



What We Heard Report

Northeast Athletic Complex

Fall 2024



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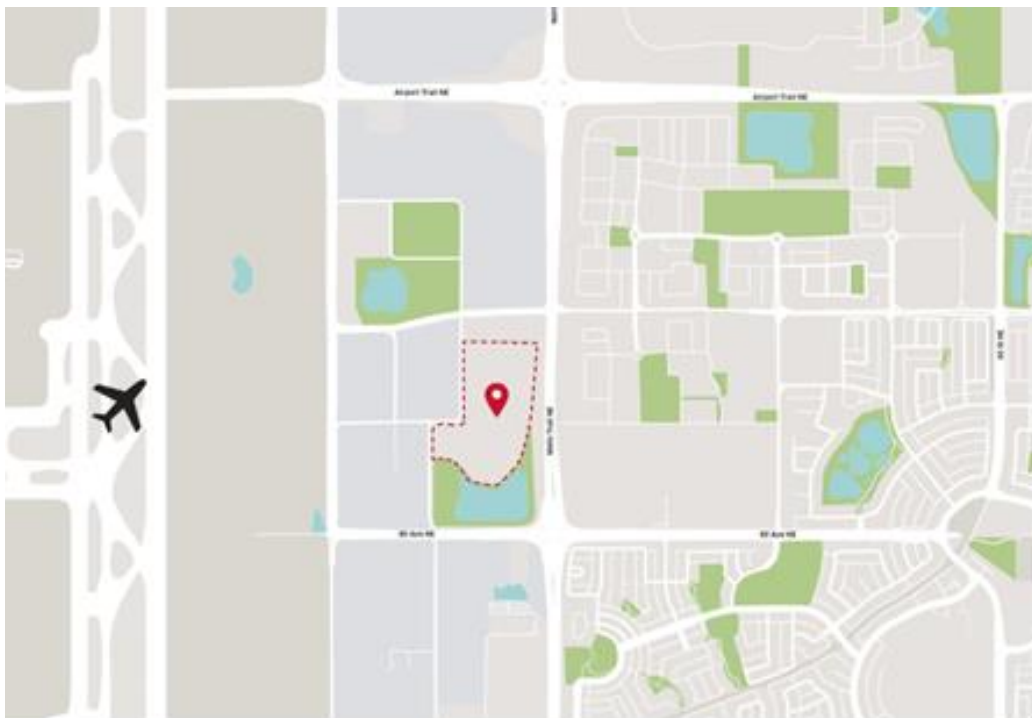
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1. Project background

To address the increasing demand for recreational amenities in one of the fastest-growing areas of Calgary, The City is investing in a new athletic complex in the northeast community of Saddle Ridge. Located on a 34.56-acre site at the northwest corner of 80th Ave. N.E. and Metis Trail N.E., the **Northeast Athletic Complex** will include an outdoor athletic park with a dedicated cricket field and four multi-use rectangular artificial turf fields and an indoor fieldhouse.

The athletic complex will serve as a community hub, fostering social connectivity and healthy, active, creative living. It will provide much-needed outdoor and indoor multi-use recreation spaces to respond to the growing demand for year-round opportunities for the local and larger Calgary community to practice, play and compete.

The athletic complex will elevate Calgary's reputation as a leading destination for hosting provincial, regional, and national events.



This investment aligns with Council's commitment to build strong communities, making it easier for Calgarians to live, play and connect.

Through June-July 2024, we gathered input from Calgarians to explore supporting amenities and uses for the athletic complex as we **develop a Master Plan for the site**.

This input, along with technical expertise, will guide planning, design and the development of a long-term vision for the site.

2. Engagement objectives

The objective of the public engagement was to hear from field sport user groups and the community by gathering input specific to field sport uses, field house design and amenities and community needs. Feedback will be used to inform the Master Plan for the complex.

