





880 Cities is a non-profit organization based in Toronto, ON. 880 Cities exists to create safe and happy cities that prioritize people's well-being. They work to improve the quality of life for people in cities by bringing citizens together to enhance mobility and public space so that together we can create more vibrant, healthy, and equitable communities.



Kitchener is an innovative, caring and vibrant city with a proud history of community-building – inspiring and supporting people to work together to create a city that feels like home for everyone. Kitchener is a place for everyone. It's a place where people come from across Canada and the world to put down roots.

Land Acknowledgment

The City of Kitchener is situated on the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee Peoples. We recognize our responsibility to serve as stewards for the land and honour the original caretakers who came before us. Our community is enriched by the enduring knowledge and deep-rooted traditions of the diverse First Nations, Metis and Inuit in Kitchener today.





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- 1 Older adults were leading players at the pop-up park
- 2 Potential for rotating pop-up parks
- 3 Community acceptance of pedestrian-only spaces



Summary of the Kitchener Pop-Up Park

880 Cities and the City of Kitchener came together to launch the first-ever pop-up park in downtown Kitchener to build excitement and engage diverse communities in reimagining parks and public spaces through an equity lens.

The pop-up park was a real-time display of ideas generated by residents through the Places and Spaces engagement conducted by the City of Kitchener's Parks and Cemeteries Division.

The pop-up park demonstrated ideas and input shared by equity-deserving communities during months of engagement leading up to the pop-up installation.



How to Read this Pop-Up Park Findings Report

Together 8 80 Cities, the City of Kitchener and community stakeholders crafted **Project Goals**, **Design Directions** and **Programming Themes** that guided the design, programming, layout and activation of the Kitchener Pop-Up Park.

The following document is a fact sheet that uses the **Project Goals**, **Design Directions** and **Programming Themes** as benchmarks to present the findings from the strategic data collection used during and after the pop-up park.

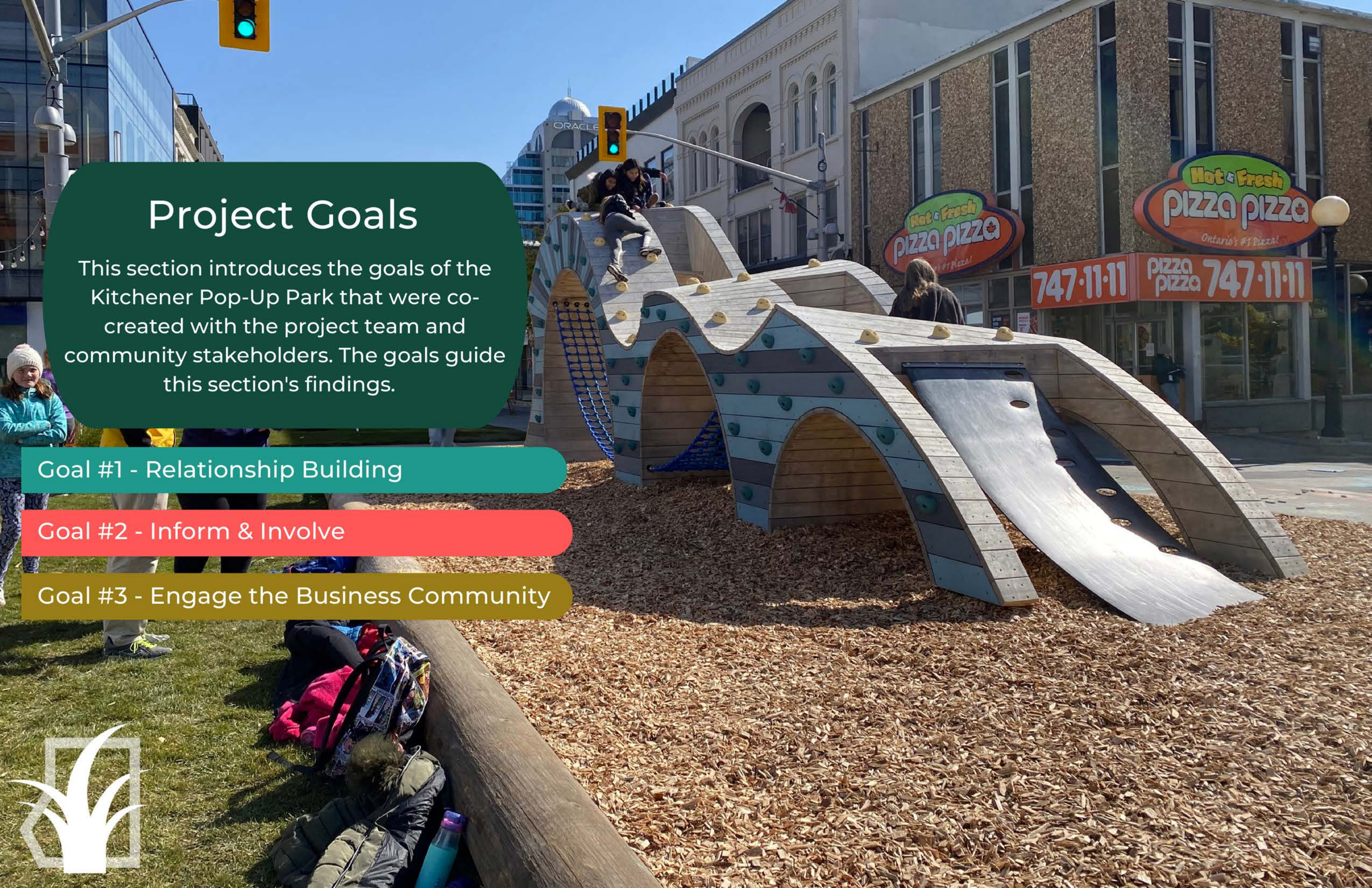
Project Goals

This section introduces the goals of the Kitchener Pop-Up Park that were co-created with the project team and community stakeholders. The goals guide this section's findings.

Goal #1 - Relationship Building

Goal #2 - Inform & Involve

Goal #3 - Engage the Business Community



Goal #1 - Relationship Building

- Strengthen relationships between City of Kitchener and community partners
- Prioritize communities historically underrepresented in public engagement and downtown placemaking
- Bring community ideas to life that will set the tone for future park investments

The pop-up park excelled at bringing community service providers together. The pop-up park provided community groups with the space and support to host their programming and outreach services. By partnering with a range of community groups, the pop-up park showed the strengths and capacity within community that can be fostered and supported through ongoing investments and commitments to community-based programming.



Goal #1 - Relationship Building

Through the pop-up park, relationships with businesses, community groups, and schools were built and strengthened. The following groups supported the programming of the Kitchener Pop-Up Park:

Pop-Up Park Programming Partners:

- Spectrum
- Anishnabeg Outreach
- Land Back Camp
- Muslims in Public Space
- Local Businesses
- Kitchener Public Library
- Social Development Kitchener
- Bridges to Belonging
- University of Waterloo
- University of Guelph
- Coalition of Muslim Women
- Tennesha Joseph, Ontario Community Changemaker
- Local Public Schools



Goal #1 - Relationship Building

80% of people surveyed said they learned something new during the pop-up park

Partnering with community groups to program the pop-up park ensured visitors would learn about and engage with individuals and organizations that are advancing the important work of equity in this community.

The pop-up park created a platform for relationship building that directly resulted in survey respondents learning something new from community partners.



Goal #2 - Inform & Involve

- Build excitement about and inform recommendations for Kitchener Parks and Open Spaces Strategy
- Trial in real time feedback gathered through Places and Spaces

Through the engagement boards, on-site surveys, and conversations with pop-up visitors, many were introduced to the Places and Spaces Strategy for the first time. While an impressive 42% of pop-up visitors surveyed said they have been involved or were aware of Places and Spaces.

42%

of survey respondents at the pop-up park said that they were involved in or aware of the city's new strategic plan called Places and Spaces



Goal #3 - Engage the Business Community

- Engage the downtown Kitchener business community

A key goal identified in early pop-up park planning conversations with local businesses and the Downtown Kitchener Business Improvement Area was to have the park increase awareness of local businesses.

In door-to-door conversations with local businesses prior to the pop-up park, all were in support of adding more greenery and additional seating.

The pop-up park excelled at increasing visibility to the adjacent businesses downtown. In fact, 30% of survey respondents said they discovered a new business as a result of the pop-up park.

30%

of survey respondents said that they discovered a new business as a result of the pop-up park



Design Directions

This section introduces the design directions that were co-created with the pop-up park project team and community stakeholders. The design directions guide this section's findings.



Design Directions

Welcoming



The pop-up park will, upon immediate entry from all angles, feel welcoming, relaxing, safe, and inclusive for people of all genders, races, abilities and socio-economic statuses. The business community will be invited to participate in extending the feeling of welcome for all from storefront to streetscape.



Refreshing

The first impression of the pop-up park will be its connections to nature through grassy spaces, plantings and textured natural elements for both passive recreation and active programming.



Playful

The pop-up park will immediately impress upon its visitors that this is a place for play. Culturally recognizable games, accessibility and intergenerational play will be prioritized.

