

st albert recreation master plan

*Approved by Council
21 February 2012*

cultivating community through recreation





foreword

This 2011 St Albert Recreation Master Plan provides a road map that leads the City into the future. It responds to resident and group recreation needs, and considers the trends and best practices that are influencing today's society. This is a document that includes and involves the entire community, with the City leading some initiatives, collaborating with others, and sometimes supporting the initiatives that community groups deliver.

The Plan was developed with the help of the community, through a detailed public engagement process of talking to residents and community groups and sport providers, and by analysing trends and best practices. All of this was done to generate the most creative and leading edge ideas possible.

This master plan considers and addresses all things "recreation," from casual opportunities such as enjoying the extensive parks and trail system or dog walking, to more scheduled activities like yoga or learn to swim programs. It includes information about how services and opportunities are provided, through partnership, private business, or by the city. It references the infrastructure required to provide services and opportunities, for example parks, trails, playing fields, pools and arenas. It contemplates new creative ways to fund these critical services and amenities, and it concludes with communication plans to encourage and engage the community to participate in whatever way they choose.

This is a comprehensive, long term, far reaching document that sets the foundation for the future of recreation in St Albert.



Plan Vision:

St Albert: Active and engaged
Active communities are healthy and proud. Recreation is a catalyst for getting residents and visitors active—mentally, physically and socially. In order for people to use recreation, they must be engaged not only in the activity in which they are participating, but also in their community. St Albert engages residents through recreation participation and engages delivery partner groups in recreation service delivery.

executive summary

Recreation is essential to community health and well being, community pride and community connectedness. Recreation is the primary vehicle for the citizens of St Albert to achieve physical and mental health, well being, and be nourished through both personal and community development.

Recreation opportunities create a city where people want to live, where they choose to shape and enrich their relationships with the people and places that make up their daily lives. This lifestyle choice contributes to an overall economic prosperity and growth and fosters environmental appreciation for those spaces and places that are so dear to all.

The City plays a major role in the delivery of recreation opportunities for both residents of and visitors to the City of St Albert. This Recreation Master Plan has been presented through an issues based approach, intended to enhance the already far-reaching benefits recreation provides in the city. The expected outcomes of this plan are:

- To create positive change or impacts in the lives of St. Albert residents;
- That staff, volunteers, and partners, understand, value, and support the long term vision of this plan;
- To ensure that the programs, services, and functions provided through this plan are relevant to citizen needs;
- To commit to supporting community development efforts in recognition that this contributes to the overall plan's success; and
- To value facilitation, partnership, and capacity building in others as a way of achieving and sustaining the resources required to achieve success in the recreation community.

This plan aligns with the city planning processes and is intended to be approved through a resolution of Council. In order to achieve these outcomes, the Plan is structured to address five priority streams. These focus areas, and associated recommendations, include:



Plan Mission:

Creating quality of life and community building through recreation. Recreation defines, in large measure, how City residents use their leisure time. The health and social benefits of the physical and mental activity associated with recreation undoubtedly improve quality of life in St Albert.

priority #1: ensure community health and well being

This priority stream is paramount to recreation and indicates the need for dynamic and creative planning as well as targeted programming that considers the ideas presented in the presented recommendations. The planning must ensure strategic provision of recreation services to all genres of City residents, engage the relevant community stakeholders and be nimble enough to respond to demographic shifts and trends in society preferences.

recommendation: engage the broader community

recommendation: seek out opportunities to engage the community

recommendation: engage the youth

priority #2: bolster community development

This priority stream identifies the need to consider the City's Community Development

Plan, as a long-range community development framework. The City will purposefully work with and recruit new groups in the future to create community, deliver recreation and maintain and enhance recreation infrastructure.

recommendation: understand common issues that community groups face and develop strategies to fill those gaps

recommendation: integrate recreation and sport tourism

priority #3: invest in recreation infrastructure

This priority stream indicates the need for a long-range infrastructure plan that addresses recreation needs of residents for the next 20–30 years, incorporates management tools to consider new recreation projects, ensures management of existing infrastructure, and incorporates a community development model that seeks opportunities for the City to partner with community groups for new recreation infrastructure.

recommendation: adopt a consistent infrastructure development process

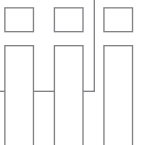
recommendation: develop and adopt an infrastructure management plan for all recreation spaces

recommendation: enhance parks and open space planning and management

priority #4: seek out innovative funding opportunities

This priority stream emphasizes the need for public recreation professionals to look at new ways to generate funding for recreation services. Leveraging public investment is key in enhancing and expanding recreation as a core municipal service.

