



Luther Vipond Memorial Arena

Community Feedback & Engagement Summary Report 2025

Prepared By:

SHCG

Introduction

The Luther Vipond Memorial Arena (LVMA) is located on the Southeast Side of Hwy #7 in the Village of Brooklin in the Town of Whitby. The LVMA opened in 1973 and has played a significant role in the Brooklin area. It is more than just an arena; it is a place where people gather, connect, and create memories.

While the facility is aging, the LVMA is an important asset for the Community of Brooklin. The Facility has hosted the annual Brooklin Spring Fair at the current location for over a century. The arena building is used for several events during the fair, including opening ceremonies, competitions (e.g., spelling bee), shows (including live music), dances, arts and crafts sales, displays, and more. Maintaining access to this facility in some form is vital to ensure that a venue is available to support this long-standing local event, as well as broader indoor programming and rental needs throughout the year.

In 2019, a Building Condition Audit was completed, and it was determined that capital investment will be required to support the facility's continued use. In 2024, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan provided a recommendation for next steps with the LVMA:

Parks and Recreation Master Plan Recommendation 20:

Undertake a facility renewal strategy to investigate the feasibility of updating and modernizing the Luther Vipond Memorial Arena for indoor programming and rentals, including supporting the Brooklin Spring Fair. This should involve input from community stakeholders and the public and may be undertaken as part of a broader visioning exercise for Brooklin Memorial Park.

About Luther Vipond



Luther Vipond (1914-1982) was a lifelong resident of Brooklin/Whitby and distinguished himself over a 5-decade period, as an athlete, coach, manager, executive, sponsor, mentor and community builder.

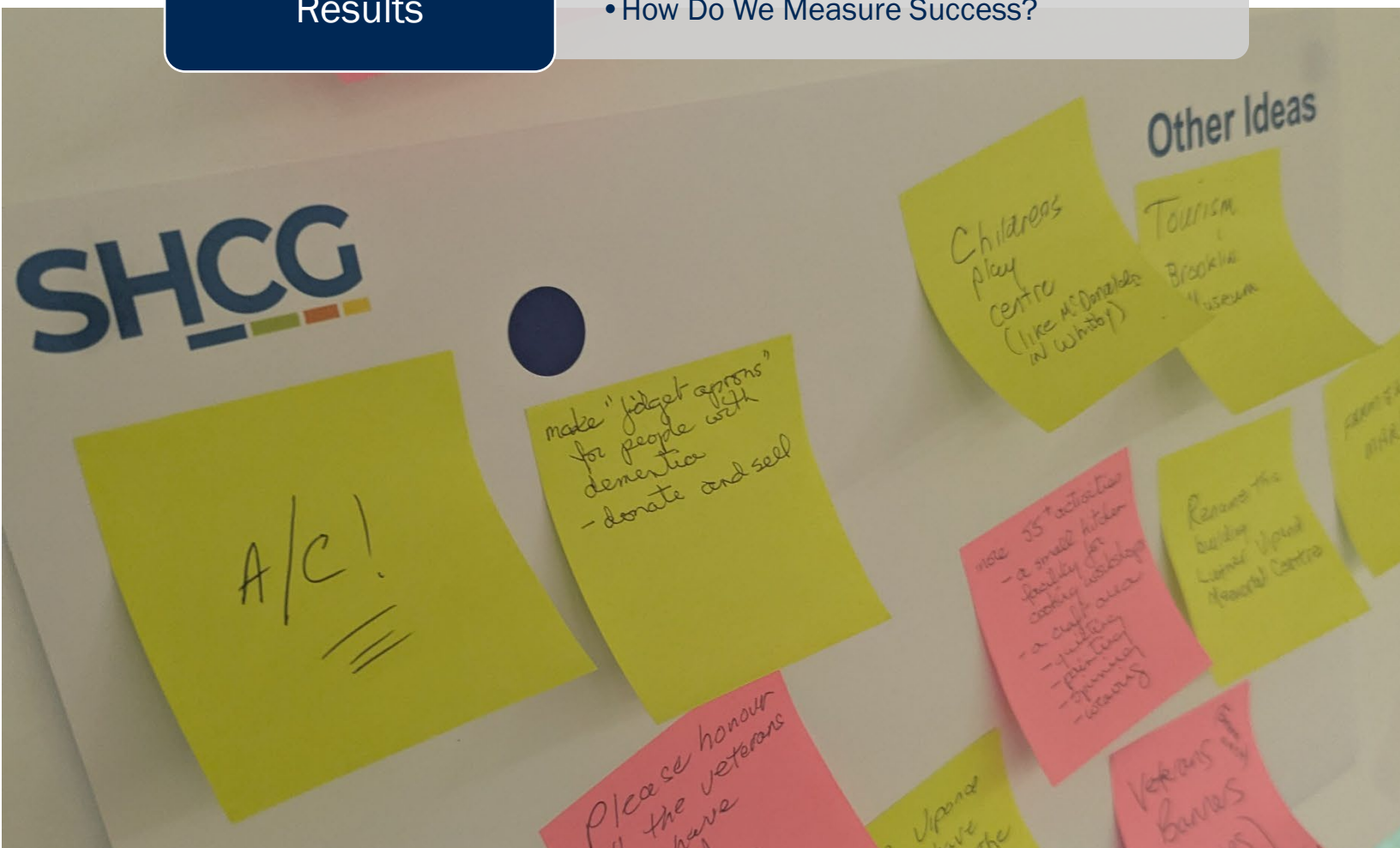
- He began his Lacrosse career in the early 1930's playing for Brooklin
- He served in WWII and was among 14,000 Canadians who landed on Normandy beaches on D-Day
- He was among the volunteers who erected a new arena in Brooklin (Brooklin Memorial Arena)
- He helped develop and grow both Hockey and Lacrosse in the area.
- In 1954, Luther assumed the role of Arena Manager until his retirement in 1979