A Master Plan is a long-term vision and concept plan that will inform the design and engineering of the site. This includes the layout of amenities, green spaces, parking, community gathering places and utility requirements

Engagement timeline:

Completed:

- **June & July 2024 Phase 1:** Public engagement – collect input to inform Master Plan
- **Fall 2024** What We Heard Report

Next steps:

- **Fall 2024 Phase 2:** Present recommended Master Plan to public
- **Winter 2024** What We Did Report

The engage survey was promoted through:

- Social media platforms including Facebook and Nextdoor, geotargeting Saddle Ridge, Martindale, Falconridge, Castleridge and Temple, as well as targeting user interests aligned with field sports in Calgary.
- Bold signs at high-profile locations in neighbouring communities of Saddle Ridge, Martindale, Falconridge, Castleridge, Skyview Ranch, Taradale and Temple.
- Email outreach to the following Community Associations: Saddle Ridge, Martindale, Falconridge, Castleridge, Skyview Ranch, Taradale and Temple.
- Posters displayed at the Calgary Soccer Centre and Centre for Newcomers.
- Email outreach to cultural and equity groups in N.E. Calgary, such as Centre for Newcomers.
- Opt-in communications for direct invites to focus groups (targeted to league leaders and representatives).

3. Interested and impacted parties identified for engagement

- **Primary booking groups:** organized cricket and soccer leagues.
- **Sports user groups:** additional field sports groups and players who will use the facilities for training, health, wellness, community connections, etc.
- **Community users:** individuals and groups who will access the facilities for health, wellness and community connection.

4. Engagement overview

This What We Heard Report summarizes responses from Phase One of engagement, which included an **online public survey** and **targeted focus groups**.

a) Focus group conversations:

Focus groups were held with the following cricket and soccer leagues. By hearing directly from representatives of these leagues, we were able to discuss technical design considerations specific to sport requirements as well as player and spectator experiences to be considered in the Master Plan.

The rationale for conducting individual focus groups was to allow for each league to provide unique perspectives based on the teams and player levels they represented. Focus group participants in these sessions were able to represent hundreds of teams and thousands of players across all ages, abilities and communities in Calgary.

- Calgary Minor Soccer Association and the Calgary United Soccer Association
- Future Stars Cricket League (youth focused)
- Calgary and District Cricket League
- Calgary Cricket Board
- Calgary Cricket Council
- Womens Cricket League
- Western Cricket League

b) Public online survey:

The [online survey](#) was open from June 14 - July 8, 2024 on [calgary.ca/NEathleticComplex](#).

- 6,630 people visited the online page during the timeframe that the survey was open for engagement.
- The page was viewed 8,852 times.
- 511 unique respondents completed the survey.

5. Summary of key themes and features

The focus of this public engagement was to gather high-level insights into what Calgarians and field sports users want to see on site. Respondents envision the complex as a vibrant community hub where families of all ages can gather and “make a day of it” around sport. Focus group participants and public survey respondents emphasized the importance of designing the space to foster social interactions and a sense of belonging, with amenities for both players and spectators.

Respondents underscored the importance of creating an inclusive, vibrant and welcoming environment that leverages the **power of sport** to bring communities together. Survey respondents celebrated the addition of field space for cricket and highlighted the need to meet the demand for soccer and other field sports.

The sections below list the priorities we heard regarding design specifics that will influence the Master Plan. These three high-level community-centric themes emerged, which will also direct the views and values that are considered when the Master Plan is developed:

- **Sport-centric:** Sport creates a sense of community and belonging; conversations circled around creating a community ‘hub’ for sport and using the project as a means of meeting-the-moment wherein spaces and supports for sports and recreation are in demand.
- **Spectator comfort:** Make the spectator experience great.
- **Accessible:** Consider ways to make it easy to get to/from and around the site; equitable experiences and spaces for all on-site.

