



LAKAWANNA PARK PLAYGROUND

WHAT WE HEARD ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

JANUARY 29, 2025

B E N C H



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PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Lakawanna Park playground and spray park were constructed in 2000. Although a popular spot for residents and visitors, the park’s aging components and outdated design restrict its use and accessibility, raising safety concerns for its users. As per the guidelines established in the 2018 Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP), which sets replacement cycles for playgrounds at 20 years and spray parks at 15 years, the infrastructure at Lakawanna Park requires major upgrades. Several sections of the playground and spray park of Lakawanna Park are deteriorating and have undergone multiple interim repairs in recent years.

BENCH was engaged by the City of Penticton to develop two preliminary design options for the upgrades to the Lakawanna Park playground, guided by goals and priorities in existing City policies and master plans. A three-week public engagement process ran from October 23rd to November 17th, 2024 to collect feedback from the community regarding the design options. With the completion of this public engagement process, BENCH has now refined the design based on the feedback received, with the intent of project construction to begin in Fall 2025.

The following design priorities were identified through previous engagement and serve as a benchmark for the conceptual design options created.



Accessibility & Universal Design

Includes play equipment for diverse abilities and ages and accessible site furniture, pathways, and play surfaces.



Safety

Includes improvements to planting, fencing, and park entries to maintain clear sitelines and safe connections to surrounding streets and parking areas.



Urban Forest & Sustainability

Includes protecting root zones of existing trees, minimizing water use, incorporating permeable surfaces, and adding new tree plantings where possible.



Gathering Spaces

Includes site furniture for people of all ages, abilities, and sizes, and a range of sunny spaces for sitting and playing.



Creative Opportunities & Public Art

Includes interactive play ares and equipment plus visual, aural, and tactile stimulation.

ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

The purpose of community engagement was to consult with Penticton residents and stakeholders about the future design for Lakawanna Park playground. Residents were asked to share their priorities and identify any issues and considerations on the design options established for the park. BENCH and the project team also engaged with the City of Penticton stakeholders such as the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC) and the Accessibility Committee (AC) to present the conceptual design options and receive feedback on priorities and accessibility considerations.

This “What We Heard” report summarizes the community engagement findings that took place between October 23 and November 17, 2024 and the input received from the two stakeholder groups. During the public consultation phase, the City of Penticton heard from approximately 172 residents through the Shape Your City Lakawanna Park project page and two onsite workshops. Input will be used to inform the park’s future design.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION BY THE NUMBERS

Approximately 172¹ people participated in the public consultation to share thoughts on Lakawanna Park.

- 60 workshop attendees at 2 events
- 112 survey submissions
- 1,100 individuals visited the Lakawanna Park project page on shapeyourcitypenticton.ca

WAYS WE ENGAGED

The public consultation approach used online and on-site, in-person workshops to gather feedback. The consultation inputs included the following:

ONLINE



Shape Your City | A project page was opened on the City’s engagement site, Shape Your City, on October 23, 2024. The project page included background information on the project, the established design priorities, as well as two conceptual design options. Residents were encouraged to review the information and provide feedback via an online survey.

IN-PERSON



Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC) Meeting | BENCH virtually presented design priorities, two conceptual design options for the Lakawanna Park playground upgrades, and the project’s public engagement strategy to the PRAC on October 25, 2024. Feedback was used to inform the final concept design, which was presented to the PRAC on January 22, 2025.

¹ This number reflects the total number of workshop participants and the total survey submissions. However, some participants may have taken part in more than one engagement opportunity.

IN-PERSON (CONTINUED)



Accessibility Committee (AC) Meeting | BENCH presented design priorities and two conceptual design options for the Lakawanna Park playground upgrades to the AC on October 28, 2024. Feedback related to accessibility considerations was used to inform the final concept design, which was presented to the AC on January 21, 2025.



Onsite Walkshops | The consultation hosted two onsite walkshops to gather community input on the Lakawanna Park design improvements and priorities. The open environment and informal conversations in small groups provided a unique setting which supported more relaxed conversations between the design team, City staff and residents.

Participants were able to learn about the background of the project, the opportunities and constraints of the existing conditions of the park, as well as review two of the conceptual design options and the considerations for each. The walks were led by staff from BENCH and City employees from Parks and Communications departments. Participants were invited to fill out a paper survey form during or after the walkshop. In addition, QR codes were available on presentation materials throughout the walkshop that directed to the same survey questions online.