Community Engagement

To explore the feasibility of updating and modernizing the LVMA, including its role in supporting the Brooklin Spring Fair, **SHCG conducted community engagement activities** throughout May, June, and July. These included interviews and workshops guided by the **S.O.A.R. model**—a framework focused on identifying **Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results**.

This engagement process ensured that community voices were central to shaping the future of the LVMA, with input gathered from a diverse range of residents, stakeholders, and user groups.

Strengths	• What Are The Strengths Of The LVMA? • What Are The LVMA's Best Attributes?
Opportunities	• How Might We Use The LVMA In The Future?
Aspirations	• What Does The Community Deeply Care About?
Results	• How Do We Measure Success?



1324 Participants Engaged

1. Interviews

- Interviews with members of Council
- Interviews with members of the Vipond Family
- Workshops and interviews with sports organizations
- Interviews with the Whitby Agricultural Society/Brooklin Spring Fair
- Interviews with staff members

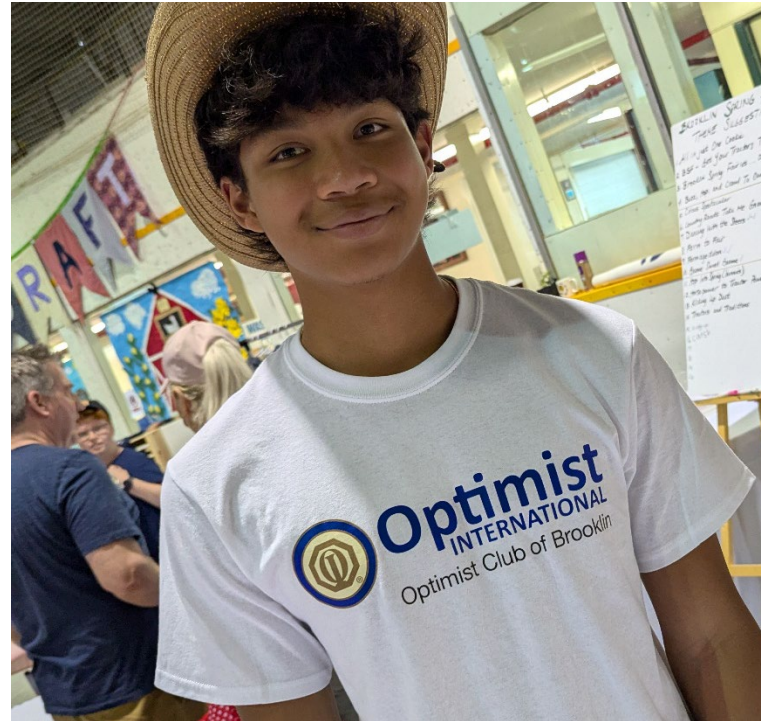
2. Local Events

- Brooklin Spring Fair
- Brooklin Farmers Market

3. Connect Whitby Survey

4. Community Input Workshops

- In person on site at the LVMA (3 sessions)
- Virtual Community Input Workshops (2 sessions)



 CONNECT WHITBY	2117	Visits To The connectwhitby.ca Project Page
	1324	Participants Engaged In The Engagement Process
	87%	Support The Use Of Public Funds To Upgrade And Modernize The Facility



What We Heard & What We Learned

Council Interviews

Strengths of the Luther Vipond Memorial Arena (LVMA)

- The facility stands out from other Whitby arenas due to its distinct small-town charm.
- The Vipond name holds deep significance within the Brooklin community, with many long-time residents having personal connections to the arena through early sports experiences.
- Its central, walkable location is close to Highway 407 and local trails, making it easily accessible.
- The 14–20-acre site (including Brooklin Memorial Park) offers extensive potential for future development and programming.
- LVMA plays a key role in hosting the Brooklin Spring Fair, attracting numerous visitors annually.
- The facility supports a wide range of programming options.