Design Direction - Welcoming



A key component of creating a welcoming space, is to ensure people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds feel safe lingering in a space, especially after dark.

To create a welcoming and inclusive space, the pop-up park introduced culturally relevant programming led by groups like Spectrum, Anishnabeg Outreach and Muslims in Public Space. Beyond programming, the pop-up park introduced design, and infrastructure interventions that supported creating a more welcoming space in the downtown. The pop-up park did this by:

- Adding pedestrian scaled lighting
- Providing a fire pit and fire keeper
- Adding modular seating elements
- Installing a giant wave play structure and an accessible swing that encouraged play well into the evening
- Creating a car-free pedestrian-only space



Design Direction - Welcoming



In early conversations with stakeholders during the pop-up park planning phase, many identified this part of King Street West as a place not to linger in, but rather a place to pass through when accessing services. This part of King Street was not a place associated with play prior to the pop-up park, but many visitors to the park spoke about how recreation is what brought them downtown and encouraged them to spend time in this place where they wouldn't have before.

An indicator that a space is welcoming is the duration of time people spend lingering in said space. What makes people spend longer periods of time in public space is perceived safety, in addition to comfortable infrastructure, and recreational opportunities.



Design Direction - Welcoming



Studies have found that people report overall higher feelings of safety in maintained public spaces that have more greenery and clear sight lines. Women report higher feelings of perceived safety if other women are already present in the space.¹

Despite significant observed increases in time spent in the Kitchener Pop-Up Park, as compared to non-activation times, public safety was challenged by an incident of public drunkenness and verbal threats.

There was a
400% increase
in time spent in
the pop-up
park!

Public space can never be a guaranteed safe space. But what can influence perceptions of safety is creating more opportunities for community to interact with their neighbours.²

Parks and public spaces that support interaction between neighbours look and feel:

- Spontaneous
- Green-focused
- Accessible
- Well-lit

To create such spaces, park investments should focus on:

- Play for all ages and abilities
- Pedestrian-scaled lighting
- Programmed gathering spaces

1. Pérez-Tejera, F., Anguera, M. T., Guàrdia-Olmos, J., Dalmau-Bueno, A., & Valera, S. (2022). Examining perceived safety and park use in public open spaces. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 81, 101823.
2. Cerdá, M., Morenoff, J. D., Hansen, B. B., Tessari Hicks, K. J., Duque, L. F., Restrepo, A., & Díez-Roux, A. V. (2012). Reducing violence by transforming neighborhoods. *American journal of epidemiology*, 175(10), 1045-1053.

Design Direction - Welcoming



During the pop-up park overall travel (walking, cycling, using a mobility device) to the site increased by 14%, while lingering in space was over 400% higher during the activation, suggesting that by creating opportunities for play, recreation and leisure, people felt safer and more comfortable spending longer amounts of time within this area and into the evening.

Travel to the site did not drastically increase as a result of the pop-up park because this site is already a well-travelled corridor. But the duration of stay drastically increased, proving that by providing spontaneous injections of nature, play and recreation into the downtown people want to stay and enjoy their City for longer periods of time.





Safety at night was a top concern raised by many stakeholders during pop-up park planning.

Tennesha Joseph's Are You Afraid of the Dark? installation brought interactive lighting, playscapes and discussion on what safe public spaces can look like for women and gender-diverse folks to the pop-up park.

Tennesha's installation at the pop-up park added some welcoming light to movie nights!

Design Direction - Welcoming



The addition of tables, chairs, and benches in a variety of materials, shapes and positions encouraged people to stop, sit, and enjoy the pop-up park.

Even during non-programming times, there was still 50% more people sitting in the pop-up park and adjacent area than normally observed.

Having comfortable, accessible and safe places to sit and rest is especially important in creating public spaces that are inviting.

50%

increase in people
sitting during non-
programmed
times

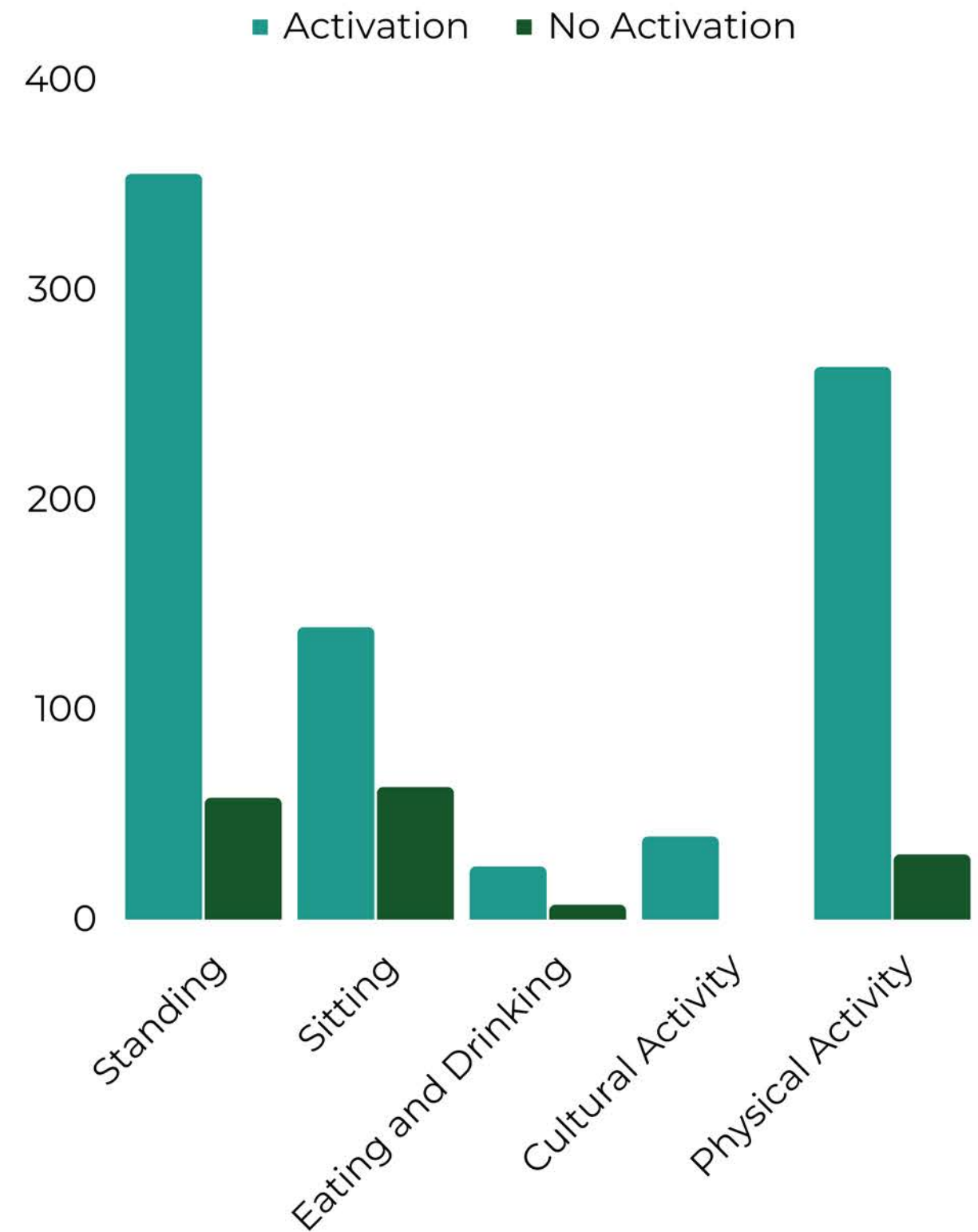




The pop-up park encouraged people of all ages to sit and linger!