What We Heard: Key design and feature considerations for the Master Plan:

Must Haves:

- Outdoor lighting to extend usage of the complex throughout the day and shoulder seasons,
- Ample seating with good sightlines and shading, including considerations for flexible seating options (from seats to bleachers and flexible seating such as grass),
- Fields and facilities designed to meet national and international tournament standards,
- Flexible space around field perimeters for stretching, warm-ups and practice,
- Social and gathering spaces with the ability to accommodate food and beverage service options (whether space for food trucks or otherwise) and sightlines to fields for pre-and post-game gatherings (both formal and informal),
- Fieldhouse with indoor change rooms and viewing areas, washrooms, team and meeting spaces for training, planning, etc.,
- Secure storage options for multiple teams as well as maintaining equipment on-site,
- Ease of access, such as efficient transit connections, ample parking, clear way-finding and accessible pathways were also top of mind.

Nice to Haves:

Additionally, both focus group participants and online survey comments highlighted a desire for family-friendly spaces, such as green areas and play areas to ensure the spectator experience is enjoyable. Given the site's primary purpose is sport, this input will be balanced with design that prioritizes player experience and spectator seating.

A handful of survey comments asked that space within site be considered for other non-field sports such as basketball, badminton or running tracks, which could be considered as The City looks at its long-term sports and recreation planning for that area.

6. Engagement input

a) Focus groups

Focus groups were held to gather insights from players and league perspectives to help inform the Master Plan.

All focus group conversations were allotted the same amount of time (60 minutes) and the same series of questions were asked.

This specific lens of input will help to ensure aspects of the design - from the fields to the spaces in and around the field house - capture the needs of primary booking groups.

A summary of key comments from focus groups are as follows:

Comments re: demand and desire; growth of sport(s)	All league representatives shared that this project is important to their teams and players today and into the future. All leagues communicated growing demand in their sport and a need for more available field time and spaces to meet demand; particularly to meet a demand for sport field space in the northeast.
Field design considerations (outdoor)	Fields and facilities to meet international and national tournament standards. Flexible field designs to accommodate different game formats. Effective drainage system to ensure quick drying post-rain. Flexible space around field perimeters for stretching, warm-ups and practice. Scoreboards and a preference electronic scoreboard with video output for live streaming and replays. Sightscreens for cricket (reversible: white/black) (while not part of the Master Plan, the need for this equipment is important to note). Lighting to allow for extended hours into the evenings and longer play seasons, addressing the lack of field time for all field sports (soccer, cricket and others). Artificial turf is preferred for reliability and maintenance, especially during adverse weather. Natural turf pitch is preferred for cricket pitch and critical to hosting various levels of tournaments. Cricket pitch / field: Minimum 65-metre radius from the pitch center for boundaries, extendable to 85 meters. Cricket pitch aligned north to south to avoid sun interference; the pitch should have multiple strips to allow natural turf time to recover/repair.

	Cricket practice nets with different pitch materials are suggested to improve local players' skills.
Seating design considerations (players and officials)	Adequate shaded seating for players sitting outside during games. Space for officials, scorers and umpires.
Seating design considerations (spectators, community)	Spectator seating, including grassy banks and possible bleachers or galleries for larger events. A mix of temporary and permanent seating that can grow incrementally. The importance of shaded areas for spectators and players was reiterated. Capacity for spectator seating needs ranges from 50-100 people and could range up to 1,000-5,000 for international tournaments (as per feedback from leagues). This complex must consider growth of sport and overall site capacity and constraints to enable games and tournaments at many scales.
Field house (desired uses, spaces, amenities)	Change rooms: Change rooms for teams (20-25 people per team) with showers and toilets. Some groups stated showers were a 'nice to have' while others maintained they are a necessity. Storage in change rooms for equipment during games. Comments were also made about the benefit to leagues who might also seek longer-term storage (such as youth-focused leagues that bring gear for the players who do not have their own). Nice to have: if possible, the ability to view the game from the change room or from a seating box connected to the change room. Washrooms: Public washrooms that are accessible for all ages and genders.