Opportunities for Future Use

- LVMA could address unmet demand for event and fieldhouse space for sports organizations.
- Future planning should be bold and innovative, with a focus on:
 - Physical and financial accessibility for all income levels and
 - Inclusive programming that engages new Canadians and encourages girls to explore and develop skills in various sports.
- Enhancements such as air conditioning and modernized features would make the facility more inviting.
- The community is seeking space for diverse events, including graduations, dances, prayer services, and weddings.
- Expanded parking would be necessary to support increased usage.

Aspirations and Community Values

- The Luther Vipond name and legacy are cherished by many long-time Brooklin residents.
- Council must find a balance between honoring tradition and embracing modernization.
- The community values having a “community-first” space that reflects its identity and needs.

Measuring Success

- Key indicators of success include financial sustainability and high utilization of the facility.

Interviews with the Vipond Family

Interviews were conducted with members of the Vipond family to learn about how the Luther Vipond Memorial Arena came to be and to understand Luther Vipond as a community leader and builder.

"Dad was a loyal and respectful man. He would give guys a chance when other people wouldn't."

– Peter Vipond, son of Luther Vipond

"It's a community icon. Luther intended for the facility to be a place where everyone could gather and play."

– John Vipond, nephew of Luther Vipond

"The local kids helped with natural ice in the winter months – they would flood the ice using a garden hose and water from the well. Flooding went on all night. They (local kids) had a job to do."

– Mike Grey, nephew of Luther Vipond



SHCG

The Town of Whitby has asked SHCG to speak with the community. We attended the Spring Fair and had many conversations and now we want to hear from you!

Please follow along with the poster boards for a brief history of the building and have your say on its future by placing dots to express your preferences.



SHCG

The Luther Vipond Memorial Arena (LVMA) has served as a community gathering space for recreation and the iconic Brooklin Spring Fair since 1973. While the facility grounds will continue to host the Brooklin Spring Fair, with the opening of a new twin-pad arena at the future Whitby Sports Complex on the horizon, ice sports like hockey will soon be moved out of the facility, making way for new community uses.



SHCG

Luther Vipond

Luther Vipond (1914-1982) was a lifelong resident of Brooklin/Whitby and distinguished himself over a 5-decade period, as an athlete, coach, manager, executive, sponsor, mentor and community builder.

- He began his Lacrosse career in the early 1930's playing for Brooklin.
- He served in WWII and was among 14,000 Canadians who landed on Normandy beaches on D-Day.
- He was among the volunteers who erected a new arena in Brooklin (Brooklin Memorial Arena).
- He helped develop and grow both Hockey and Lacrosse in the area.
- In 1954, Luther assumed the role of Arena Manager until his retirement in 1979.

The Arena

- The building was officially dedicated as Whitby Township's war memorial in 1949.
- The building then was replaced in 1973 as the Luther Vipond Memorial Arena.



Brooklin Agricultural Society Interviews

The Brooklin Spring Fair President participated in an interview. The Fair Board finds the space to be working well for the annual spring fair and finds staff at the Town of Whitby to be very supportive of the event. Currently, the Fair Board stores some of its supplies at the LVMA and would like to continue being able to do so as they do not own a permanent home. The Board meets monthly and suggested that having a place to meet each month at the LVMA would be a value add for them. The board continues to seek ways to grow attendance at the fair. This year, 30,000 people attended.

As part of the Community Engagement process, SHCG Consultants attended the Brooklin Farmers Market in June to promote the survey, to have more community conversations about the future of the arena and to promote the Connect Whitby survey.

Engagement With Whitby Sports Organizations

A virtual workshop using the S.O.A.R. (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) model, along with several interviews, were conducted with local sports organizations.

The following groups participated:

Whitby Minor Lacrosse
Brooklin Lacrosse Club
Brooklin Merchants
Whitby Warriors Jr. A Lacrosse
Whitby Jr. C Lacrosse
Whitby Rush Women's Lacrosse

Durham Men's Lacrosse League
Ontario Lacrosse Association
Whitby Ball Hockey
Whitby Soccer
Whitby Girls Softball
Whitby Eagles Fast Pitch



Community Strengths and Values

The LVMA is cherished for its central location, historic significance, and its role in community traditions like the Brooklin Spring Fair. Strong emotional connections and memories are associated with the venue, reinforcing its importance as a community hub.