recommendation: consider new avenues of funding for recreation services



priority #5: celebrate and communicate recreation

This priority stream outlines the importance of communications between all City recreation stakeholders—internal and external. The focus of this communication includes identifying how the City can assist and improve upon service delivery as well as how to portray the benefits and successes of recreation with the broader community.

recommendation: *coordinate communications efforts*

recommendation: *share the benefits of recreation and promote casual recreation*

recommendation: *optimize the use of existing and new media to communicate recreation*

The city provides and facilitates recreation with the understanding that partnerships in the delivery of recreation are vital. For this reason further strengthening of existing agreements with non-profit and public partners that provide recreation will be key in sustaining existing service levels and in meeting new demands. The future strength of recreation provision in the city will also be heightened by information sharing, lobbying and programming (cross-sectoral). Communication and promotion of the opportunities available to city residents as well as the benefits of participation is important to build a case for continued, and increased, support of recreation. Recreation stakeholder engagement in planning, assessing and visioning for the future is important because delivery and participation in recreation activities is truly a collaboration of the community.

New recreation management tools and guidelines, as well as infrastructure priorities and initiatives presented throughout the Plan are summarized as follows:

Key management tools and guidelines recommendations

- A transparent and equitable **Partnership Protocol** is being developed to formalize and standardize how the City partners with groups. This protocol must keep in mind the strengths and limitations associated with non-profits groups and understand that City support should be dynamic as groups evolve
- The City can play a role in **strengthening the volunteer community** through attraction, retention and recognition of volunteers. This could include the facilitation of a volunteer database, annual information sharing events with groups and volunteers and the potential development of a recreation volunteer support centre
- Residents and businesses within the city benefit from recreation and sport tourism. The City should **support groups that facilitate tourism through recreation and sport**. Further the City could play a role in coordinating all stakeholders to ensure that the benefits of event hosting and tourism are fully realized throughout the community
- The City has an opportunity to **market recreation service sponsorship on a citywide basis**. Packaging opportunities specific to potential sponsors will ultimately lead to added value and exposure while affording recreation needed funds for future initiatives
- The development of an **Parks and Open Spaces Management Plan (POSMP)** has been a priority for the City for many years. The formulation of the POSMP should be facilitated to meet the future objectives of parks providers in the City and should provide the information outlined in the POSMP Terms of Reference (under separate cover)

Key infrastructure and program priorities

All future infrastructure investment, whether enhancement of existing facilities or building new facilities and spaces, should consider the following:

- land banking
- life cycle planning
- geographic distribution
- recreation and culture
- spontaneous and structured opportunities
- stand-alone versus a multiplex approach
- expansion and enhancement versus building new
- event hosting design specifications
- repurposing of existing facilities

That being said, it is recommended that initial focus be placed on enhancing existing facilities and/or repurposing existing spaces. Initial ideas include:

- the re-purposing of the neighbourhood clubhouses to accommodate enhanced recreation opportunities (potentially including, but not limited to, fitness/wellness and indoor child play)
- investing in the Akinsdale/Kinex Arenas to ensure future sustainability
- enhancing Servus Credit Union Place to meet community needs and sustainability targets



With the realization that once existing infrastructure is enhanced, new facilities and spaces will be required to handle changing societal preferences and larger population base. New infrastructure ideas include:

- the development of a support centre for non-profit recreation delivery organizations
- land acquisition for major indoor/outdoor facility development considering geographic balance throughout the community (which may not occur for 15+ years)

Other initiatives identified herein, not specifically related to infrastructure, include:

- the creation of a **Recreation Successes** reporting process outlining the specific benefits of recreation to St Albert to be used in generating public messaging and in strengthening the case for recreation investment
- a **recreation communications program** outlining key messages related to recreation and utilizing existing media as well as social media and potentially an editorial in the local newspaper
- providing added **volunteer support**, including a volunteer roster, assistance/ services to organizations at different stages of evolution and the hosting of a forum for information and expertise sharing amongst delivery organizations
- the adoption of the **Active Community Strategy**, involving all impacted sectors including health, education, crime prevention and others, ultimately coordinated the ongoing efforts of all sectors, creating clear and agreed to messages and goals and optimizing the use of resource

- focusing on **after-school programming** (3 p.m.– 6 p.m.) in partnership with schools and utilizing the Canadian Sport 4 Life strategy in developing **programs for all ages**

The intent of this Recreation Master Plan is to provide an accurate depiction of the present and future needs for recreation infrastructure and programs in St Albert and outline strategies as to how to meet identified needs in the future.