Note that the majority of walkshop attendees arrived on foot. They were predominantly residents from the immediate neighbourhood, many who currently have or previously had young children who enjoyed using the playground. Representatives from the YMCA also attended the walkshops to provide input on how the park is used in their programming.

- Saturday, November 2nd, 2024 - 35 participants
- Wednesday, November 6th, 2024 - 25 participants



WHAT WE HEARD

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

October 24, 2024 Meeting

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee reviewed the design concepts and identified safety improvements as a top priority, suggesting enhanced lighting and improving sightlines by keeping planting low. The committee also discussed the feasibility of installing a camera on the washroom building to assist with security.

Specific elements of the park were discussed, such as the importance of adequate seating for parents and caregivers, as well as the feasibility of having fixed or moveable furniture. There is also a desire to select site furniture with durability and longevity in mind. Parking was identified as an important element to consider, including areas for bicycles. The committee noted that there should be areas large enough to accommodate storage for large strollers and bikes with attachments (such as trailers). Committee members inquired about pet provisions within the park and it was confirmed these elements are outside of the current scope.

Overall, committee members showed support for playground expansion and recommended taking into consideration the projected population for the area.

January 22, 2025 Meeting

The PRAC reviewed the final concept design and was asked for its support in light of the proposed park expansion into the adjacent parking area. Committee members inquired about the phasing and clarification was given on the available funding only being enough to construct the first phase, with the second phase being constructed at a later date dependent on additional funding.

The committee expressed its appreciation of the presentation, particularly of the seating variation and quantity, as well as the attention to neurodivergent learning and play opportunities.

ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE

October 28, 2024 Meeting

The Accessibility Committee reviewed the design concepts and noted the importance of physical accessibility, especially relating to pathways around trees and the prevention of heaving from tree root growth. Safe and accessible connections to the parking lot were also identified as a priority, regardless of which option is developed. It was requested that the playground plan have flexibility for a safe future connection to the other park parcels on the west side of Power Street.

The importance of an accessible washroom was also noted; while not in the scope of this project, the City noted that upgrades to the washroom have been approved as part of the facilities projects in the 2025-2029 Financial Plan.

Committee members also discussed play options for neurodivergent children, noting the need for quiet spaces & less stimulating activities/locations, tactile and aural opportunities, nature play, voice activated play equipment, and infographics for non-verbal indication. The committee noted how important it is to include non-equipment items for play, such as slopes and looping paths.

Indigenization was noted as a consideration for the park. The AC identified individuals who can provide contacts to Penticton Indian Band, who can potentially contribute to art, naming, or other indigenization activities.

January 21, 2025 Meeting

The AC reviewed the final concept design, and requested that the garbage enclosure be made accessible. Members also inquired about the size of the new water play area, and it was confirmed that it is comparable to the existing water play area. While understanding that the washroom upgrades will be completed under a separate contract and funding allocation, the committee requested confirmation that the park design in this area will be compatible with the future washroom upgrades; this was confirmed.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The following table summarizes the responses received from both the online survey and onsite workshops, organized by topic.

PARK USAGE

The park is used year-round, but most use occurs in the spring, summer and fall seasons. Responses showed that 45% of respondents use the park a few times a month, and 27% use the park a few times a week. Almost half of respondents (49%) use the park in the afternoon while 35% use the park in the morning. 72% of travel to the park by private automobile, and 36% of respondents walk to the park.

PLAY EQUIPMENT

Respondents showed strong support for the provision of play equipment for children ages 0-12, with play spaces separated by age groups. Positive feedback was provided on the stated guiding principles of play equipment accessibility, universal design, and diversity of challenge. More than half of respondents (52.8%) supported having play equipment that can be used year round and cater to different age groups.

Workshop attendees were predominately in favour of focusing play equipment for children ages 0-12 and were less enthusiastic about expanding play opportunities for children 12+ in age. However, online survey participants expressed support for play equipment of all ages, including teenagers and adults.

