

MEMO: Preliminary Emerging Themes for Community Pop-Ins + Online Ideas Tools (Nov–Dec 2025)

PURPOSE

This memo provides a concise snapshot of early, emerging themes heard through Round 1 engagement activities held in late Fall 2025 (Community Pop-Ins and Online Ideas Tools). These findings are preliminary and intended for interim sharing only.

This memo reflects input from these two engagement methods only. It does not include findings from the Community Survey or other engagement activities conducted during Round 1. A full report on *What We Heard* will be included in the Interim Report to Council.

What this memo is

A short summary of early, emerging themes shared through the Community Pop-Ins and Online Ideas Tools during the listening phase.

What this memo is not

A final analysis, a complete “What We Heard” report, or a recommendation about what should happen on the Fairgrounds site. Themes may evolve as more input is received and analyzed.

Important context

- Demographic information was not collected through the Pop-In boards or the Online Ideas Tools.
- These activities were designed to gather a range of perspectives, not to produce statistically representative results.
- People had the opportunity to participate in more than one activity (e.g., attend a pop-in and also share input online), so results should be interpreted as common themes, ideas and perspectives we've heard so far.

HOW WE LISTENED

1) In-Person Community Pop-Ins (Library, VOS, Greenbank Hall)

Local citizens and community members participated in drop-in sessions and shared input using facilitated boards with three prompts:

- What the Fairgrounds means to me today
- What values should guide its future
- Ideas for the site in the future

2) Online Ideas Tools (my.scugog.ca/YourVoiceYourFairgrounds)

People shared written ideas through an online tool running at the same time. Submissions were reviewed in anonymized form and grouped into early themes.

Emerging Themes by Engagement Type and Prompt

Themes below reflect a range of perspectives shared to date. They are not ranked, and the presence of a theme does not indicate the number of people who hold that view.

Input reflected strong shared values around protecting the Fairgrounds as a public and community-focused space, alongside differing perspectives on how best to balance preservation, programming, and long-term sustainability.

A) IN-PERSON COMMUNITY POP-INS (Library, VOS, Greenbank Hall)

1) What the Fairgrounds means to me

Common themes included:

- A community gathering place connected to shared traditions and events
- A meaningful part of local identity and continuity across generations
- Valued open space/green space and a place to be outdoors
- A place used (or seen as having potential) for everyday, informal recreation (e.g., walking, fresh air, casual activity)

2) What values should guide the Fairgrounds' future

Values most often emphasized:

- Community belonging and a space that works for different ages and interests
- Protecting open space/green space and maintaining public benefit
- Heritage and agricultural roots as defining features of the site
- Access and inclusion (safe, welcoming, easy to use)
- Year-round usefulness and long-term stewardship

3) Ideas community members have for the site

Ideas raised in-person commonly clustered around:

- **Basics and comfort:** washrooms, seating, shade/trees, pathways
- **Greenspace and recreation:** trails, playground features, community garden support
- **Facilities and activation:** community events and uses that support year-round benefit
- **Upgrading existing elements:** improvements to buildings and site features
- **Keeping signature uses:** many expressed interest in maintaining key traditions and long-standing activities associated with the Fairgrounds

B) ONLINE IDEAS TOOLS (my.scugog.ca/YourVoiceYourFairgrounds)

1) What the Fairgrounds means to me

Online submissions frequently echoed:

- understanding the Fairgrounds as a shared community space, tied to memories and traditions
- valuing it as open space/green space in town
- interest in the site being useful for both events and expanded everyday community life

2) What values should guide the Fairgrounds' future

Commonly expressed values included:

- protecting community and quality of life benefits
- keeping the site community-serving and welcoming
- honouring identity/heritage
- improving year-round use and functionality through practical upgrades
- considering local impacts (e.g., access, safety, circulation)

3) Ideas community members have for the site

Online ideas reflected both near-term enhancements and longer-term concepts.

Suggestions for the future emphasized guiding principles such as inclusivity, flexibility, accessibility, and community benefit, with specific ideas offered as illustrative possibilities rather than fixed proposals:

- **Practical improvements:** washrooms, landscaping/trees, seating, pathways, building upgrades
- **Recreation options:** trails, larger sports/recreation amenities, spaces for casual activity
- **Community-serving facilities:** multi-use community space concepts and other indoor/outdoor amenities
- **Programming and activation:** markets, performances, seasonal and winter-friendly uses
- **Long-term land use perspectives:** Ideas strongly emphasized keeping the Fairgrounds in public/community use—often described as green space, a gathering place, and the long-term home of community events—alongside interest in improving or enhancing existing features (e.g., washrooms, landscaping, pathways, upgraded buildings, and expanded year-round use). Some comments also proposed larger-scale community recreation opportunities (such as expanded sports or multi-use recreational amenities), while a smaller number suggested exploring more significant redevelopment concepts (such as housing). While many participants expressed strong opposition to housing and permanent privatization on the Fairgrounds, there was broad support for thoughtful enhancements and improvements that strengthen community use, accessibility, and long-term public benefit.

Next steps:

Engagement is ongoing. These themes will be validated and expanded through additional participation and analysis before formal reporting.