

# WHAT WE HEARD

## Sports Village Park Needs Assessment

### ENGAGEMENT REPORT



**Fall 2023**





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# Project overview

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report summarizes what the City of Vaughan heard through community engagement on Sports Village Park (2600 Rutherford Road) as part of a needs assessment study.

In July and August of 2023, the City hosted an online survey to collect feedback on how community members currently use Sports Village Park and what they feel is missing. An abbreviated paper survey was also shared with residents of Villa Giardino in both English and Italian.

Several questions were asked to seek feedback on the following:

- how the park space is currently used
- how often participants use the park
- which amenities are needed to support children's play, sports and active living, gathering and social connection or environmental protection and enjoyment

**In total, the City heard from 465 people, 395 of whom completed the online survey and 70 who completed the paper survey.**

Most survey respondents expressed their support and excitement for additional amenities in Sports Village Park. Participants strongly supported a playground, pathway improvements throughout the park and more sports facilities. They also expressed an interest in a splashpad, amenities that support social gathering, an off-leash dog area, pickleball courts, walking and hiking trails, an event space and picnic areas.

## WHAT IS A NEEDS ASSESSMENT STUDY?

Before a park can be designed and developed, staff must submit a budget request to Council for their approval during the annual budgeting process. To inform this ask, City staff complete a needs assessment study that includes:

- an inventory and analysis of current site conditions, community demographics and area needs based on standards set in the [2018 Active Together Master Plan](#).
- community input on the park's existing amenities and features, usage and desired new amenities.

Using this information, City staff develop high-level cost estimates. If the budget is approved by Council, the City can proceed with park design and construction. Additional consultation may be solicited from the community as the park is designed.



# What about The Sports Village complex?

The operation of The Sports Village complex – the recreational building beside the park – and programming offered were not included in this study, including the main building, all parking lots, outdoor volleyball area, skating trail and patio grounds. The area in scope for the needs assessment study included the open greenspace, senior baseball diamond and junior baseball diamond (Figure 1).

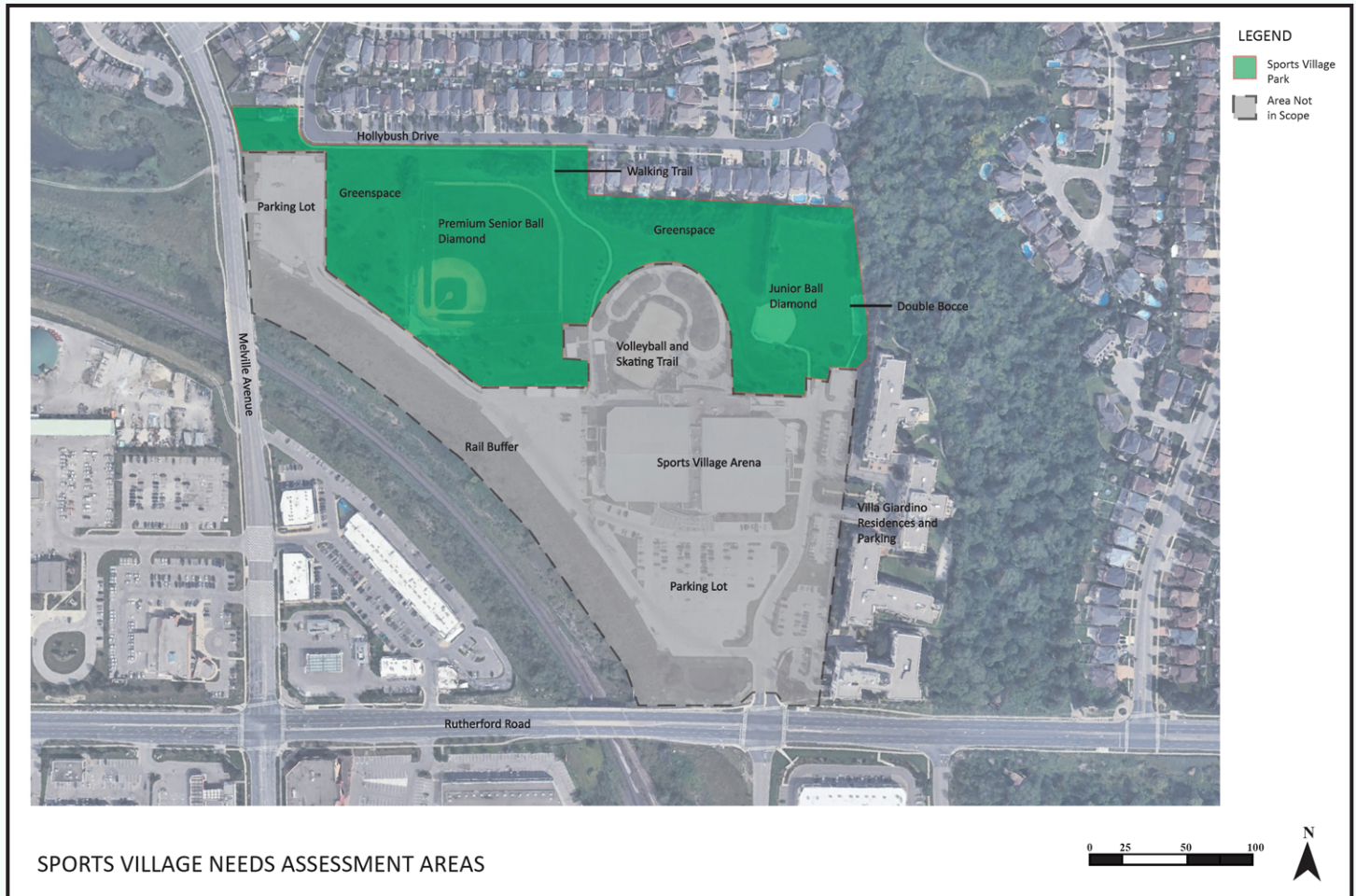


Figure 1: Needs assessment study area for Sports Village Park





# How we engaged

## Online survey

The City launched an online survey from July 11 to Aug. 8, 2023. The survey was hosted on the City's online engagement platform – Have Your Say, Vaughan – to collect community feedback on how the park is currently used and how residents would like to use it in the future.

The primary focus of the survey was to collect feedback on which future park use categories resonated with community members and, within each category, which amenities and features they would prefer. The four use categories were:

- childrens' play.
- active living.
- sports and active living.
- gathering and social connection.
- environmental protection and enjoyment.

## Paper survey

The City delivered an abbreviated paper survey to the residents of Villa Giardino on July 11, 2023, and collected them on Aug. 8, 2023. As Villa Giardino is a residence for older adults and seniors, the option to complete a paper survey was provided to address potential barriers around computer access and technological literacy. City staff met with Villa Giardino board members and were advised that a significant proportion of residents are Italian-speaking and may not be able or comfortable providing feedback in English, so the paper survey was provided in both English and Italian. The survey included five questions to better understand the following:

- how often residents use Sports Village Park
- who residents visit the park with
- which activities residents enjoy when visiting the park
- how residents would prioritize which new amenities are needed in the park
- additional thoughts about what is needed in the park





# How we reached the community

Promotion of the online survey was multi-faceted and included a combination of far-reaching and targeted communications tactics.

