

Phase 2: Community Engagement Report

Parkland Strategy Update

February 21, 2025, to December 3, 2025

Parks & Recreation Division
City of Toronto





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Overview

Parkland Strategy update

The City of Toronto's [Parkland Strategy](#) was adopted in 2019 to guide the long-term planning for Toronto's parks system, including where the City adds new parkland and improves existing parks. The Parkland Strategy sets a 20-year vision and planning framework guided by the principles of: Expand, Improve, Connect, and Include. It fulfills the Ontario *Planning Act*'s requirement for a 'parks plan', enabling a municipality to apply the alternative requirement, under Section 42 of the *Planning Act*, to development and redevelopment that is eligible for parkland dedication. This is a tool that Toronto and other municipalities use to help address the increasing need for parks and recreational facilities as populations grow. There are over 1,500 parks owned and/or operated by the City throughout Toronto and the system is expanding with new parks added every year.

The City periodically updates the Parkland Strategy to ensure it reflects:

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

Community engagement for the Parkland Strategy update has occurred in collaboration with the City's update of the Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan. The insights gathered will directly inform the Parkland Strategy update.

Visit the project webpage to review past engagement summaries, sign up for e-updates, and to be notified of future opportunities to get involved:

www.toronto.ca/ParksandFacilitiesPlans

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 Parkland Strategy update. It summarizes what we have heard in the review process about the public's experiences with City of Toronto parks and the public's priorities for future investments in improving parks and creating new parkland.

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. This report does not cover most of the local Indigenous engagement covered in Phase 2. Individual summary reports have been prepared for each type of engagement that has occurred, including a report on local Indigenous engagement in Phase 2. These reports are available on the [Parkland & Recreation Facilities Strategies: Community Engagement](#) project webpage.

Acronyms frequently used in this report include:

- **PLS** – referring to the Parkland Strategy
- **PRFP** – referring to the Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan
- **2SLGBTQ+** – referring to Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and other non-cisgender and non-straight identities and communities
- **EDAG** – the Equity-Deserving Advisory Group, established to help inform the update process for the Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan and the Parkland Strategy. The EDAG consists of members/staff from the following organizations:
 - 8 80 Cities
 - Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services
 - Building Roots
 - For Youth Initiative
 - 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

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 of the City of Toronto’s Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan (PRFP) and the Parkland Strategy (PLS). The following list provides an overview of the different ways the public were invited to participate in this process. Individual reports are also available online that summarize the input received through the various engagement activities, and which provide a greater level of detail on the themes covered in this report.

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-specific meeting took place on July 15, 2025 and the PRFP meeting took place on July 16, 2025. A total of 60 members of the public attended (32 of whom attended the PLS-specific online meeting).

Online Survey: From July 22 to September 14, 2025, 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 (2,500 of the respondents answered survey questions about the PLS).

Visits to existing City Advisory Bodies: From Summer to Fall 2025, the project team presented to, and sought feedback from, the following existing City Advisory Bodies:

- City of Toronto Seniors’ Forum
- Parks & Recreation Community Disability Steering Committee
- 2SLGBTQ+ Council Advisory Committee
- Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Confronting Anti-Black Racism Advisory Committee
- Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee

Do-It-Yourself community-led workshops: Between October 14 to November 30, 2025, 12 organizations engaged community members in discussions about the future of their recreation spaces and parks using a do-it-yourself workshop kit.

Of the 12 organizations, 11 are 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): Two EDAG meetings were held as a part of the engagement process. On June 25, 2025, 12 EDAG members provided feedback on the initial drafts of proposed updates to the Parkland Strategy and Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan. On January 22, 2026, 12 EDAG members provided feedback on the refined drafts of proposed updates.

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 Parkland Strategy. Approximately 150 community members were engaged.

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 other distribution channels.
- **Materials in community locations**
Community Recreation Centres, EarlyON Centres, and Toronto Community Housing sites across the city shared and displayed e-flyers and posters promoting the online survey.
- **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.

What We Heard

Mapping in the Parkland Strategy: Parkland Priority Areas

The Parkland Strategy has [a map showing Parkland Priority Areas](#). These are areas of Toronto that the Parks & Recreation Division prioritizes for parkland studies (e.g., detailed analysis of parkland within a neighbourhood), parkland acquisitions (e.g., purchase of new parkland), and park improvements (e.g., upgrades in existing parks). The City considers multiple factors to determine whether or not a particular area is a Parkland Priority Area.

