

Community Advisory Committee Meetings 1 and 2 Summary Report

Downsview Community Recreation Centre
Phase 1: Towards a Vision
City of Toronto – Parks and Recreation
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James Cho, Project Manager
Joshua Bowman, Senior Public Consultation Coordinator
Annie Ding, Public Consultation Coordinator





Contents

- Community Advisory Committee Meetings 1 and 2 Summary Report..... 1
- Introduction 4
 - About the Community Advisory Committee 5
 - Phase 1: Towards a Vision 5
- Community Advisory Committee Meeting 1 7
 - Meeting Highlights 7
 - Icebreaker: Memory in a Shared Space 8
 - Common Themes 9
 - Breakout Session: Shared Values Exercise 14
 - Breakout Session: Terms of Reference Review 16
- Community Advisory Committee Meeting 2 17
 - Meeting Highlights 17
 - Breakout Session: Vision Statement..... 18
 - Vision Theme and Card Creation 18
 - Vision Statement Creation 19
 - Collective Vision Statement Creation 20
 - Breakout Session: Guiding Principles..... 21
 - Guiding Principles Discussion 21
 - Breakout Session: Big Moves 22
 - Play Your Best Hand 22
- Building on What We Heard 25
 - Draft Vision Statement..... 25
 - Draft Guiding Principles 26
 - Draft Big Moves 27
- Next Steps..... 28
- Appendix: Meeting Attendance 29

Introduction

A new community recreation centre is coming to 1377 Sheppard Avenue West, near Sheppard Avenue West and Keele Street in the Downsview neighbourhood. The design will be developed through community engagement and will provide cultural and recreational opportunities that support the growth and well-being of the Downsview community.



Figure 1. Map of the project area, bounded by Sheppard Avenue West to the north, Canuck Avenue to the east, Downsview Park to the south and Keele Street to the west.

About the Community Advisory Committee

As part of the community engagement process, the City's project team formed a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) to obtain local input. Members of the CAC were selected primarily through a civic lottery process. A civic lottery randomly selects individuals from specific populations to participate in an advisory or decision-making body. The process controls for demographic factors to ensure members represent the community as best as possible, with a specific focus on fair representation from equity-deserving communities.

For this lottery, the project team controlled for age, gender identity, ethnicity, Indigenous identity, disability and other key community demographics. To maintain the integrity of the process and protect applicants' privacy, names and email addresses were removed during selection.

A total of 354 people applied to the lottery and 28 were selected to participate in the CAC. In addition to community member participants selected via civic lottery, the CAC consists of 14 community representatives from local stakeholder groups. The committee will convene at least once during each phase of engagement.

This report provides a summary of CAC Meetings 1 and 2, which took place during Phase 1 of the engagement process.

Phase 1: Towards a Vision

The purpose of this phase was to develop a vision for the Downsview Community Recreation Centre together with the local community. In this phase of the engagement process, the project team collected feedback to develop a draft vision statement for the community recreation centre, a series of guiding principles and big moves, which will guide the development of design options.

Feedback was collected through community engagement activities, including two Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings, an online thought exchange activity, an Indigenous Community Resource Group meeting and an in-person workshop with children attending CampTO summer programs at Grandravine Community Recreation Centre.

The first CAC meeting took place in person on Tuesday, July 15, 2025, followed by the second in-person meeting on Thursday, September 25, 2025.

The two CAC meetings focused on the following objectives:

- Getting to know one another
- Establishing a shared understanding of the CAC's role and the design process
- Clarifying the current context and constraints associated with the project
- Reaching consensus on the way forward in terms of the engagement process
- Developing a draft vision statement for the new community recreation centre
- Developing draft guiding principles and big moves to inform the design process

The following sections of this report summarize discussions and outcomes from the first and second CAC meetings. For more information about the project and the community engagement process, including summaries of other engagement activities, visit the project webpage at: toronto.ca/DownsviewCRC.

Community Advisory Committee Meeting 1

On Tuesday, July 15, 2025, the first Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting took place at the Northwood Community Centre (15 Clubhouse Court) from 6 to 9 p.m.