Opportunities and Potential Uses

The facility's adjacency to open space and sports fields positions it well to become a 12-month training and skill-building hub. Emphasis on year-round, inclusive sports programming to engage:

- New Canadians
- Girls and women in sport
- Athletes of all ages and skill levels

Upgrades are needed to modernize the space, improve equipment storage, and enhance accessibility. Partnerships among sports organizations could unlock funding opportunities. Proposed future uses include:

- Lacrosse, pickleball, soccer, ball hockey
- Indoor training space for baseball, cricket, and other sports
- Recreational programming for all ages, including 55+ groups

Unmet Demand for Indoor Facilities

There is a shortage of indoor training space, forcing teams to travel long distances (e.g., to Hastings for batting clinics), and accept inconvenient scheduling (e.g., late-night or early-morning sessions in soccer domes). Demand continues to outpace available space, limiting local development opportunities.

Lacrosse Community Focus

Lacrosse is seen as a cornerstone sport for the LVMA. Aspirations include:

- Year-round programming
- Volunteer retention
- Youth development pathways
- Alignment with the sport's Olympic inclusion in 2028

Memorializing Luther Vipond

Suggestions to honor his legacy include: retaining the Luther Vipond name, creating physical memorials such as murals, plaques, or statues and involving local organizations in preserving his story for future generations.

Measures of Success

- High facility utilization
- Increased participation, especially during off-season months
- Diverse programming and activities
- Growth of local sports organizations
- Higher-level athlete development through year-round access
- Collaborative funding efforts (e.g., Trillium grants)

Brooklin Spring Fair & Farmers Market

Organizers for the Brooklin Spring Fair welcomed the team from SHCG and allowed the team to have a table in the Luther Vipond Memorial Arena where members could greet visitors, gather comments and encourage participation in the Connect Whitby survey.

SHCG attended the Brooklin Spring Fair where it became apparent that the arena is a keystone facility for the annual fair; used for contests, displays, the opening parade and other guest services.

On Saturday June 21st, SHCG consultants attended the Brooklin Farmers Market with a display to promote participation in the Connect Whitby survey and to attend an in-person engagement session.



Interviews with Staff

Staff from the Recreation division participated in a workshop to provide input for the future use of the LVMA. Staff highlighted the facility's unique heritage and community role while identifying needed improvements and unmet use demands.

Heritage and Community Identity

The Luther Vipond Memorial Arena (LVMA) is highly valued for its historic significance, its longstanding connection to the Brooklin Spring Fair, and its role as a community gathering place. Its small, family-friendly atmosphere, central location, and adjacent parkland contribute to its unique character and enduring appeal.

Facility Improvements and Accessibility

Town staff emphasized the need for modernization of the facility, including:

- Enhanced accessibility features
- Improved lighting, bathrooms, and dressing rooms
- Upgraded admissions booths
- Better traffic flow and expanded parking to support future use

Programming and Unmet Demand

There is growing demand for diverse and inclusive programming, including:

- Sports such as pickleball, basketball, roller skating, cricket, baseball, and soccer training
- Cultural celebrations, graduations, and community events
- Enhanced event infrastructure, such as a stage, streaming technology, and larger banquet spaces

Current limitations in storage and event capacity have resulted in the facility turning away some community requests.

Measures of Success

Staff identified the following key indicators of success:

- High utilization of the facility
- Strong community engagement
- Inclusive programming for all ages and income levels
- Revenue generation to support ongoing improvements
- The ability to accommodate local events without requiring residents to seek venues outside of Whitby

Connect Whitby Survey Summary

The Town of Whitby utilized its Connect Whitby engagement platform to launch a public survey titled “*Help Shape the Future of Luther Vipond Memorial Arena.*” The initiative received strong community participation, with over 1,200 responses collected—providing a robust dataset to inform future recommendations.