Behaviours within the site during and after the activation

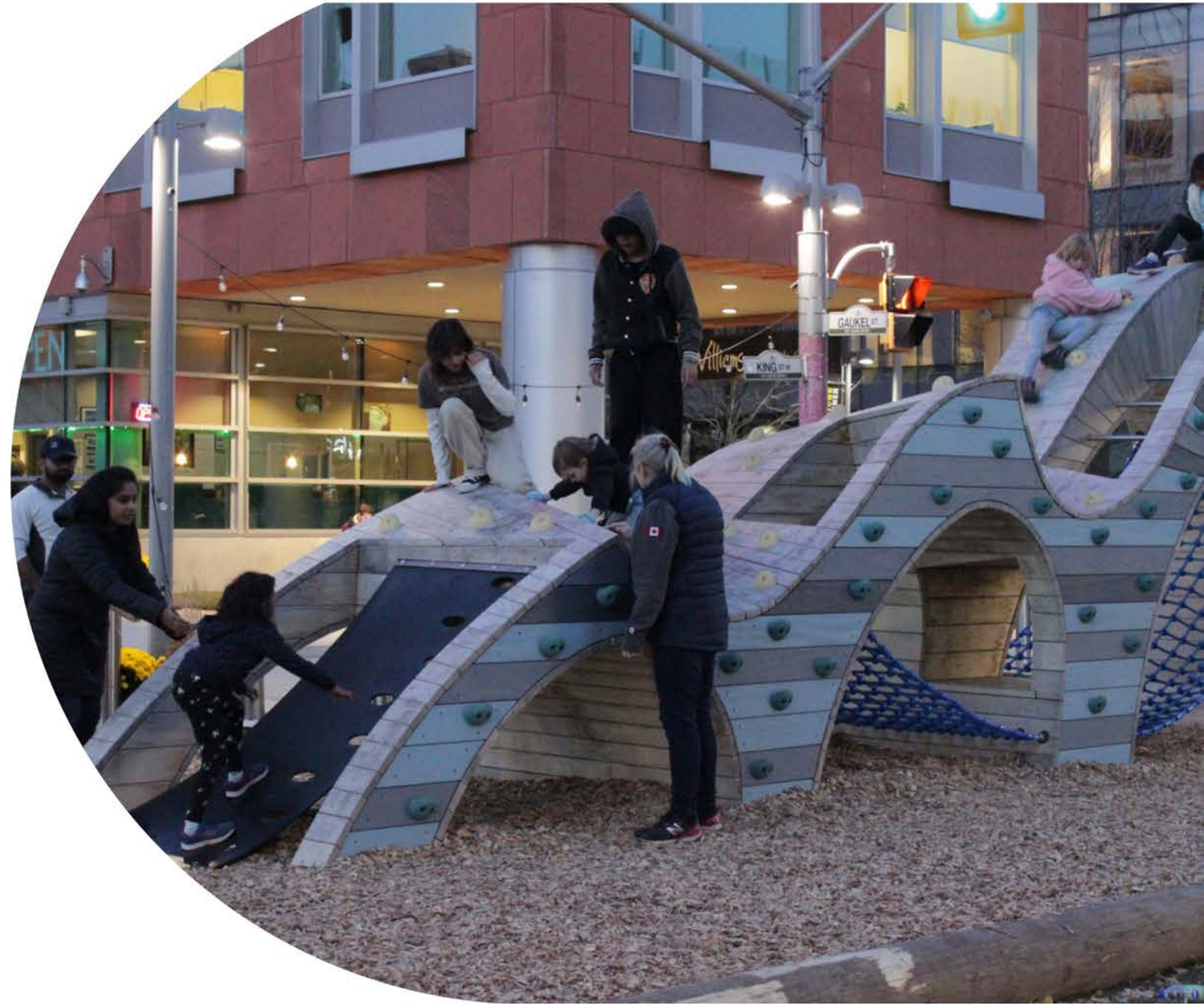


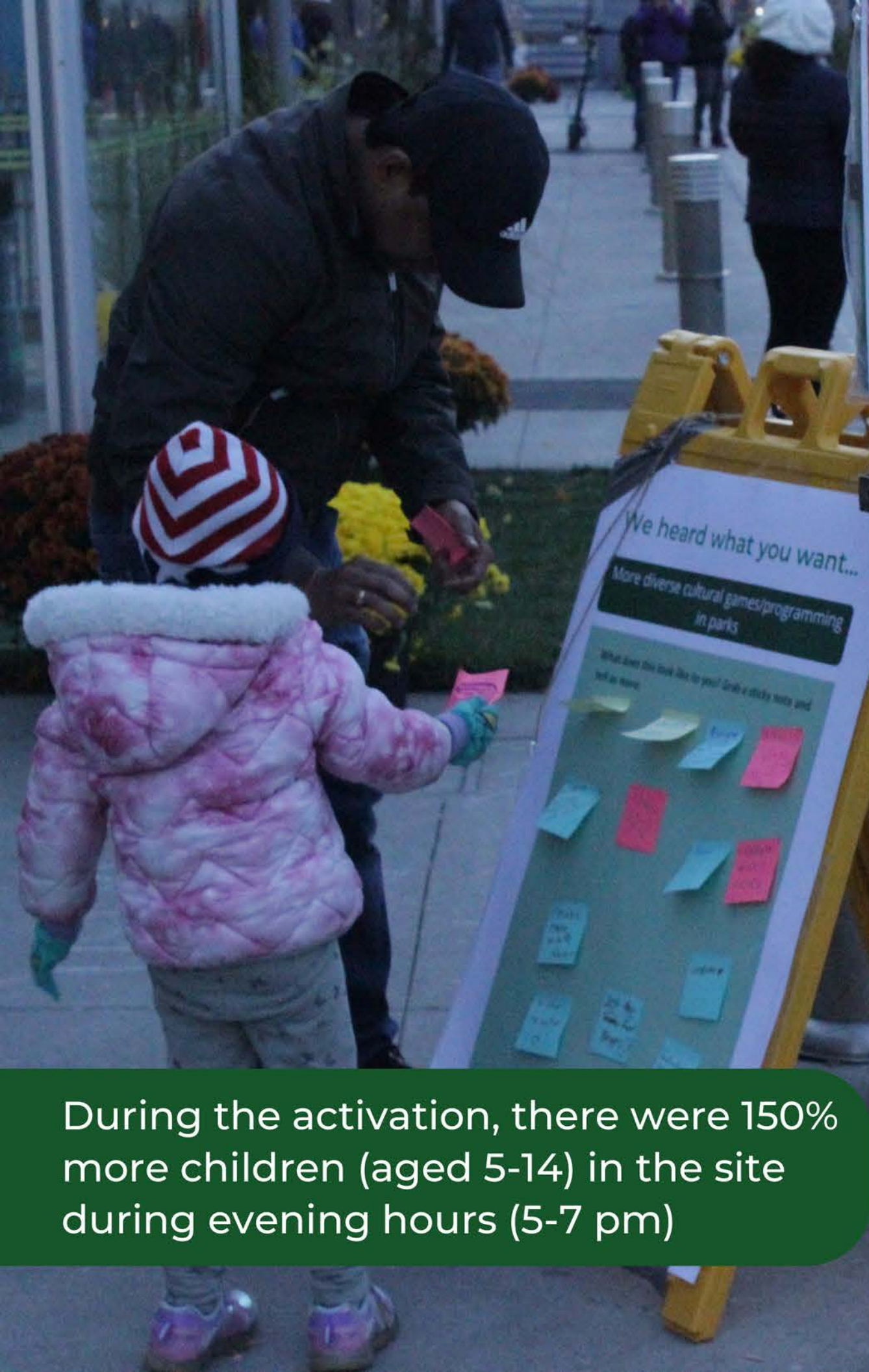
Design Direction - Welcoming



Children between the ages of 5 and 14 had the most significant increase in travel to the pop-up park, followed in second place by young adults between the ages of 15 and 24. The giant wave structure was the standout attraction that brought people of all ages to the site, some parents even reported that they visited the pop-up park all three days of its duration just to play on the wave.

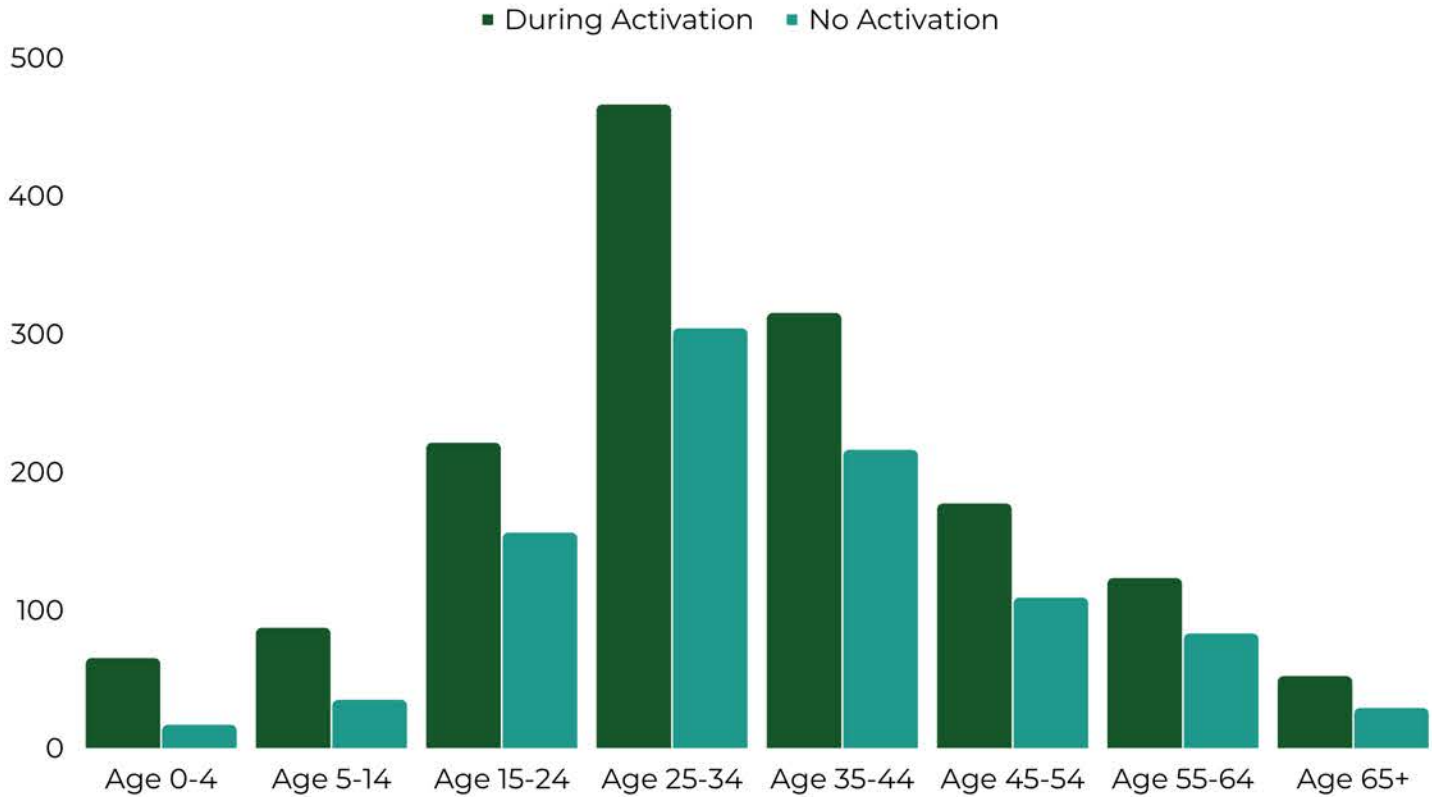
Additionally, the combination of fire at night and evening programming created a welcoming environment for children and families to stay out later than they normally would. During the activation, there were 150% more children (aged 5-14) in the site during evening hours (5-7 pm) compared to the following Friday and Saturday evenings where there was no activation.