The PLS team is proposing to update which factors are considered for this decision making, and sought feedback on this topic.

Proposed Factor One: Provision of parkland that's generally used by people

Parkland provision rates are defined as the estimated future amount of parkland per person, in each area of the city. The City is able to estimate future rates based on City of Toronto data of residential development applications. Over half of Toronto's parkland is located within ravines and some of these lands are not generally accessible to people (e.g., due to steep slopes and/or dense vegetation). To emphasize areas of the park system that are currently accessible to and used by people, in the first proposed factor, the City is proposing to exclude the portions of natural areas that are inaccessible to the public.

From the virtual public meeting, online survey, and DIY Workshops, members of the public generally supported Factor One. In the online survey, out of approximately 1400 responses, 37% strongly supported the approach, 36% supported the approach, and 8% opposed the approach. 42% of DIY Workshop Kit organizations said that they strongly support Factor One, 50% said that they support Factor One and only 8% said that they oppose Factor One.

Ravines are valued and should be well maintained

Through the online survey, 24 members of the public expressed a strong value for ravines in Toronto. Respondents noted that ravines are deteriorating due to lack of maintenance and invasive species. Some respondents shared concerns with past City projects that damaged ecosystems stating, “Mature trees that sheltered bats were removed [on a previous development project]. I wish the trees could have been left alone.” Many explicitly stated they prefer mature forests, ravines, and naturalized spaces over recreational lawns. Some respondents recommended expanded volunteer stewardship programs for trail care, ravine monitoring, butterfly gardens, and pollinator habitat creation.

In the online survey, a few respondents viewed ravines as distinct ecological systems that should not be treated as regular parks. Survey respondents frequently referred to ravines as migratory bird stopovers and sensitive wildlife habitats in need of proactive protection. A survey respondent mentioned, “ravines and urban forests should not be included in the calculation of parkland. They are completely separate spaces.”

Some respondents requested no additional paved paths, no new entrances, no lighting, and no modifications that would encourage heavy human traffic. The 2SLGBTQ+ Council Advisory Committee agreed with these sentiments, expressing that the relationship and impact between biodiversity and humans should be considered from an Indigenous worldview.

Proposed Factor Two: Access to private yards

The second proposed factor to determine Parkland Priority Areas is areas of Toronto where residents are less likely to have access to their own private yard. People living in multi-unit dwellings are less likely to have access to private green space (e.g., a back yard, or a side yard) and may be more likely to depend on parks as spaces for leisure and social gathering. The City is proposing to prioritize those areas of Toronto with a higher number of dwellings that are multi-unit dwellings. This can be done using Statistics Canada data that identifies the location of apartment/multi-unit dwellings (from duplexes up to high rise buildings).

From the virtual public meeting, public survey, and DIY Workshops, members of the public clearly supported Factor Two, with 48% strongly supporting the approach, 31% supporting the approach, and 5% opposing the approach. Out of 1,800 respondents, 65% said that they have access to a yard, 16% said that they have access to a balcony, 8% said they have access to semi-private or shared outdoor space, and 13% said that they only have access to public spaces like parks as their primary outdoor area. 75% of

organizations that conducted the DIY Workshop Kits said that they strongly support Factor Two and 25% said that they support Factor Two.

Equity considerations for residents in vertical and high-density neighbourhoods

Participants shared that many Torontonians, especially in condos and apartments, do not have private yards and rely entirely on parks for shade, exercise, and outdoor space. A DIY Workshop participant shared that improving park accessibility and amenities in high-density neighborhoods will significantly enhance quality of life and community wellbeing.

Outdoor resting spaces for seniors and people with disabilities

Apartment-dwelling seniors frequently called for more benches, shade, washrooms, and resting places to support mobility. A survey respondent shared that they “really want to get out, but need resting places.” Prioritizing lower income seniors, residents with disabilities, or high-density apartment dwellers that often face the greatest access barriers should be highly considered. Several respondents noted that the City must be transparent about the sources used for demographic data.

