscaping and new paths) while missing essential infrastructure like stairs, ramps, or proper connections, resulting in continued inaccessibility. Participants stressed that accessibility must address everyday mobility barriers, including walkways, transit connections, seating, washrooms, shade, and indoor circulation.

Survey respondents shared that small design decisions such as door widths, pathway stability, or surface materials can determine whether someone can participate. Several respondents noted the need to replace unstable or exclusionary playground materials (e.g., sand, woodchips) with more accessible surfacing. Families emphasized the need for inclusive and adaptive playground features, including stable surfaces, sensory-friendly design, and supports for children using mobility devices or augmentative communication.

Several respondents cautioned the City against over-promising accessibility improvements without sufficient resources, urging the establishment of clear, measurable outcomes and accountability mechanisms.

Psychological Safety and Cultural Inclusion

Beyond physical access, respondents emphasized neurodiverse accessibility, psychological safety and a sense of belonging as essential components of equitable access. Some participants highlighted the value of cultural programming at CRCs, noting that it makes facilities feel welcoming and affirming.

Survey respondents similarly called for recreation staff training to address everyday discrimination and harassment, particularly for women, youth, trans, and racialized residents using recreation facilities.

Some respondents noted that visual representation signals belonging and helps ensure residents feel seen and welcomed in public spaces (e.g. including symbols, such as rainbows to signify LGBTQ2S+ friendly spaces), and should be incorporated into the design of recreation facilities. At the Legacy Gathering pop-up, participants emphasized the importance of visibly reflecting Indigenous cultures, histories, and identities throughout recreation spaces. Suggestions included incorporating public art installations created by Indigenous artists, with a preference for commissioning local Indigenous artists to ensure authenticity and community connection. Participants also encouraged integrating Indigenous design language and cultural symbolism into CRC infrastructure including interpretive elements that tell Indigenous stories and highlight Indigenous presence within the city.

Digital Accessibility

Digital accessibility was consistently framed as an equity issue. Survey respondents emphasized that accessibility includes communication, language, and service design, noting that “part of accessibility is communication.” Participants requested clearer, more user-friendly websites that indicate which centres offer which facilities and programs, improved filtering, simplified registration systems, and accessible online forms such as CampTO. Several respondents suggested incorporating digital tools that better support people with disabilities and establishing public-facing guidelines with tangible digital accessibility targets.

Some participants described exclusively online registration systems as a major digital barrier to accessing recreation programs and a source of exclusion, particularly when requests for help are met with redirection to websites rather than human support. A few participants noted that digital-only systems disproportionately exclude equity-deserving communities. Black and equity-deserving participants emphasized that the ability to walk into a CRC, speak to knowledgeable front-desk staff, learn about programs, and register in person is critical because having this information gives communities confidence to navigate recreation spaces. Participants supported offering more in-person support at CRCs, including staff roles dedicated to helping residents navigate programs, registration, and services to offer a variety of ways to participate in programming and access services.

Applying an Intersectional Lens to Equitable Recreation

Survey feedback strongly emphasized the intersection of race, income, and geography in determining access to recreation. Respondents encouraged prioritizing lower-income neighbourhoods with older rental housing, fewer private amenities, and long travel times

to facilities. Participants contrasted these areas with higher-income neighbourhoods, where residents may already have access to private clubs or condo amenities, suggesting that public investment should be directed where options are limited.

Facility types also emerged as an equity issue. Respondents questioned the appropriateness of exclusive or fee-based amenities such as golf courses, tennis clubs, or paid pizza ovens located in lower-income neighbourhoods. They framed reallocation of these spaces as a solution to ensure the facility types are accessible financially to the surrounding neighbourhoods.

Indigenous Legacy Gathering participants supported opportunities for Indigenous leadership and employment. This includes hiring Indigenous staff and program leaders, employing Indigenous artists for public art, and creating job opportunities for Indigenous youth. Participants also noted the value of working with Knowledge Keepers and Elders to guide cultural programming and decision-making. Volunteer opportunities and pathways for students were also suggested.

Meeting the Needs of Equity-Deserving Communities

2SLGBTQ+ Communities

Feedback highlighted the need for dedicated and affirming spaces for 2SLGBTQ+ communities, with respondents citing lawn bowling, roller derby, and disc golf as sports with strong queer participation. Trans-specific and gender-affirming programming, such as gender-diverse swim times, were identified as critical gaps in Toronto, with respondents noting that other cities have created trans and gender-diverse pool programming where these community members feel safe. Requests for more gender-neutral washrooms in CRCs and outdoor facilities were also common.