The meeting agenda included:

- An official welcome from the local City Councillor and City staff
- A hands-on group icebreaker activity
- A project presentation on the project objectives and scope by City staff
- A group discussion about shared values and collaboration norms for the CAC
- A review of the CAC Terms of Reference (TOR)
- A wrap-up and outline of next steps

Meeting Highlights

The first CAC orientation meeting focused on clarifying project details, explaining the design framework and engagement process, and establishing the purpose and mandate of the CAC. Participants engaged in a hands-on icebreaker activity and discussed their shared values on how they would like to work together moving forward as a CAC throughout the engagement process.

Icebreaker: Memory in a Shared Space



Figure 2. Models built by CAC members at the first CAC meeting, representing a time when they felt a deep sense of community, belonging, creativity or joy in a shared space.

During the icebreaker activity, CAC members participated in a group exercise using found objects. Staff provided an assortment of loose, random objects for participants to manipulate and creatively assemble.

Each member had 10 minutes to create a small structural piece on coloured cardboard paper, representing a time when they felt a deep sense of community, belonging, creativity or joy in a shared space. This hands-on activity was designed to encourage participants to get to know one another better, while also uncovering common values that could underpin and contribute to later conversations.

A link to the full activity can be found [here](#).

Common Themes

CAC members shared various themes that resonated with the group. Some shared common themes included:

- **Community connection:**
 - Caring for seniors
 - Diversity
 - Events
 - Family
 - Gatherings
 - Kindness to friends and strangers
 - Neighbours
 - Newcomers
 - Open door
 - People of all generations together
- **Nature:**
 - Acorns
 - Butterflies
 - Flowers
 - Green space
 - Plants
 - Respect for the land
 - Sharing fruits from the garden
 - Trees
- **Kids:**
 - Less screen time
 - Playing outdoors
 - Safe and comfortable spaces for kids and youth
 - Unstructured play
- **Community growth:**
 - Accomplishments
 - Co-creation of public spaces
 - Coming together in hard times
 - New experiences
 - Overcoming challenges
- **Active pastimes:**
 - Biking
 - Hiking
 - Ice skating
 - Playing sports
 - Skateboarding
 - Swimming

Breakout Session: Shared Values Exercise

In this breakout session, CAC members worked in small groups to identify shared values for how they want to work together throughout this project. The goal was to reach an agreement on a common set of values that would help shape how the CAC collaborates and interacts as a group moving forward. Each CAC member began by writing down a word or short phrase that reflected a value they felt should guide the CAC engagement process.

In small groups, members discussed and selected the top three values that best represented their collective perspective, which they then shared with the larger group. The project team then organized the values, grouping ones that were similar. Each value was then reviewed by the larger group, with support measured by hand voting. The final set of values identified by the CAC was:

- **Awareness:**
We recognize that people come from many different backgrounds and circumstances. We strive to reduce barriers and make space for meaningful participation.
- **Collaboration:**
We work side-by-side, embracing new ideas and feedback. Collaboration thrives when we are willing to adapt and grow together.
- **Creativity:**
We think outside the box while being intentional about our choices. Imaginative ideas, with clear purpose, lead to lasting impact.
- **Inclusivity:**
We commit to doing this together, ensuring all voices are heard and all people can participate fully. The community recreation centre should be a place where everyone feels welcome.
- **Knowledge-Sharing:**
We value the wisdom and skills people bring. Sharing knowledge allows everyone to contribute, learn, and grow together.

- **Respect:**
We lead with respect, empathy, and consideration. By treating one another with kindness, we help build a caring community.
- **Trust:**
We stay open to new ideas and are willing to change our minds when presented with new information, leading to better, more thoughtful decisions.