Increased access to food for high-rise communities

A participant mentioned access to healthy, local food is another benefit to Factor Two. Food-growing initiatives were framed as equity tools for high-rise communities without private yards and as climate resilience strategies. Many call for “farm-in-the-city” experiences for families, combining nature education, food security, and recreational programming like expanding community garden programming. A respondent shared that Torontonians in high-density neighbourhoods often also experience poor tree equity and food security challenges. The respondent shared, “It's not the biggest intervention, but persistently done, more community gardens and fruit trees that communities can access would make a steady difference in food-insecure neighbourhoods: let people grow or use skills, build good relationships to nature, fit into Toronto's climate response, and also be one more piece of the puzzle for stormwater.”

Members of the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Council Advisory Committee (CABRAC) specifically discussed Black food sovereignty, suggesting further exploration into the correlation between Black community gardens and food security in relation to where parks are located or are being built.

Factor Three: Equitable parkland access for Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving communities

When determining the location of Parkland Priority Areas, low-income is currently the only factor considered that relates to equity. The City is proposing to change this by adding other socio-demographic factors in addition to income, such as age, ethnicity (including Indigenous and Black identities), newcomer status, and knowledge of official languages (English or French) when considering equity and reconciliation.

From the virtual public meeting, public survey and DIY Workshops, members of the public supported Factor Three. When asked if participants supported the use of this expanded equity index, out of 1,400 respondents, 31% strongly supported the approach, 23% supported the approach, and 12% opposed the approach. 75% of DIY Workshop organizations said that they strongly support Factor Three, 17% said that they support Factor Three, and 8% said that they strongly oppose Factor Three. A survey respondent supported Factor Three sharing, “Equity should be guided by access of underserved communities to greenspaces.”

In the virtual public meeting, a participant recommended that disability and neurodiversity should be considered in the equity index. Further, a member of the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee (TAAC) said to consider mobility-based accessibility in the criteria for Parkland Provision. A member of the EDAG shared similar sentiments, explaining that the mapping should demonstrate where the land is elevated so that people with mobility needs are considered in the assessment and design of new parkland.

Regarding the data management and data equity approach itself, members of the 2SLGBTQ+ Council Advisory Body and the CABRAC recommended using data that is disaggregated and that can highlight information about intersectional identities in Toronto. A virtual public meeting participant recommended exploring alternate data sources to fill gaps for certain equity-deserving groups, such as the 2SLGBTQ+ community, that are not captured in the equity index because the index uses census data, which is not available for all socio-demographic identities.

In addition to using the equity index, a CABRAC member recommended ongoing engagement with neighbourhood associations and grassroots organizations to determine equity considerations for specific neighbourhoods (e.g., Regent Park).

Characteristics that define a high-quality park

While parks may have distinct characteristics, often reflecting the neighbourhoods where they are located, there are a number of important considerations in the PLS for ensuring high-quality parks. The existing characteristics include:

- Prominence and visibility
- Identity and character
- User experience
- Physical characteristics and thermal comfort

When asked to select the elements that are most important for a park to be considered high quality, 1,800 survey respondents most commonly selected washrooms (70%), natural elements, including mature trees and streams (69%), well maintained, including garbage and graffiti removal (67%), rest and comfort features (67%), and the presence of gardens (50%).

Washrooms

20 survey respondents shared additional feedback regarding washroom facilities in parks. Some respondents described the public washrooms as being in “dismal shape,” often non-functional, unclean, or closed, and not meeting the hygiene standards of park users. Clean washrooms were identified as important to encourage longer usage of parks as social spaces. Winterizing more washrooms would also allow them to be used year-round. Family washrooms with changerooms and gender-neutral washrooms were requested in the survey and at the public meeting.

Similarly, DIY Workshop participants, such as those that participated with West Neighbourhood House and Midaynta Community Services, overwhelmingly agreed that washrooms should be prioritized as a characteristic. The group highlighted wheelchair accessibility, including adding a secondary washroom in places where the primary washroom is difficult to access (e.g., at the bottom of a hill or a pit).

Natural elements

Many survey respondents requested an increased level of ecological maintenance such as sustaining naturalized areas and plantings to remediate green walls, native planting beds and ravine ecosystems that are deteriorating from a lack of management. Survey

respondents, as well as the Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services in South Scarborough, proposed more investment in incorporating native plantings, wetland restoration, and seasonal ecological care in City parks. A respondent suggested training park staff in sowing the seeds of native plants.