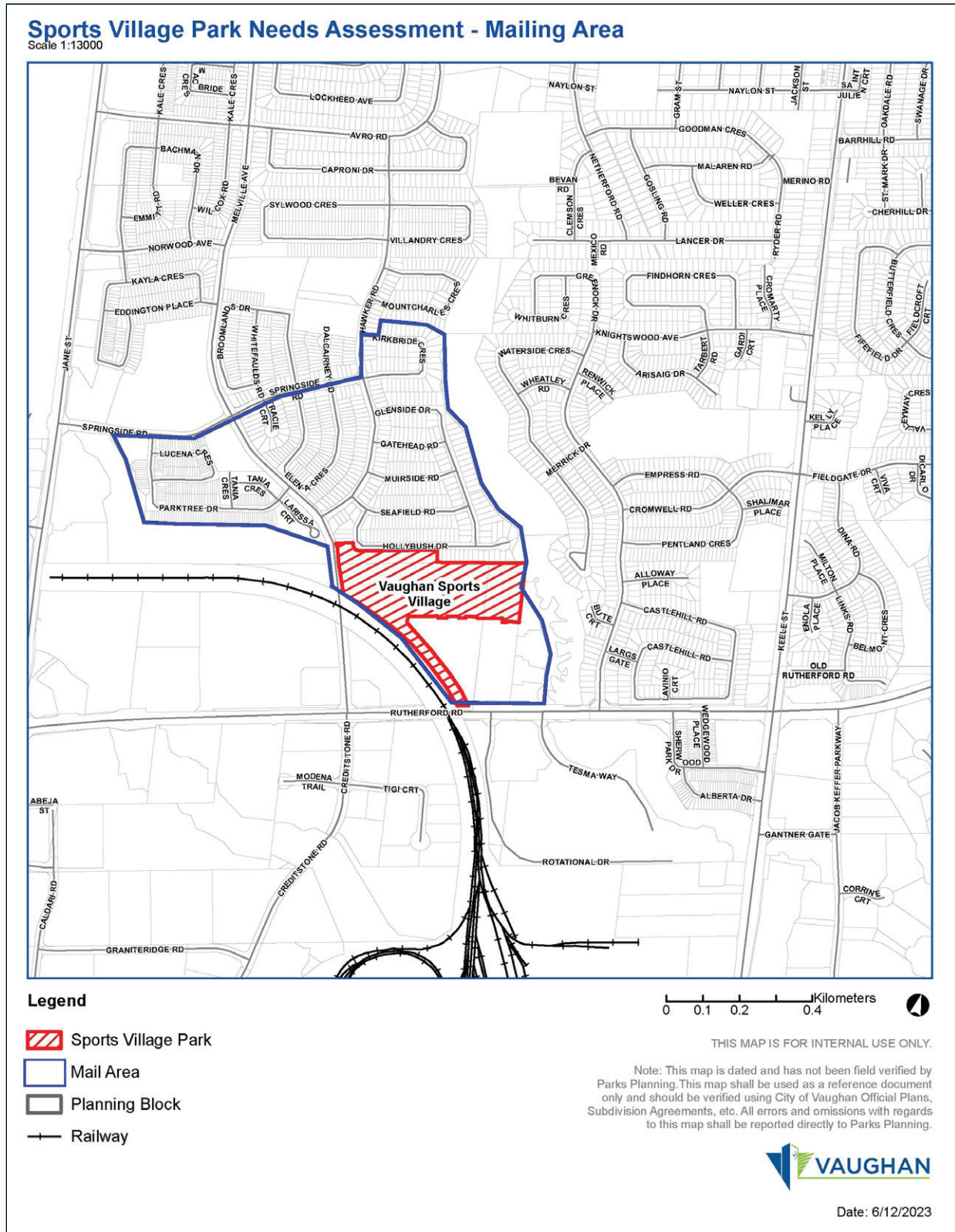


Figure 2: Map of residents who received a project notice



## Project notice

A project notice with information about the project and online survey was mailed to 902 homes west of the valley, within approximately 500 metres of Sports Village Park (Figure 2). Additionally, this information was shared with management at The Sports Village complex and sent to Everest Academy, a sports school functioning out of the complex. In addition, direct mail, emails and courtesy reminders were sent to the South Maple Ratepayers' Association.



Figure 3: Project notice mailed to residents within 500 metres of Sports Village Park

## Public service announcement

A public service announcement was released on July 11, 2023 to promote the project to local, GTA, national and cultural media outlets, and those who subscribe to Vaughan News, the City's eNewsletter. The public service announcement was issued to 43,361 subscribers.

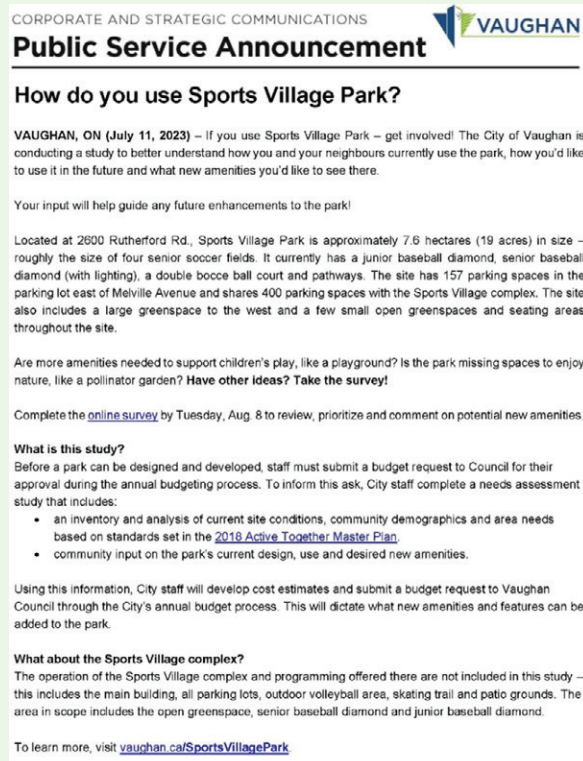


Figure 4: Public service announcement sent to residents



## Social media

From July 11 to Aug. 8, 2023, the City shared 16 posts across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn to promote the online survey and encourage the community to learn more by visiting the project website.



Figure 5: Social media post

## Community signage

The City installed temporary signage around Sports Village Park throughout the engagement period to inform those living in the community about the online survey. Three roadside signs were placed at high-traffic areas within the community at the following locations:

- southwest corner of Melville Avenue and Springside Road
- east of Melville Avenue and west of Hollybush Drive
- north of Rutherford Road at the entrance to The Sports Village complex parking lot

The survey was also promoted across the City's digital signage network, including on televisions in community centres.



Figure 6: Roadside sign located in the community



Figure 7: Digital advertisement played on community centre televisions



## Posters

The City installed six posters inside The Sports Village complex throughout the engagement period to inform those who visit the complex about the online survey. Additionally, several posters were provided to the managers of Villa Giardino to place in each building.



Figure 8: Poster placed in the Villa Giardino residences

## Website

Throughout the engagement process, residents were encouraged to visit the project webpage at [vaughan.ca/SportsVillagePark](https://vaughan.ca/SportsVillagePark) for more information. This report will be posted to the project website and additional updates will follow as the study progresses.

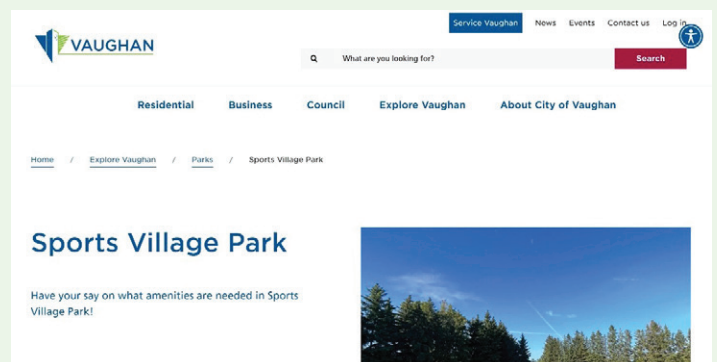


Figure 9: Sports Village Park project website



## Who we heard from

**In total, 465 people responded to the public engagement.** Of those 465 people, 395 responded to the online survey, and 70 completed the abbreviated paper survey. Based on postal code data, just over half (55 per cent) of respondents live close to Sport Village Park, in the area bounded by Major Mackenzie Drive to the north, Rutherford Road to the south, Jane Street to the west, and Keele Street to the east.

The survey included several questions to help the City better understand who participated, including their age, who lives in their household and how they heard about the project.

### AGE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Feedback was collected from respondents representing a wide age range. Most participants were 35 to 44 years old (24 per cent) or 45 to 54 years old (24 per cent), followed by 55 to 64 years old (19 per cent) and 25 to 34 (15 per cent). Few respondents were between 18 and 24 years old (nine per cent) or over 65 years old (five per cent). Data on the respondents' age was only collected via the online survey. It does not include the 70 Villa Giardino residents who completed a paper survey.

### What is your age?

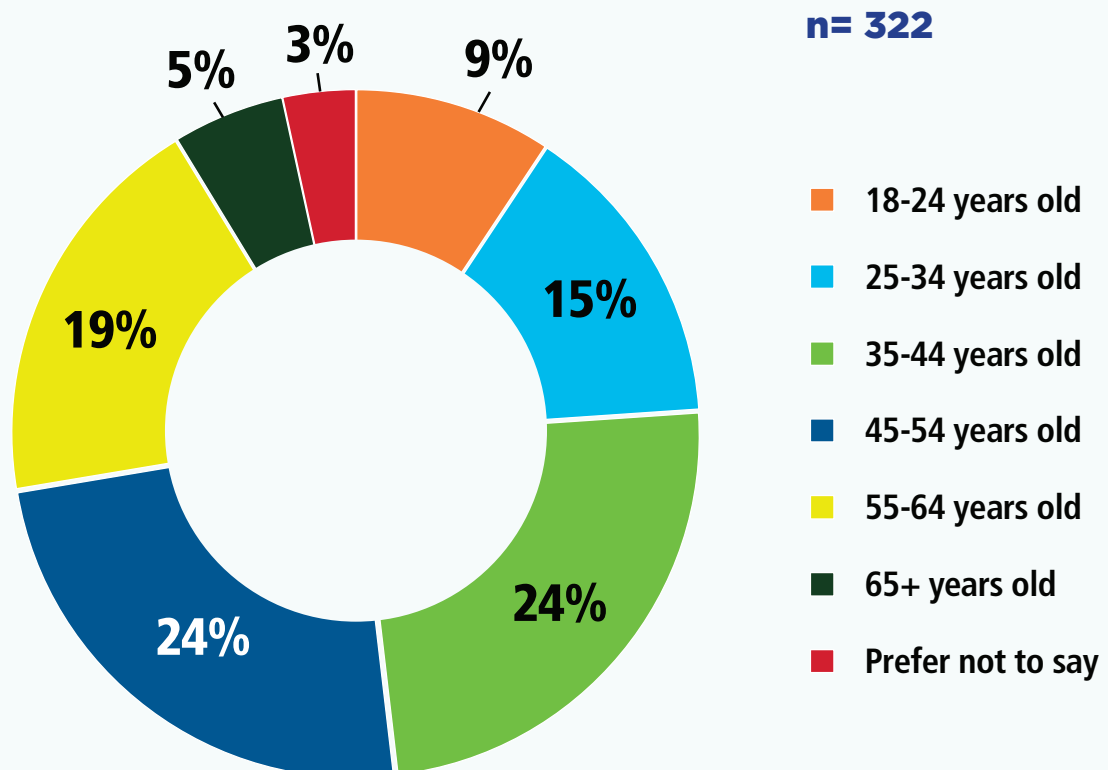


Figure 10: Survey responses to "What is your age?"

## HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

Those who took the online survey represented a mixture of household types, including single- and two-parent families with kids, multi-generational families and adult/older adult households with no children. The majority (66 per cent) of households included one or two adults. Many of the households included one or more children, teens or young adults. More than half (56 per cent) included one or two teens (13 to 19 years old) or young adults (20 to 29 years old). Almost half (45 per cent) of the survey respondents indicated they live in households with one to two children from zero to 12 years of age, and, almost half (42 per cent) included at least one or two older adults or seniors (55 years of age or older). Similar to the question above, this data does not include the 70 Villa Giardino residents who completed a paper survey.

### Including yourself, how many people within each age group live in your household?

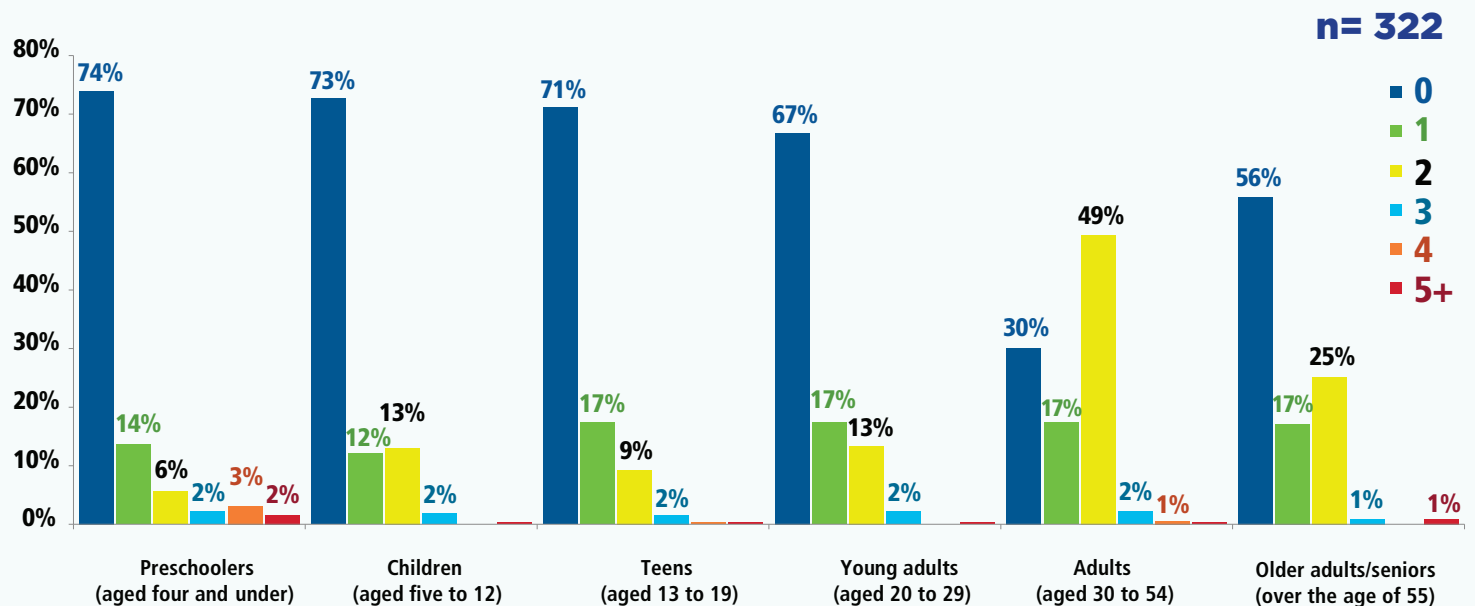


Figure 11: Survey responses to “Including yourself, how many people within each age group live in your household?”





## AWARENESS AND OUTREACH

The survey results showed that most participants heard about the project through the mailed letter from City staff (34 per cent) and signage in the community (32 per cent). Others heard about the project through word of mouth (18 per cent), social media (16 per cent), social media (16 per cent) or the City of Vaughan eNewsletter (11 per cent). This information helps inform staff on how to best reach residents and community members in Vaughan with future public engagement opportunities.

### How did you hear about this project?

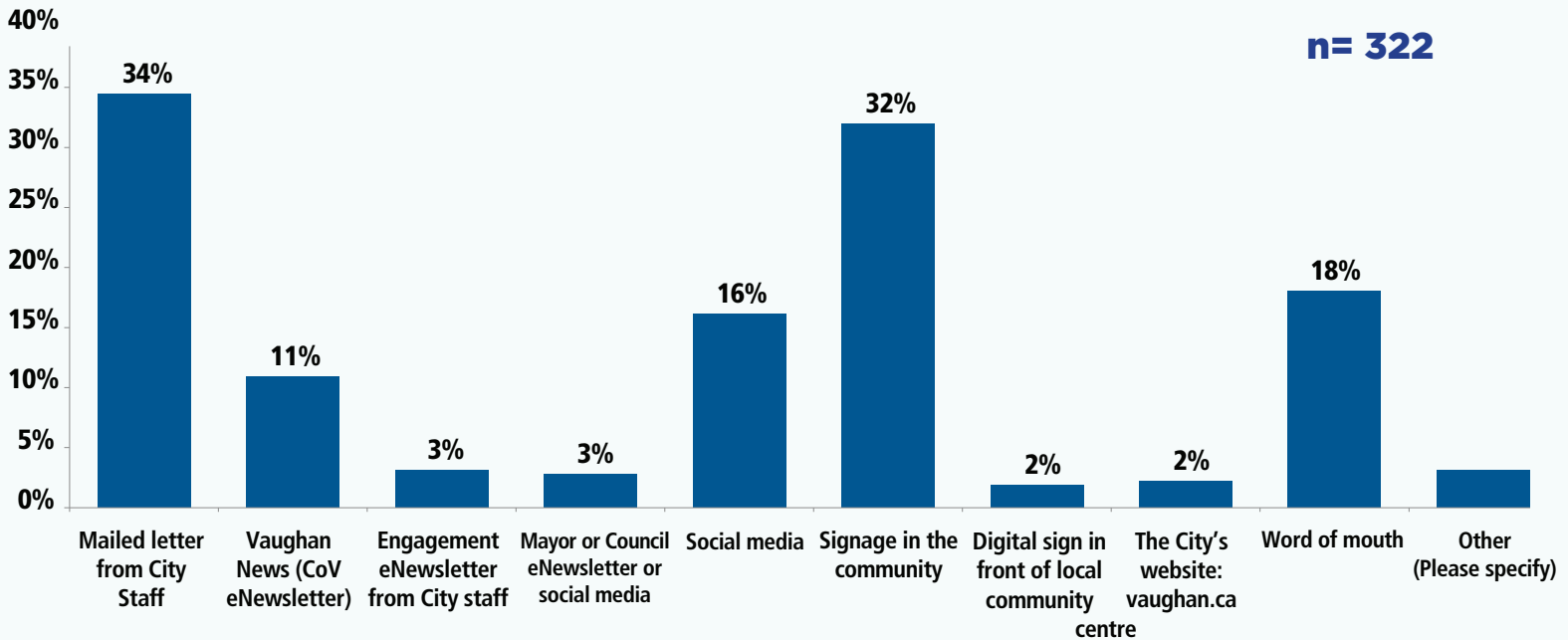


Figure 12: Survey responses to “How did you hear about this project? Select all that apply.”



# What we heard

## EXISTING CONDITIONS AND SITE CONTEXT

Sports Village Park is approximately 7.6 hectares (19 acres) in size. It currently contains a junior baseball diamond, senior baseball diamond (with lighting), a double bocce ball court, paved pathways, a skating trail and beach volleyball courts. The site has 157 parking spaces in the parking lot off of Melville Avenue and shares approximately 400 parking spaces with The Sports Village complex. The building provides access to five beach volleyball courts that are booked through the complex operator. The park also includes unprogrammed open space – a grass lawn – to the west and a few small open greenspaces and seating areas dispersed throughout the site. Pedestrians can access the park via a paved pathway off of Hollybush Drive, as well as two paved pathways on the east and west sides of The Sports Village complex.

To help City staff better understand the current use of the park, participants were asked to provide feedback on the existing conditions in Sports Village Park. Many respondents had positive to mixed sentiments towards the existing features of the park. Participants provided a wide range of feedback on what is working well, what isn't and suggested potential improvements:

**Wayfinding and visibility:** Participants felt these aspects of the park are lacking, giving the impression that the park is a private facility geared towards specific sports and clubs, especially with the use of the park by Everest Academy.

**Public washroom facilities:** Many participants expressed they would like to see public restrooms added to the park, as well as change rooms. Residents noted they were unsure whether restrooms in The Sports Village complex are open to the public. Better wayfinding and signage were also suggested to direct park patrons to available restrooms.

**Water fountains:** Participants noted a lack of drinking fountains and/or water bottle stations in the park and would like to see some installed. Similar to washroom facilities, participants felt unclear as to whether water fountains in The Sports Village complex are open to the public.

