

Phase 2

Virtual Public Meeting

Summary Report

Parkland Strategy

Community Engagement: Phase 2 - Setting the Direction

July 15, 2025

Parks & Recreation Division

City of Toronto





VISION

WHO?

NEXT STEPS

WHY?

[Sticky note]

[Sticky notes]

[Sticky notes]

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Overview

Phase 2: Setting the direction

In Phase 2 of the review process, draft directions were developed by the project team that were informed by the needs and priorities identified through community engagement in Phase 1. The emerging directions were shared with the public for review and feedback. The community engagement activities in this phase included:

- An online public survey
- Virtual public meetings
- A workshop with the Equity Deserving Advisory Group (established for this review process)
- Meetings of the Indigenous Advisory Circle (established for this review process)
- Pop-up conversations in Indigenous community spaces
- Engaging with Council Advisory Boards
- Do-it-yourself workshop kits distributed through various networks to different equity deserving groups, (including distribution to community organizations through the City's Social Development, Finance, and Administration network)

How we reached people

The project team promoted Phase 2 community engagement activities (including the online survey) to audiences across the city through the following channels:

- Paid and organic social media:
 - Video posts ran between July 18, 2025 - September 14, 2025, to boost promotion of 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:
 - Emails were sent to the project listserv containing over 500 registrants.

Overview of the Virtual Meeting

The virtual public meeting took place on July 15, 2025, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on Webex. 32 members of the public attended the meeting.

Project staff delivered a presentation that provided an overview of what the Parkland Strategy is, the review process, what was heard during Phase 1 of community engagement, and emerging directions proposed for revisions to the strategic document. Facilitators led participants through two discussion periods. The input received was recorded on a virtual Miro board that was visible to participants.

Discussion Highlights

The following section offers a summary of feedback received during the virtual meeting.

Discussion period one

Question 1: Do you agree with the features of a high-quality park that were listed on a previous slide? Is there anything missing?

- Suggestion to **invest in tower communities** and communities with those identified as being a part of **Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving communities**.
- There was **overall support for culturally relevant parks**.
- 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.
- A few participants expressed concern about the **State of Good Repair (SOGR)** and requested that the City prioritize the backlog.
- Participants agreed that **access to food** is a good addition in the PLS, as it aligns with the City's direction for [neighbourhood retail and services](#).
- A participant encouraged the City to **expand on the definitions of each consideration** and consider that the features are not mutually exclusive. For example, seating can be for comfort and intergenerational design.
- The PLS should recognize that **parks may have multiple and potentially conflicting functions**. For example, a ravine can be visible from a street, or a dog park may not be a peaceful green space for picnics.

- A respondent recommended **including safe air as a feature of a high quality park**, referencing the University of Toronto’s Toxic Air Study.
- **Water quality** should also be considered, particularly to preserve and sustain wildlife.
- Human activity in parks that is **respectful of the environment**, including plants and animals.
- A participant highlighted the **importance of access to transit (i.e., the TTC)** to get to parks – specifically referencing TTC access to Centennial Park.
- A participant requested **more amenities year-round**, available in the winter.
 - Many participants recommended year-round washrooms and changerooms in all park spaces.

Question 2: Do you support adding “Protect” as an additional Guiding Principle in the Parkland Strategy? (adding to Expand, Improve, Connect, Include)

- **Participants supported “Protect”** as a new guiding principle.
- A participant encouraged the City to **keep up maintenance**, including dealing with **invasive species**, while protecting parkland and developing management plans.
- Numerous participants highlighted the importance of **protecting wildlife** such as foxes and coyotes by placing more **limits on fireworks** and developing more **naturalized spaces**.
- A participant shared, **“protect is an essential word, I support this!”**
- **Enforcement** was recommended for those who create **informal trails in naturalized spaces** to ensure the environment is protected.

Question 3: For the revised Parkland Acquisitions Assessment Tool, which considerations are important to you when the City is acquiring new parkland?

- Regarding consideration number six (supporting climate mitigation), a participant recommended **analyzing mitigation and resilience tactics** in our parks to see what we are currently doing and how to improve and consistently implement best practices.
- A respondent highlighted the need to **balance local access for everyone with larger park spaces** that are used for a specific purpose i.e., the beach is used by residents to cool down.
- Respondents commonly chose **number seven (supporting climate change adaptation and resilience) as the most important**, referring to Toronto as a **“heat island”**, followed by **number five** (providing an opportunity to rehabilitate or create new ecologically healthy natural land), and **number six** (supporting climate mitigation). A few participants also selected:
 - **Number four** (protecting existing ecologically healthy natural lands)

- **Number three** (expanding the trail network)
- **Number eight** (accommodating new recreation facilities)

Discussion period two

Question Four: Do you support the proposed changes to what is counted as parkland in the Parkland Strategy?

Support

- **All participants supported the inclusion of Provincial and Federal land as parkland.**
- **Most participants supported the inclusion of select hydro corridors as parkland** because it more accurately displays access to parkland across the City.
- One participant said that they support the inclusion of hydro corridors if they are used to host **food security initiatives**.
- A participant rationalized, “They exist with the city and are used by Torontonians so good idea.”

Concern

- A participant was concerned about the **technical health and safety risks** that must be assessed when using hydro corridor space as parks.
- There is a lack of **enforcement** of bylaws for dog off-leash areas.
- A participant expressed that not all hydro corridors should be included. Rather, they should be **assessed on an individual basis**.

Neutral or question

- Consider if **land owned by religious institutions** can count as parkland.
- Consider **dog-free zones** where appropriate.
- **Why would the City include Provincial and Federal land if it was previously mentioned that only parks within the City's jurisdiction are included since the City has influence on things like facilities in these spaces?**
 - A City staff responded that **provision will look inaccurate if the City does not include these spaces that already function as parkland.**
 - The City also does have some influence in some of these spaces . For example, the City works with Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, and with Hydro One to help make The Meadowway happen. The City updated the Downsview Secondary Plan which looks at the Parks and Public Realm spaces at Downsview Park and surrounding area.

Question 5: Do you support the three factors that are proposed to determine Parkland Priority Areas:

- **Factor #1 - Projected provision of parkland that's generally used by people**
- **Factor #2 - Access to private yards**
- **Factor #3 - Equitable parkland access for Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving communities**

Overall feedback

- **All participants agreed with all three factors.** A participant commended the updates, “kudos to staff on adding factors two and three that seem vital to address equitable access!”

Factor two: Access to private yards

- Respondents noted the nuances and considerations when discussing what access to private yards means.
 - They noted that while backyards provide outdoor space, they **do not always offer the same connection to community, access to facilities and amenities that parks do.**
 - A respondent noted that **many renters live in houses but do not have access to backyards.**

Factor three: Accessibility considerations

- **Accessibility considerations.**
 - A respondent identified the need to **work with people with disabilities to design parks.**
 - Respondents also recommended that **disability and neurodiversity should be included in the Parks and Recreation Equity Index.**
 - A respondent recommended **defining the full meaning of accessibility** in the Parkland Strategy.
- **Using additional data sources.**
 - A respondent recommended to **explore additional data sources** to fill gaps for certain Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving groups, such as the 2SLGBTQ+ community, that is not captured in the Parks and Recreation Equity Index because it uses census data, which does not include all socio-demographic identities.

Project Team

City of Toronto

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Community Engagement Unit

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Consulting Team

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