Seniors

Seniors were repeatedly described as an intersectional group spanning all equity categories. Respondents emphasized the importance of affordable, age-friendly programming, including walking tracks, low-impact sports, lawn bowling, curling, and swimming, which support physical and mental health, aging in place, and social connection.

Newcomers

Respondents supported culturally responsive programming, improved transit access, as well as expanded language options in signage, online communications, and forms.

Affordable Recreation

Affordability was repeatedly identified as a core equity consideration. Respondents proposed sliding-scale fees, subsidies, and low-cost programs to ensure access for lower-income residents while still discouraging no-shows. Some participants

emphasized that equitable access includes low-cost recreation options and a wide range of programming for different fitness and mobility levels, supported by clear signage and maps to help residents navigate subsidized services confidently.

Emerging Direction Four

Emerging Direction Four is to 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.

- Co-locate Community Recreation Centres with other facilities and services (e.g., libraries, schools, employment services, seniors' services, newcomer services, etc.) based on a specific community's needs (determined in part, through early engagements with a community).
- Where appropriate, build housing on top of new Community Recreation Centres, in partnership with different housing providers and levels of government.

Feedback Related to Emerging Direction Four

From the virtual public meeting, online survey, and DIY Workshops, members of the public generally supported Emerging Direction Four. In the online survey, out of approximately 2,400 responses, 36% strongly supported, 29% supported, 7% opposed, and 22% felt neutrally about Emerging Direction One. 67% of DIY Workshop participants strongly supported, 25% supported, and 8% felt neutrally about Emerging Direction Four.

Strong Interest in Co-Location

Across engagement activities, there was broad interest in Emerging Direction Four's focus on collaboration, partnerships, and co-location to maximize public benefit and make more efficient use of limited urban land. Many respondents valued co-location as a way to reduce travel, consolidate services, and create vibrant community hubs that reflect how residents use public space. Online survey respondents cited successful local examples such as Canoe Landing, where libraries, community recreation centres, and outdoor amenities are integrated, noting that this model makes daily life easier and strengthens intergenerational use. Several participants emphasized that co-location works best when facilities are large enough to accommodate multiple uses, cautioning that combining services should not result in smaller or compromised spaces.

Participants broadly supported collaboration and partnerships with schools, libraries, employment services, and newcomer-serving organizations. They emphasized that co-

locating community recreation centres with complementary services strengthens accessibility and inclusion, particularly for newcomers, youth, and families. Participants viewed Emerging Direction Four as a practical and innovative approach to efficient land use that aligns with evolving community needs, and supported integrating housing where appropriate to create mixed-use, complete communities.

Housing Above Community Recreation Centres

The proposal to build housing above new or redeveloped CRCs received moderate support from respondents, though it ranked as the least strongly supported of all the actions presented.

Many respondents framed this approach as a smart, equity-oriented solution that maximizes land use while directly benefiting residents who rely most on public recreation. Several cited examples from Montréal and international cities where housing is routinely built above community infrastructure, describing these models as vibrant, human-scaled, and socially connected. One respondent commented that “housing on top of community centres is brilliant,” while another noted that living above a CRC would significantly improve quality of life for people receiving the Ontario Disability Support Program, who may experience challenges affording longer commutes to a facility or program.

The Neighbourhood Information Post strongly agreed with this approach, describing it as a way to dramatically improve accessibility and community bonding, and suggesting that it would bring Toronto’s urban planning closer to global best practices seen across Asia. Some respondents specifically suggested co-locating seniors’ housing above CRCs to maintain community connection and reduce isolation, provided accessible housing units are available. Participants emphasized that housing delivered through this model must be deeply affordable, family-sized, high-quality, and publicly owned.

Some respondents raised concerns about safety, noise, parking pressure, crowding, and operational complexity. Some worried that adding housing could strain already limited parking or complicate how recreation spaces function, especially in high-demand areas. These concerns underscored the need for clear governance, and thoughtful design to accommodate the volume of residents that would use the co-located space.

Considerations for Co-location and Partnerships

Participants across engagement activities supported partnerships with non-profit organizations, ethnocultural groups, seniors’ clubs, 2SLGBTQ+ organizations, schools, and libraries. Suggestions included shared gyms, pools, and educational spaces such as computer labs for youth and adult learning. DIY Workshop participants expressed interest in flexible facilities such as community bike repair shops and advanced educational spaces within co-located hubs.