PARK FEATURES	<p>The preservation of the existing trees received unanimous support from those who provided comment on this item. Respondents expressed a desire to focus play and seating elements in areas that have shade. Many also expressed a desire for additional seating, tables, and informal gathering spaces for picnics, children’s birthday parties, and caregiver use.</p>
SPRAY PARK	<p>Walkshop feedback was split on the importance of continuing to have a spray park or water play feature in this location, and 52.8% of respondents supported replacing the spray park with play equipment that could be used year-round. Yet feedback also showed that water play had the same high level of importance as did 0-12 play equipment, and many responses highlighted tot play and water play as the amenities most used during park visits. Additionally, 68% of responses stated a preference for Design Option 2, which included a spray park.</p>
PARKING & LANEWAY	<p>Many respondents supported the idea of reducing parking and redirecting the laneway onto Churchill Ave., identifying the parking area as an opportunity for more diverse play opportunities. However, a number respondents were not in favour of a reduction in parking stalls in the park.</p> <p>Several walkshop attendees identified safety concerns over the volume and speed of traffic in the lane to the south of the playground.</p>
SAFETY & ACCESSIBILITY	<p>Fencing was identified as a high priority to maintain at the park for safety concerns. Improving lines of site at entrances, accessibility, and universal design within the park were largely found to be desirable and positive.</p> <p>Walkshop participants expressed the most concern with actual and perceived conflicts with the homeless population using the washroom on the east side of the building, using park planting areas as washrooms, littering, and causing damage to the fence on the east side of the playground. Walkshop attendees also identified teenagers as a potential safety concern, though they seldom actually cause trouble.</p>

CONCLUSION

In addition to collecting feedback from residents and stakeholders on their priorities and considerations for the redesign of the Lakawanna Park playground, a primary goal of the engagement process was to gather feedback that would help the design team gauge interest in maintaining the spray park, and to determine whether participants would like to see the playground expanded into the existing parking area. After compiling feedback from stakeholders, the Shape Your City Lakawanna Park project page, and the two onsite workshops, it became clear that the guiding principles used in the initial design phase were largely supported and that Option 2 was preferred overall; a water play element was important to continue to include for younger age groups and, while loss of parking is a concern, an expansion of the playground into the existing parking area was still seen as desirable. Natural elements are a priority for park users, with nearly unanimous support for retaining the existing trees and ensuring their continued health.

While feedback on many issues was like-minded, there were two key areas where respondents disagreed. First, responses diverged greatly between workshop attendees and online participants regarding which age groups should be prioritized in the playground redesign. Workshop attendees were more hesitant to support play equipment for those over the age of twelve than were online participants; this potentially could be attributed to a difference in demographics between workshop attendees and online participants from across the broader City.

Second, a small majority of respondents supported replacing the spray park in favour of play equipment for year-round use; at the same time, water play was identified as one of the most important amenities for park users. Although the results seem contradictory, there is an opportunity to meet both of these needs by replacing water play features with those that still offer play value outside the summer months, even when the water is turned off.

Additional to what was presented in the design concepts, a few key areas of interest were identified. The Accessibility Committee, in particular, encouraged the inclusion of play features and equipment that accommodate neurodiverse children and differing learning abilities and styles. Furthermore, many respondents were clear in their desire for not only ample seating opportunities within the playground, but also a diversity of seating and gathering options. Flexibility should be considered for varying group sizes (from an individual caregiver wanting to watch children on the playground, to a small children's birthday party or family picnic) and physical requirements (from parking areas for strollers and bikes with trailers, to both shady and sunny seating locations throughout the day). This feedback has all been carefully considered for the final design concept which builds upon the strengths of this popular park while enhancing safety and accessibility for all community members.

APPENDIX A:

ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE

DATE	ACTIVITY
October 23, 2024	Project information and feedback form on www.shapeyourcity.ca
October 23, 2024	PRAC presentation
October 25, 2024	Press Release
October 28, 2024	Invitation to attend walkshop sent to Queens Park Elementary
October 28, 2024	AC presentation
October 30, 2024	Social Media Post
November 2, 2024	Walkshop #1
November 3, 2024	Social Media Post
November 4, 2024	Invitation to attend walkshop sent to YMCA Penticton
November 6, 2024	Walkshop #2
November 13, 2024	E blast
November 14, 2024	Social Media Post
November 17, 2024	Deadline for feedback forms
January 21, 2025	AC presentation
January 22, 2025	PRAC presentation

APPENDIX B:

COMMENTS RECEIVED AT WALKSHOPS

PROGRAM

- Suggestions included focusing the park on toddlers and younger children, while newer developments to the adjacent park (Lakawanna West and South) could cater more to older kids
- Protecting existing trees in the area is crucial to maintain the park's natural beauty
- This is a valuable park for small children; majority of people want focus of the park to be kids ages 2-12
- Good idea to separate play areas by age. Concern about conflict between younger and older kids; older kids sometimes engage in unsafe behaviours and encourages younger kids to jump from heights or spraying water at them inappropriately when using the spray park
- More seating needed, especially tables
- 12+ wouldn't want to come here, what would they do? They don't want to be near little kids

SPRAY PARK

- Many expressed a love of the spray park and a desire for it to be usable year-round rather than only seasonally, while some also value the preservation of the spray park
- A few people think the spray park is under utilized or unnecessary

PARKING

- Many people identified the importance of the parking area
- Questions regarding paid parking arrangements were raised, with many expressing apprehensions about insufficient parking availability, especially during peak seasons
- If issues with the parking persist, it was proposed that the area near the tennis courts could be developed into more parking space to allow for further expansion on the park
- Several people disagreed, saying that the parking lot is rarely full (apart from July and August), and that this land shouldn't be wasted on so much parking

SAFETY AND ACCESSIBILITY

- There were suggestions on considering how the park integrates with the larger Lakawanna Park area. Improved sightlines, better entry points from adjacent streets and the parking lot, as well as better lighting throughout the park were emphasized for safety and accessibility
- Overall, there seems to be a favourable opinion towards the idea of expanding the park, although logistics around parking and washroom access need improvement, including better wayfinding signage
- The current asphalt ramp has been identified as a problem. Plans for the new playground should incorporate rubber surfacing to enhance safety
- Issues with the washrooms include homeless individuals frequently lock themselves inside, which raises safety concerns, particularly when children are present
- Fencing considered important for safety of small children and to keep users out at night (including several people in favour of locking gates at night)

- General positivity about focus on accessibility and universal design
- Re-routing of laneway is looked upon favourably; current speed of traffic in laneway was expressed as a concern
- Occasionally, large groups of teenagers congregate in the back area, creating a sense of unease, although they seldom cause direct trouble
- Several comments about fear of teenagers in this park or stereotype of teenagers as trouble-makers

WASHROOM

- There are ongoing concerns regarding the washroom's accessibility, with some areas not fully meeting the needs of all users
- A significant concern is related to the management and upkeep of the restroom facilities. Many users mistakenly believe the washrooms are the responsibility of the restaurant, leading to confusion and complaints when supplies run low

OTHER

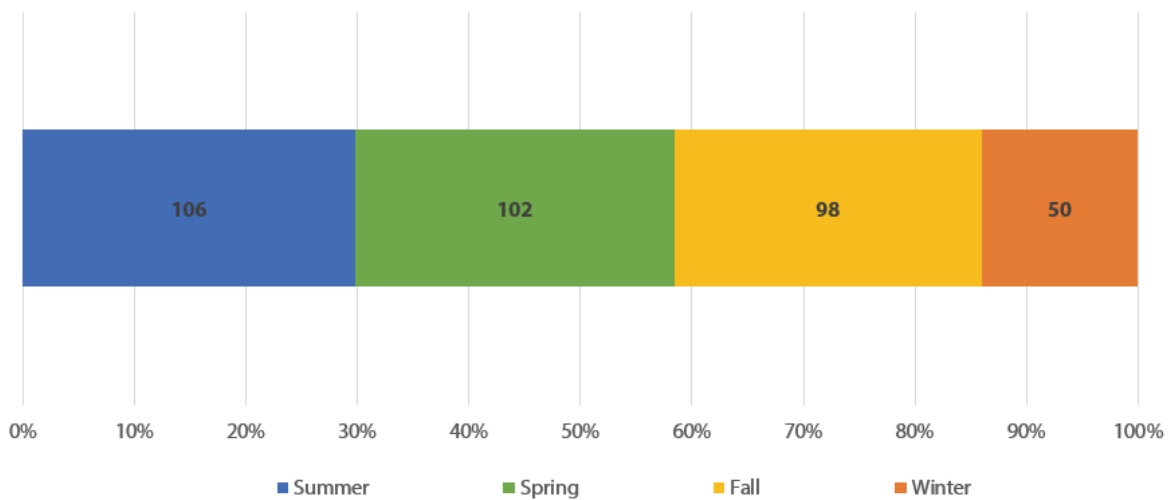
- Concerns about the orientation of slides have been raised, as those facing south tend to heat up and become unusable
- Many community members shared stories about their generational ties to the park, with grandparents reminiscing about the park's use in their children's youth and now enjoying it with their grandchildren. The park is recognized as one of the most popular, second only to Skaha Discovery Park
- Local business owners expressed a positive outlook regarding the proposed changes for the project, recognizing it as an overall improvement for the community