	Team rooms / meeting / community rooms: Separate meeting spaces for team meetings and official meetings (approx. 25 people capacity) with the ability to flex smaller or larger. Some leagues even suggested a large room for up to 300 people for courses, training and events. Food and beverage options: Vendors or food trucks during events. All leagues expressed desire for a social gathering and viewing space anchored around food and drink. Areas that can be licensed for alcohol for post-game socializing were flagged by some leagues. Commentators, officials and broadcasting: Commentators usually sit in a separate room with enough space for audio-visual equipment and sometimes share space with the broadcasting team. Space for 4-10 people in a flexible commentator/media room at a height with full-field visibility would support tournaments of many scales. Streaming and IT services: Necessary for hosting high-level events and enhancing local tournaments.
Additional comments and considerations	Flexible design to accommodate future growth and increased popularity of sports. Creating a community/social hub: Leagues would like to “make a day of it” and encouraged the Master Plan to accommodate designs for all ages, creating various viewing points, and creating places to gather across the complex. Group and family areas: Areas with shade, seating, picnic tables, barbecue pits and play structures.

	Clear wayfinding: Clear signage across the complex to make for smooth experiences for players of all abilities, ages and languages. Parking and Transportation: Ample parking and proximity to transit are essential, especially for underserved areas.
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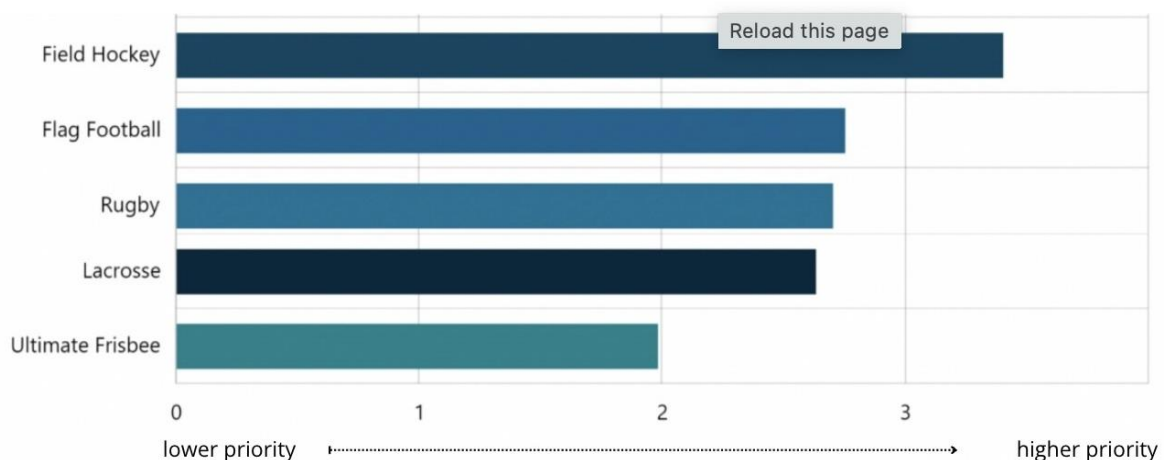
b) Online survey results

Questions and responses:

1. The NE Athletic Complex will serve sports like cricket and soccer as well as other field-based activities and uses. Help us understand what field sports would like the facilities to accommodate by ordering them in priority.

374 [survey respondents](#) (75%) answered this question by dragging options up/down in a list from top priority to bottom. Options provided included rugby, field hockey, lacrosse, flag football and ultimate frisbee.

- 40% placed field hockey as the top field-based sport they hope to see accommodated on-site.
- Flag football, rugby, and lacrosse shared similar average priority weightings (averaging among third place for many) and ultimate frisbee ranked 4 or 5th on most respondents of this survey.



2. If you participate in a sport not listed above and wish to utilize the fields for your sport, please indicate the sport(s) and tell us why?