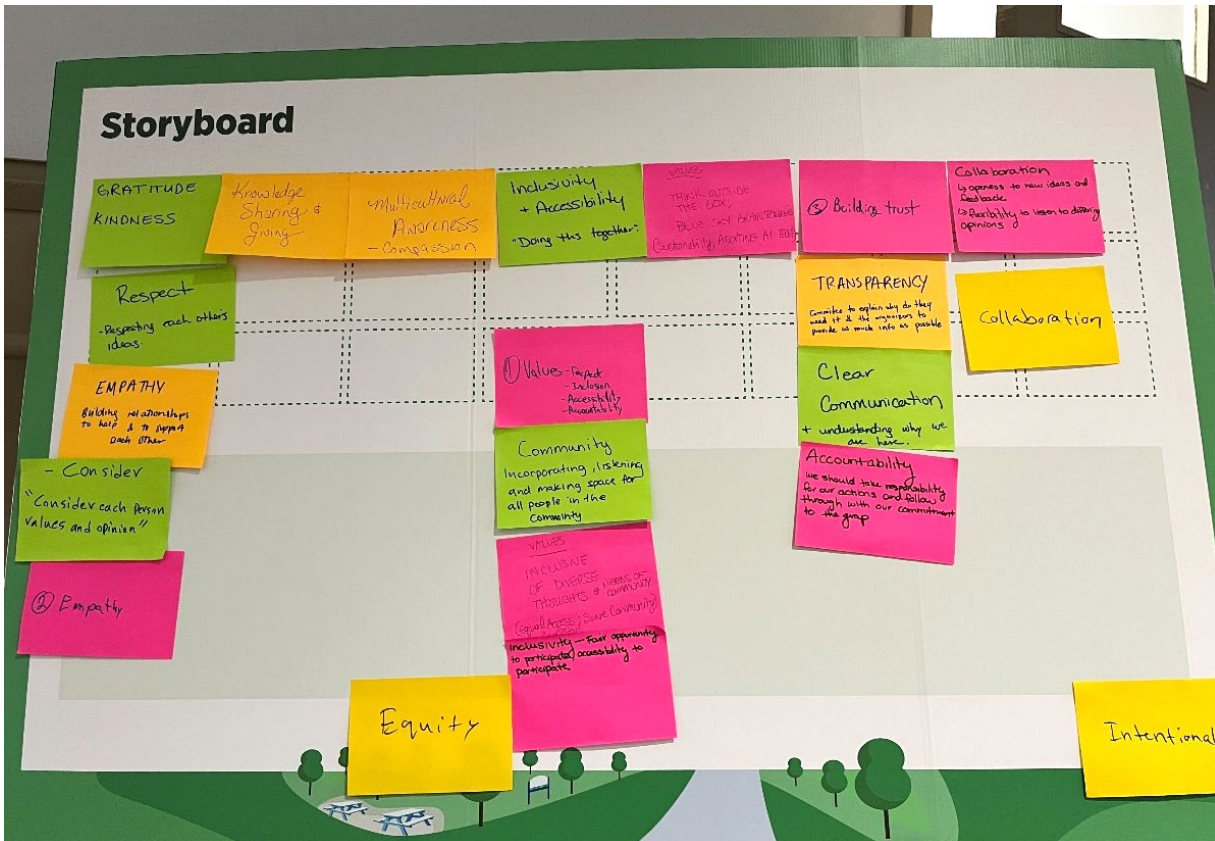


Figure 3. Storyboard with the initial draft values that CAC members wrote and selected from their small group discussions.

Breakout Session: Terms of Reference Review

In this breakout session, CAC members reviewed and discussed items outlined in the draft Terms of Reference (TOR). The TOR outline the roles and responsibilities for the project team and CAC members.

CAC members were asked to provide any feedback or suggestions on the TOR terms. They were encouraged to reflect not just on whether the proposed language works, but also if it aligns with the values identified in the shared values exercise. All members must agree to these terms to sit on the CAC.

The draft TOR was collaboratively reviewed, and an updated TOR was circulated after the meeting.

Community Advisory Committee Meeting 2

On Thursday, September 25, 2025, the second Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting took place at the Grandravine Community Recreation Centre (23 Grandravine Drive) from 6 to 9 p.m.