**Waste bins:** A few respondents requested more waste bins in the park, sharing they see large garbage bags placed next to waste receptacles in the park, indicating more bins are needed.

**Seating:** Requests were made to provide additional seating throughout the park, including covered picnic benches, gathering areas and places to sit and watch baseball games.

**Condition of the pathways:** The existing pathways were felt to be in poor condition and should be fixed and better maintained. Respondents highlighted many potholes and uneven patches, which make the park less accessible to elderly residents and those with mobility issues. They requested a review of the existing pathway's design to improve connectivity between park amenities and asked for additional dedicated pathways for biking.



**Unprogrammed open greenspace:** Participants felt the grass is in poor condition and the existing no-mow zone is too large and could be better allocated to other activities. Suggestions included adding pathways for exploration, more trees or a community garden.

**Vandalism in the park:** The baseball diamonds were highlighted as often vandalized, with the equipment box broken into, broken bottles and remnants of fireworks scattered around and the backstop fence damaged from golf balls.

**Public vs. private amenities:** Respondents expressed confusion as to which facilities are private and/or public in the park, including the volleyball courts, portables and certain pathways.

**Skating trail:** While many shared they enjoy the newly opened skate trail as a winter activity to gather and get exercise, some recommended a wider/larger rink, and others requested an additional outdoor hockey rink and change room.

**Melville Avenue access:** Many participants (especially those from Villa Giardino) would like the access road opened to the parking lot off of Melville Avenue. Residents noted that the road closure creates increased traffic in the area, and, if opened, it would also allow seniors to drive more comfortably through The Sports Village complex and avoid construction on Rutherford Road. Potholes and a lack of lighting were also cited as parking lot concerns.

**Noise:** Participants expressed their concern with the existing noise from sports and worried additional facilities would only increase the noise from the park.



## CURRENT PARK USES

Online and paper survey respondents were asked which activities they enjoy when visiting Sports Village Park. The most popular park use reported was exercise, including walking, jogging, fitness and biking (80 per cent). This was followed by utilizing the unprogrammed open greenspace for free play (30 per cent) or enjoying nature (46 per cent). Relaxation is another popular use, with respondents reporting they enjoy sitting (31 per cent), socializing and gathering (27 per cent) or enjoying the park alone (25 per cent). Respondents also use the park to play sports, including softball or baseball (14 per cent), skating (34 per cent) or informal sports in the open greenspace (17 per cent). A further 26 per cent use Sports Village Park to exercise their dog. Twelve per cent noted they do not visit the park, and 14 per cent chose “other,” sharing that they use the park for tobogganing, riding their scooter, rollerblading and attending sporting events.

### Which of the following activities do you enjoy when visiting Sports Village Park?

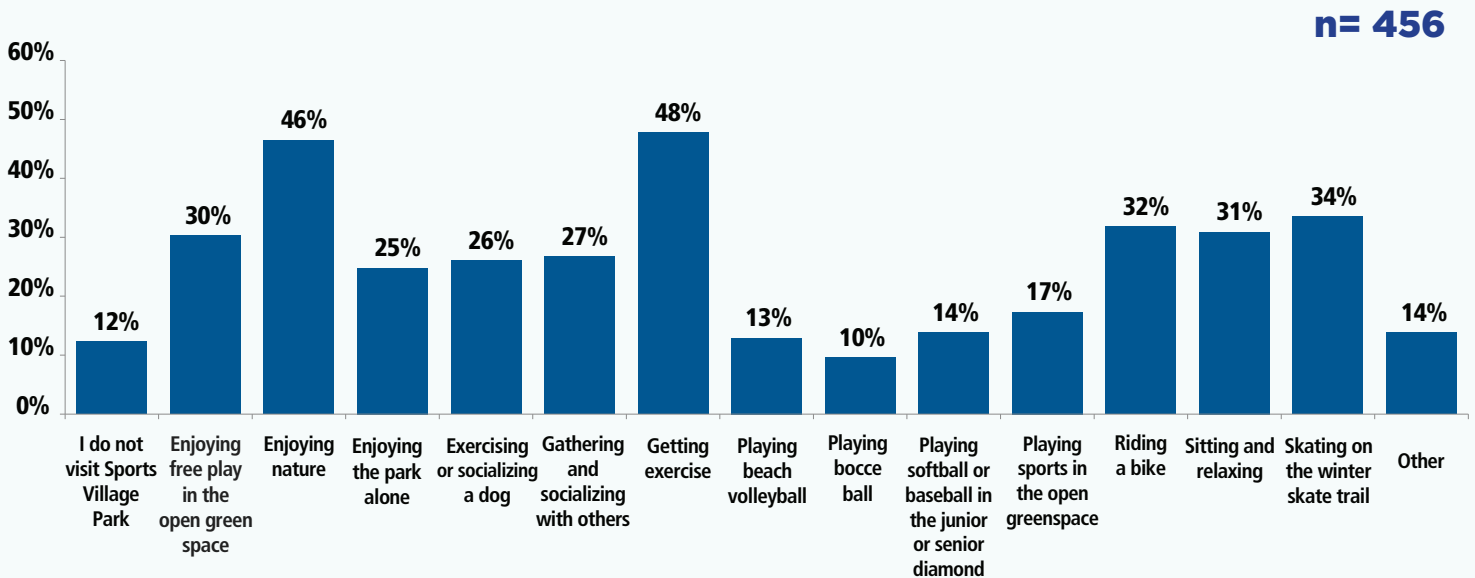


Figure 13: Survey responses to “Which of the following activities do you enjoy when visiting Sports Village Park? Select all that apply.”

Online and paper survey respondents were also asked how often they visit the park. Half (50 per cent) reported visiting the park often (at least once per week), 27 per cent reported visiting the park sometimes (at least once per month) and 21 per cent reported visiting the park rarely (a few times a year or less).



## How often do you visit Sports Village Park?

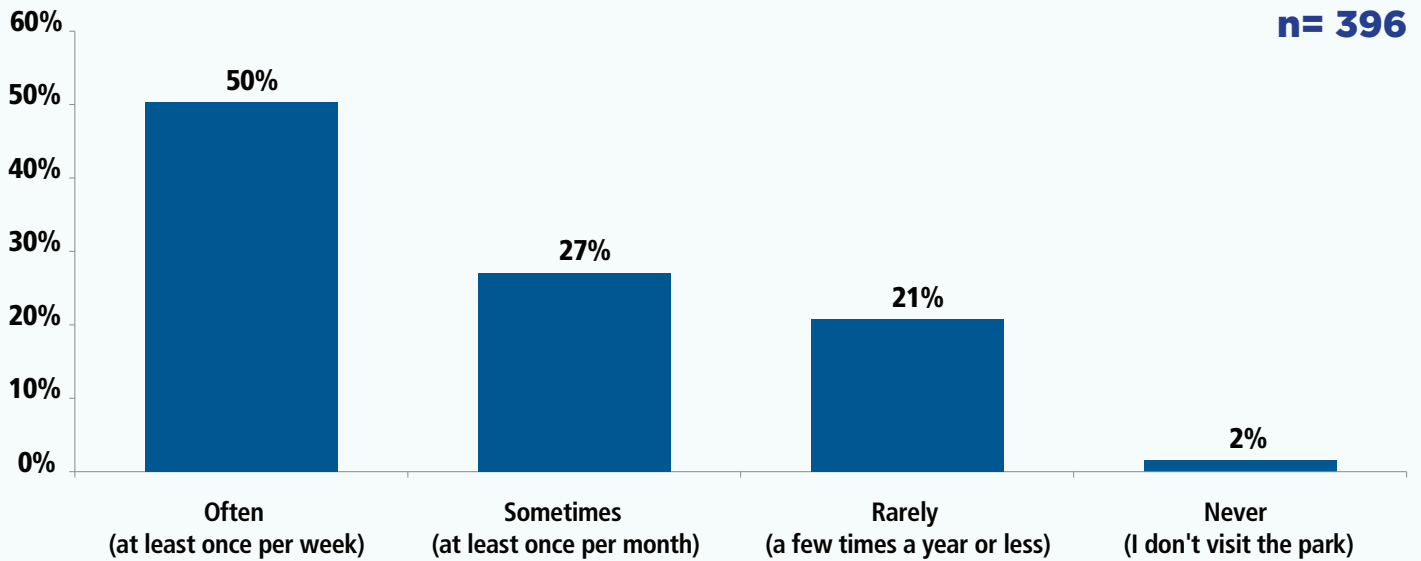


Figure 14: Survey responses to “How often do you visit Sports Village Park?”

In addition to reporting on how they visit Sports Village Park, participants were also asked who they typically go with. The majority of survey respondents visit the park with others, with only 27 per cent visiting the park alone. They visit with their spouse (51 per cent), children (39 per cent), friends (43 per cent), a caregiver (18 per cent), grandchildren (17 per cent), teens (13 per cent) or an elderly family member (12 per cent). Although not provided as an option to select from, eight per cent of participants wrote in that they visit the park with their dog.