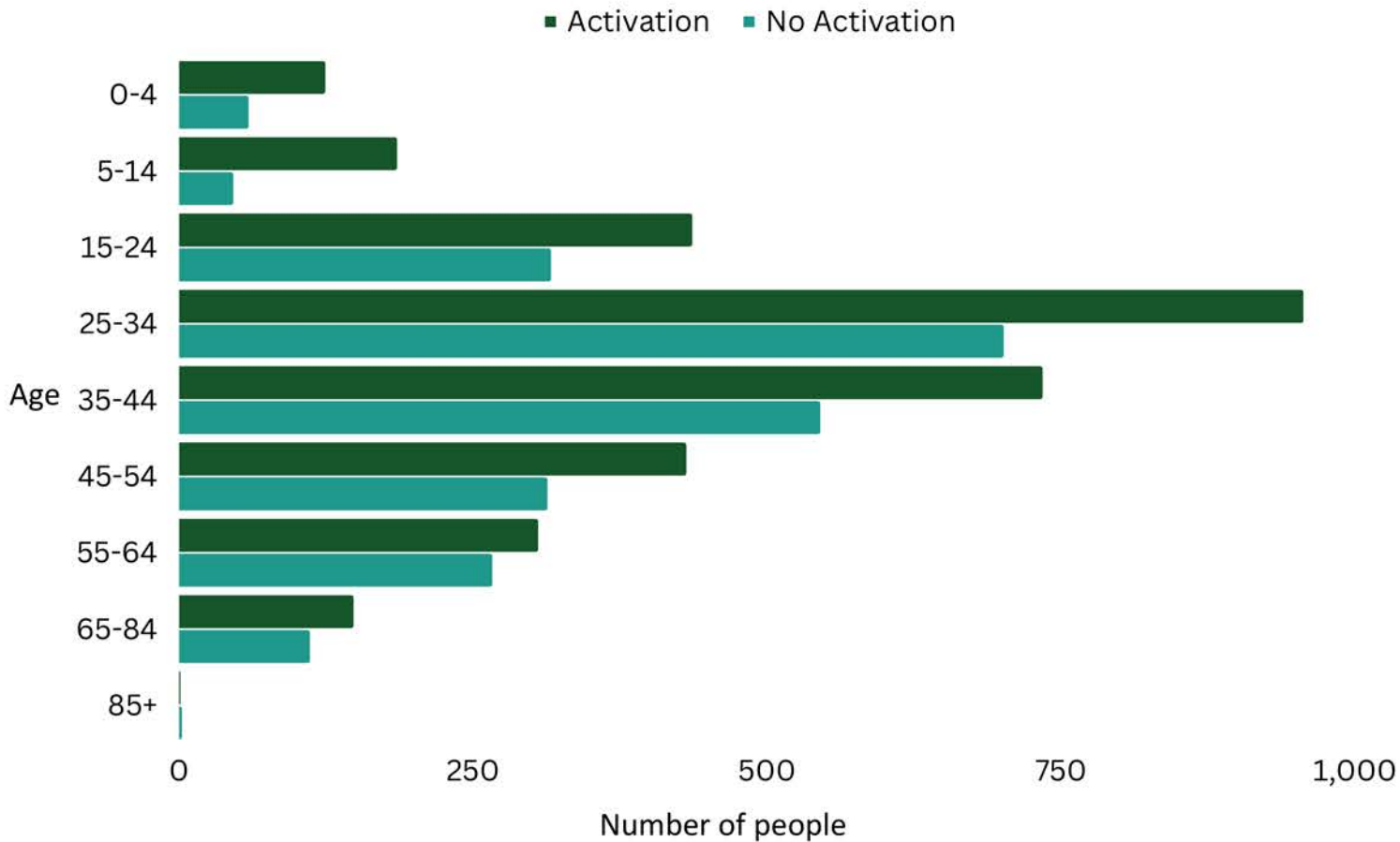


During the activation, there were 150% more children (aged 5-14) in the site during evening hours (5-7 pm)

Travel to and from site in the evenings (5:00-7:00 PM)
by age group



Total Travel to and from the site by age



Design Direction - Welcoming

The fire, at all times of the day, facilitated socio-economic mixing and created a welcoming feeling for many houseless folks who may not normally feel welcome lingering in public space. The fire and modular wood seating created an opportunity for people to interact with their neighbours of all backgrounds.

The fire also encouraged socialization between children and adults who worked together to roast marshmallows.

Many parents and children expressed that this was their first-time roasting marshmallows and sitting around a campfire, as generally fire pits are not found in urban settings and many families may not be able to access camping opportunities.



Design Direction - Refreshing



Research shows that access to green space in urban settings facilitates psychological relaxation, stress relief and improves mental health. To create a refreshing space, the pop-up park provided:



11,808 Sq Ft of Sod



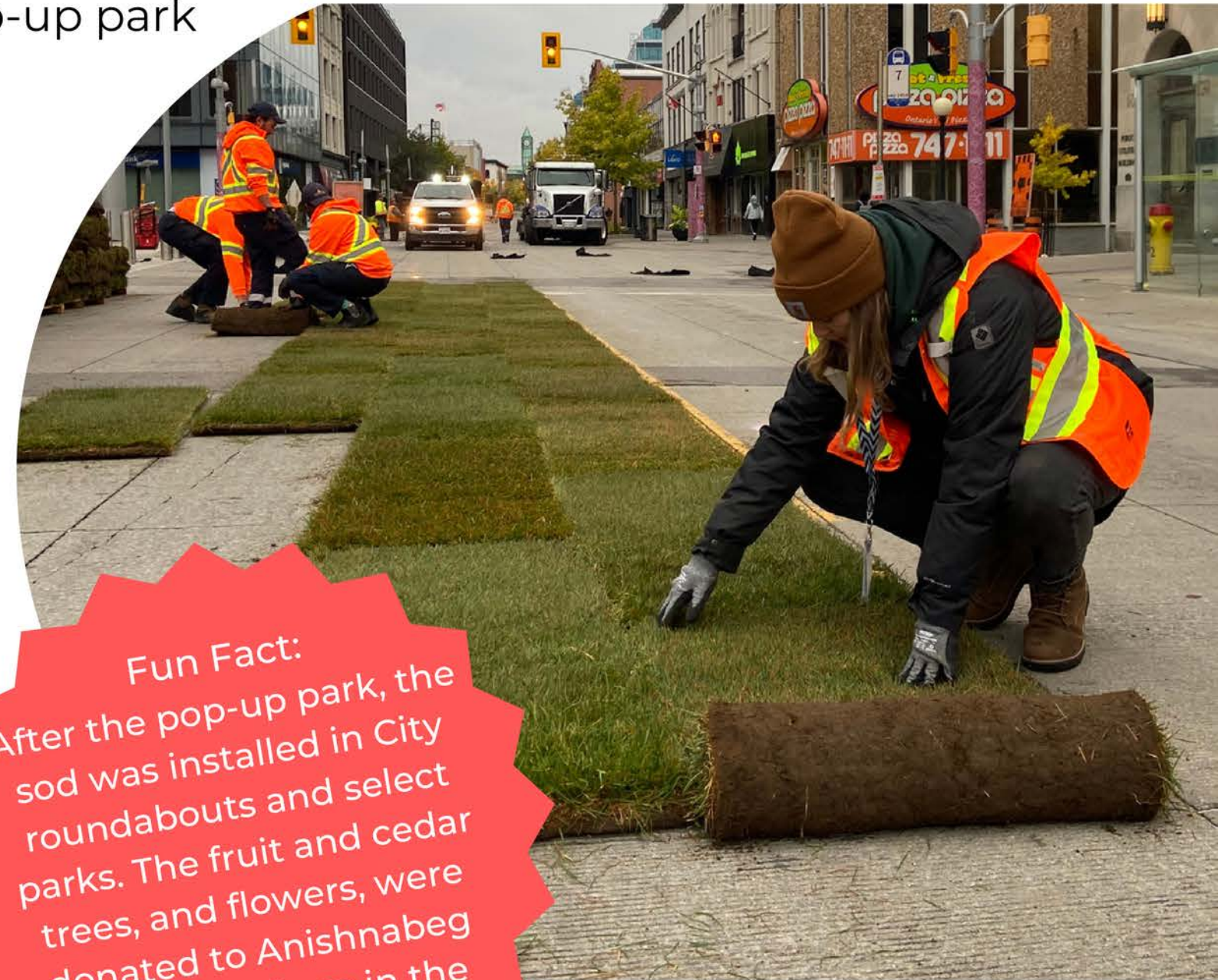
15 Fruit Bearing Trees



50 Cedar Trees



100 Chrysanthemums



Fun Fact:
After the pop-up park, the sod was installed in City roundabouts and select parks. The fruit and cedar trees, and flowers, were donated to Anishnabeg Outreach's farm in the KW area!

