

# WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

## Alexandra Park Phase 2B Community Event Day

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On May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Karakusevic Carson Architects and SAFFY hosted a day of engagement activities with the Alexandra Park Community Centre (APCC) Steering Committee, APCC staff and the wider Alex Park community.

This document summarises feedback we received at the Community Day Event.

To learn more about the project and stay involved you can visit Toronto Community Housing's (TCHC) **Alexandra Park Community Centre MicroSite**.

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# 1.0 Introduction

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In 2012, the Atkinson Co-Op and Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) embarked on an ambitious revitalization project for Alexandra Park. The comprehensive plan aimed to enhance the neighbourhood by renovating rental units, establishing a new park, and developing retail and social enterprise spaces.

A key component of the revitalization initiative was the construction of the Alexandra Park Community Centre (APCC), which stands as a cornerstone of Phase 2B in the neighbourhood's ongoing revitalization efforts. Since 1975 the APCC has served as hub in the community offering an array of resources, programs, and services to individuals in the Alexandra Park neighbourhood to children, youth, and families.

As a prominent hub within the Alexandra Park neighbourhood, the engagement strategy has prioritized fostering meaningful and purposeful engagement with a wide range of stakeholders.

The approach for developing the new APCC began with a community lead selection process. Karakusevic Carson Architects (KCA) and SAFFY were chosen in July 2022 to undertake the design project for Phase 2B of the Alexandra Park site that included the redesign of the new APCC.

Working in close collaboration with the APCC Steering Committee, the design team has been expanding upon the APCC Vision Report of 2019. Their goal is to determine the precise spaces and amenities that should be incorporated into the new 2000m<sup>2</sup> community centre in what is called a "spatial brief". Subsequently, this valuable information is shared with the community at large through events and engaging activities (e.g. pop-ups) to further validate, share and collect resident feedback through the stages of the early spatial brief development. By actively engaging in the co-design and implementation of the new centre, members contribute and shape the development of the future APCC.

The local knowledge, input and ideas gained during this event and future engagements like this play a crucial role in shaping the project's direction and ensuring its alignment with the community's needs and aspirations.

# 1.1 About This Report

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This report provides a detailed overview and summary of the Community Event Day held on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023. It incorporates insights obtained from the main engagement activities that occurred that day which were the:

- Public Meeting and Site Walk Around
- Pop-Up space prioritization activity

The report identifies recurring themes, highlights key feedback, outlines space preferences, and presents recommendations that have been compiled to guide the development of the final spatial brief. A spatial brief is a list of different spaces and estimated areas identified or requested for the new APCC and is the starting point for designing the new building.





# 2.0 Engagement

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On May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Karakusevic Carson Architects (KCA) and SAFFY organized an afternoon full of activities. The event included a range of activities and methods of participation.

The main event site was at 73 Augusta Sq. and also incorporated a guided walk of the perimeters of the new APCC. Residents actively participated in a hands-on activity to capture their space preferences. Information boards were put on display and staff were on hand to have conversations with event visitors to answer questions and share latest updates on the spatial brief progress to date.

The day brought together a diverse range of participants, including Toronto Community Housing staff, members of the Alexandra Park Community Centre (APCC) Steering Committee, and the Alex Park and Atkinson Park Co-Op community to share their experiences with the project to date as well as to learn more about the development of the spatial brief as it nears the final stages.