## When you visit the park, who do you typically go with? Select all that apply.

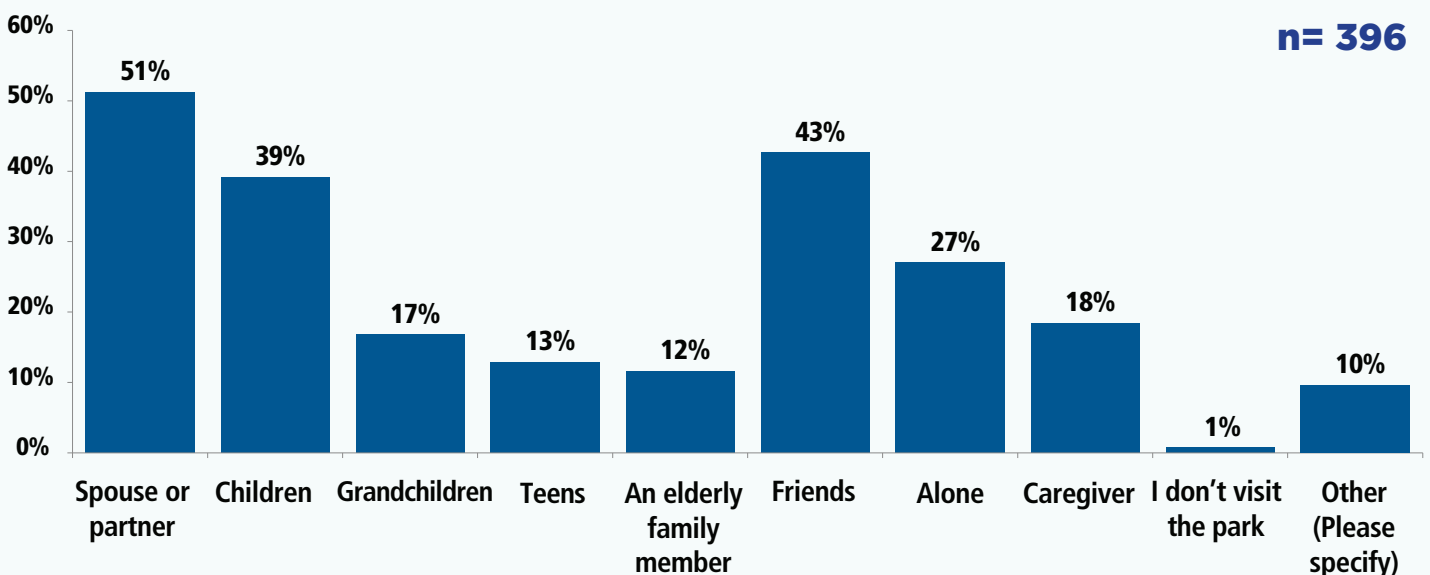


Figure 15: Survey responses to “When you visit the park, who do you typically go with? Select all that apply.”

## ACCESSING THE PARK

Survey respondents were asked how they travel to the park. The majority (65 per cent) of park users reported walking to Sports Village Park. Almost half (47 per cent) indicated they drive to the park and 34 per cent travel to the park by bicycle. Others reported using skateboards, scooters or rollerblades (nine per cent), electric scooters/bicycles (two per cent), public transit (two per cent) or a mobility device (one per cent).

### How do you currently travel to Sports Village Park? Select all that apply.

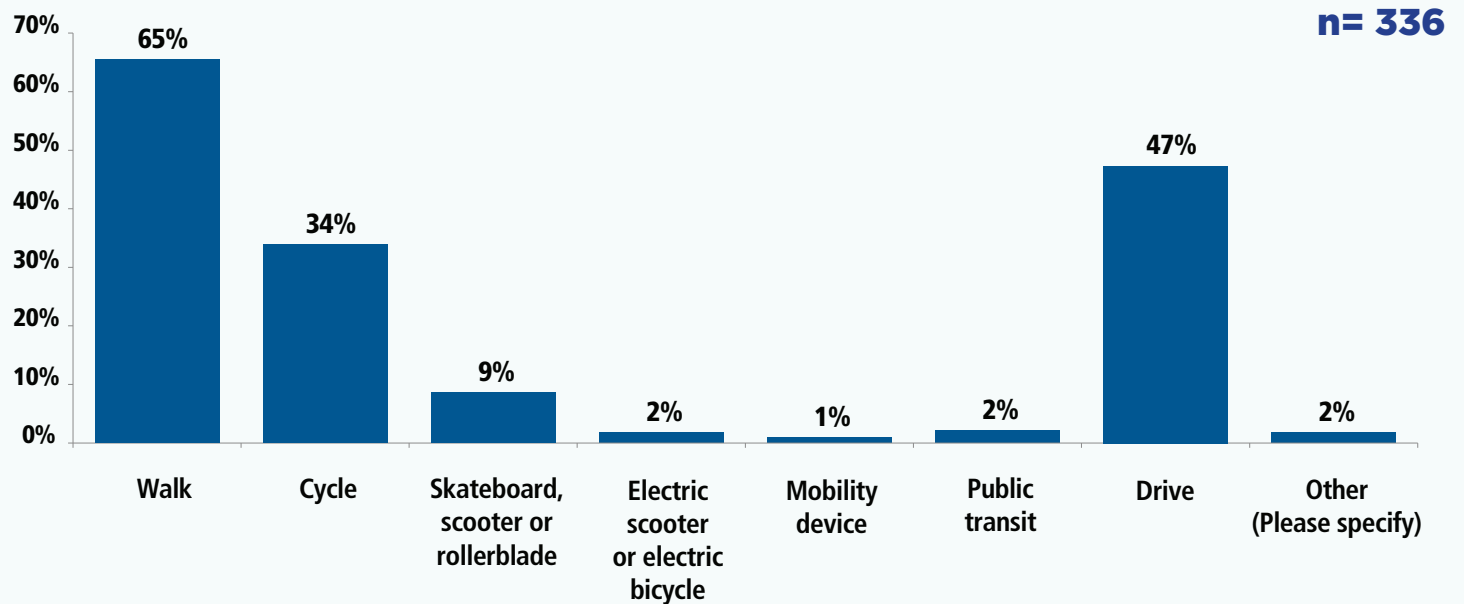


Figure 16: Survey responses to “How do you currently travel to Sports Village Park? Select all that apply.”





## FUTURE PARK USE THEMES

The primary objective of engagement on Sports Village Park was to collect the community's feedback on which future park use categories would most benefit their neighbourhood. These categories were chosen based on a review of existing amenities within Sports Village Park and nearby parks and what would be feasible to construct given the available space within the park.

The four future park use categories were:

- children's play.
- sports and active living.
- gathering and social connection.
- environmental protection and enjoyment.

In the online survey, participants were presented with each park use category – including a description and sample images – and asked to select up to three amenities they felt were needed in the park from that category. Participants could also provide thoughts and feedback in an open-ended comment box. Then, after reviewing each category and its associated amenities list, participants were asked to rank the four categories from most to least important to them.

The paper survey was shortened and simplified, only asking participants to rank the four categories and provide their thoughts on what Sports Village Park needs.



Figure 17: Example park use images representing children's play, sports and active living, gathering and social connection, and environmental protection and enjoyment.



## FUTURE PARK USE: PLACES FOR CHILDREN TO PLAY

The most popular children’s play amenity selected by online survey respondents was social play structures (42 per cent), followed by climbing structures (35 per cent) and swings for toddlers and children (34 per cent). Also selected, but less popular, were slides (27 per cent), monkey bars/rings (19 per cent), rock hop (12 per cent) and standalone toys such as spring toys or see-saws and teeter-totters (nine per cent). Twenty-one per cent of respondents felt the park does not need additional amenities for children’s play, and 16 per cent selected “other,” providing alternative ideas and suggestions.

### Summary of written community feedback:

**Splashpad:** Many participants requested water play, such as a splashpad, be considered in the park, highlighting the lack of water play facilities in the neighbourhood and nearby.

**Playground amenities:** Participants requested additional playground features not listed in the survey, like rock climbing, a zipline and an obstacle course.

**Themes and aesthetics:** Participants felt playgrounds should be themed for better aesthetics and child development. Suggestions included thematic-inspired play structures, nature play with logs and wood instead of metal and sensory play such as musical boards and sandboxes – something unique that would contribute to making the park a destination.

**Inclusive and universal:** Participants recommended having playgrounds that provide play opportunities for children at various stages of development and ranges of mobility.

**Places for parents:** Participants suggested providing shade structures or outdoor fitness equipment close to the playground for parents to use while supervising their children.

**Playground surfacing:** Some participants requested rubber surfacing for the playground, rather than engineered wood fibre, as they felt it’s safer and looks better.