Demographic Insights

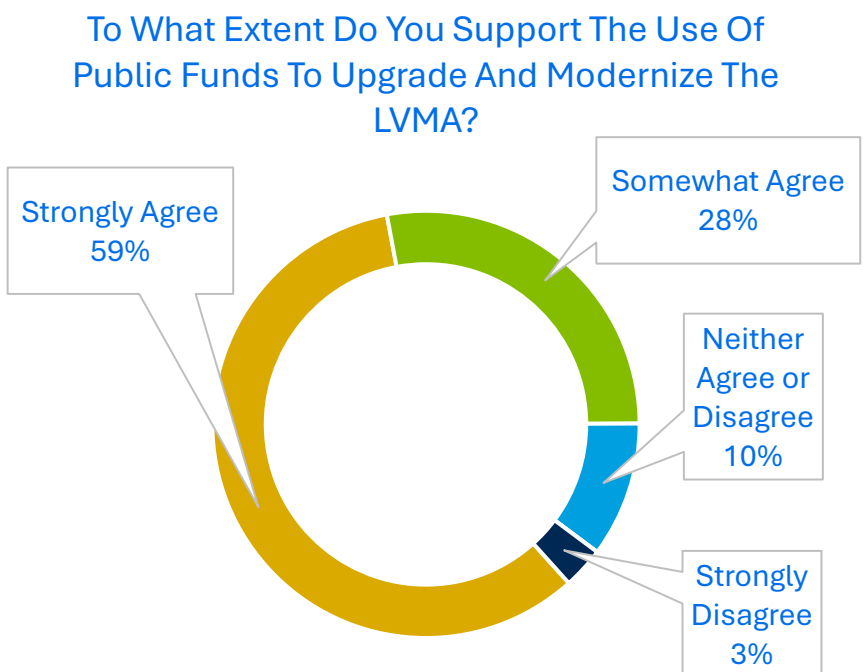
- Households with Seniors: 385 respondents reported having individuals aged 55 and older in their household.
- Households with Children: 558 households indicated that children reside with them.
- Long-Term Residents: 84% of participants have lived in Whitby for 10 years or more, reflecting a deeply rooted community perspective.

Community Sentiment on Arena Naming

Survey participants were asked to evaluate the importance of retaining the name *Luther Vipond Memorial Arena*. The results revealed strong community support for preserving the Luther Vipond name, recognizing its historical and emotional significance. While the name itself holds deep value, many respondents suggested updating the term “arena” to better reflect the facility’s future purpose. Alternatives such as “centre,” “community centre,” or “memorial centre” were commonly recommended to align with its envisioned role as a multi-use, inclusive space.

Investing in the Luther Vipond Memorial Arena

Participants were also asked about their willingness to support public investment in upgrading and modernizing the facility. A significant majority expressed positive sentiment, with **59% strongly agreeing** and **28% somewhat agreeing** that public funds should be used to enhance the space. This feedback underscores a clear mandate from the community to revitalize the facility and ensure it remains a valuable and accessible resource for all residents.



Future Non-Ice Uses Of The Facility

Survey responses identified **pickleball, lacrosse, and ball hockey** as the most desired non-ice sports for the repurposed facility. Building on this feedback, consultations with Whitby-based sports organizations confirmed a strong demand for **year-round indoor space** to support athlete development, training, and recreational play.

In addition to sports programming, survey participants emphasized the importance of having a **flexible community space** that could accommodate events, banquets, and other social gatherings—further reinforcing the need for a multi-purpose facility that serves both athletic and community needs.



Examples of Community Feedback from Connect Whitby Survey

"It is essential, that the future of the LVMA is focused on sport – primarily lacrosse. The Vipond family's place in the cultural and sporting history of Brooklin is undeniable. Luther's contributions, as formally recognized by naming of the arena and his induction into the Whitby Sports Hall of Fame have been a huge part of generations of young Brooklin athletes' lives."

Whitby needs a year-round facility for lacrosse. In winter, it's almost impossible to play and practice box lacrosse locally because all arenas convert to ice hockey."

"This barn is historic & should be preserved and used for all non ice sports & events. The smell is nostalgic."

"Lacrosse all year round!"

"Great site for indoor pickleball which would allow for 12 month use. Could multi-purpose for indoor basketball also."

"An affordable rental space for ball hockey or adult ball hockey leagues would be great."
"Year-round turf would greatly benefit the sports community in Whitby."