The meeting agenda included:

- A project presentation on the site context of the new community recreation centre and the Downsview Community Development Plan by City staff
- A summary of the online thought exchange activity results
- A summary of the in-person camp workshop results
- A breakout session to develop a draft vision statement
- A breakout session to develop draft guiding principles
- A breakout session to identify initial big moves
- A wrap-up and outline of next steps

Meeting Highlights

The second CAC meeting focused on developing a draft vision statement, a series of guiding principles and big moves for the Downsview Community Recreation Centre. City staff also shared feedback from the broader community, including input gathered through an online thought exchange activity and an in-person workshop with CampTO participants.

During breakout sessions, participants engaged in a hands-on visioning exercise and worked in small groups to select cards that best reflected their collective vision for the Downsview Community Recreation Centre. Each small group then prioritized six cards, with a minimum of two representing themes from the thought exchange activity or camp workshop. Using these cards, groups prepared their own vision statements for the community recreation centre, which were synthesized by the project team to create one collective vision statement. This activity helped identify shared themes and important values, which guided the discussion in creating a vision statement, guiding principles and big moves that resonated with the CAC.

Breakout Session: Vision Statement

Vision Theme and Card Creation

In this breakout session, CAC members were asked to independently write down three to four brief statements on separate cue cards that reflected their personal vision for the Downsview Community Recreation Centre. They then worked in small groups to identify any overlap between their ideas and discuss and prioritize the cards that most resonated with their group.

Participants were then provided with pre-populated cue cards featuring highly rated thoughts from the online thought exchange activity and in-person camp workshop. Combined with the cards they created, CAC members had to prioritize six cards. At least two of the selected cards had to be from the pre-populated cards, ensuring that broader community feedback was incorporated into the discussion.

The goal was to collaboratively select cards that represented both their collective thoughts and broader community feedback in creating a vision for the Downsview Community Recreation Centre.