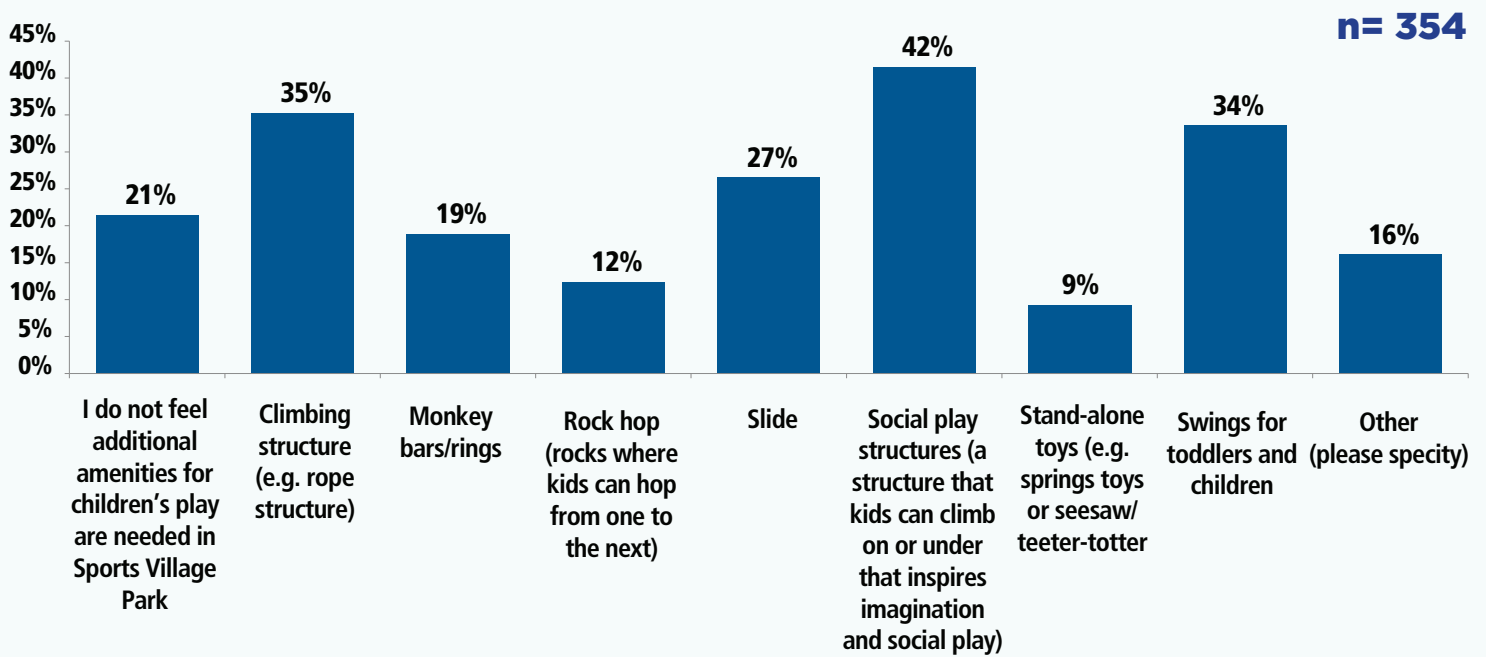
**Playground not needed:** Some participants felt there are already several playgrounds in the neighbourhood and another one is not needed.



Figure 18: Example images of amenities that support children’s play



**Which of the following amenities do you feel are needed in Sports Village Park to support children’s play? Please select up to three.**



*Figure 19: Which of the following amenities do you feel are needed in Sports Village Park to support children’s play? Please select up to three.*





## FUTURE PARK USE: PLACES FOR SPORTS AND ACTIVE LIVING

A new basketball court was the most popular sports and active play amenity selected by online survey respondents (35 per cent). Tennis courts, outdoor fitness equipment and paved park pathways tied for second-most popular (32 per cent), followed by pickleball courts (28 per cent). Also selected, but less popular, were multi-use courts (21 per cent), facilities for skateboards, scooters and rollerblading (20 per cent) and ping pong tables (15 per cent). Only three per cent of respondents felt additional sports and active living amenities were not needed in Sports Village Park, and 12 per cent selected “other,” providing alternative ideas and suggestions.

### Summary of community feedback:

**Pickleball:** Many participants requested dedicated pickleball courts – citing the importance of the sport to elderly individuals who wish to stay active.

**Off-leash dog area:** Many participants requested an off-leash dog park, highlighting the need for a space to exercise their dogs.

**Walking and hiking trails:** Some suggested adding more walking and hiking trails through the natural areas east of the park, connecting them to the existing pathways in the park.

**Outdoor fitness equipment:** Some respondents asked for outdoor fitness equipment for exercising, especially for parents to use while their children play sports and use the park. Many respondents requested moveable – as opposed to stationary – fitness equipment, and a few suggested specific equipment such as climbing rings.

**Other amenities:** Additional suggestions provided by a few participants included more bocce courts, a soccer field, an outdoor hockey rink and a yoga or tai-chi area.



Figure 20: Example images of amenities that support sports and active living



**Which of the following amenities do you feel are needed in Sports Village Park to support sports and active living? Please select up to three.**

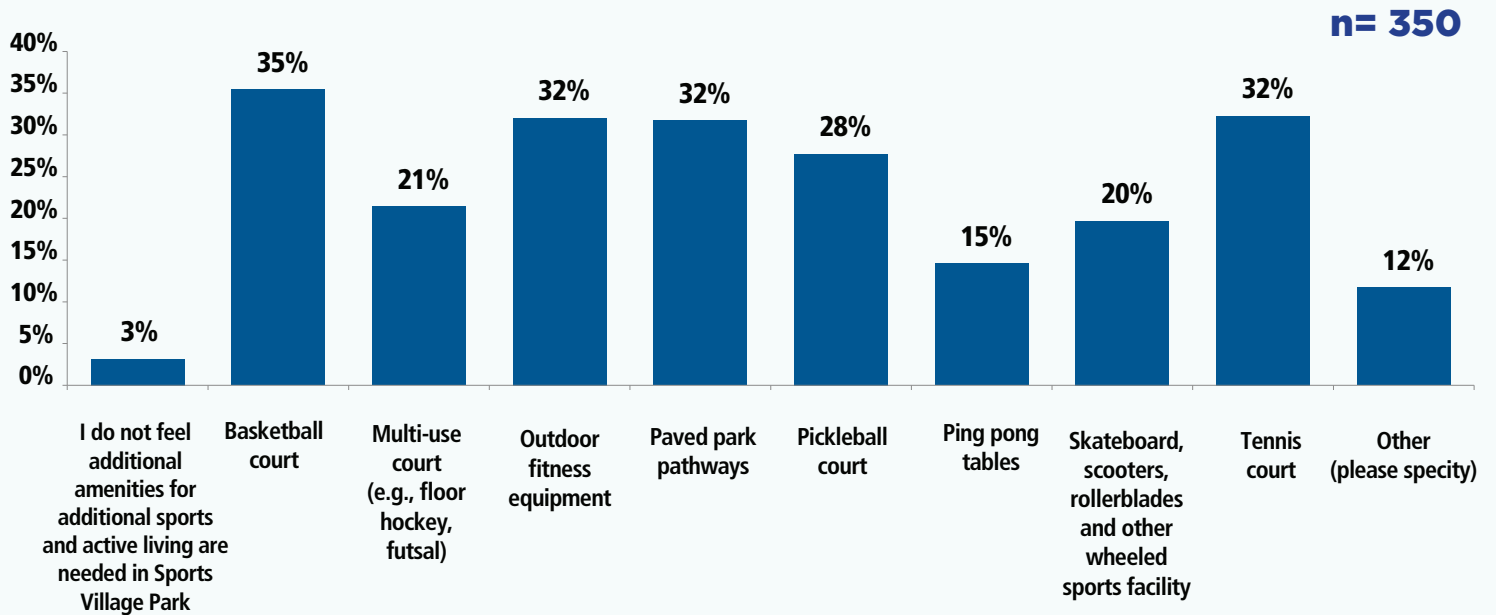


Figure 21: Survey responses to “Which of the following amenities do you feel are needed in Sports Village Park to support sports and active living? Please select up to three.”



## FUTURE PARK USE: PLACES FOR GATHERING AND SOCIAL CONNECTION

The most popular gathering and social connection amenity selected by online survey respondents was multiple small shaded seating areas (59 per cent). The next most popular amenities were benches (47 per cent) and picnic tables (45 per cent). These were followed by a large shade structure (35 per cent), board game tables such as chess, checkers and dominos (25 per cent) and public art/sculptures (15 per cent). Seven per cent of respondents felt additional amenities for gathering and social connection were not needed in Sports Village Park, and seven per cent selected “other,” providing alternative ideas and suggestions.

### Summary of community feedback:

**Event space:** Participants suggested building a large shade structure, seating area or stage for the City to host events such as Concerts in the Park or for residents to host events and gatherings.

**Shade structure or trees:** Participants noted a lack of shaded areas in the park and recommended adding trees for shade or a covered gazebo to protect against the elements and provide a place for seniors to sit and gather.

**Other amenities:** A few additional suggestions made by respondents included a picnic area with BBQ stations, open space for games, a fountain feature, an outdoor pool and allowing a café to operate in the park.