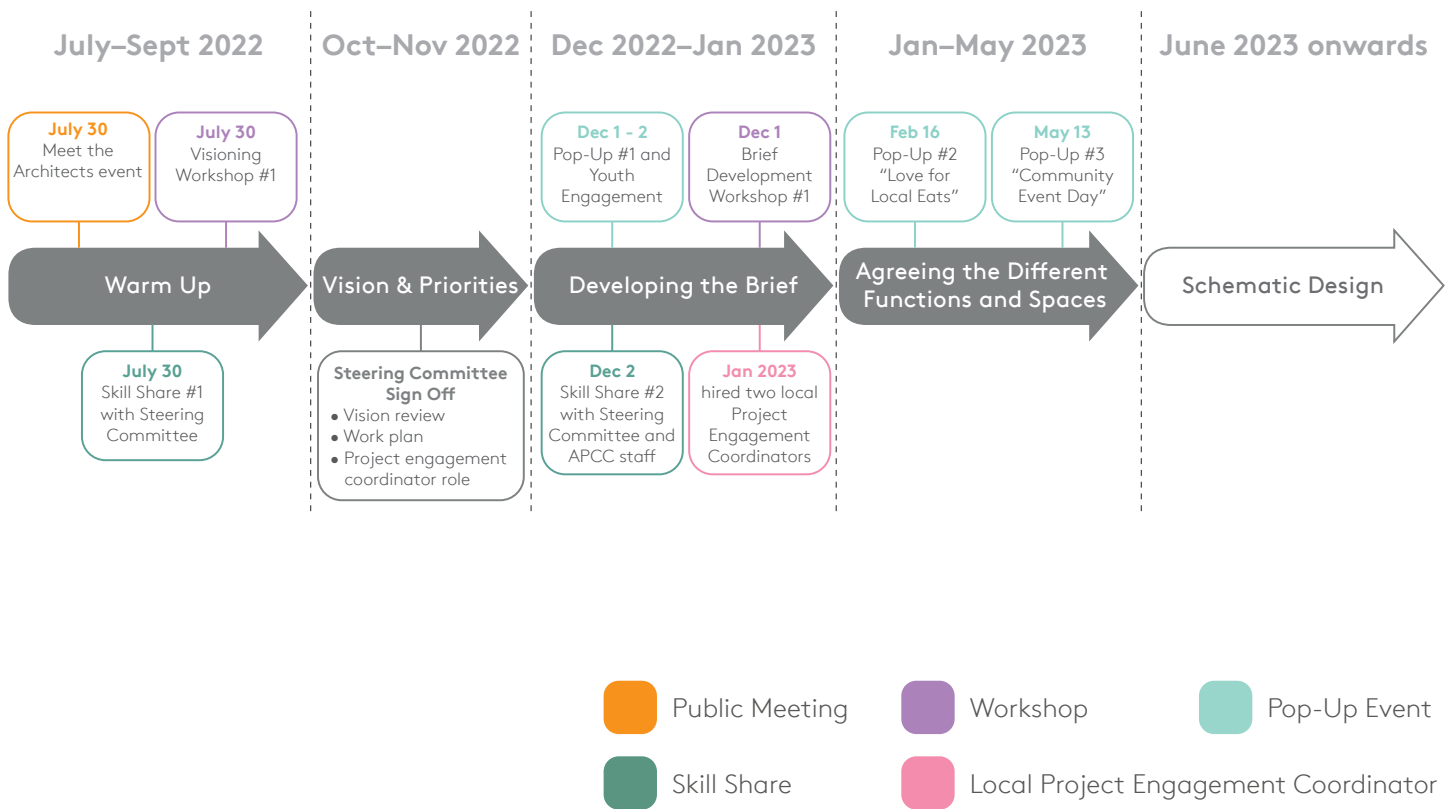
## Objectives

- Inform residents about progress in the spatial brief development process.
- Conduct additional user research to support Steering Committee in finalizing the spatial brief.
- Provide a crucial update to broader community as the project team and Steering Committee approaches spatial brief approval.



## 2.1 Engagement Timeline

The timeline lists down key milestones in the brief development to date that involved Steering Committee meetings, and broader community engagement.



## 2.2 Event Overview

The Public Meeting (indoors) and Pop-up (outdoors) occurred at the same time, offering different ways for APCC's communities to learn about the project and ask questions.

The Atkinson Co-Op courtyard, a popular and easily accessible location, was where most of the engagement activities took place. It's high visibility attracted diverse demographics, including families, children, and youth.



<b>When</b>	Saturday, May 13 <sup>th</sup> , 2023 1:00pm - 4:00pm
<b>Where</b>	Atkinson Boardroom(Presentation and Q&A Meeting), 73 Augusta Square courtyard (Pop-Up), and Vanauley Walk (Site walk-around)
<b>Who</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC)</li> <li>• Alexandra Community Centre Steering Group</li> <li>• Karakusevic Carson Architects (KCA)</li> <li>• ERA Architects</li> <li>• SAFFY</li> <li>• Alexandra Park Community Centre (APCC) Steering Committee</li> <li>• Alex Park and Atkinson Park Co-Op community</li> </ul>
<b>Format</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation and Q&amp;A</li> <li>• Site walk around</li> <li>• Pop-Up (space voting activity, family friendly activities)</li> </ul>