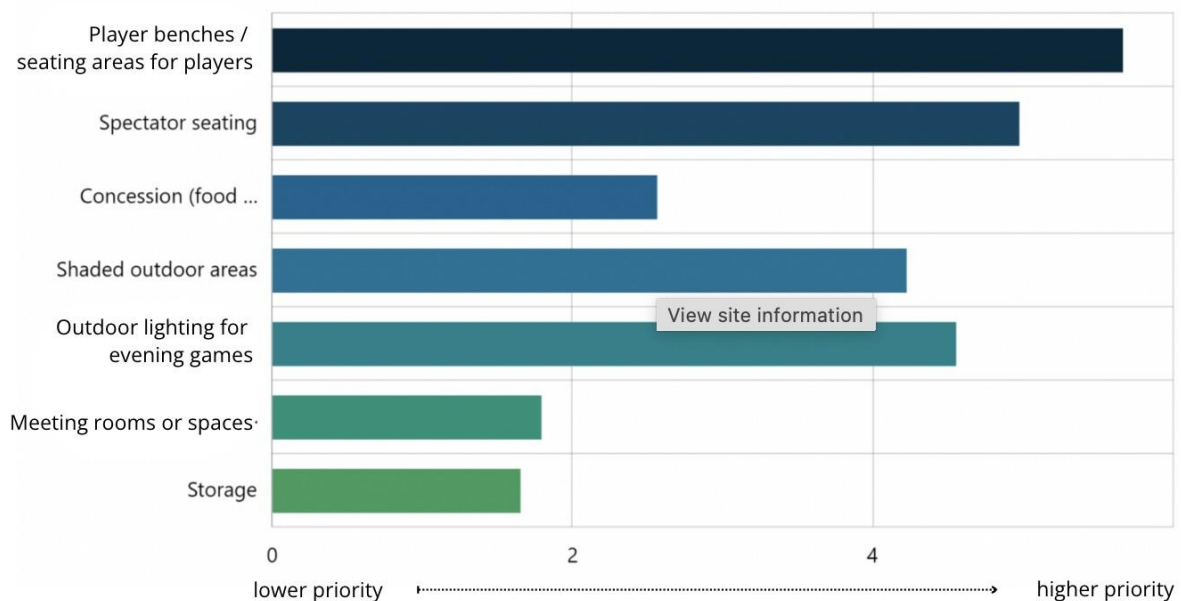
291 survey respondents (58%) answered this question, most of whom took the opportunity to reiterate the need for soccer fields (soccer was mentioned 129 times).

While the NE athletic complex site is focused on field-based sports, community members also shared the desire for volleyball (42 people), badminton (26 people), basketball (19 people) and baseball (12 people).

3a. If you play field sports, what amenities do you think are essential in this athletic complex?

481 respondents (96%) answered this question by dragging options up/down in a list from top priority to bottom.

- Player and spectator seating weighted as top priorities.
- Features such as lighting to extend games into the evening and shaded areas to protect from sun and rain also ranked high in importance.



3b. Why did you rank these (question 3a) the way you did?

306 (61%) of survey respondents added a comment about their ranking order for question 3a.

On average, most comments related to the need to prioritize the player experience, including secure spaces and team seating that is shared or protected from inclement weather; and creating seating and spaces for spectator viewing as well as waiting areas for families. The word “seating” was mentioned 47 times. The word “shade” was mentioned 27 times.

Some verbatim comments include:

- *"Sheltered player seating (benches) necessary to protect players from our varied weather; spectator seating encourages parents and supporters to watch games; lighting offers longer hours of use."*
- *"This location is far out of the way of 3/4 of Calgarians. There needs to be the ability for those who are bringing kids/families with them to comfortably wait for games to be over, and have everything they need."*
- *"Place to escape from the sun between games is a big plus, providing seating for spectators helps keep them in a specific space, as opposed to lawn chairs all over the sidelines."*
- *"Outdoor lighting allows longer use of the outdoor facilities. Spectator seating because youth playing often have their parents watching, shaded outdoor areas because the summer sun is very hot, concessions as a small profit maker."*
- *"Optimize facilities for the players and maximize the usage of the fields. The concessions are nice to have, but not required to use the facilities, and the meeting rooms and storage should not be required at all to minimize the cost of the facilities."*
- *"Spectator areas are dismal in other facilities, preventing fans (family members) from coming to watch kids play."*

4a. Do you prefer to play on indoor or outdoor fields?