APPENDIX C: ONLINE FEEDBACK RESPONSES

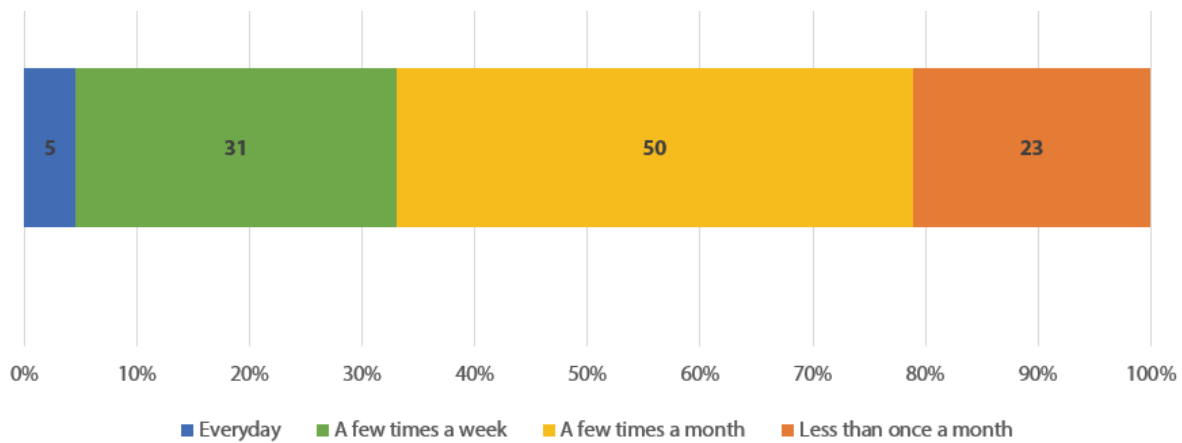
1. Please enter your postal code to help us understand where Lakawanna Park users live.

This question received 106 responses.

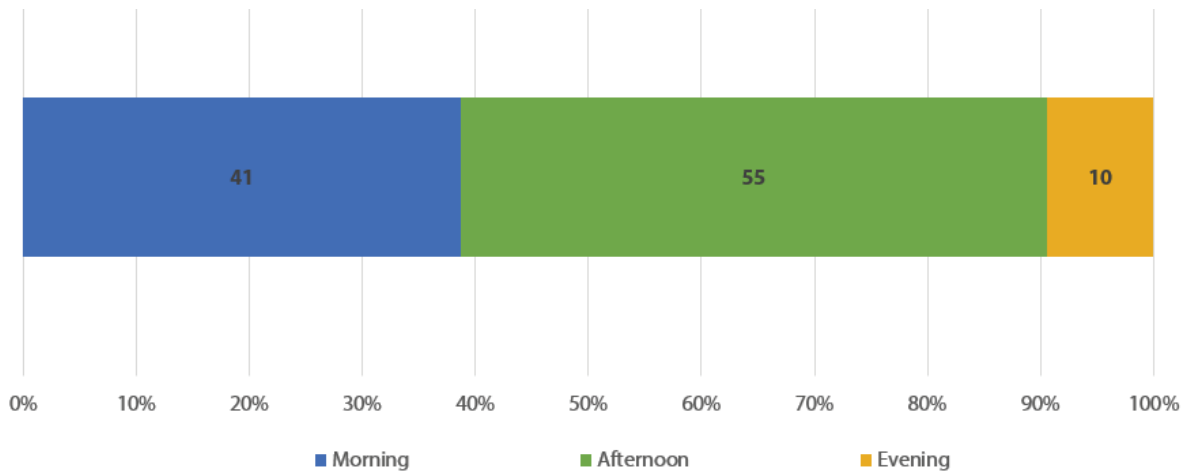
2. Which season(s) do you visit Lakawanna Park? Choose all that apply.