Many respondents asked the City to lead with nature first, with comments such as, “wilding should be a priority when developing new areas” and “restoration of natural landscape that sustains itself”. There was a strong request for rewilding efforts such as limiting the usage of gas-powered mowers to allow re-wilding to occur and transforming parkland into forested areas.

In the virtual public meeting, a participant recommended that all green spaces should be classified as parkland to preserve natural spaces such as wetlands. Various participants highlighted the importance of native plants, stewarding native plant spaces, and interpretive signage for native plants so the public understands and learns about the environment around them.

Maintenance

Survey respondents shared that the absence of routine and visible maintenance including litter pickup, bin servicing, and surface cleaning leads residents to perceive parks as neglected across seasons. Respondents reported sharp objects, broken glass, needles, and other hazardous materials near some playgrounds and sandpits, creating a tangible safety risk for children. They also requested the strategic placement of garbage bins, especially at TTC stops or park entrances, to prevent spillover trash from accumulating on park grounds. Members of the West Neighbourhood house agreed and spoke about the need to regularly clean and maintain bathrooms, having garbage bins inside, and adding heating for the winter. Malvern Family Resource Centre shared that garbage maintenance is essential to deter wild animals from going into the garbage. Additionally, Midaynta Community Services requested the maintenance of trees to prevent them from overgrowing. The TAAC highlighted the importance of winter maintenance to ensure park pathways are accessible year-round.

Rest and comfort features

Survey respondents, DIY Workshop participants and the TAAC highlighted the need for more seating, particularly for seniors (given the aging population) and people with disabilities who may require frequent resting spots. A public meeting participant said to consider that features are not mutually exclusive. For example, seating can be for comfort and intergenerational design. Respondents also highlighted the importance of seating and shade to create quality “third spaces” for residents to cultivate relaxing

places to meet the community, chat, and have a coffee or a picnic. Some respondents expressed support for cafes in parks to increase community gathering and social spaces. Survey respondents and participants from the Delta Family Resource Centre shared that concessions should have seating to make parks more inviting and encourage users to gather for longer periods of time. The Black Environmental Initiative suggested more pergolas and natural seating options.

Water fountains that are usable by wheelchair users and open at an earlier time of year were requested by seniors.

Presence of gardens

Survey respondents requested accessible community gardens so people with disabilities can participate in community gardening, allotment gardens and greenhouses. Making community gardens and fruit trees more accessible for communities would make a steady difference in food-insecure neighbourhoods. For example, permitting food growth allows park users to exercise and learn gardening skills, build good relationships to nature and support Toronto's climate response. CABRAC discussions identified community gardens as places for wellness and healing. Similarly, a member of the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee (AAAC) shared that gardens are important spaces that can provide cultural grounding.

Respondents want more pollinator gardens, butterfly gardens, and vegetation that supports insects at all life stages. Vertical gardens could optimize parkland space or be suited for small plots of land.

Indigenous Legacy Gathering participants highlighted the importance of strengthening relationships with the land through ecological restoration and traditional plantings. Several ideas focused on creating pollinator gardens, healing gardens, spirit gardens, native plant gardens, and medicine plant gardens that feature traditional plants. These spaces could support Indigenous ceremonies and cultural gatherings as well as environmental stewardship. Participants also suggested community food gardens and improvements to naturalized areas that prioritize ecological health and biodiversity. Participants explained that these ideas reflect an interest in supporting Indigenous approaches to land stewardship and recognizing the land as a living system that should be cared for and restored.

Visual representation of culture and identity

Indigenous Legacy Gathering participants highlighted the importance of visibly reflecting Indigenous cultures, histories, and identities throughout parks. 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 language and cultural symbolism into park infrastructure and landscape features. Some ideas included beautifying existing park structures with Indigenous art and creating interpretive elements that tell Indigenous stories and highlight Indigenous presence within the city.

