

Community Survey Report

Calvin Park Green Space and Courtyard Rejuvenation

Background

The courtyard at our Calvin Park branch is an underused space, and KFPL is looking to make it more inviting and engaging. We are also planning a rejuvenation of the greenspace immediately surrounding the branch to better serve the needs of our patrons and the neighbourhood.

The initial design may include:

- Nature-inspired play items
- Additional seating
- Sensory Panels
- Shaded picnic area
- Outdoor art space
- Community garden

Next Steps

KFPL has applied for funding from the [Canada Healthy Communities Initiative](#) to support this project. If successful, your feedback through the initial survey will inform a draft design. We will do more community engagement on the final design of the courtyard and greenspace immediately surrounding the building.

We are working with the Community Garden Network to receive City approval for our proposed garden site in the space between Wright Crescent and the drive-up area next to the item return. We will reach out to the survey respondents who were interested in getting involved in this part of the project.

If we do not receive grant funding, the remainder of the project will be delayed or phased in through incremental upgrades.

Feedback Summary

Who Took the Survey?

We received **739 responses**, 556 (75.2%) complete and 183 (24.8%) partial. 89.7% of respondents had Calvin Park listed as their home branch, and 96.1% had visited Calvin Park on their last use of library services. 76.4% of respondents visit the branch at least once a month, and 68.4% spent between 15 minutes to an hour at the library when visiting.

Respondents represented households that included a range of age groups, from preschool age through seniors. Seniors were more heavily represented; with 28.5% indicated their household had someone aged 65-74 and 12.4% indicating someone age 75 or older. Younger families made up a smaller percentage of survey participants, with 17.8% indicating at least one child under 5, 14.7% indicating children aged 5-9, and 9.9% indicating children aged 10-13.

How Do People Use the Space Now?

Only **53.8%** of respondents knew that the courtyard was available for their use, and only 36.1% had ever used it.

Most survey respondents indicated that borrowing, returning and browsing materials were their most important reasons for visiting the branch, sharing more details about their experience in the comments.

Several participants shared comments about their visits. They appreciated a quiet space to sit and read, a place to connect with friends and enjoy time with their children, and some mentioned taking advantage of library services like printing and meeting spaces.

Design Elements

When asked to think about a new design for the courtyard and greenspace, survey respondents indicated it would be very important to include:

- Shaded spaces – 98.6% (82.8% very important, 15.8% somewhat important)
- Trees, shrubs and flowers – 98.2% (78.5% very, 19.7% somewhat)
- Seating areas with tables and benches – 98% (81.1% very, 16.9% somewhat)
- Minimize environmental impacts – 95.1% (67.4% very, 27.7% somewhat)
- Child-friendly - 91.4% (66.9% very, 24.5% somewhat)
- Nature-inspired play items – 85.2% (43.6% very, 41.6% somewhat)
- Shaded picnic area – 82.3% (44.5% very, 37.8% somewhat)

- Outdoor art space – 80.1% (28.4% very, 51.7% somewhat)
- Space to play/exercise – 76.4% (34.3% very, 42.1% somewhat)
- Open grass area – 75.8% (27.9% very, 47.9% somewhat)
- Picnic area – 75.1% (25.4% very, 49.7% somewhat)
- Community garden – 73.6% (31% very, 42.6% somewhat)
- Sensory panels – 69.6% (19.9% very, 49.7% somewhat)

When asked about other design elements, we heard from many patrons that we need to have a balanced use of space to allow quiet reading, explorative play, and activity spaces that bring the community together. Many respondents were excited about educational elements that could be incorporated, such as play-based learning for children, a butterfly garden, hidden letters of the alphabet throughout the space, science and environmental elements.

“It would be great to have some sort of outdoor play area for the kids and somewhere to sit for adults. It becomes a bit more of a destination where we can do a few things at once (play and get a book) and meet other members of the community.” – Survey participant

Many welcomed comfortable outdoor seating and tables, encouraging us to allow opportunities for people to move items to create groupings as needed. Several people requested that outdoor power and a water bottle refilling station be provided in the outdoor space.

Staff response: Our facilities staff will assess the feasibility of unfixed furnishings, power and drinking water in this space, keeping in mind public health and safety as well as the potential for vandalism.

We were reminded of the importance of accessibility for furnishings as well as pathways and other landscaping features.

Staff response: KFPL believes that library service should be relevant, inclusive and responsive for all, and provides service in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. This extends to our facilities, both indoor and outdoor. More information is available in our [Accessibility Policy](#).

Many requested a multi-purpose outdoor event/performance space where library programs, teaching and community events for all ages could be held. Several program ideas were shared which have been passed along to our Programming and Outreach team, and respondents suggested amenities that would be useful in such a space including amplification and power.

Staff response: While we have occasionally offered outdoor programs over the years, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted our need for flexible

outdoor space that will allow the community to gather to learn and share experiences. We will incorporate this into any design.

Families requested a space to engage children in explorative play and learning for toddlers through the school years. We were reminded that many of our patrons are looking for a peaceful space to spend time with requests to create separate areas for children's exploration and their quiet enjoyment of the space, along with many requests to incorporate design features to block some of the sound from the busy roadway.