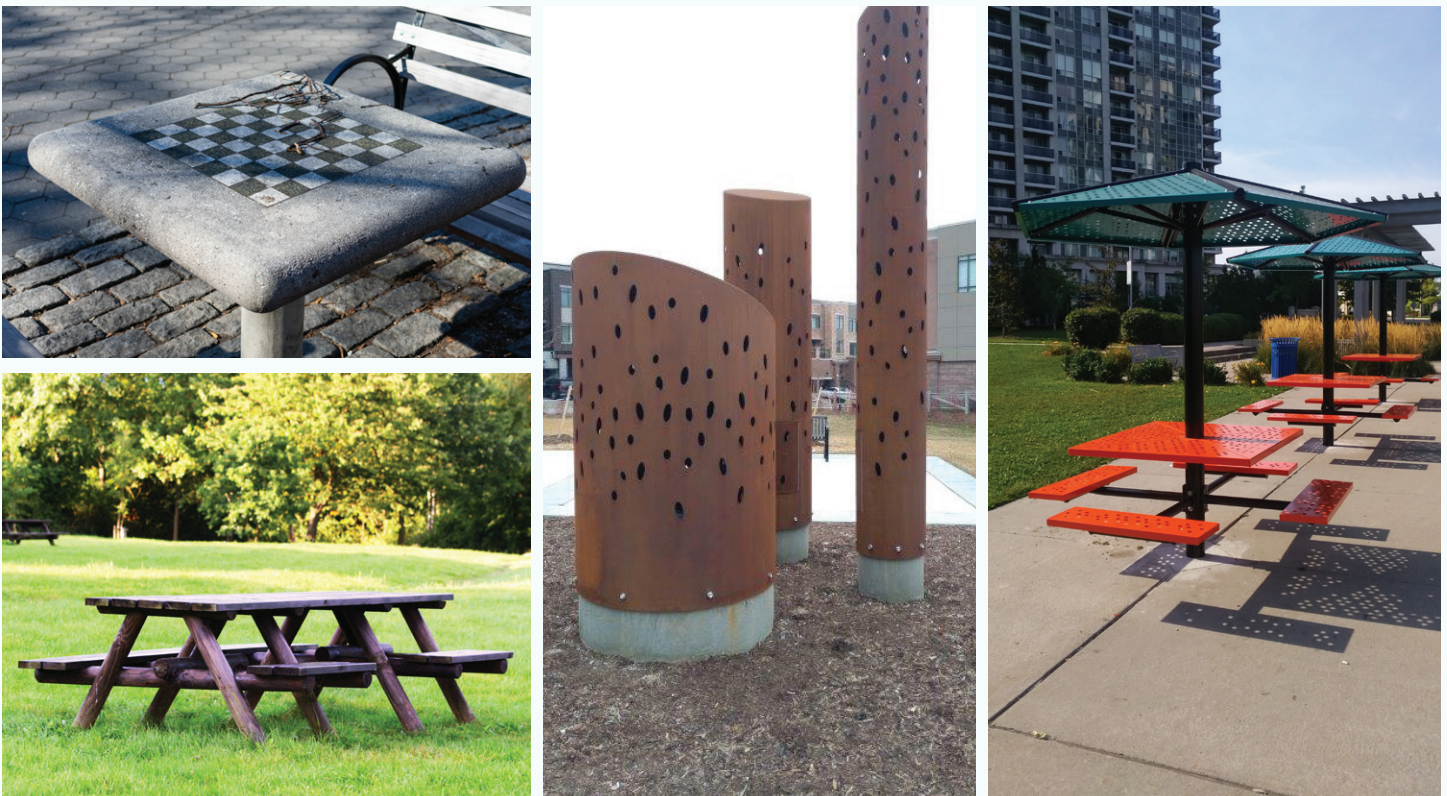


Figure 22: Example images of amenities that support gathering and socialization



**Which of the following amenities do you feel are needed in Sports Village Park to support gathering and social connection? Please select up to three.**

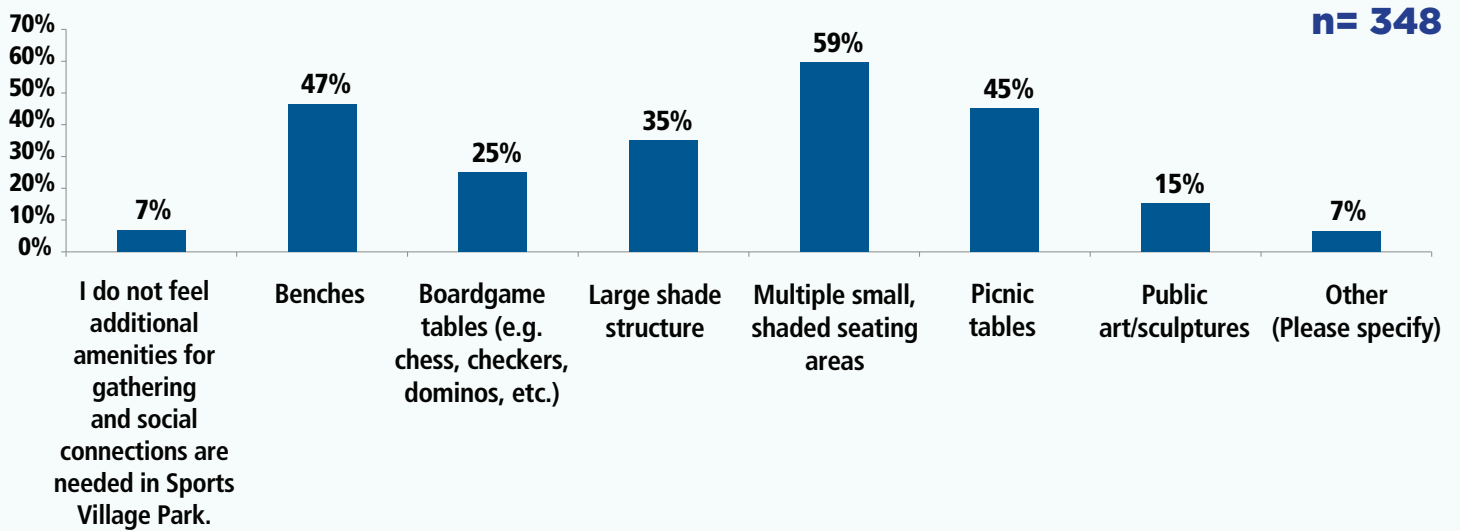


Figure 23: Survey responses to “Which of the following amenities do you feel are needed in Sports Village Park to support gathering and social connection? Please select up to three.”





## FUTURE PARK USE: A PLACE FOR PROTECTING AND ENJOYING THE ENVIRONMENT

Nature trails were the most desired amenity in this category by a large margin (43 per cent). The next most popular were tree plantings (24 per cent), pollinator gardens (15 per cent) and naturalized areas or “no mow” zones (4 per cent). Eleven per cent of respondents felt additional amenities for environmental protection and enjoyment were not needed in Sports Village Park, and three per cent selected “other,” providing alternative ideas and suggestions.

### Summary of community feedback:

**Features to support biodiversity:** Participants noted the important role native plants play in fostering biodiversity within the park, and suggested bird baths to attract various bird species to the park.

**Education and signage:** Participants noted that signage with information on plant and animal species could provide an educational experience for residents, suggesting they be placed in natural areas of the park.

**Maintenance concerns:** Participants expressed concern about the lack of maintenance within Sports Village Park. They felt the grass areas have not been mowed, there is an abundance of weeds and many trees have died. Participants also recommended the installation of dog waste stations to help with the maintenance of the grass areas.

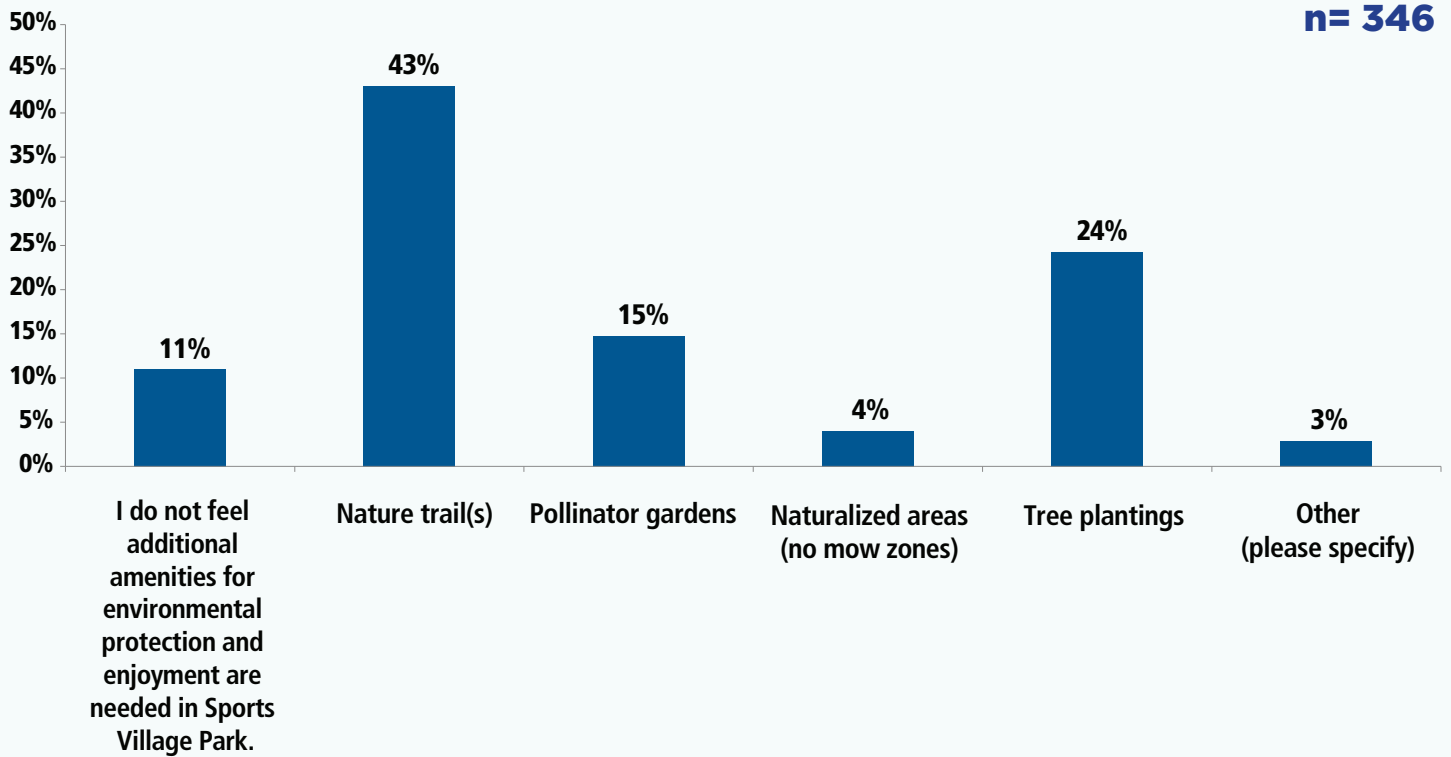
**Pollinator or community gardens preferred:** Participants noted a preference for pollinator gardens or a community vegetable garden instead of “no mow” zones. Participants expressed that “no mow” zones may attract unwanted insects such as ticks and do not provide the same aesthetic and environmental benefits as pollinator gardens.