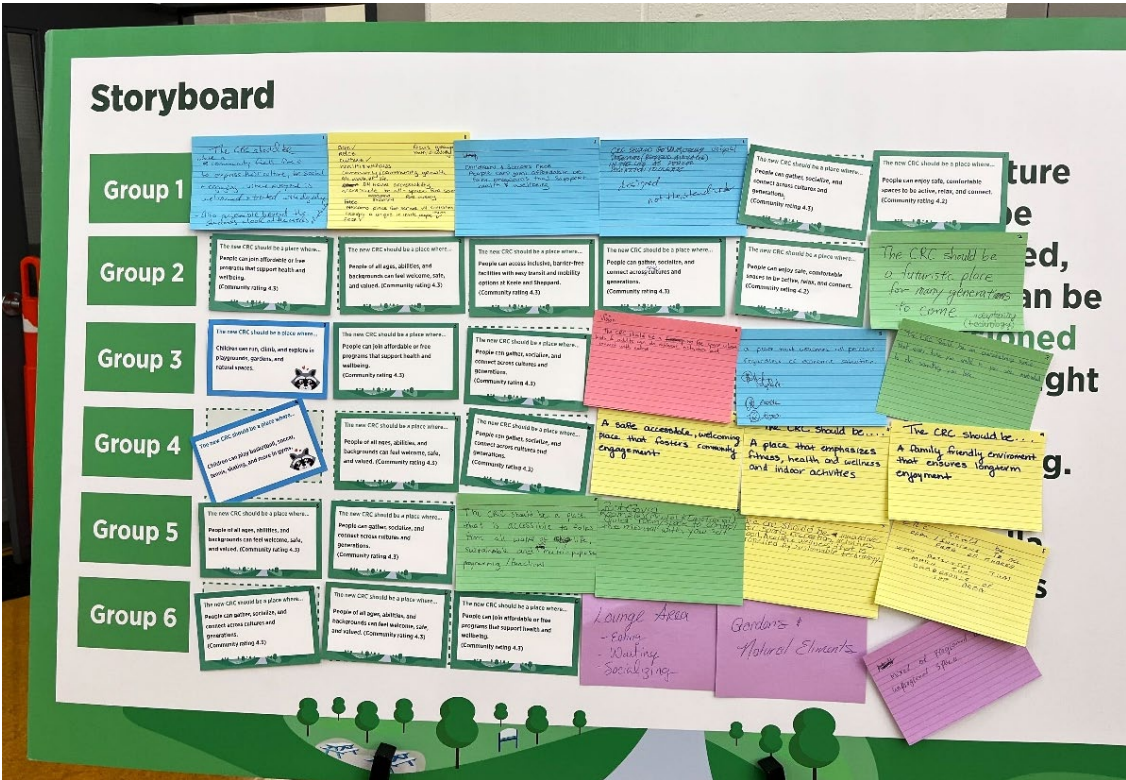


Figure 4. Storyboard with the vision cards that CAC members wrote and selected from their small group discussions.

Vision Statement Creation

After the first exercise, each group received a notepad to write down their own vision statement based on the six visioning cue cards they selected. The prompt provided to inspire the exercise was:

“The Downsview Community Recreation Centre should be a place where...”

Each vision statement followed the following format:

- *Opening: Start with “We envision”*
- *Verb: Use an action verb in the future tense*
- *Future: State your desired future*
- *Impact: Describe the future impact on the local community*

Each group’s vision statement can be found below:

Group 1:

People can enjoy safe, comfortable spaces to be active, relax and connect. People can gather, socialize and connect across cultures and generations. CRC should be uniquely designed (beyond average) in the city as desired destination to create. Encourage to add focus groups: individuals with disability and parents with children with special needs to have a voice. City standard committee is not enough! Children and seniors should be free. People can join if they can afford to pay. If not, then we need to support them without depreciating the centre. Accessibility should be beyond the standard.

Group 2:

A safe, affordable, welcoming, accessible and technologically vibrant hub where diversity is celebrated, connections are fostered and everyone feels a true sense of belonging.

Group 3:

The CRC should be an overwhelming space. A place you can walk into and be motivated to do something you love! A free space where kids and adults can participate in a broad range of activities or connect with nature. Where people of different cultures and generations can gather, socialize, and connect. The CRC should be somewhere kids can run and climb. Explore playgrounds, gardens and nature spaces. Somewhere people can join affordable or free programs that support health and well-being. Something for everyone.

Group 4:

We envision the future Downsview CRC to be a place that creates a welcoming recreation centre where people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds come together in a safe, family-friendly environment that celebrates culture, promotes fitness and wellness, offers diverse indoor activities, and inspires long-term enjoyment and community connection.

Group 5:

The CRC must accommodate gender, age, culture, religion, wellness activities, in a safe, balanced, and welcoming environment.

Group 6:

The CRC should be the heart of the community by being inclusive and reflective of our multicultural community by having a lounge for socializing, a natural space area, affordable free programming in a mix of program-specific and non-program-specific space.

Collective Vision Statement Creation

The project team combined each group's vision statement into one clear and compelling draft vision statement for the new community recreation centre, emphasizing phrases that were repeated. CAC members were then asked to review and confirm the draft vision statement.

The following draft vision statement received widespread support from CAC members:

*The new Downsview Community Recreation Centre will be a **safe, affordable, welcoming, accessible and technologically vibrant hub** where **diversity** is celebrated, **connections** are fostered and everyone feels a true sense of **belonging**.*

***Accessibility** will go beyond the standard. **Children and seniors** will be supported to participate. It will be **uniquely designed** as a desired **destination**, creating spaces where people of all ages, abilities, religions and cultures can gather and be motivated to do **something they love**. The CRC should be the **heart of the community**, inclusive and reflective of our multiculturalism. It will have a balance of program specific and non-program specific spaces to be active, relax, play and enjoy nature, culture and social experiences.*

It will be a **family-friendly** environment that promotes **health and wellness**, inspires long-term enjoyment and **community connections**, and offers something for **everyone**.