# 3.0 Public Meeting and Site Walk Around

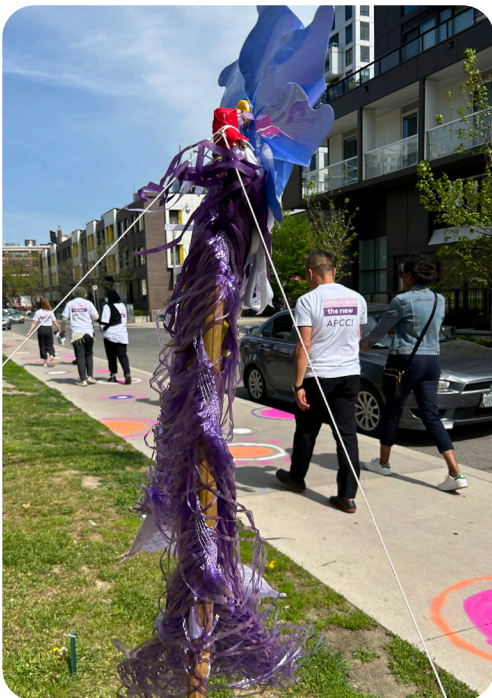
A public presentation was held at the Atkinson Boardroom. There were two (2) presentations scheduled to start at 12:00pm and second presentation at 3:00pm, but only the 3:00pm Public Meeting and Site Walk Around were completed due to low attendance in the earlier portion of the day.

The Public Meeting provided an opportunity for deeper learning and explanation on the spatial brief developing process and created an open forum for meeting attendees to ask questions directly to members of the project team, design team, and Steering Committee.

A total of 15 community members attended the presentation.

## Meeting Agenda

- Introduction to the team
- Updated on the brief development work to date
- The proposed Spatial Brief
- Next steps of the design process were provided
- Q&A





## 3.1 What We Heard at the Public Meeting and Site Walk Around

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Respondents were generally supportive of the decisions made and the proposed spaces for the new community centre. Participants particularly enjoyed the Site Walk Around, as it provided an opportunity to visit the new site and gain a visual understanding of the building's size and location.

Topics raised by attendees included the location of the community centre, the timeline for completion and the repetition of uses/activities that currently exist in nearby facilities.

While participants at the meeting expressed excitement about the new centre, some felt that progress was moving too slowly. Ideas were shared on improving lives in the short term, engaging the youth through a dedicated action group, enhancing the accessibility of the working group, and increasing sustainability efforts.

## 3.2 Summary of Key Insights

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- **Design suggestions:** Clarify the purpose and necessity of spaces like wellness nooks and counselling booths, consider the optimal placement of the fitness gym, evaluate the need for a media library, and incorporate feedback on gender-neutral changing rooms.
- **Provide explanations and transparency:** Address concerns about the size, location, and timeline of the community centre, explaining the decision-making process and budget constraints.
- **Improve accessibility and engagement:** Enhance the working group's accessibility through website improvements and the inclusion of an online suggestion box for community input. Ensure ongoing engagement with the community during the design phase.

## 4.0 Pop-Up and Space Prioritization Activity

The Pop-Up event took place at 73 Augusta Sq. courtyard, conveniently located next to the Atkinson boardroom where the Public Meeting was held. The event featured engaging and attention-grabbing material to captivate all attendees (**Appendix A**). Family-friendly activities like music and face painting were organized to entertain everyone, while free food and snacks were provided by local vendors and the nearby Tuk Stop.

In addition to the space prioritization activity, feedback forms (**Appendix B**) were also distributed to gather demographic information about the participants. This allowed for a comprehensive assessment of the representation and inclusion of individuals in the Community Event Day activities.

The forms were either completed independently or with the assistance of an engagement team member, providing an additional avenue to collect valuable resident feedback.

In addition to the 15 individuals who attended the public meeting, a total of 40 people participated in the outdoor activities.

### Feedback Form Findings

- A majority of the event participants were residents of Atkinson Co-op.
- Most identified within the 45-61+ age range.
- The frequency of APCC usage varied among participants, with occasional usage being the second most common.
- English is the primary language spoken by the majority, with Mandarin being the second.