Calculating Parkland Provision Rates

The calculation of [parkland provision rates across the city](#) is an important part of the Parkland Strategy. The rates are currently a measure of the amount of parkland that a person has access to within a 500-metre walking distance from where they live, and they vary for different areas. Understanding parkland provision rates helps the City to make decisions on future investment in parkland, directing more resources to areas with lower rates. What gets counted as parkland is an important input to calculate and to map out parkland provision rates. Including parkland owned by Provincial and Federal Governments

The PLS team is proposing to include parkland that is owned by the Provincial and Federal governments (Rouge National Urban Park, Trillium Park, and Downsview Park)* in the calculation of parkland provision rates across the city. Including these parks in our counting results in higher parkland provision rates for those areas within 500 metres of these types of parks.

*Note: These Provincial and Federal parks are designated as Parks and Open Spaces, Natural Areas, or Other Open Spaces in the City's Official Plan.

Out of 1,400 survey responses, 29% strongly supported this approach, 29% supported this approach, and 10% opposed this approach. Those who opposed the approach shared concerns because the City cannot guarantee long-term protection, access or programming on lands it does not own (e.g., Ontario Place and Wasaga Beach). All public meeting participants supported the inclusion of parkland owned by Provincial and Federal governments.

Including certain hydro lands that have park uses

The City of Toronto has agreements with hydro utility providers that permit some land in hydro corridors to be used for park purposes, while continuing the primary function of

the land as a location for hydro transmission towers. An example of this is the Meadoway in Scarborough, which is a linear greenspace that includes walking trails, benches, and native flowers. The PLS team is proposing to include certain hydro lands that have park uses in the calculation of parkland provision rates, and where an agreement has been signed between Hydro One and the City of Toronto. Including these lands results in higher parkland provision rates for those areas within 500 metres of the included portions of hydro corridors.

Out of 1,400 survey responses, 32% strongly supported the approach, 29% supported the approach, and 11% opposed the approach. Most public meeting participants supported the inclusion of hydro corridors as parkland because it more accurately displays access to park spaces across the City. They also suggested to consider if land owned by religious institutions can count as parkland. A participant was concerned about the technical health and safety risks that must be assessed when using hydro corridor space as parks. Another participant agreed that not all hydro corridors should be included. Rather, they should be assessed on an individual basis.

In the EDAG meeting, In the spirit of a broader definition of ‘park’, Park People recommended to consider prioritizing or including other adaptive reuse sites in addition to hydro corridors, such as railway corridors, and other industrial sites that could be re-naturalized.

“Protect” as a new Guiding Principle

Through Phase 1 engagement, the City heard from some participants that “Protect” is missing as a Guiding Principle in the Parkland Strategy. The City is therefore considering adding this as a new guiding principle, to reflect the following:

- Protecting parkland from conversion to other uses, ensuring that parks remain as parks.
- Protecting the natural environment, including landscapes, wildlife, and ecosystems.
- Protecting cultural and heritage spaces, especially those with Indigenous significance.

Out of 1,400 survey responses, 72% strongly supported, 20% supported, and 2% opposed the new guiding principle. Public meeting participants were also highly supportive of “Protect” as a new guiding principle. 83% of DIY Workshop organizations said that they strongly support “Protect” as a new guiding principle, 8% said that they

support “Protect” as a new guiding principle and 8% said that they oppose “Protect” as a new guiding principle.

Significance of “Protect” to humans and animals

- At the EDAG meeting, OutSport Toronto was strongly supportive of the additional principle to reflect reconciliation and land stewardship. Jane Alliance Neighbourhood Services shared that 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 Indigenous communities. WoodGreen Community Services expressed similar sentiments, explaining that the concept of protection should go beyond environmental preservation to also include human, animal, and community safety and wellbeing. Participants across DIY Workshops highlighted the following 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.
 - **Respect for the land:** Protecting parks involves showing respect for the land, wildlife, trees, and other visitors, including avoiding damage and preserving natural elements.
 - **Protecting natural habitats:** Group members emphasized safeguarding wildlife habitats, promoting coexistence, and preventing ecosystem damage, even during activities like barbecues or fires.
 - **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.
- WoodGreen Community Services shared that “Protect” should also emphasize education and awareness, encouraging visitors to understand their role in preserving parks and nature. 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 the park.

- Indigenous Legacy Gathering participants also supported increased hiring of Indigenous staff and program leaders, employing Indigenous artists for public art, and creating job opportunities for Indigenous youth to protect and share knowledge on the Indigenous histories in park spaces. 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.