Design Direction - Refreshing



100% of survey respondents said that there was some element of the pop-up park installation that they would like to see in their own neighbourhood park. Responses to engagement boards set up during the installation also re-iterated an appreciation for the greenness of the activation and the desire for more greenery across the city:

- “Like the trees, need more trees and water features in the city”
- “Love the grass in public place, feels like Europe!”
- “Need more parks for families, would love more trees!”
- “[Equitable and accessible park system looks like] trees and nature”
- “Would like to see more shade and bushes to play hide and seek. Too open = boring”
- “I’d like to see natural structures and edible plants like the ones here in more parks across the city”



Design Direction - Playful



Play was woven into the design of the activated space with elements to appeal to all ages, different play styles, and abilities, including; nature play, board games, arts and crafts, the wheelchair swing and the wave play structure.

People of all ages enjoyed climbing the wave, sitting atop and observing the park and views of the city. The wave did not clearly indicate an age restriction through both the materials and design of the structure which lent itself well to communicating that people of all ages are welcome to explore.



Design Direction - Playful



As a result of creating play for all ages, abilities and play styles, there was 748% increase in physical activity. The majority of play was observed on the east end of the site where the nature play, wave structure and wheelchair swing were located.

The pop-up park also provided nature play elements like logs, and sticks that encouraged people of all ages to engage in unstructured play. It's important that our parks and public spaces offer opportunities for creative, unstructured play with moveable and flexible features like nature play.

748% Increase in physical activity



Design Direction - Playful



In addition to the giant wave play structure, and programmed activities, the Kitchener Pop-Up Park provided unstructured nature play items like logs, branches, tree cookies and other movable natural materials.

Unstructured nature play is recognized by the Canadian Public Health Association as a critical component to child and youth health, and wellbeing. Unstructured nature play encourages children, and people of all ages, to be creative, collaborative and imaginative.



The CPHA provides the following suggestions for Canadian municipalities and the adoption of unstructured nature play:

- Establish a community-wide approach to increasing access to unstructured play that establishes a common vision and addresses community concerns.
- Enhance community planning and design standards to increase and improve all-seasons play spaces and parks within existing communities and new residential or mixed-use developments.
- Identify and address gaps in access to safe places for unstructured play by location and socio-economic status.³

3. www.cpha.ca/childrens-unstructured-play

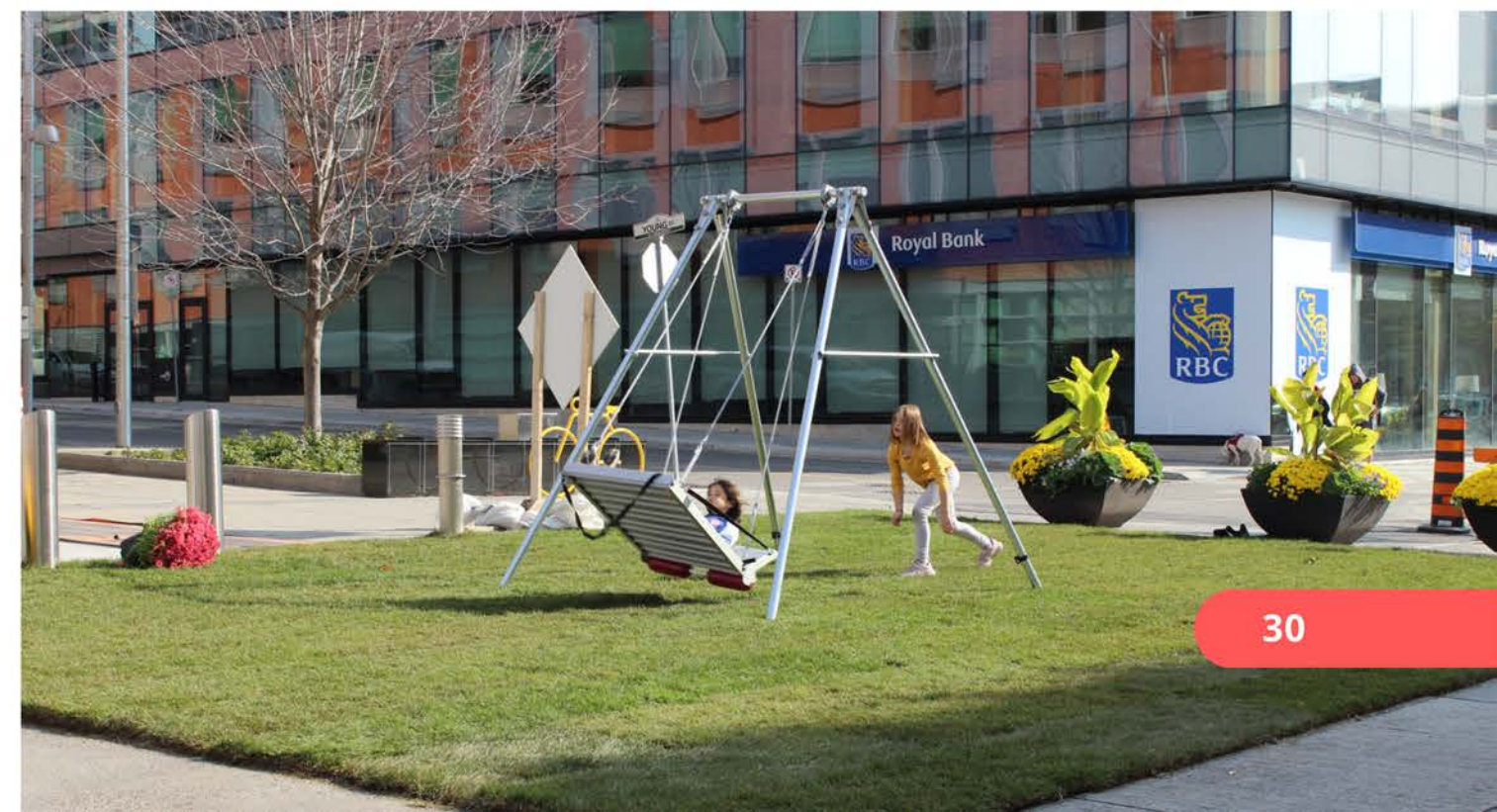
Design Direction - Playful



Play was not exclusive to children visiting the site, as 70% of survey respondents said they played during the pop-up park, and of the respondents who played, 60% of folks fell between the ages of 30 – 49. The giant wave did not clearly indicate an age restriction through both the materials and design of the structure which lent itself well to communicating that people of all ages are welcome to explore.

Additionally, 1/3rd of survey respondents who identify with a disability said they played.

Throughout the pop-up park, the wheelchair swing was used by children and adults of all ages and abilities and demonstrated that accessible play can be inclusive of everyone.