Some Indigenous Legacy Gathering participants expressed interest in programming that supports Indigenous learning opportunities for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Ideas included inviting Elders and Knowledge Keepers to teach and share stories, creating land-based education programs for students, and offering workshops or outdoor activities rooted in Indigenous teachings and wellness practices. Participants also highlighted opportunities for reconciliation education by sharing Indigenous histories, relationships to the land, and cultural knowledge within CRCs.

Community organizations raised concerns about Toronto Community Housing Corporation and cautioned that collaboration should not result in public funds being diverted to private corporations without clear public benefit. Participants emphasized that partnerships must be grounded in transparency, accountability, and demonstrable community value.

Many participants supported partnerships that promote public health, disease prevention, and long-term wellbeing, noting that recreation and physical activity can reduce healthcare costs over time. They emphasized that co-located or shared facilities must remain equally accessible to all residents, not restricted to specific user groups, and called for intentional multi-use design that reflects local context rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

Community members emphasized the importance of welcoming programming for residents who may not feel comfortable using traditional recreation facilities. They called for collaboration with Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving communities to design programming that feels accessible and affirming and stressed that any housing built above recreation facilities must be affordable to avoid reinforcing exclusion.

Co-located Services and Supports

Across DIY Workshops, public meetings, and online surveys, participants identified a wide range of services that would meaningfully complement recreation spaces. Participants highlighted senior services, newcomer services, libraries and reading spaces, housing supports, food banks and community kitchens, employment services and job training, and free childcare as high value co-located uses. Other participants echoed this, expressing interest in partnerships that provide employment services, expanded seniors' programming, and low-cost childcare or early-years programming.

Several respondents supported co-location with schools, libraries, and adult learning providers, including shared computer labs, educational spaces, and maker-style programming. Some community organizations expressed readiness to partner with the City to activate underused spaces and support newcomer families.

Wayfinding Improvements

Public meeting participants shared that co-located facilities must be supported by intuitive wayfinding. Respondents requested clear navigation systems and playful, welcoming wayfinding approaches using public art, colour, and design to help people move confidently through larger, more complex buildings.

Safety

Safety was also raised as a key concern, particularly as facilities become busier and host more diverse uses. Participants emphasized the importance of adequate staffing, security, and clear operational protocols to maintain safe, welcoming environments for all users.

Priorities by Facility Type

The Facilities Plan sets out goals and priorities for investment in each type of recreation facility over the next 20 years. After reviewing recent recreation facility use and demand, four categories are proposed for each type of recreation facility (note: multiple categories can apply to the same type of recreation facility):

Category A) Build more to fill existing gaps in service

There are existing gaps in the availability of the facilities listed below, across the city. The new Facilities Plan proposes to build more of these facilities, where these gaps exist. Types of recreation facility proposed for this category:

- Basketball Courts
- Beach Volleyball
- Community Recreation Centres
- Cricket Pitches
- Curling Rinks
- Dog Off-leash Areas
- Gymnasiums
- Indoor Pools
- Off-road Bike Parks
- Outdoor Skating Trails
- Outdoor Artificial Ice Rinks
- Pickleball Courts
- Skateparks (outdoor)
- Splash Pads
- Soccer and Multi-Sport Fields
- Sports Bubbles
- Tennis Courts

Category B) Build more recreation facilities as the population grows

Build new recreation facilities in areas with high population growth, to provide consistent levels of access. Types of recreation facility proposed for this category:

- Basketball Courts
- Community Recreation Centres
- Cricket Pitches
- Dog Off-leash Areas
- Gymnasiums
- Indoor Pools
- Off-Road Bike Parks
- Outdoor Artificial Ice Rinks
- Outdoor Skating Trails
- Pickleball Courts
- Skateparks and Spots(outdoor)
- Soccer and Multi-Sport Fields
- Splash Pads
- Sport Bubbles
- Tennis Courts

Category C) Improve to increase use and accessibility

Improve or upgrade existing recreation facilities to increase their usability and available hours for permit use (e.g., adding artificial turf or lighting to a field to increase seasonal use time) or upgrading the physical accessibility of an older community recreation centre. Types of recreation facility proposed for this category:

- Arenas
- Ball Diamonds
- Basketball Courts
- Clubhouses and Fieldhouses
- Community Recreation Centres
- Cricket Pitches
- Curling Rinks
- Dog Off-leash Areas
- Gymnasiums
- Indoor Pools
- Outdoor Artificial Ice Rinks
- Outdoor Pools
- Skateparks (outdoor)
- Soccer and Multi-use Sports Fields
- Splash Pads
- Tennis Courts

Category D) Repurpose to a higher use

Identify individual under-used facilities and connect with communities to understand reasons for low use with the aim of revitalizing, reprogramming, or converting the facility to meet current community needs and maximize use. Types of recreation facility proposed for this category:

- Ball Diamonds (selected Class C fields)
- Bocce Courts (outdoor)
- Clubhouses and Fieldhouses
- Lawn Bowling Greens
- Wading Pools

Results: Strong overall support for facility type priorities

Over 93% of survey respondents (of ~2,000) agreed with the facilities by priority type, the only exception being lawn bowling facilities, where over 400 respondents suggested they be improved to increase use and accessibility, rather than repurposed.