Protecting existing ecosystems

Survey respondents expressed strong support for parkland restoration and rewilding efforts. Many respondents want parks that look after the planet, help nature, and respond meaningfully to climate change. Respondents frequently described Toronto's natural areas as undervalued ecological assets, "Forested areas are good for people, good for the environment, and good for the climate crisis." A part of rewilding is limiting development to allow parkland that is currently inaccessible to residents to remain protected and inaccessible.

In addition, survey respondents and public meeting participants shared concerns about protecting wildlife, sharing that expanding parks should only be done if the natural forests and green space are untouched and will not disturb animals. Dogs were described as a threat to wildlife in certain naturalized areas. A no-dog policy, like the one at Tommy Thompson Park, was encouraged in other naturalized park areas. Placing limits on fireworks was suggested to limit disturbance to animals like foxes and coyotes.

Climate change and resilience

25 survey respondents emphasised the linkage between climate change, resilience, and parks – identifying parks as a key way to counter climate change. More specifically, park expansion, forest protection, and native planting may help by reducing carbon emissions, improving shade, and supporting cooling. Public meeting respondents agreed, supporting climate resilience efforts to combat Toronto from further becoming a "heat island".

- **Many suggested that Toronto must plan for climate-resilient ecosystems, including:**

- Stormwater management
- Wetland restoration
- Biodiverse plant communities, and
- Wildlife corridors resilient to heatwaves

Parkland Acquisition Assessment Tool

The Parkland Strategy currently contains a [Parkland Acquisition Assessment Tool](#) to help staff make recommendations to City Council about whether or not to purchase a specific piece of land to become parkland. This assessment tool is how the Parks & Recreation Division prioritizes the limited available funds for the purpose of creating new parkland.

The City is proposing to update the assessment tool to reflect a greater number of City priorities. Participants across engagement activities provided feedback on prioritizing the following considerations for updating the assessment tool:

- **Protects existing ecologically healthy natural lands:** Survey respondents ranked this consideration as the most important to them, with 70% ranking it as highly important.
- **Supports climate change adaptation and resilience (e.g., reduces urban heat island):** Survey respondents ranked this consideration as the second most important to them, with 65% ranking it as highly important.
 - The CABRAC strongly agreed with this consideration and called for stronger alignment with climate goals and green building standards for new facilities.
- **Results in new parkland in areas that currently have low parkland provision rates:** Survey respondents ranked this consideration as the third most important to them, with 60% ranking it as highly important.
- **Provides an opportunity to rehabilitate or create new ecologically healthy natural land:** Survey respondents ranked this consideration as the fourth most important to them, with 60% ranking it as highly important.
- **Supports climate change mitigation (e.g., carbon sequestration and storage):** Survey respondents ranked this consideration as the sixth most important to them, with 54% ranking it as highly important.
 - A public meeting participant recommended analyzing mitigation and resilience tactics in Toronto parks to see what we are currently doing and how to improve and consistently implement best practices.

- **Expands the City’s trail network (or closes a gap in the trail network):** Survey respondents ranked this consideration as the fifth most important to them, with 47% ranking it as highly important.
- **Accommodates new recreation facilities (e.g., sports fields, community recreation centres):** Survey respondents ranked this consideration as the seventh most important to them, with 32% ranking it as highly important.
- **Expands existing parks to make those parks bigger:** Survey respondents ranked this consideration as the least most important to them, with 20% ranking it as highly important.
 - A public meeting participant highlighted the need to balance local access for everyone, with access to larger park spaces that are used for a specific purpose i.e., the beach can be used by residents to cool down.

Community Spotlight: “Protect” and Indigenous reconciliation

During Phase 1 of Indigenous engagement, the PLS team heard that protecting cultural and heritage spaces, especially those with Indigenous significance, should be included in the guiding principles for the PLS. Of survey respondents who identified as First Nations, Inuit, or Métis (FNIM), 19 (68%) strongly supported adding “Protect” as a guiding principle, followed by 5 (18%) who did not have an opinion on the matter, 1 (4%) who opposed, and 2 (4%) who strongly opposed.