Design Direction - Playful

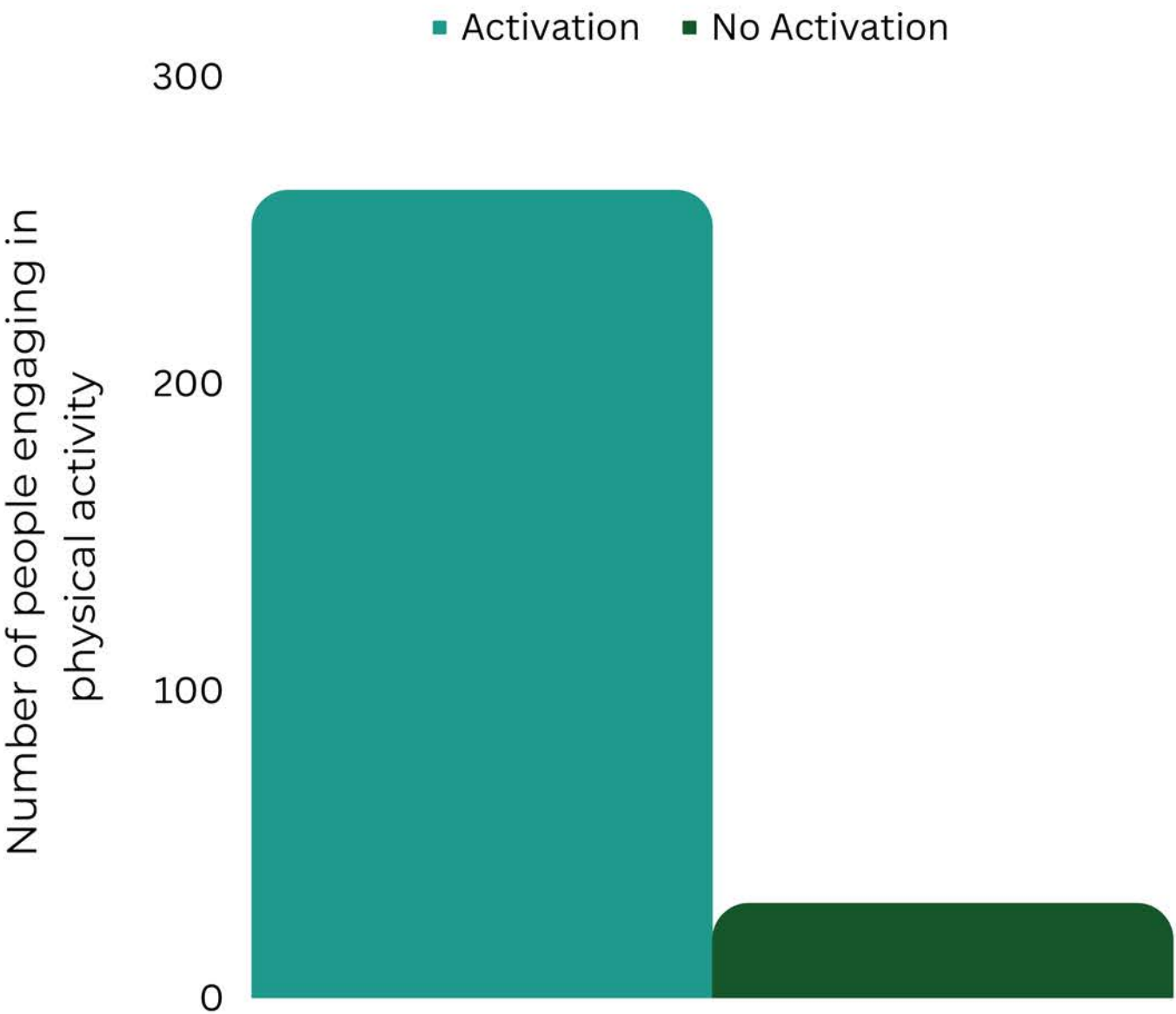


Survey respondents who identified as an immigrant or refugee also expressed feeling a sense of inclusion from the space and were engaged in play and activity.

78% of surveyed immigrants or refugees indicated that they were active for 30 minutes or more, emphasizing that the physical activity benefits were experienced by people of all backgrounds.



Levels of physical activity during and after the activation



Design Direction - Playful



Carl Zehr Square is a prominent fixture of downtown Kitchener and should be seen as a destination to visit, stay and play in.

During the summer the square is used partially as a splash pad and in the winter, it acts as an ice rink. But the pop-up park showed there is appetite for a programmed and playful square all year round.



Design Direction - Playful

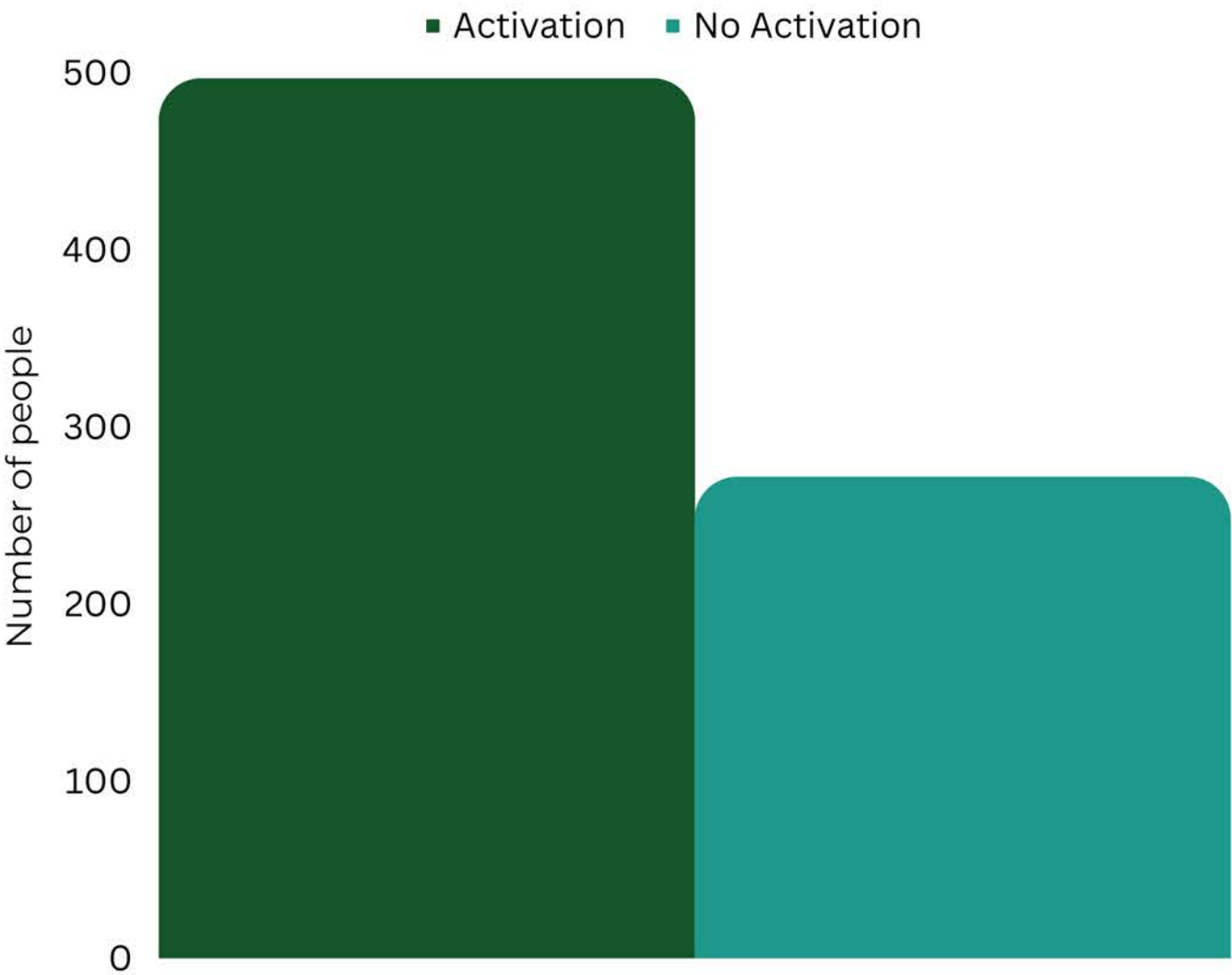


While the pop-up park was situated adjacent to the square, activities like yoga, movie nights, public prayer, flamenco and free play spilled into Carl Zehr Square. Even during times of non-programming, the amount of people travelling to and from the square almost doubled.

The pop-up park brought increased usership to the square and allowed many to enjoy this public space in new ways.



Total travel to and from Carl Zehr Square



Programming Themes

This section introduces the programming themes that were co-created with the pop-up park project team and community stakeholders. The programming themes guide this section's findings.



Programming Themes



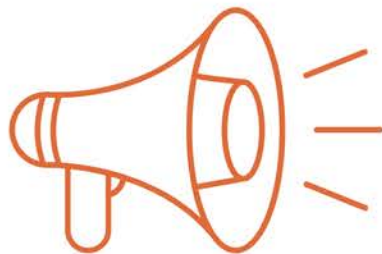
Culturally Responsive

Programming in the pop-up park will be culturally recognizable, sourcing games and materials that speak to the childhood of many Indigenous and South Asian folks.



Belonging for All

A range of programming and self-programmable spaces will be provided that connotes a sense of belonging and stewardship for all visitors.



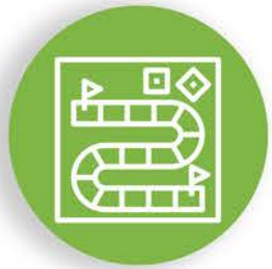
New!

The pop-up park's programming will incorporate new and exciting ways to get folks active, involved, engaged and informed for the public and for businesses.

Programming Theme - Culturally Responsive



The pop-up park provided culturally responsive programming, including:



60+ Games were brought to the pop-up park, including Ludo and Carrom (highly recommended games by South Asian folks who were engaged in the planning and development phase of the pop-up park)



100 prayer mats were provided for the first City-run outdoor public prayer



50 cedars and 15 fruit bearing trees were donated to Anishnabeg Outreach's farm at the end of the pop-up



Beading supplies for 100 people and instruction led by an Indigenous beader

Programming Theme - Culturally Responsive

Local community groups helped program the pop-up park:



Muslims in Public Space (MiPs) provided workshops with local elementary schools on Islamic geometric design then enlisted the support of the students to beautify the pop-up park with chalk designs.