96.6% of respondents answered this question.

- 54.36% said they prefer the ability to play on indoor fields.
- 45.64% said they prefer to play on outdoor fields.

4b. If you answered with a preference above, tell us why?

154 (69%) of respondents provided insights into their answer for 4a. Comments included:

- *"No preference, just want the fields to be good. However, with Calgary weather indoor options are good to have."*
- *"Many soccer events where out-of-town teams are coming are ideally scheduled indoors to avoid cancellations due to weather."*
- *"As a soccer player, I like playing outside it is a big part of summer games for me. However it is miserable to play in hot weather with no shade, it gets very uncomfortable. I don't mind playing in rain though as long as there's no freezing cold wind."*

- *"Prefer outdoors BUT indoors is essential in Calgary for year-round use so it is more important."*
- *"Indoor as the weather can be so unpredictable in Calgary. Summer storms often impact games or cancel them outright."*
- *"Playing on a field that can be utilized full year-round would be advantageous for the city as it will allow sports to run more regularly, allow for games to proceed when weather is a factor such as rain, wind, hail, lightning, or extreme heat."*

4c. Do you prefer to play on artificial or natural turf?

464 (93%) of respondents answered this question.

- 53% said they prefer to play on artificial turf.
- 47% said they prefer to play on natural turf.

5a. What amenities (i.e. showers, tables/chairs, team huddle area) should be made available in team rooms and why?

This was an open text question. 316 (63%) of survey respondents added their thoughts.

Based on the responses regarding amenities that should be made available in team rooms, the most frequently mentioned items included showers, seating (such as benches and chairs), and lockers. Respondents emphasized the importance of these amenities for hygiene, comfort, and convenience, especially after games and practices.

Key takeaways for consideration include:

- **Showers:** Frequently highlighted as essential for cleanliness, particularly for older players, and as a desirable feature.
- **Seating:** Benches and chairs were commonly requested to provide comfortable places for players to rest, change, and have team discussions.
- **Lockers and Storage:** Secure storage for personal items during practices and games was a recurring theme, ensuring safety and organization.
- **Team Huddle Areas:** Spaces dedicated to team meetings and strategy discussions, including whiteboards, were deemed important for team cohesion and planning.
- **Basic Amenities:** Toilets, sinks, and water fountains were frequently mentioned as necessary for convenience and maintaining basic hygiene standards.
- **Multi-functional Spaces:** Versatile spaces to accommodate various needs, such as pre-game warm-ups, strategy sessions, and post-game cool-downs.

5b. In team rooms, are showers a requirement or a nice-to-have feature?

100% of respondents answered this question.

- 26% said showers are required.
- 74% said showers are a 'nice to have' (nice, but not required).

6a. What equipment (if any) should be part of change rooms?

This was an open text question. 247 (49.5%) of survey respondents added their thoughts.

Most frequently mentioned items were lockers, benches, showers, and whiteboards. Answers were very similar to the answers provided to question 5a (about amenities in team rooms).

Answers fell into the following categories:

- **Lockers:** The most commonly requested amenity, lockers are essential for secure storage of personal belongings during games and practices. Many respondents emphasized the importance of security due to frequent theft issues.
- **Benches:** Benches were frequently mentioned as necessary for seating, providing a comfortable space for players to sit, change, and prepare for games.
- **Whiteboards:** Many respondents noted the importance of whiteboards for team strategy discussions and planning. These are considered useful for coaches to illustrate game plans and tactics.
- **Basic Amenities:** Toilets, sinks, and water fountains were also commonly requested, emphasizing the need for basic hygiene and hydration facilities.
- **Hooks and Cubbies:** Hooks and cubbies for hanging clothes and equipment were suggested to keep the space organized and provide easy access to gear.
- **Safety and First Aid:** Some respondents mentioned the importance of having first aid kits, AEDs, and emergency help buttons to ensure player safety.
- **Inclusive and Private Spaces:** There were suggestions for gender-neutral changing facilities and private changing areas to accommodate diverse needs and preferences for privacy.