Community Spotlight: Lawn Bowling Clubs

Support for Maintaining Lawn Bowling Facilities

When asked if there was a recreation facility that was in the wrong category, 22% (447 respondents) selected Lawn Bowling Greens, the top facility selected out of 24 facilities within the proposed priorities for future provision by recreation type. Several Lawn Bowling organizations completed the survey, including:

- Agincourt Lawn Bowling Club
- Balmy Beach Lawn Bowling Club
- Beeton Lawn Bowling
- Cosburn Park Lawn Bowling Club
- Etobicoke Lawn Bowling Club
- Golden Girls Lawn Bowling League
- Kew Beach Lawn Bowling Club
- Lawrence Park Lawn Bowling & Croquet Club
- New Toronto Lawn Bowling Club
- Newmarket Lawn Bowling Club
- SUNSHINE BOYS Lawn Bowling League
- Wells Hill Lawn Bowling Club
- West Toronto Lawn Bowling Club
- Willowdale Lawn Bowling Club

Of the 444 respondents who felt that lawn bowling was miscategorized, 83% said that lawn bowling facilities should be improved to increase use and accessibility, followed by 16% claiming that more lawn bowling facilities should be developed in areas with high population growth to provide consistent levels of access. 13% said that more lawn bowling facilities should be built to fill existing gaps in service, and 8% said that lawn bowling facilities should be repurposed to a higher use.

Equity Considerations for Lawn Bowling Facilities

When expanding on the quantitative feedback, many respondents strongly expressed support for Lawn Bowling as a sport that fosters community connection and belonging for 2SLGBTQ+, senior, multigenerational, and lower-income communities. For example, a respondent noted, “Cosburn Park Lawn Bowling Club is described as “a social nexus for the local gay community” with large membership.” Some respondents expressed concern that the reallocation of lawn bowling facilities may limit the long-standing gathering and sport opportunities available through lawn bowling facilities.

Implications for Seniors, Accessible Sports and Social Well-being

Respondents emphasized that lawn bowling provides low-cost, low-impact physical activity for an aging population, helping reduce isolation and supporting social connection. A respondent shared, “The Golden Girls is a league of about 90 senior women that travel and play weekly at various lawn bowling clubs in Toronto. For most of these women, it is the only physical activity that they have.”

Respondents were predominantly unsupportive of removing lawn bowling facilities due to the high level of accessibility for seniors as a low-impact sport that allows for “vibrant social connection”. Many respondents also described an increase in younger residents joining lawn bowling clubs, making it a unique space for inter-generational connection.

Respondents highlighted the increasing availability of indoor short-mat bowling facilitating year-round lawn bowling. The removal or reallocation of lawn bowling facilities was seen as inequitable to some respondents, as they view it as a limitation for seniors and residents with accessibility needs to participate in City sport offerings that improve physical, mental and social health.

Lawn bowling players recommended further public consultation to evaluate individual use of lawn bowling facilities and make decisions using local community data.

Support for Reallocating Lawn Bowling Facilities

While there was very strong advocacy for maintaining lawn bowling facilities and clubs due to the accessible and communal nature, ~116 respondents specifically shared feedback regarding the underuse of lawn bowling facilities at Alexander Muir Park and how it might be rebalanced to better meet community needs. The Lawrence Park Tennis Club members noted that their three courts face an exceptionally high waitlist of

about 1,900 people. Courts are consistently at capacity, limiting access for both members and casual players. Many noted that the lawn bowling and croquet area, approximately twice the size of the tennis courts, serves only ~40 members and are often unused during peak park hours.

A strong subset of comments advocate converting part of the croquet or lawn bowling area in Alexander Muir Park into two to three additional tennis courts, arguing that this would better match demonstrated demand while still preserving space for existing lawn bowling members.

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
- Alex Lavasidis – Project Officer
- Vanessa Cipriani – Project Officer
- Amanda Rooney – 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