Breakout Session: Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles Discussion

In this breakout session, City staff introduced the definition of guiding principles and how they will guide the development of design options. CAC members were each asked to develop and write down five to six principles that addressed the draft vision statement and incorporated themes identified in the previous breakout session.

All draft guiding principles followed the prompt:

“The new community recreation centre design should...”

CAC members worked in small groups to prioritize their cards and select three guiding principles to share back with the whole team. City staff led a discussion to identify common themes and determine if there was consensus around the outcome.

The following guiding principles were drafted by and agreed upon by CAC members and have been edited for clarity:

- **Foster belonging and community representation:** The community recreation centre should reflect community needs and create a welcoming place where diverse groups feel safe, represented and connected.
- **Ensure affordability and access:** Programs and spaces should be free or low-cost so that families and community members of all income levels can participate fully.
- **Connect with nature:** The design should integrate greenery, gardens and seamless connections to the surrounding park to promote health and sustainability.
- **Champion accessibility and safety:** The community recreation centre must be barrier-free, safe and inclusive for people of all ages, abilities and schedules.
- **Celebrate diversity:** The community recreation centre should reflect the area’s identity, celebrate cultural diversity and offer programs that draw people from across Toronto.

- **Promote Health and Wellness:** The community recreation centre should inspire active, healthy living and holistic wellbeing through fitness, recreation and lifelong learning.