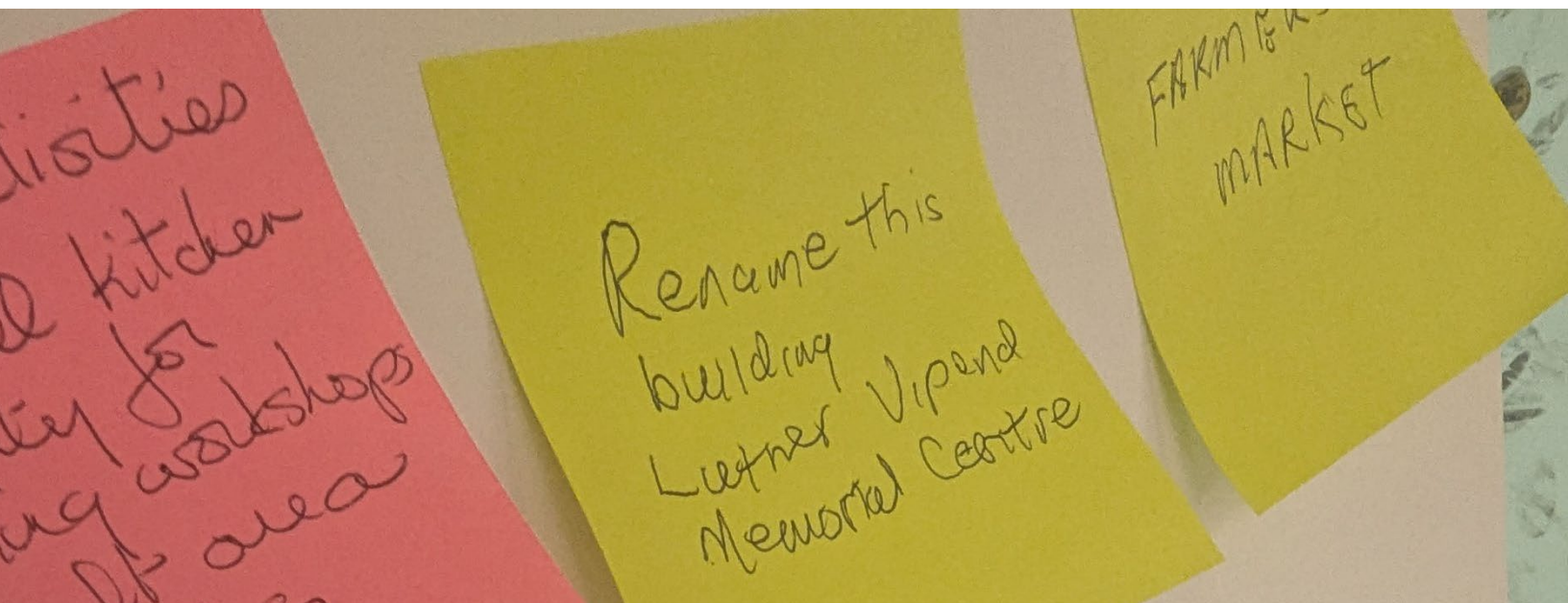
"Modernize the interior." "Make it accessible."

"Historically important. Just needs a facelift. Multiple purpose future"

"It's essential to keep this arena around for other recreational sports and activities so the younger generation can also grow up enjoying what I enjoyed."

"I think the fair grounds should always be the fair grounds. It's been there for years and wouldn't be fair to change some of the only things left. It keeps the old town feel."

"I think having a wall where long time community members can share their memories of the arena would be special. This could be done with photos or small write ups."



Community Input Workshops

In June, the Town of Whitby hosted three in-person workshops at the Luther Vipond Memorial Arena—one daytime session and two evening sessions. These events were promoted through the Town’s social media channels and Whitby Connect, ensuring broad community awareness and participation.

Upon arrival, participants provided basic household and residency information before engaging in a **“Dotmocracy” exercise**, where they allocated dots to their preferred program options. This interactive method allowed residents to visually express their priorities for future uses of the facility.

Honouring the Luther Vipond Legacy

Participants were invited to share ideas on how to preserve and celebrate the legacy of Luther Vipond, regardless of the facility’s future form. Suggestions included:

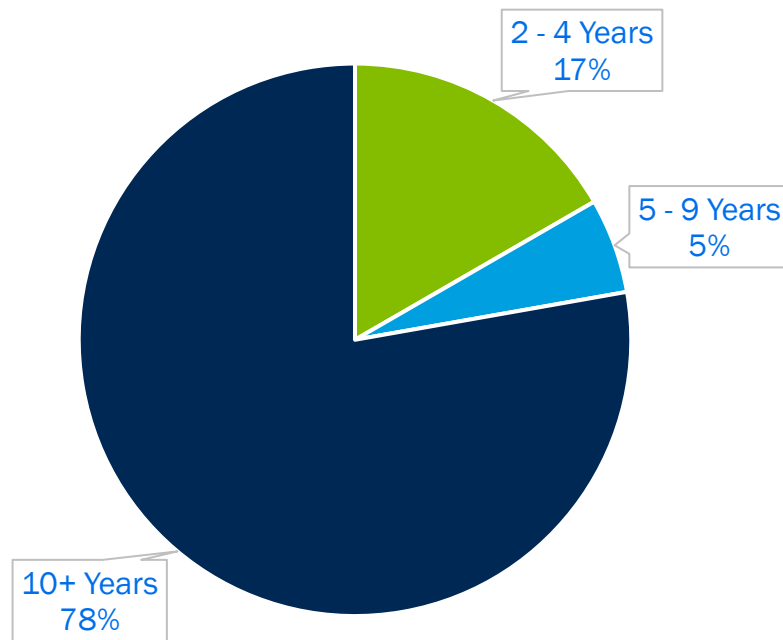
- A **memory wall** featuring photos of past users and community events at LVMA.
- A **timeline installation** illustrating the community’s efforts to build and support the facility.
- **Display cases** showcasing notable athletes and milestones from LVMA’s history.