6b. In change rooms, are showers a requirement or a nice-to-have feature?

468 (94%) of respondents answered this question.

- 36% said showers are required.
- 64% said showers are a 'nice to have' (nice, but not required).

7. If you play team sports (i.e., cricket, soccer, etc.), approximately how many team members need to be accommodated in a team room?

419 (84%) of survey respondents answered this question.

- 56% said rooms should accommodate **16-24 players**.
- 37% said rooms should accommodate **10-16 players**.
- 7% said rooms should accommodate **24-32 players**.

8a. Being a player is only part of the experience of any sports facility. What design elements would make for a great experience as a spectator?

466 (93%) of respondents answered this question. Respondents were asked to sort the options below into a priority order.

- The majority shared that, as spectators, seating was top priority (60% listed seating at the top of their list).
- Covered outdoor seating and shaded areas were ranked within the top three for most respondents.

Gathering spaces for families and teams, concession (food and beverage) and play areas for children averaged within the bottom three, meaning spectators want comfortable seating options met before other aspects are considered.

8b. Why did you rank these (question 8a) the way you did?

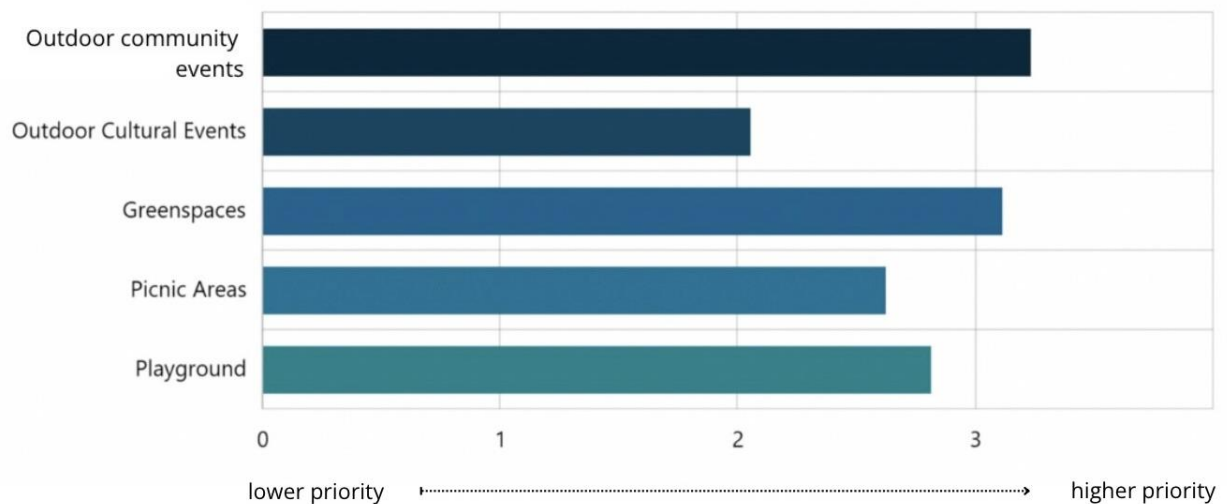
251 (50%) of respondents added their comments about their reasoning for rankings in question 8a. Answers fell into the following categories:

- **Focus on Spectator Comfort:** Comfortable and adequate seating, as well as protection from the elements (sun and rain), are the top priorities for enhancing the spectator experience.
- **Health and Safety:** Providing shaded areas and covered seating is essential for the health and safety of spectators, preventing heat-related issues and making the viewing experience more pleasant.
- **Family-Friendly Facilities:** Incorporating play areas for children can make the sports complex more attractive to families, allowing parents to enjoy the games while their children are entertained.
- **Balanced Amenities:** While some amenities like concession stands are appreciated, they are considered secondary to seating and shade. Prioritizing essential amenities while considering cost and maintenance is important.