MiPs also brought bike lane barriers and a qibla finder to the pop-up park!



Social Development Centre
WATERLOO REGION

Social Development Centre Waterloo Region (SDCWR) brought comfy couches, chairs, rugs and lamps to the pop-up park to create an outdoor living room. SDCWR used the outdoor living as a platform to discuss homelessness in parks.



Spectrum Waterloo Region's Rainbow Community Space is an 2SLGBTQIA+ group that brought the Mindful Movements dance with Joscelyn Guindon to the pop-up park.



Anishnabeg Outreach (AO) programmed the pop-up park with their Indigenized EarlyON care for family play, as well as daily art projects for all pop-up park visitors.

KITCHENER POP-UP PARK

We heard what you want from **Kitchener parks**

October 14 - 16, Carl Zehr Square

Join us as we test your ideas for parks in front of Carl Zehr Square to inform the **Parks and Open Spaces Strategy**.

FRIDAY

9 AM - 3 PM - Indigenous EarlyON open for family play

9:45 AM - Opening Ceremony

10 AM - 5 PM - Family Fire with Elder and Knowledge Keeper Gerard

12 PM - 1 PM - Yoga

1:30 PM - 2 PM - Jummah with Sheikh Usman

6:30 PM - 8 PM - Movie Night: Stories from Land Back Camp and Recollections & Imaginings

SATURDAY

9 AM - 3 PM - Indigenous EarlyON open for family play

10 AM - 3 PM - Community Living Room Conversation on Homelessness in Parks

10 AM - 5 PM - Family Fire with Elder and Knowledge Keeper Gerard

1 PM - 3 PM - Community Picnic (BYO, Buy Local)

2 PM - 4 PM - Art in the Park

2:30 PM & 3:30 PM - Story Time with Kitchener Public Library

6 PM - 8 PM Are You Afraid of the Dark? A Safe Space to Connect After Dark Installation With Tennesha Joseph

6:30 PM - 8 PM - Movie Night - Hocus Pocus

SUNDAY

9 AM - 3 PM - Indigenous EarlyON open for family play

10 AM - 5 PM - Family Fire with Elder and Knowledge Keeper Gerard & Closing Ceremony

12 PM - 1 PM - Mindful Movements with Joscelyn Guindon & Spectrum Community Space

1 - 2 PM - Erick Traplin Concert

2 PM - 3 PM - Gold Leaf Botanical's Plant Propagation Workshop

6:30 PM - 8 PM - Movie Night - Hocus Pocus 2



880cities



PLACES & SPACES
KITCHENER'S PARK & OPEN SPACE STRATEGY



For the most up to date programming schedule see
www.engageWR.ca/placesandspaces



Community Living Room
Conversation on
Homelessness in Parks



Spectrum's Mindful
Movements



Land Back Camp
drumming &
documentary screening



City-run public prayer



Anishnabeg Outreach's
EarlyON programming



Propagation workshop
by local business, Gold
Leaf Botanicals



Muslims in Public
Space's stencil
workshop



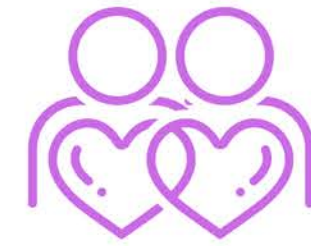
Programming Theme - Cultural Responsive

It was important that the programming of the pop-up park be culturally responsive, and through surveys, it was observed that 100% of self-identified members of a racialized group and 100% of those who identified as First Nations, Metis or Inuit said their interests were reflected in the space.

The presence of fire provided a communal space to warm up and gather where people of all incomes socialized at all times of the day. The sacred fire during the day created a welcoming space for Indigenous folks and a place for settlers to listen, learn and relax. During the Friday of the pop-up park, an Indigenous youth from a local school gravitated toward to fire and introduced themselves to Fire Keeper Gerard Sagassige. The presence of Fire Keeper and a sacred fire helped create a safe place to share culture and connect.



Programming Theme - Belonging for All



The pop-up park balanced programming that reflects a diversity of users and activities. Programming partners activated the space with music, dance, crafts and learning opportunities.

- 64% of park visitors met someone new and 56% of immigrants or refugees said that they met someone new while at the pop-up park activation, highlighting how well-designed public spaces has the ability to build community connections
- 96% of people said they experienced something new and different
- 93% of people said their interests were reflected in the pop-up park
- 88% of people who identified as a part of the LGBTQ2S+ community, said that they saw their interests reflected in the space



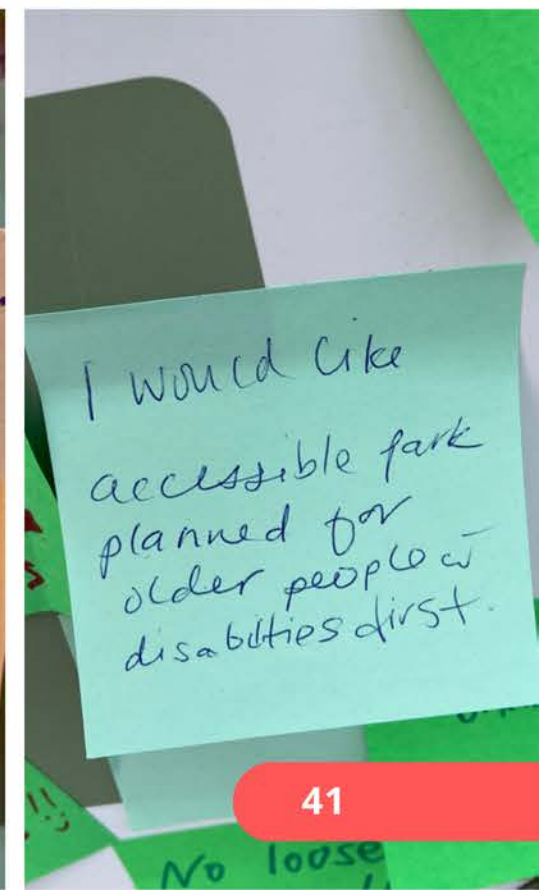
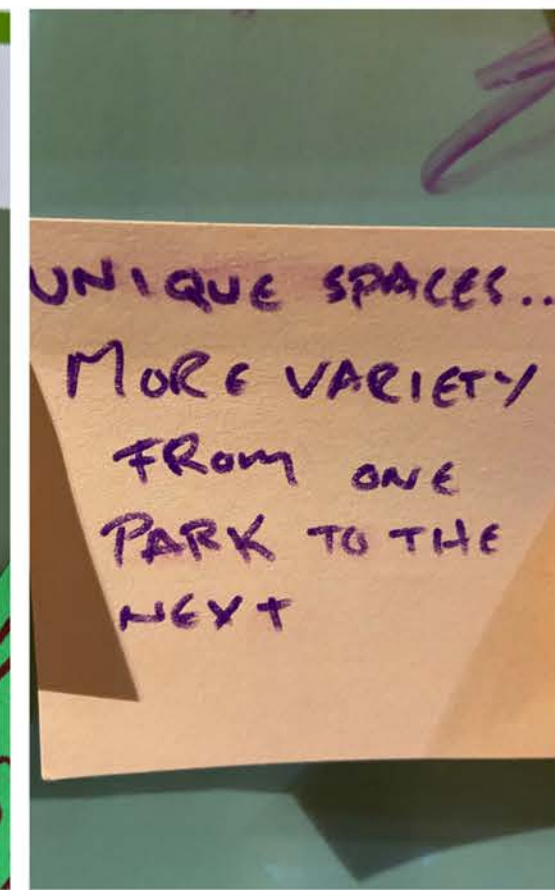
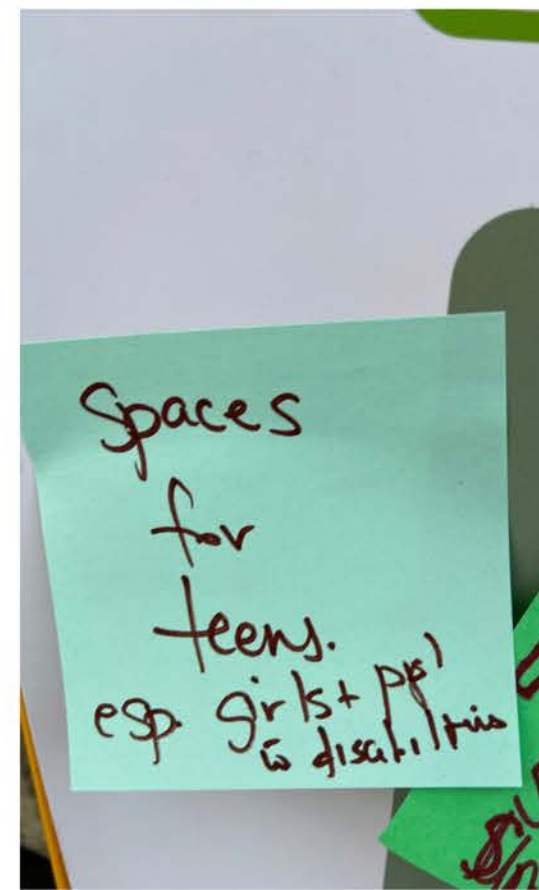
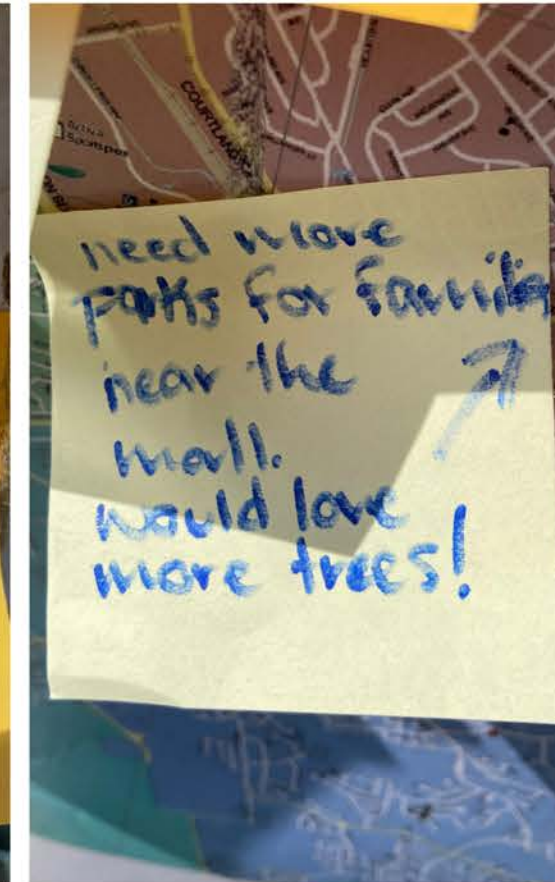
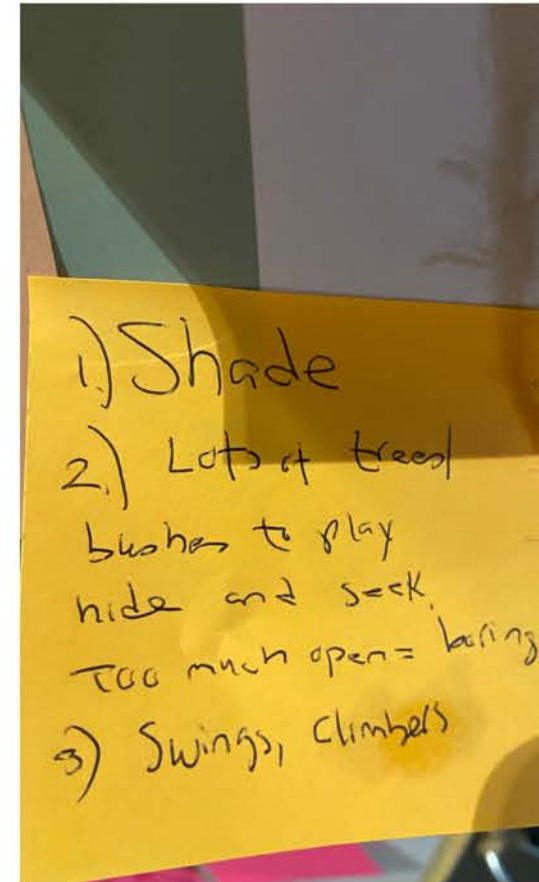
Programming Theme - Belonging for All