Staff response: As supporters of lifelong learning and early literacy development, KFPL understands the need for people of all ages to have space to explore, learn and grow in our space. Sometimes that is quiet, and sometimes it isn't. We will aim to incorporate separate quiet and more boisterous spaces into the design.

Survey respondents encouraged us to keep the space as natural and drought-resistant as possible, incorporating flowers, shrubs and trees that are indigenous to this region.

Staff response: KFPL aligns with the City of Kingston's sustainability goals, and the branch is LEED certified, so any changes to the greenspace would be environmentally sustainable.

Some respondents encouraged us to partner with the local Indigenous community to incorporate land recognition, educational gardens, teaching and learning.

Staff response: KFPL is committed to increasing partnership with the local Indigenous community. We will reach out to our existing partners and our Indigenous Advisory Council to invite collaboration on this project.

There were many requests to include a fountain or other running water feature in the design.

Staff response: Adding a water feature would not align with our LEED Gold standard for the building. We will focus on plantings and other elements to beautify the space.

Some survey respondents asked us to use the space to create additional parking spaces. Two respondents asked us to convert the space into an off-leash dog park, and a few others asked that we make the space pet-friendly.

Staff response: When the building received its LEED Gold certification in 2010, KFPL was bound to an agreement not to expand parking on the site. We encourage active transportation such as cycling, walking and public transit for those patrons who are able to do so.

We know that people use the greenspace in front of the building to exercise their pets. We have passed on the design for more pet-friendly space to the City of Kingston. There is an off-leash dog park at the Memorial Centre which is a 5-minute drive or 25-minute walk from the branch.

There was support for incorporating a community garden into the space; with 123 participants asking to be involved should that part of the project move forward. We were encouraged to include accessible raised beds.

Staff response: KFPL will request City approval to convert the space between the road and drive-up item return to a community garden space. This will provide ample sunshine to the garden while reserving the greenspace immediately surrounding the branch for other use.

How People Want to Use the Space

When asked the primary reason they would use the enhanced space, participants responded:

- Read / spend time alone – 32.1%
- Rest and relaxation – 21.2%
- Play area for children – 18.2%
- Spend time with others – 7%
- Sit and/or eat – 6.7%
- Use library materials – 5.5%
- Participate in a community garden – 4.7%
- Use Wi-Fi – 1%

In the month leading up to the survey, 90.6% of participants reported that they hadn't used the greenspace at all, but 46.6% were very likely to do so if we made improvements, and another 45.9% were somewhat likely.

Other Elements to Consider

When asked if there was anything else we should consider, survey respondents shared continued enthusiasm for the project.

“This is such a great idea. These outdoor spaces are so essential to mental health. It is wasted space right now that is never utilized. It will help parents and families cope better, help students get more work done and help seniors connect and have a space outdoors to go. Many people that live in apartments don't have access to an outdoor space such as this so it will be particularly beneficial for low income families like seniors and single parents and their children. Community spaces are essential to create a sense of community.” – Survey participant

One survey participant encouraged us to involve youth in the planning process.

Staff response: KFPL will involve our Teen Advisory Group and New Adult Advisory Board in the planning process. There will be additional community engagement when draft designs are available, and we will invite students and staff from Loyalist Collegiate Vocational Institute, Calvin Park Public School and other nearby schools to participate.

Several raised concerns about proper lighting, keeping open sightlines to minimize risk for users and for KFPL, preventing vandalism and other illegal or inappropriate activity in the space outside of library hours, and keeping the space clean and sanitary.

We were also asked to consider the drainage needs of the site to avoid pooling water and mud. We were also encouraged to think carefully about site maintenance, making sure that we incorporate community volunteers or professional groundskeepers for the upkeep of the space and gardens.

Staff response: Public health and safety, and a well-maintained space, is a priority for KFPL. Our Facilities team will consider all of these elements during the design phase.

We were reminded that the library is used by homeless members of our community and asked to take their needs into consideration, and to make sure they have a chance to provide input since COVID-19 lockdowns limited their access to computers.

Staff response: This has been a challenging time to engage the community given the restrictions on gathering and limited access to library services. There will be additional community engagement when draft designs are available, and we will request help from our community partners to reach these members of our public.

One participant raised concerns about how this project fits into the library's role in the community, questioning whether the proposed redesign is the best use of limited funds available to the Library.

Staff response: Public libraries are valued as community hubs. We develop our spaces to create safe places for the public to gather. We will be seeking grant funding to support this project, and may need to move forward in small phases depending on our success.

We were asked to find a way to provide safe accessible crossing from Loyalist Collegiate Vocational Institute and Calvin Park Public School to accommodate the increased foot traffic this project may create.

Staff response: KFPL enjoys a strong relationship with the City. We will share this concern with the appropriate staff.

Finally, we were asked to please consider signage for the courtyard. Many patrons had never used it because they weren't sure they could.

Staff response: This is an excellent idea. We will create eye-catching signage to welcome our patrons into the courtyard now!

Closing

Thank you to all the members of our community who took the time to share their enthusiasm, concerns and ideas for how we can make our outdoor space even better.