Support for Investment and Partnerships

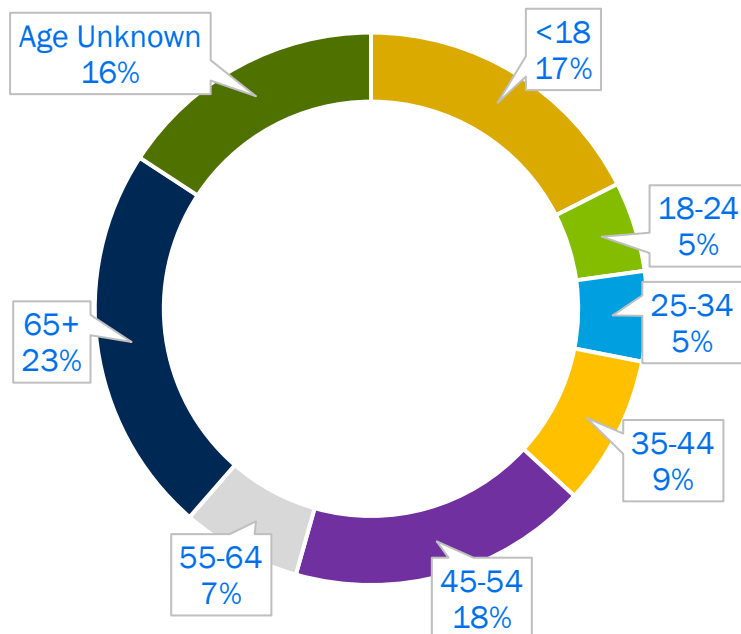
Workshop attendees unanimously supported the use of **public funds** to upgrade and modernize the facility. In addition, participants proposed that the Town of Whitby explore **private partnerships** and engage **local sports organizations** as potential collaborators in securing funding and contributing to future improvements.



How Long Have You Lived In Whitby?