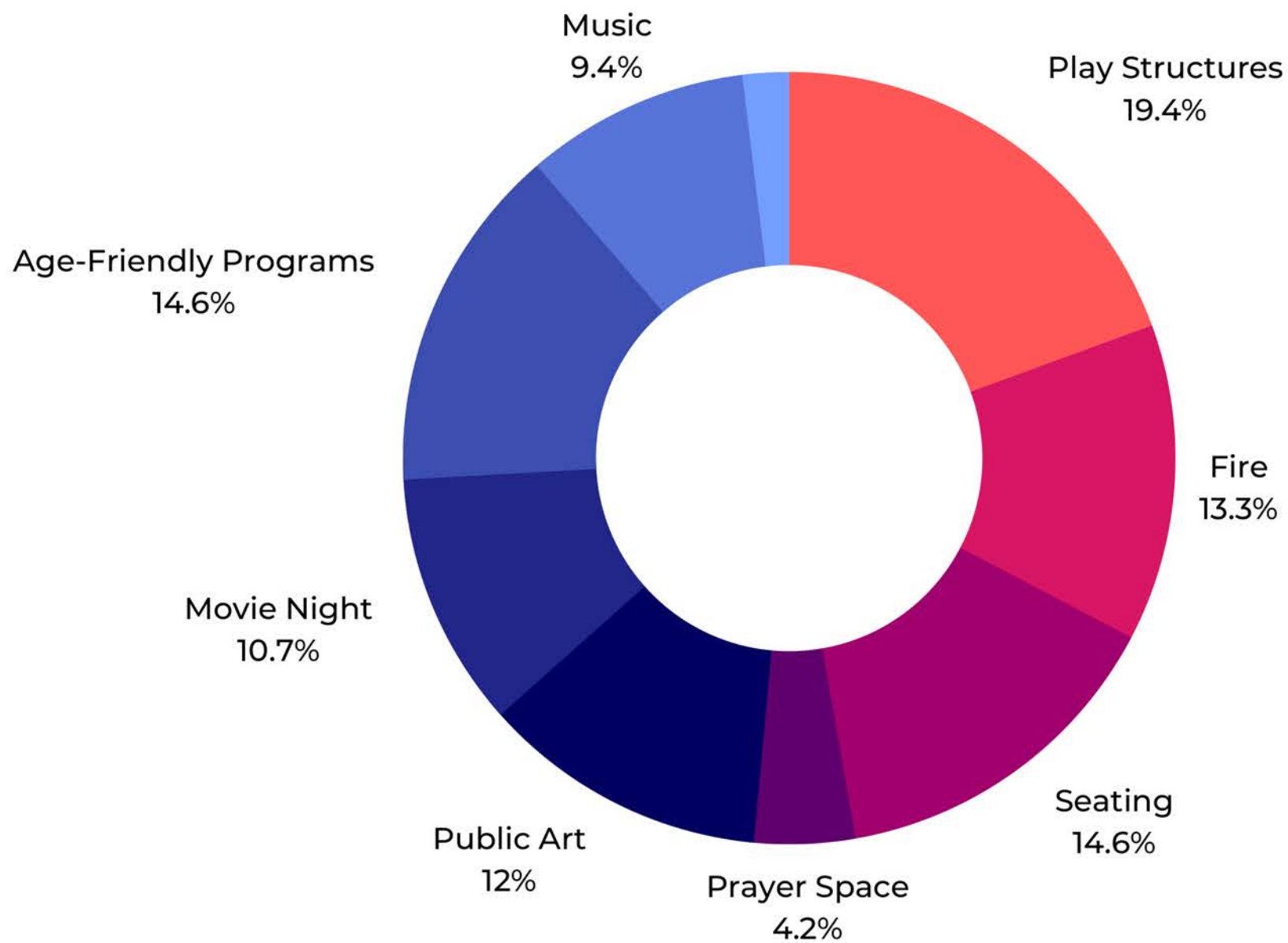
The pop-up park allowed the community to re-imagine parks and public spaces in their own neighbourhoods.

When asked “Did you see something you'd like to see in your neighbourhood park?” survey respondents were most interested in creative play structures, and fire pits with accessible, and plentiful seating areas.

The engagement boards revealed that there is demand for unique and playful parks throughout the City. Many pop-up park visitors spoke to the need for more teen-friendly spaces, and park space for older adults with disabilities. Visitors to the pop-up park liked its downtown location and wished for more small family-friendly parks strategically placed throughout the downtown.



Did you see something you'd like to see in your neighbourhood park?



Programming Theme - Belonging for All



Many people also expressed excitement around edible plants and gardens and want to see fruit bearing trees/bushes across city parks. Community feedback also called for more community gardens that can hold gardening classes and age-friendly programming.

The community expressed interest in creating free or subsidized garden plots so that people of all income levels can access gardening opportunities. Investing in fruit bearing trees and bushes in parks was also seen as a step towards land-based reconciliation and nurturing relationships to the land.



Programming Theme - Belonging for All



Many Indigenous visitors and programmers of the pop-up park spoke to the idea that sacred fires, fruit producing plants and the presence of medicines like cedar, should be staples in Kitchener's parks of the future.





Pop-Up Park Summary

- 1** Observations showed a large interest from older age groups using the play structure provided, indicating a need to provide more equipment elsewhere that's for all ages
- 2** The popularity of the event can be tied to its temporary nature, supporting a possible pop-up program that rotates between parks that offers unique experiences
- 3** The positive reception of the pop-up park indicates an acceptance of shifting public realm from cars to pedestrian and even recreational uses