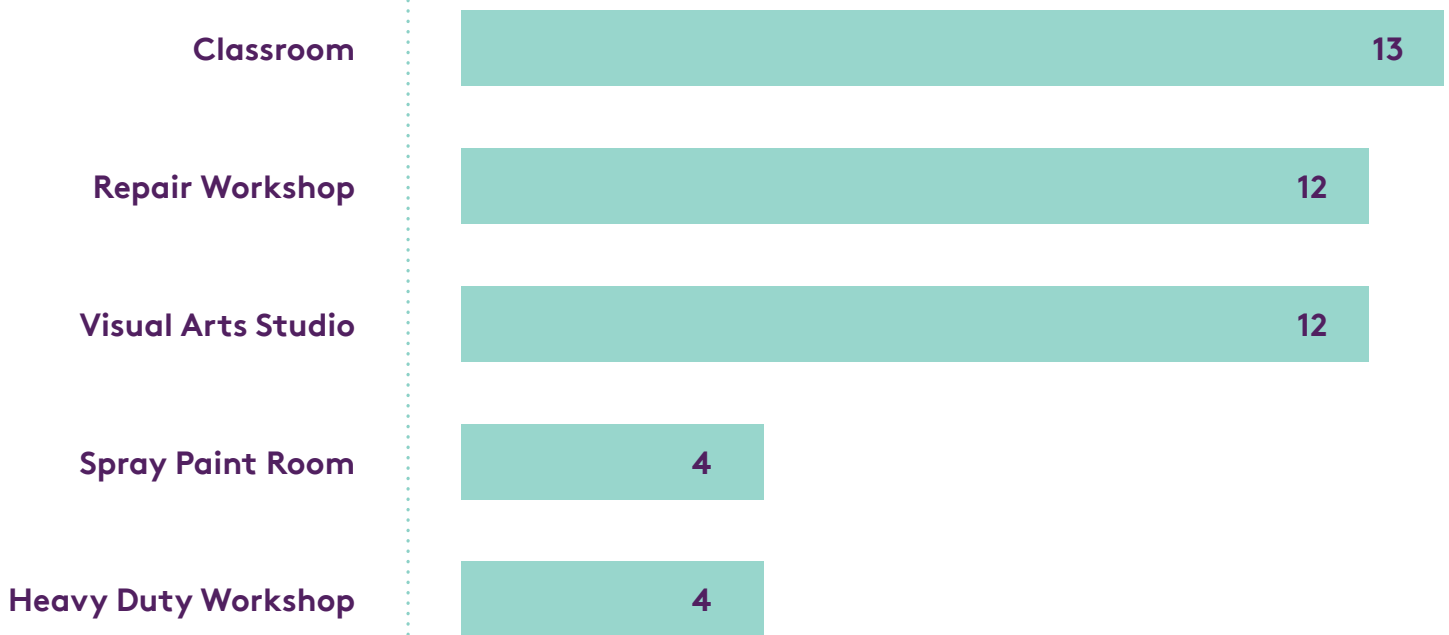


# 4.1 What We Heard at the Space Prioritization Activity

The space prioritization activity was facilitated by a member of the engagement team, and is a voting game using ping-pong balls. It proved to be an attractive and effective voting tool to garner feedback and tally residents preferences on different spaces proposed in the community center.

The spaces selected for voting were determined by the Steering Committee members prior to the public meeting. These spaces were identified as additional areas requiring greater insight from the public before the Steering Committee members can make a final decision on which spaces are included in the spatial brief.

Totals votes for each space:



## Additional Comments

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"I like sewing, making clothes."

"I chose this space for the sustainability aspect."

### Repair & Sewing Workshop

"Sewing workshop would be a priority because they don't have access to that equipment and it's a life skill."

"Repair is good because we can fix our children's clothes."

"A sewing workshop was implemented in the APCC in the past and it didn't work because people didn't show up."

"Combine an art studio and sewing workshop?"

"Useful, can be used by all ages."

"Media room where kids can learn to operate computers and learn to edit or film, also take pictures."

"There's a tool library down the street. Might be redundant but can complement each other and hold collaborative workshops! Trades should be encouraged and supported"

### Visual Art Studio

"Artists would like an art room, trying to make business art or personal art."