Participant Ages

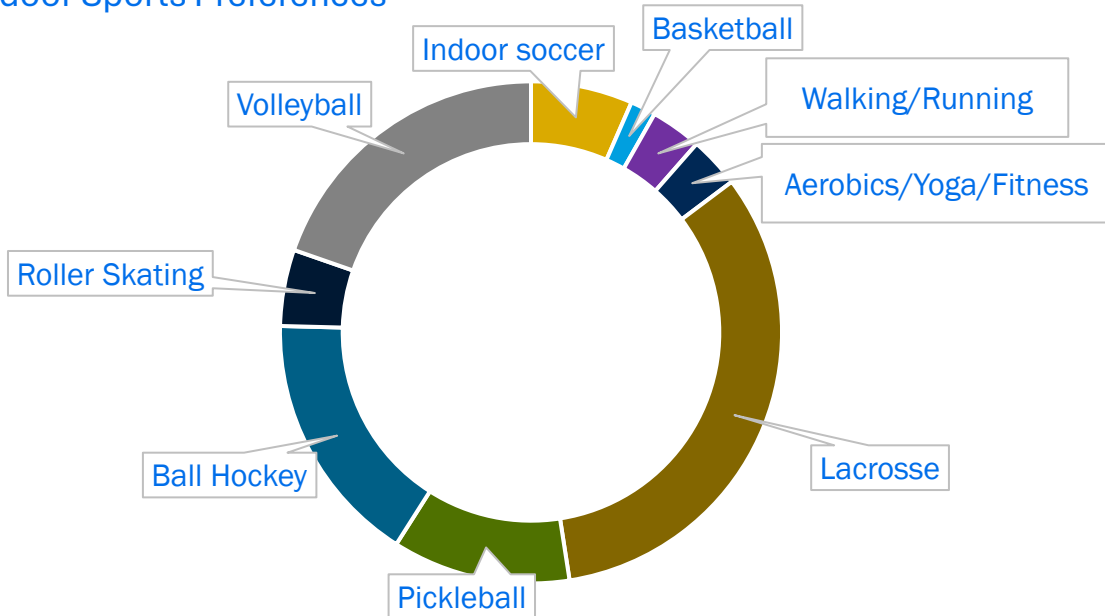


Indoor Sports & Community Programming

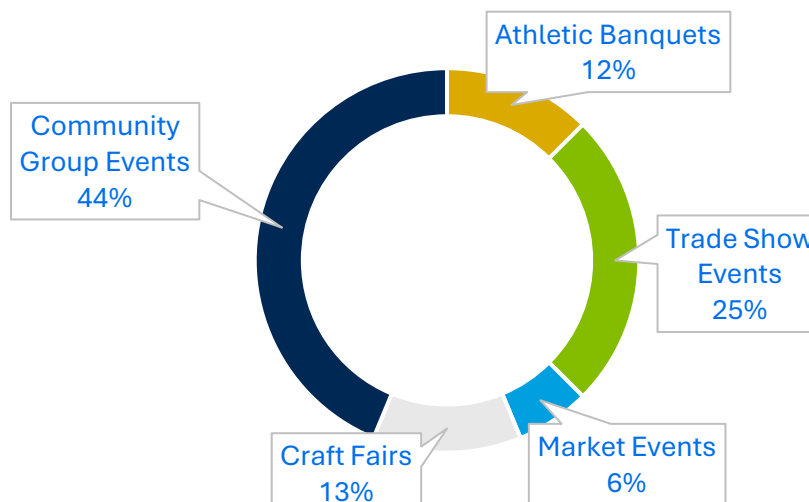
During the community workshops, participants identified their preferred future uses for the Luther Vipond Memorial Arena. The top non-ice sport choices included **lacrosse, ball hockey, volleyball, and pickleball**, reflecting strong interest in active, year-round recreational opportunities.

In addition to sports, participants highlighted the importance of **non-sport programming**, with top preferences including **community group events, trade shows, and athletic banquets**. These responses underscore the desire for a flexible, multi-use facility that can serve both recreational and social functions within the community.

Indoor Sports Preferences



Non Sports Programming



Examples of Community Feedback from Workshop Sessions

Brooklin is now home to many new Canadians who might like a chance to learn some of our games and sports. LVMA is a great place to have new experiences and learn a new skill.”

“A floor that can be used for any sport. A kitchen, added accoutrements for meetings and banquets.”

“Convention Centre is needed in Whitby. A place for dinners, dances, meetings, even weddings.”

“Keep the sports theme.”

“Change the flooring for pickleball, basketball, lacrosse, volleyball,”

“Brooklin Spring Fair Office Space”

SHCG

To What Extent Do You Support Public Funds Being Used To Upgrade & Modernize The Luther Vipond Memorial Arena?

Strongly Agree	18
Somewhat Agree	1
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	0
Somewhat Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	0

SHCG Honouring Our History

Luther Vipond Memorial Arena holds deep historical significance for the Brooklin and Whitby communities. As we plan for its future, we want to ensure its legacy is preserved and celebrated.

Please place your dots below the ideas you support for incorporating this history into future plans. Feel free to add your own ideas for consideration.

SHCG

Summary Of Recommendations

Following an extensive community engagement process—including surveys, public consultations, stakeholder meetings, and digital outreach—the following recommendations reflect the most widely supported and impactful strategies for repurposing the Luther Vipond Memorial Arena. These proposals align closely with community priorities, demonstrate strong public interest, and offer significant potential for long-term benefit.

1. Preserve the Luther Vipond Legacy

Retain the name “Luther Vipond” to honour the facility’s heritage and community roots. Consider updating the term “arena” to “community centre” or “fieldhouse” to better reflect its future role and expanded programming.

2. Enable Year-Round Access for Non-Ice Sports

Transition the facility to support year-round use by local sports organizations. Primary uses should include indoor floor sports such as lacrosse, ball hockey, and pickleball, with a focus on skill development, training, and recreational play.

3. Maintain Town Oversight of Scheduling

Continue to have Town of Whitby staff manage scheduling and permit allocation to ensure equitable access for all user groups.

4. Invest in Facility Enhancements

Community feedback supports financial investment in the facility, potentially through public funding and partnerships with local sports organizations for grant applications.

Recommended upgrades include:

- **Accessibility Improvements:** Enhanced heating and the installation of air conditioning to support summer use.
- **Multi-Use Playing Surface & Lighting:** A versatile surface and improved lighting suitable for lacrosse, ball hockey, baseball, and pickleball.
- **Community Activity Spaces:** Dedicated areas for 55+ programming, yoga and fitness classes, and meetings (e.g., Brooklin Spring Fair board).

5. Celebrate Community History

Design and install a “Memory Wall” to commemorate the origins of the LVMA and the contributions of the community members who built it.

By embracing the inclusive spirit championed by Luther Vipond, the repurposed facility can continue to serve as a welcoming space where residents of all ages and abilities come together to play, learn, and grow through sport and community connection.