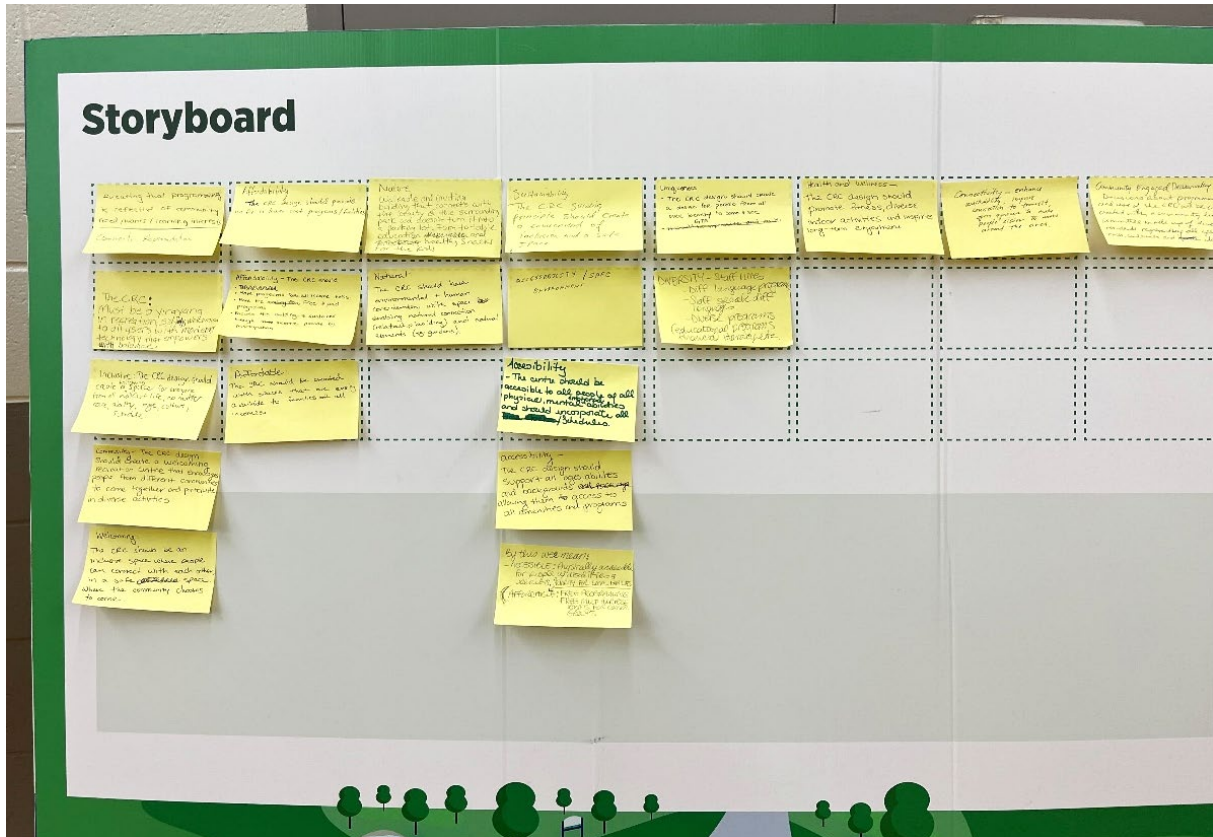


Figure 5. Storyboard with the guiding principles that CAC members wrote and selected from their small group discussions.

Breakout Session: Big Moves

Play Your Best Hand

In this breakout session, CAC members were presented with a deck of 12 cards. Six of the cards had big moves that were pre-populated from the online thought exchange activity and in-person camp workshop. Six of the cards were “wild” cards, on which participants could write their own big moves. Participants were asked to prioritize cards that would implement their group’s previously established vision statement and guiding principles.

Each group prioritized four big moves that they would like to see in the new community recreation centre, representing each table's "best hand." Scores were then tallied to show how often each card was played. City staff led a discussion to identify common themes and determine if there was consensus around the outcome.

Each group's best hand can be found below:

Group 1:

- Gymnasium with running track and sport lines with weights/fitness studio
- Add inclusive areas such as sensory rooms
- Multipurpose rooms with kitchen, sensory/inclusive accessories, and can be used for art, music and for programs (yoga, co-working, prayer)
- Add aquatic centre with pool and water features

Group 2:

- Add aquatic centre with pool and water features
- Add weight room and fitness studio
- Multipurpose room
- Add gymnasium with running track

Group 3:

- Add multi-use courts and sport lines
- Outdoor water playground
- Multi-use spaces for classes and programs
- Add aquatic centre with pool and water play features

Group 4:

- Indoor play space for children and families
- Add weight room and fitness studio
- Add multi-use courts and sport lines
- Add aquatic centre with pool and water play features

Group 5:

- Indoor play space for children and families
- Add weight room and fitness studio

- Add youth and age-friendly areas
- Add a community kitchen

Group 6:

- Spaces for community supports (e.g. tax clinic, mobile health, legal, food bank, resources available, maybe on a rotating basis)
- Add a community kitchen
- Add lounges and co-working spaces
- Add inclusive areas such as sensory rooms

Building on What We Heard

The following recommendations were directly developed from the feedback received in Phase 1 of the engagement process, particularly the second CAC meeting on September 25, 2025.

Feedback from this phase consistently emphasized the importance of:

- **Creating a welcoming hub** where people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities feel comfortable, supported and connected.
- **Keeping the centre affordable and accessible**, so local families and residents at every income level are prioritized and can participate in programs and activities.
- **Designing spaces that go beyond basic accessibility** to include sensory-friendly, age-friendly and barrier-free features that support children, seniors and people with diverse needs.
- Building a place that **encourages active, healthy living**, with recreation, aquatics, fitness and wellness opportunities for the whole community.
- **Offering a mix of flexible and dedicated spaces** so people can take part in structured programming or simply gather, play, relax or connect with neighbours.
- **Making the centre a truly family-friendly place**, with play areas, youth and senior spaces, and intergenerational activities that bring people together.
- **Delivering a full range of facilities** so the centre becomes the heart of the community and has something for everyone.

Draft Vision Statement

The vision is co-created with the community to describe the ideal future community recreation centre. It is a big-picture statement that should inspire everyone toward a common understanding of the project's overall goals and objectives.