"Visual art is cool, don't forget to get instruments."

### Heavy Duty Workshop

"Can the heavy duty workshop and spray room be combined?"



## 4.2 Summary of Key Findings

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### Impact of a Creative Space for Children and Youth

A large number of feedback focused on the visual arts and street art room, especially by the children and youth (eg. life skill, open to all ages, some people might not have access to the arts in the community).

### Consideration of a Multi-Faith Prayer Room

Interest about including a multi-faith prayer room for spiritual purposes was shared. Prayer rooms in airports were cited as an example to draw inspiration from.

### Mixed Opinions About a Heavy-Duty Workshop

Compared to the other spaces fewer people expressing interest in it. Some residents proposed incorporating certain elements of the workshop into the existing repairs workshops, while others raised concerns about potential noise issues.

### Spaces for Skills Building

Young adults, parents and older residents were focused on learning new skills and pushing for additional classrooms for teaching and training.



# 5.0 Overall Recommendations

The recommendations presented in this section were synthesized from the Public Meeting, Pop-Up Space prioritization activity, and conversations had at the community event day.

## Implement “Early Win” Projects

Identify and initiate improvements that can be done in the meantime, such as enhancing green spaces for children to play. These early wins can help maintain community engagement and momentum throughout the lengthy design and construction process.

## Include Youth in the Decision-Making Process

Actively invite youth to participate in meetings, and encourage them to contribute their ideas and perspectives alongside the Steering Committee. Consider the formation of a youth action group to gather their ideas and involve them in the planning process, linking it to existing Community Economic Development programs.

## Address Concerns and Support the Community During the Revitalization

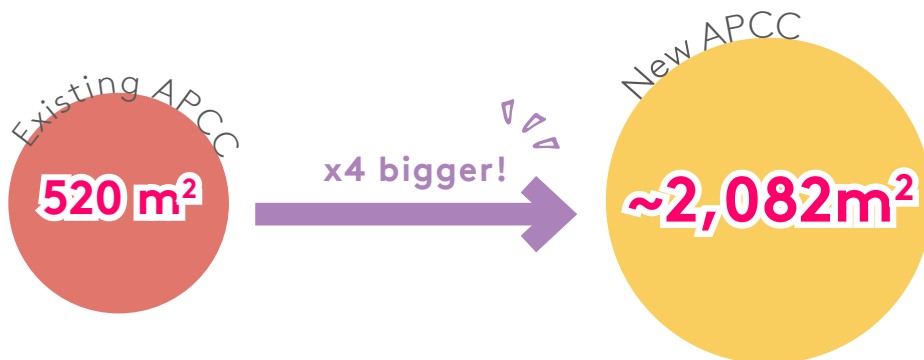
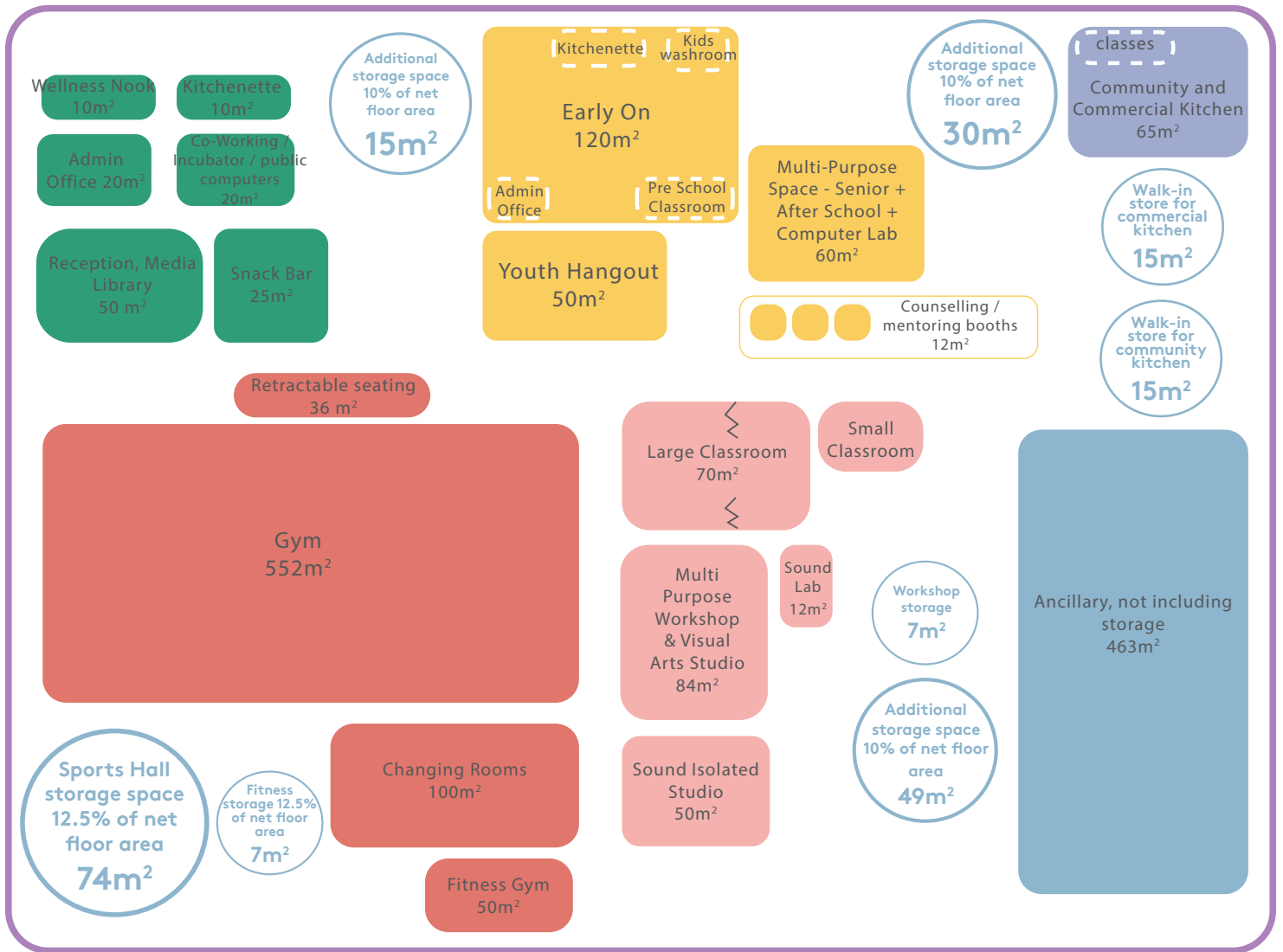
Acknowledge the community’s concerns about the inconvenience caused by the ongoing construction/revitalization process. Provide clear and transparent information on the measures being taken to support the community during this period, addressing issues such as noise, safety, and accessibility.