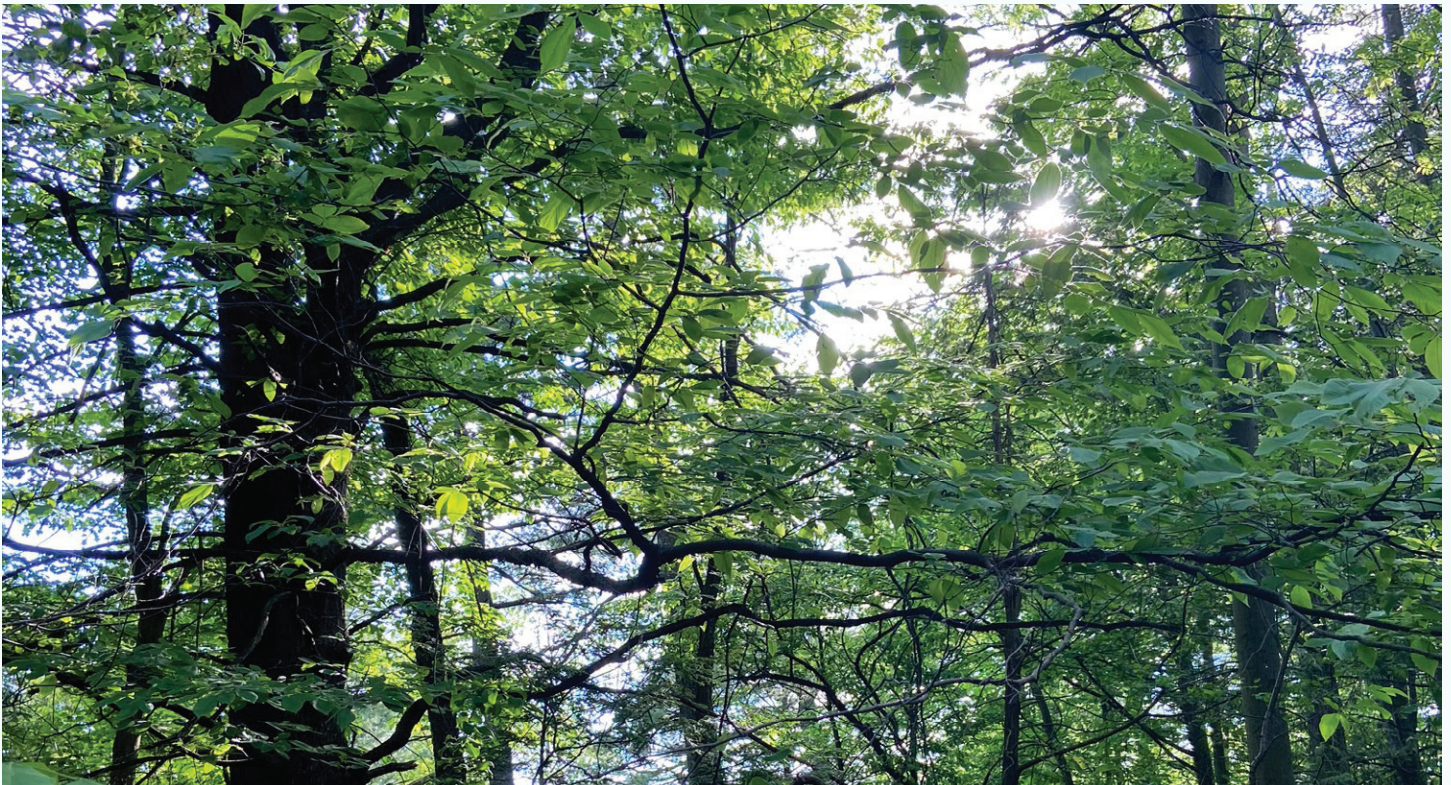
Figure 24: Example images of amenities that support environmental protection and the enjoyment of nature



**Which of the following amenities do you feel are needed in Sports Village Park to support environmental protection and enjoyment? Please select your top choice.**



*Figure 25: Survey responses to “Which of the following amenities do you feel are needed in Sports Village Park to support environmental protection and enjoyment? Please select your top choice.”*





## PREFERRED FUTURE PARK USE

When asked to rank the four park categories, online and paper survey respondents felt sports and active living were most important (2.8), followed by a tie for second place between children’s play and gathering and social connection (2.3). In last place was protection and enjoyment of the environment (1.9). Only those taking the paper survey had the option to choose “none.”

### Which park use category is most important to you?

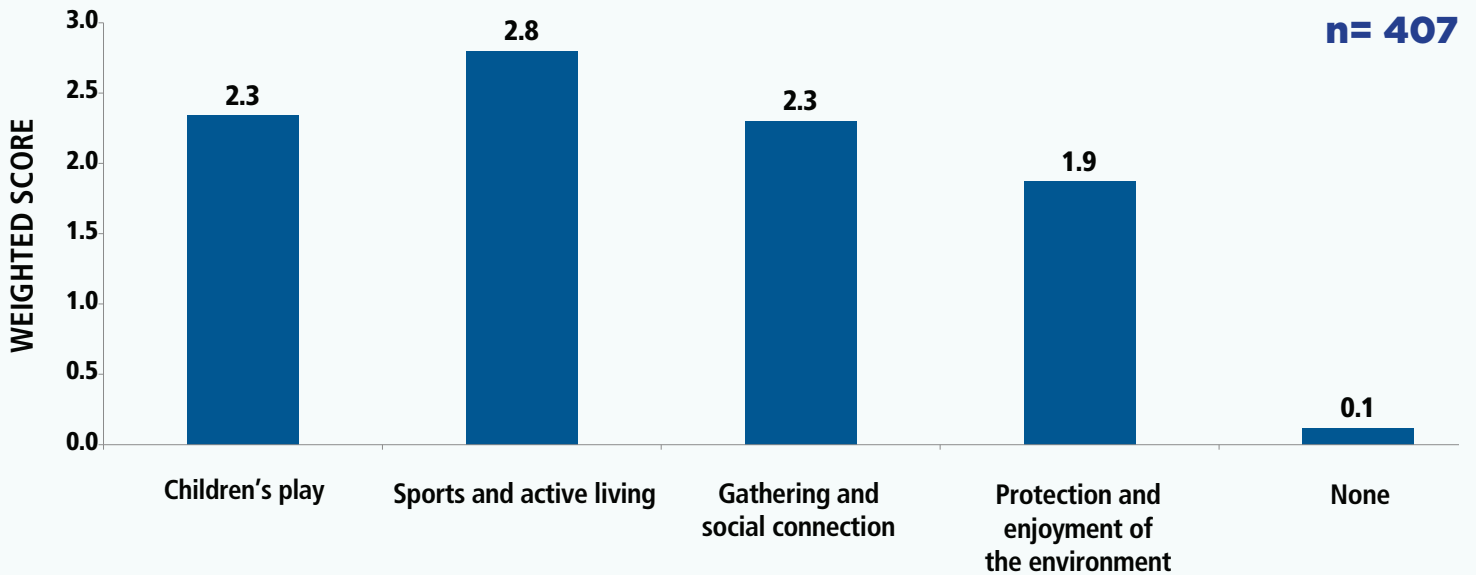


Figure 26: Weighted scores for each future park use category





## NEXT STEPS

### **Thank you to all who provided thoughtful suggestions and feedback!**

The online and paper surveys demonstrated a strong community desire for additional amenities in Sports Village Park. The City heard significant interest for more sports facilities, a playground and pathway improvements throughout the park. The City also heard community interest in amenities that support social gathering, a splashpad, a local off-leash dog area, pickleball courts, walking and hiking trails, an event space and picnic areas.

Informed by community feedback, as well as considerations of technical and financial feasibility, City staff submitted a budget request that prioritizes the development of a new children's playground, social gathering amenities and accessible pathway enhancements in the park. If approved, design will begin in 2024, with construction anticipated in 2025. Through the design process, City staff will explore future opportunities to incorporate the additional amenities identified by the community.

To stay in the know on this project as it progresses, please visit [vaughan.ca/SportsVillagePark](https://vaughan.ca/SportsVillagePark).



**City of Vaughan**  
**Parks and Open Space Planning**  
**Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development**

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[vaughan.ca/SportsVillagePark](http://vaughan.ca/SportsVillagePark)

