

Vaughan POPS Guidelines

Public Survey #2 Results

Submitted to
City of Vaughan
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Submitted by
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1. Purpose of Report

The City of Vaughan is developing city-wide standards and guidelines for privately owned public spaces (POPS).

The City is conducting this study in response to changes in the law from Ontario's Bill 23, which changes the development approvals process and allows for POPS to qualify for parkland dedication credits. Also, POPS are increasingly important in the way that cities, like Vaughan, can provide more park space for residents and community members. The study aims to integrate POPS effectively into Vaughan's open space network and set expectations regarding planning, design, maintenance and operations.

The purpose of this report is to summarize the key takeaways that have emerged through the second Public Engagement Survey.

2. Results

The second public engagement was hosted virtually for three weeks between April 14, 2025 and May 5, 2025. The engagement consisted of a recorded presentation video and a survey.

The recorded video presentation showed the progress of the project to the public since the first public engagement in Fall 2024. It included a project overview and updates to the guidelines based on feedback received till date. The online video was hosted on the City's YouTube channel. As of April 15, the video was viewed 99 times, received one thumbs up, no thumbs down, and no comments.

To accompany the video presentation, a survey was posted on the City's project webpage (vaughan.ca/POPS) to collect feedback. The two questions included in the survey were intended to better understand from participants what would make POPS more welcoming, and what active and passive features they would like to see in POPS. A total of 27 participants responded to the survey. Responses were analyzed and themed, as presented in the following sections of this report.

Question 1: "What else should be included to make POPS more vibrant and welcoming?"

1. Shade, Seating, and Greenery

Many respondents emphasized the importance of natural elements and comfortable places to sit:

- “Native trees. Shaded areas for children and seniors.”
- “Trees and bushes for privacy and shade.”
- “Well maintained greenery”
- “Lots of greenery providing shade for impromptu family picnics.”

These comments reflect a consistent desire for cooler, more hospitable spaces through planting and shelter.

2. Play and Fitness Features

There was strong support for including features that encourage physical activity for all ages:

- “Kids playground with different structures... splash pads... outdoor pool.”
- “Climbing structures. Body weight exercise equipment like pull up bars.”
- “Volleyball courts”
- “Squat fitness challenges... dancing day for families with DJ from community.”

This theme points to a broad interest in interactive and active features that support wellness and family activity.

3. Events and Community Programming

Multiple comments called for organized activities to build community:

- “Owner of POPS to organize at least 1 event annually to bring community together.”
- “More local programs and events like farmers markets, craft fairs.”
- “Vendors such as food trucks or farmers market.”

Events and programming were seen as essential to encouraging regular and diverse use.

4. Amenities and Infrastructure

Respondents want POPS to have more practical features to support comfort and usability:

- “Water fountain with drinkable water, washrooms”
- “Seating in shade and in sunlight”
- “Free Wi-Fi, comfortable/ergonomic seating”
- “Table games boards, e.g. chess, checkers.”

Many comments also noted the importance of lighting and maintenance:

- “Sufficient lighting at night to make the spaces safe.”
- “Bins are regularly cleaned and not overflowing”
- “Proper lighting during the late evening hours... 24-hour video CCTV surveillance.”

5. Safety, Signage, and Accessibility

Clear signage, inclusive access, and safety came through as key expectations:

- “Clear, large, visible signage that says the public is allowed to use the POPS.”
- “Wheelchair accessibility for the physically challenged”
- “No dead-end spots /ease of free-flowing walkways.”

These suggestions reinforce the idea that POPS should feel open, secure, and easy to use for all.

6. Other Important Comments

- Several respondents proposed community gardens and spaces for local artists.
- There were multiple calls for POPS to avoid being a substitute for true public spaces, with one commenter saying, “The City should put these active features in City community parks and not be asking developers to pay for this.”
- A few comments touched on pet policies—e.g., “dogs must be leashed,” or consideration of dog inclusion/exclusion.

Question 2: What active and passive design features would you like to see?"

Common Themes:

1. Playgrounds and Active Recreation

Many responses strongly supported a variety of **active play features**, particularly for children:

- “Active - playgrounds”
- “Playground suited for kids of all age groups and level of comfort”
- “Open style playground (with no sand) ... natural playground and easy climbing structures”
- “Active – Natural playgrounds, open play areas and swing sets”
- “More splash pads for summer”

There was also interest in sports and adult-friendly active spaces:

- “Pickleball courts, basketball nets, walking paths and play structures”
- “More football/soccer fields, volleyball courts”
- “Exercise spaces... cool swings for adults to sit and chat with a friend”

2. Passive Seating and Shade

A major theme was the need for **comfortable, shaded, and social seating** areas:

- “Passive – reading areas”
- “Shaded park banquettes. Picnic area with shade, table.”
- “Benches, shaded seating areas, patio chairs and bean bags in summer”
- “Gazebo for shade... sensory activities and inclusive activities for special needs individuals”
- “Garden landscaping, seated areas which include shade.”

There was also criticism of ineffective shade structures:

- “Parks in Vaughan have those pergolas with gaps in them that are useless... do not protect from the sun or rain.”

3. Walking and Connectivity

Multiple responses emphasized **walkability and trail connections** over vehicular access:

- “More walking pathways connecting these spaces to neighbourhoods.”
- “Access from bike path.”
- “I want our communities to be connected more through sidewalks/trails and bikeways not new roads.”

This theme highlights a desire for POPS to be part of a broader pedestrian and cycling network.

4. Practical Amenities

Respondents identified essential **support features** for usability and comfort:

- “Publicly accessible washrooms (constantly kept clean and tidy)”
- “Ample garbage bins”
- “Surveillance video 24 x 7 x 365 with emergency response capabilities”
- “Must be regularly cleaned and inspected”

These comments show a focus on maintenance and safety alongside design.

5. Inclusive and Educational Features

Several respondents suggested **inclusive and sensory-friendly elements**, as well as educational opportunities:

- “Sensory activities and inclusive activities for special needs individuals”
- “Plant/flowers with ID signs”
- “Free little libraries, art installations”

These ideas suggest support for thoughtful, welcoming design that serves diverse users.

3. Next Steps

Feedback from the survey will further inform best practices and design features within the design guidelines to make POPS vibrant and more welcoming.