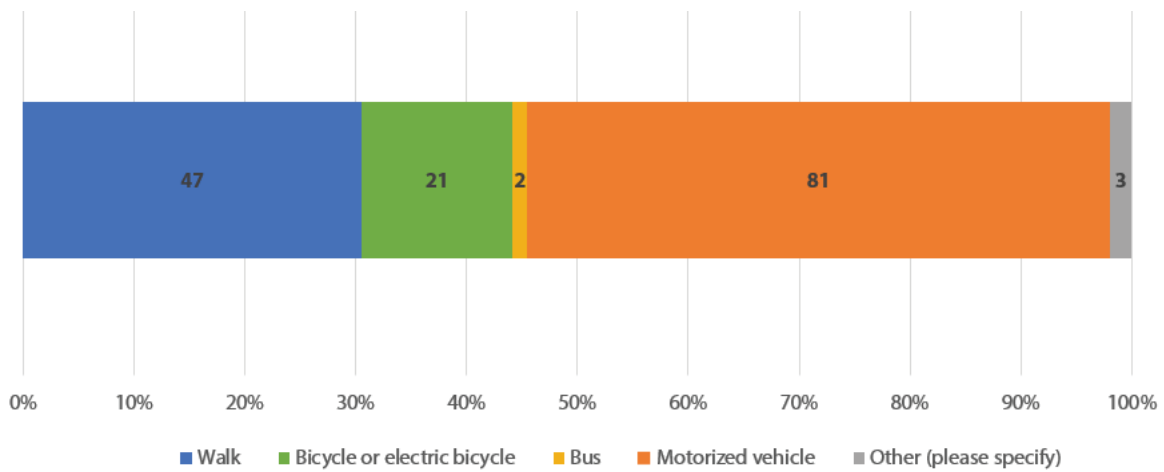
3. How often do you come to the park?



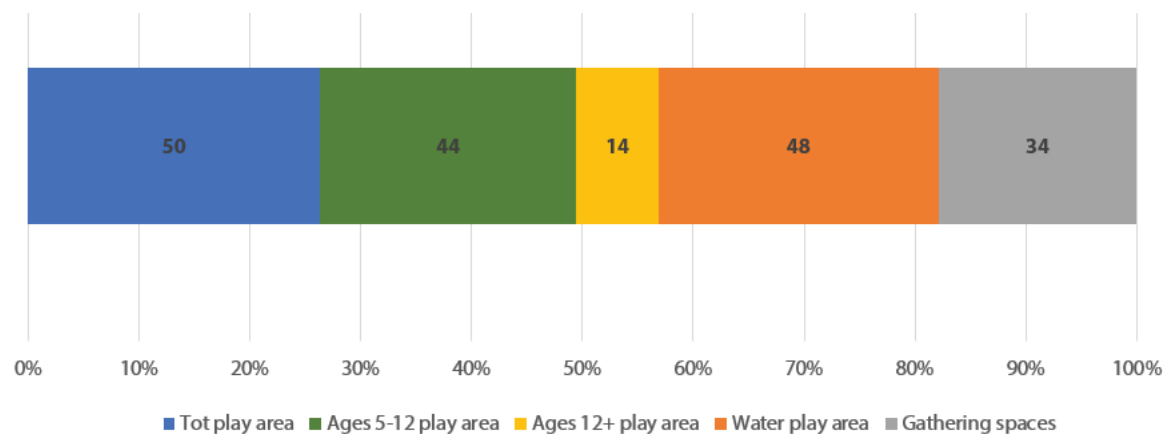
4. What time of day do you usually visit the park?