9. What types of community uses and gathering spaces should the Northeast Athletic Complex accommodate?

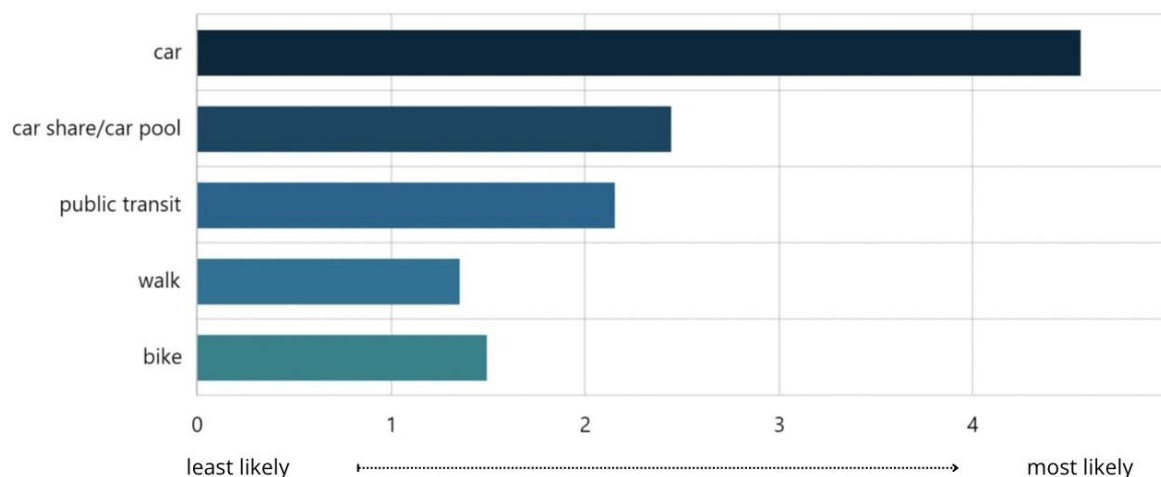
100% of survey respondents answered this question. Respondents were asked to create their priority ranking list from top choice to bottom.

Outdoor community events, greenspaces and playground averaged as the top choices for the majority of respondents.



**10. What mode(s) of transportation would you be most likely to use to get to this site?
Select all that apply:**

482 (97%) of survey respondents answered this question.



11. What should be considered to ensure the athletic complex is culturally inclusive and welcoming?

234 (47%) of survey respondents answered this question. The survey responses provided various suggestions on ensuring the athletic complex is culturally inclusive and welcoming. Here are the common themes:

Several respondents emphasized the importance of representing diverse cultures, such as displaying flags from various nations and featuring artwork that includes teams from different backgrounds, whereas others suggested using culturally neutral colors and designs to ensure that the space does not favor any specific culture over others.

Focus on Sports: A recurring theme was the idea of keeping the facility centered on sports as a universal activity that brings people together, rather than heavily focusing on cultural elements.

12. How else can we make this site more accessible and welcoming for you as a sports participant or spectator?

220 (44%) of survey respondents answered this question. The survey responses echoed many of the answers from above survey questions, such as desire for equitable design that ensures ease of access and equitable experiences for diverse user groups.

These included mentions of accessibility ramps, clear way finding, smooth pathways, locations for prayer, ample seating, and easy drop-off / pick-up access to the site for families dropping off players. People also requested family-friendly design that considered spectators with young children and/or elderly members, as well as asking for quick and simple places to get food and gather socially – such as a plaza or food truck area.

7. Outcome and next steps

The inputs received during this phase 1 engagement will inform the development of the NE Athletic Complex Master Plan, while balancing site constraints, budget, environmental conditions, operational requirements and other considerations.

The Master Plan will be used to guide future detailed design plans for the site.

The next phase of engagement (phase 2) is when The City will share the Master Plan along with a What We Did Report that will explain how the feedback that was collected during this phase 1 engagement has been considered and incorporated into the Master Plan, and why. The phase 2 engagement is targeted before the end of 2024.