*The new Downsview Community Recreation Centre will be a **safe, affordable, welcoming, accessible and technologically vibrant hub** where **diversity is celebrated, connections are fostered** and everyone feels a true sense of **belonging**.*

*Accessibility will go beyond the standard. **Children and seniors** will be supported to participate. It will be **uniquely designed** as a desired **destination**, creating spaces where people of all ages, abilities, religions and cultures can gather and be motivated to do **something they love**. The CRC should be the **heart of the community**, inclusive and reflective of our multiculturalism. It will have a balance of program specific and non-program specific spaces to be active, relax, play and enjoy nature, culture and social experiences.*

*It will be a **family-friendly** environment that promotes **health and wellness**, inspires long-term enjoyment and **community connections**, and offers something for **everyone**.*

Draft Guiding Principles

The guiding principles are high-level directions that reflect the community's most important values and ideas for how the community recreation centre should look and feel. They help to clarify the vision statement and guide how the community recreation centre should be designed by describing the desired outcomes.

- 1. Foster belonging and community representation:** The community recreation centre should reflect community needs and create a welcoming place where diverse groups feel safe, represented and connected.
- 2. Ensure affordability and access:** Programs and spaces should be free or low-cost so that families and community members of all income levels can participate fully.
- 3. Connect with nature:** The design should integrate greenery, gardens and seamless connections to the surrounding park to promote health and sustainability.
- 4. Champion accessibility and safety:** The community recreation centre must be barrier-free, safe and inclusive for people of all ages, abilities and schedules.
- 5. Celebrate diversity:** The community recreation centre should reflect the area's identity, celebrate cultural diversity and offer programs that draw people from across Toronto.
- 6. Promote health and wellness:** The community recreation centre should inspire active, healthy living and holistic wellbeing through fitness, recreation and lifelong learning.

Draft Big Moves

The big moves communicate the main priorities of both the community and the City for the design of the community recreation centre. They are specific directions for how the physical design can achieve the vision and guiding principles.

In no particular order, the big moves for the Downsview Community Recreation Centre are:

1. Add aquatic centre with pool and water play features.
2. Add weight room and fitness studio.
3. Add multi-purpose rooms and spaces.
4. Indoor play space for children and families.
5. Add multi-use courts and sport lines.
6. Add a community kitchen.
7. Add inclusive areas such as sensory rooms.

Next Steps

To conclude Phase 1: Towards a Vision, the draft vision statement, guiding principles and big moves generated by the Community Advisory Committee will be presented to the Indigenous Community Resource Group and broader public for feedback through an online survey.

The project will then move into Phase 2: Exploring Design Options. In this next phase of the engagement process, the project team aims to:

- Share early draft designs of the community recreation centre with the community and project advisory groups.
- Refine the draft designs based on preliminary input and collect additional feedback to inform a preferred design.

Community reviews and feedback on the designs will ensure transparency and inclusivity, bringing the community's vision to life. This input, along with technical and feasibility considerations, will help develop a preferred design, which will be shared in Phase 3 of the engagement process in the final report.

To learn more about the project, visit: toronto.ca/DownsviewCRC.

Appendix: Meeting Attendance

36 CAC members attended the first meeting, and 30 attended the second meeting. The following project team members and City staff attended one or both meetings:

- City of Toronto, Parks and Recreation
 - James Cho – Project Manager
 - Joshua Bowman – Senior Public Consultation Coordinator
 - Annie Ding – Public Consultation Coordinator
 - Natasha Petzold – Project Officer
 - Lindsay Stephens – Senior Public Consultation Coordinator
 - Rosemary McManus – Senior Public Consultation Coordinator
 - Stella Zhou – Public Consultation Coordinator

Representatives from the following community organizations attended one or both meetings:

- ARBO Seniors Association
- ARBO Seniors Health Village
- Downsview Lands Community Voice Association
- MTCC 1275
- North York Harvest Food Bank
- Oaks Revitalization Association
- Stanley Green Neighbourhood Association
- Toronto Black Farmers and Growers
- Toronto Community Benefits Network
- Wilson Village BIA
- York Centre Karate

Six CAC members were absent from the first meeting, and 12 were absent from the second meeting.

We appreciate all the community members who engaged with us during CAC Meetings 1 and 2. Your questions, insights and feedback have been invaluable in refining our materials and enhancing the overall experience for all participants.