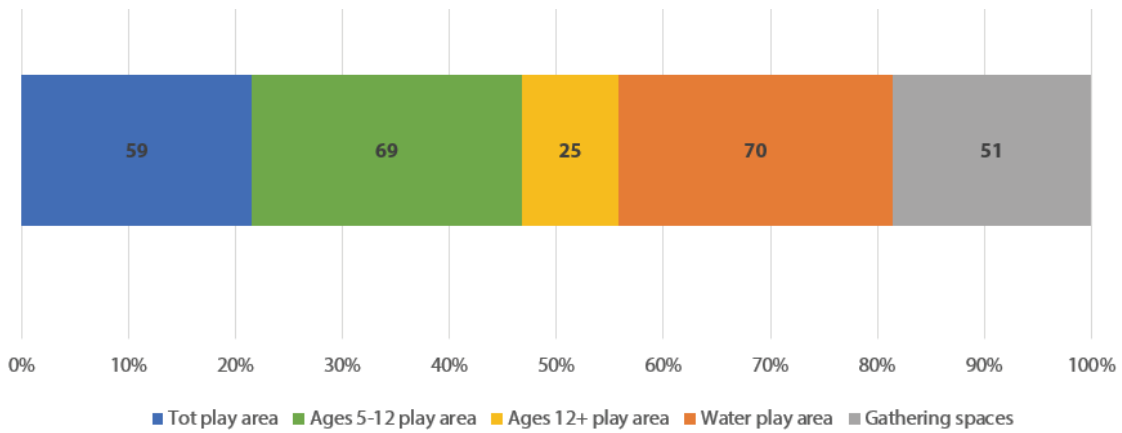
5. What modes of transportation do you use to get to the park?



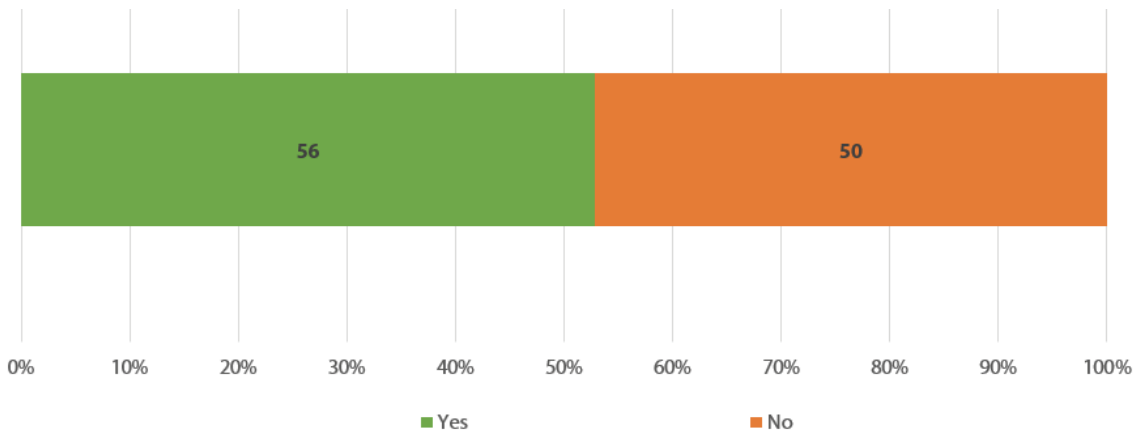
6. Which of the following areas would you (and/or those under your care) use the most? Please select up to 2.



7. Which amenities in this area are most important to you (and/or those under your care)? Please select up to 3.



8. Would you support replacing the spray park with additional play equipment that could be used year-round and cater to different age groups?



9. What do you like about Design Option 1?

A summary of the themes and comments are provided here. Full comments are available at shapeyourcitypenticton.ca

- Tree play feature
- Keeping the spray park feature
- Greater accessibility access
- Keeping the parking lot
- Separated areas/structures based on age
- Perimeter walkway and improved garbage enclosure
- Maintaining existing footprint

10. What could be improve in Design Option 1?

- Grass areas to sit with infants
- More complex play structures for older children
- More grass areas, no meandering path
- Wind protection from lake
- Swings closer to tot area
- Parking for strollers, striders, bikes and trikes
- More picnic areas
- Better washroom access, more facilities
- Keep the spray park
- Desire to not include 12+ area at this location

11. What do you like about Design Option 2?

- Increased seating
- Park expansion and elevated tree area
- Parkour area and sensory wall
- Redirection of laneway to Churchill Ave access
- Additional seating and informal gathering spots
- Diverse play options for various ages
- Spray park

12. What could be improved in Design Option 2?

- Don't reduce parking
- Incorporate toddler swings with rest of swings
- Make the spray park with features that can be used year-round/off-season
- Tot space and young kid space are too far apart, difficult for families with multiple aged kids
- Parking for strollers, bikes, wagons
- Keep washroom access, improve access
- Ensure the park is fully fenced
- Concern for emergency vehicle access to laneway if accessed from Churchill Ave, it is a very tight corner
- Add monkey bars

13. Which design option do you think serves the community best?