A FNIM identifying respondent shared a distinction that should be made when defining “Protect”, “Glad to see that protecting existing is being considered. I want to add that protecting parkland is not the same as protecting trees and other wildlife. This should also be added to the strategy as trees and birds etc. also make up our city and should be considered in policy.” Another FNIM identifying respondent remarked that protecting green spaces to create “green corridors” for nature and people is underemphasized and could be highlighted more in the “Protect” guiding principle.

When discussing the purchasing of land to create new parkland, those who identified as FNIM ranked the considerations as follows in comparison to the overall survey results:

1. Protects existing ecologically healthy natural lands (86% supported and strongly supported compared to 89% overall)
2. Results in new parkland in areas that currently have low parkland provision rates (75% supported and strongly supported compared to 84% overall)

3. Provides an opportunity to rehabilitate or create new ecologically healthy natural land (75% supported and strongly supported compared to 85% overall)
4. Expands the City's trail network (or closes a gap in the trail network) (75% supported and strongly supported compared to 81% overall)
5. Supports climate change adaptation and resilience (e.g., reduces urban heat island) (60% supported and strongly supported compared to 83% overall)
6. Expands existing parks to make those parks bigger (61% supported and strongly supported compared to 81% overall)
7. Accommodates new recreation facilities (e.g., sports fields, community recreation centres) (61% supported and strongly supported compared to 65% overall)
8. Supports climate change mitigation (e.g., carbon sequestration and storage) (57% supported and strongly supported compared to 75% overall)

The ratings of FNIM respondents were comparable to the overall survey results with a few exceptions:

- Provides an opportunity to rehabilitate or create new ecologically healthy natural land was ranked lower.
- Expands the City's trail network (or closes a gap in the trail network) was ranked lower.
- Supports climate change mitigation (e.g., carbon sequestration and storage) was ranked lower.

Community Spotlight: Supporting seniors in the Parkland Strategy

Input from seniors (residents 65 and older) highlighted the critical role Toronto's park system plays in supporting health, mobility, and quality of life, particularly for older adults living in high-density neighbourhoods without access to private outdoor space. Seniors emphasized the need for targeted, equity-driven investments that respond to aging-related mobility needs and enable safe, comfortable, and frequent park use.

Survey results show clear priorities for what seniors value in a high-quality park. Among respondents aged 65 and older, 74% identified natural elements, including mature trees and streams, as the most important feature, followed by well-maintained spaces, such as garbage and graffiti removal (70%). Rest and comfort features, including seating, shelter from sun or rain, and drinking fountains, were selected by 68% of seniors, as was the presence of gardens, including spaces for flowers, food, and pollinators. These

findings highlight the importance of parks that balance nature, maintenance, and comfort to support longer visits and regular use by seniors.

Seniors also emphasized the importance of amenities that support mobility and independence. Apartment-dwelling seniors frequently called for more benches, shade, accessible washrooms, and resting places along pathways to allow them to move through parks at a comfortable pace.

Access to parks was described as extending beyond park boundaries. Seniors highlighted the importance of continuous, accessible routes including safe walkways, ramps, and reliable TTC connections to ensure parks are reachable and usable. Without these connections, many parks remain difficult to access, particularly for seniors and people with disabilities.

Safety and comfort were recurring concerns. Low lighting or darkness in trails, ravines, and park pathways was identified as a barrier that can create feelings of fear and vulnerability, leading seniors to avoid certain areas, especially in the evening. Poor surface conditions, such as mud, ice, and uneven ground, were also cited as limiting mobility and increasing the risk of falls.

Seniors expressed strong interest in recreation and social spaces that support active aging. Walking, soccer, lawn bowling, older-adult fitness programs, and informal gathering spaces were frequently identified as important opportunities for physical activity and social connection. Organizations such as the West Toronto Lawn Bowling Club, whose members are primarily seniors, expressed support for park investments that improve accessibility, safety, and long-term usability.

Protecting existing parkland emerged as a key priority. 93% of seniors supported or strongly supported the addition of “Protect” as a new guiding principle, reflecting the value placed on preserving natural features, mature trees, and the overall quality of park spaces relied upon by older adults.

Targeted investments in nature, maintenance, accessibility, safety, and comfort were recommended by seniors to ensure Toronto’s parks continue to meet the needs of an aging population.

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