# 6.0 Finalized Spatial Brief

Community feedback helped put the finishing touches on the brief and played a role in influencing certain decisions at various stages of the process. This spatial brief for the new Alexandra Park Community Centre was finalized by the Steering Committee on June 8th 2023.



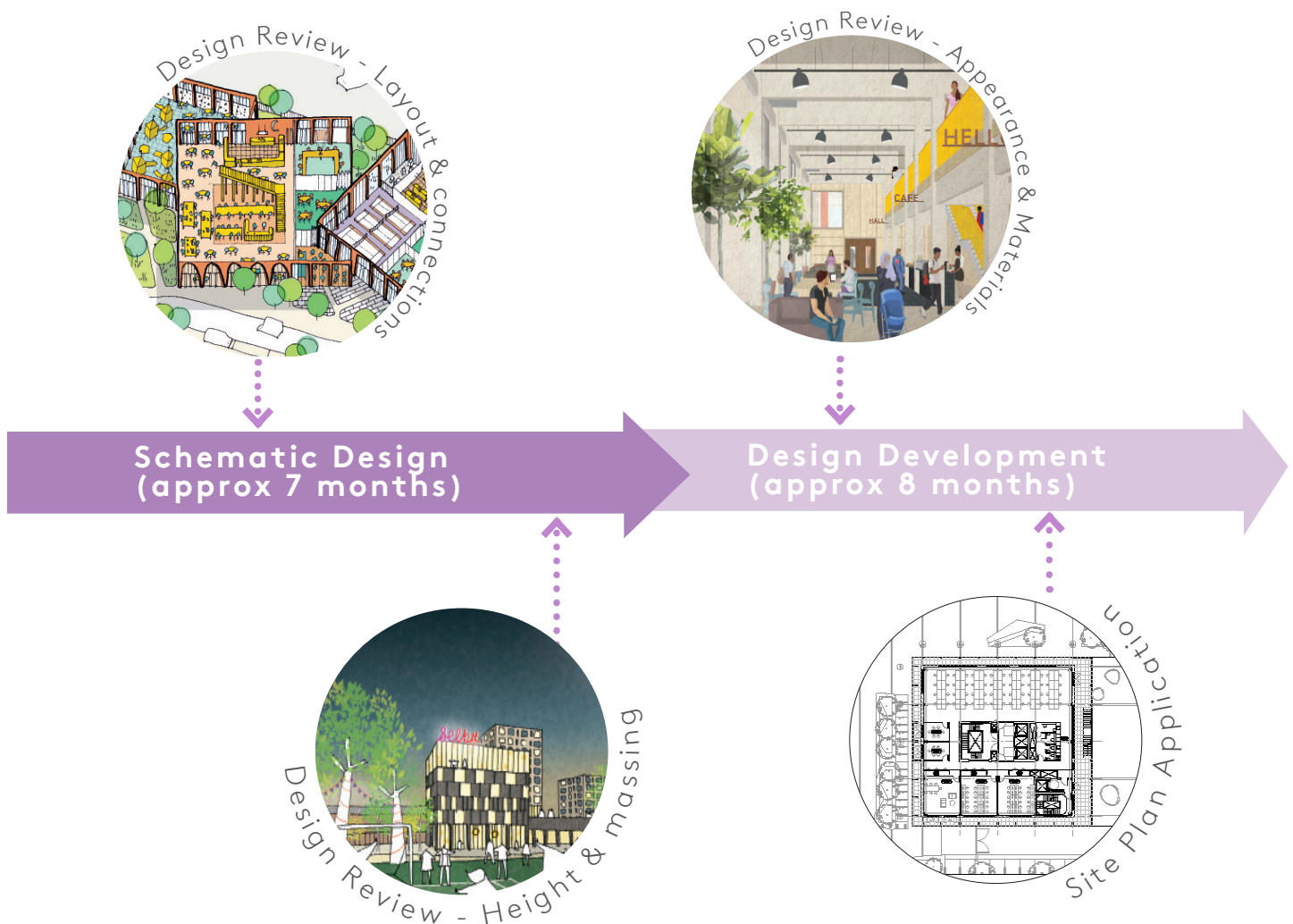
# 7.0 Next Steps

The brief will still continue to be developed and refined throughout the design process, considering other important factors such as:

- Design factors such as site constraints, interface with the tower, relationship with the park, outdoor space
- Technical constraints such as the structure, heating/ventilation, potential for expansion
- Cost & maintenance

The project is now scheduled to enter into the Schematic Design process. During this stage, the team will concentrate on the building layout. Important aspects such as building height, optimizing natural light in all areas, efficient flow within the center, and access to open spaces will be carefully considered.

Regular meetings with the Steering Committee and wider community engagement will continue and will be vital to keep everyone updated on the evolving design and to gather feedback on the appearance and overall functionality of the community center.





# Appendix A

**ALEXANDRA PARK PHASE 2B**

**VISUAL ARTS STUDIO**

**How could this benefit my community?**

- Community classes for all ages and abilities
- Opportunity to share existing practical skills and learn new ones
- Space and facilities can be rented to generate income
- Will encourage creative talents for Alexandra park residents

**What's included?**

- Drying racks
- Spacious area with exhaust
- Darkrooms
- Storage

**YOUR COMMENTS**

TRIDEL | Alexandra Housing Group | Karakuskeri Carson Architects | saffy | E | A

Poster board for the visual arts studio

**ALEXANDRA PARK PHASE 2B**

**HEAVY-DUTY WORKSHOP**

**How could this benefit my community?**

- Opportunity to share existing practical skills and learn new ones
- Space to repair useful loved items
- Could be hired out to individuals and businesses
- Promotes sustainable practices and circular economies in the community

**What's included?**

- Space suitable for woodwork and bike repair
- 4x work benches
- 2x Repair Stands
- Blue acids

**YOUR COMMENTS**

TRIDEL | Alexandra Housing Group | Karakuskeri Carson Architects | saffy | E | A

Poster board for the heavy-duty workshop

**ALEXANDRA PARK PHASE 2B**

**REPAIR AND SEWING WORKSHOP**

**How could this benefit my community?**

- Opportunity to share existing practical skills and learn new ones
- Space to repair useful loved items
- Library of things for community to share high-tech equipment
- Promotes sustainable circular economy
- Flexible space
- Facilities for workshops
- Locking/furniture for large cutting table
- Community comparing
- 4x work areas
- 1x large cutting table
- Waste management

**What's included?**

- Library of things for community to share high-tech equipment
- Promotes sustainable circular economy
- Flexible space
- Facilities for workshops
- Locking/furniture for large cutting table
- Community comparing
- 4x work areas
- 1x large cutting table
- Waste management

**YOUR COMMENTS**

TRIDEL | Alexandra Housing Group | Karakuskeri Carson Architects | saffy | E | A

Poster board for the repair and sewing workshop

**ALEXANDRA PARK PHASE 2B**

**ADDITIONAL LARGE CLASSROOM**

**How could this benefit my community?**

- This would be in addition to the large classroom already in the brief
- This could host even more classes, workshops and activities
- Space for 30 people
- Could be divided into 2 medium, occasionally
- Facilities for open separate classrooms and activities
- Portable desks or tidy cubicles for computers
- Facilities for open

**What's included?**

- Portable desks or tidy cubicles for computers
- Facilities for open separate classrooms and activities

**YOUR COMMENTS**

TRIDEL | Alexandra Housing Group | Karakuskeri Carson Architects | saffy | E | A

Poster board for the additional large classroom

**ALEXANDRA PARK PHASE 2B**

**SPRAY ROOM**

**How could this benefit my community?**

- A safe, welcoming environment for all members of the estate to express themselves creatively
- Potential to be used for DIY painting, repairing and maintenance
- Facilities for open facilities to be hired out to generate income for community centre
- Can filter for sprays, not dust
- Drying Racks

**What's included?**

- Can filter for sprays, not dust
- Drying Racks

**YOUR COMMENTS**

TRIDEL | Alexandra Housing Group | Karakuskeri Carson Architects | saffy | E | A

Poster board for the spray room

# Appendix B

## ALEXANDRA PARK Feedback Survey

Please take a look at the information boards displayed today, which explain the journey so far. Since July 2022, the project team have been working closely with the APCC Steering Committee to turn your vision for the site into a spatial brief. The following questions will help us to ensure the emerging brief aligns with the aspirations of local people as a first step before the design process begins.

**Your Priorities for a New Community Centre**  
So far, a number of priority spaces have been identified for the new community center. We are looking to better understand your views on some additional areas listed below and to get your feedback on which spaces are the most important to you in the new community center. This will help to inform the decision making process and to reduce the current spatial brief to the target size.

**1. Please tick from the options below up to 3 functions/uses that you would most like to see in the new community center building.**

  
Street Art Spray Room

  
Visual Arts Studio

  
Heavy Duty Workshop

  
Repair & sewing workshop

  
Additional Classroom

**2. Tell us your reasons for your choices in Q1 above...**

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Karakusevic Carson Architects



Front

**About You\***  
We value the different perspectives and experiences that make up your community. The questions below will help us learn more about the people who have shared feedback with us. Please note, all questions are optional and will be kept confidential.

**1. Do you live in either Atkinson Co-op, 20 Vanauley or 91 Augusta?**

Atkinson Co-op  20 Vanauley  91 Augusta  None

No, but I am a former resident of one of the above

**2. If 'None' to Q1, tell us which neighbourhood you live in now**

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**3. How often do you currently use APCC?**

Daily  Weekly  Monthly  Occasionally  Never

**4. What is your age?**

0 - 18  19 - 24  25 - 34  Prefer not to say

35 - 44  45 - 60  61 +

**5. How would you describe your ethnicity?**

White/Eastern European  Central American  Indigenous

Black Central American  Mixed heritage  Indo

Black Latin American  Middle Eastern

Prefer not to say

Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**6. What is your first language?**

French  Spanish  Mandarin  Cantonese

Somali  Arabic  English  Vietnamese

Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

\*Any data you share with us will be treated with strict confidentiality under data protection regulations and will not be shared with Third Parties.

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