This Plan has been developed based on broad public engagement, due diligence and compilation of varying levels of internal and external qualitative and quantitative information. The plan considers existing strategic directions set by the City of St. Albert and is aligned with broader existing City planning. Needs identified and planning guidelines and management tools contained herein are built upon the inputs of many different stakeholders and represent a balanced approach to meeting needs with available public resources.

Although the content and recommendations contained herein are not binding once approved by City Council, the Plan will become a key reference point in future decision making regarding recreation infrastructure and programs.

The underlying theme in this Plan and its various recommendations and guidelines is that the delivery of recreation programs, facilities, trails, parks and open spaces is dependent upon a collaborative effort.

Although the City has overseen this Plan and many of the recommendations are most pertinent for the City administration and staff, the fact remains that these services and facilities are a product of the dedication and perseverance of all stakeholders, including the volunteer sector, other levels of government and the private sector.

This document is meant to aid the City in making the right decisions for future recreation infrastructure and programs. The planning guidelines and management tools provided will ensure that the City is able to deal with other delivery stakeholders in an efficient, fair and equitable fashion. As well, the infrastructure and programming recommendations provide a strategic approach to sustaining existing service levels while provide exciting, unique and necessary environments and programs to enrich the quality of life of regional residents and visitors alike.

acknowledgements

Great communities are built through active citizen involvement and engagement in the process. Many thanks go to City Council and administration who assisted in this planning effort—recognizing the importance of investing in long range planning and displaying the fortitude to make decisions in the best interest of the community and region.

Of most importance, thanks go to the:

- residents of St Albert for participating in the household surveys and attending focus group meetings
- key representatives of volunteer groups who answered questionnaires and attended meetings to discuss their needs
- agency representatives who provided information and attended meetings when asked

(For a detailed list of participating groups, please refer to Appendix #1)

Special thanks go to the project steering committee and the recreation working group (listed below) who assisted in this planning effort (through the provision of advice, information, support and opinions), who recognized the importance of investing in long range planning and who displayed the fortitude to make decisions in the best interest of the City of St Albert.

The project steering committee:

- Chris Jardine, General Manager, CPS (Chair)
- Kelly Jerrott, Director, Cultural Services
- Monique St. Louis, Director, Recreation Services
- Anna Royer, Business Manager, CPS
- Roger Lemieux, City Council Representative
- Anthony Varga, Community Services Advisory Board Representative
- Nancy Abrahamson, Manager, Cultural Services

The recreation working group:

- Monique St. Louis, Director, Recreation Services
- Diane Enger, Director, Servus Place
- John Younie, Manager, Major Projects & Parks Planning
- Nicole Deering, Recreation Projects Assistant
- Carmen Wyton, Community Member
- Rick Curtis, Community Member
- Neil Korotash, Community Member

And the Consulting Team:

- Mike Roma, RC Strategies
- Rob Parks, RC Strategies
- Brian Bengert, Architecture | Arndt Tkalcic Bengert
- Kevin Osborne, Architecture | Arndt Tkalcic Bengert
- Ted Muller, EDA Collaborative
- Kristen Grimard, EDA Collaborative



contents

1.0 The Value of Recreation	1
2.0 Methodology and Purpose	7
3.0 The State of Recreation in 2011	11
4.0 A Master Plan for Recreation	17
4.1 Priority #1: Ensure community health and well being	20
4.2 Priority #2: Bolster community development	24
4.3 Priority #3: Invest in recreation infrastructure	31
4.4 Priority #4: Seek out innovative funding opportunities	38
4.5 Priority #5 Celebrate and communicate recreation	41
5.0 Summary	47
6.0 Implementation	53
7.0 Conclusion	59
Appendix #1: Participating Groups	63
Appendix #2: Infrastructure Direction	67
Appendix #3: Infrastructure Considerations	73
Appendix #4: Stakeholder Review Results	83



1.0 the value of recreation

The abundance of recreation opportunities create a city where people want to live, where they choose to shape and enrich their relationships with the people and places that make up their daily lives. This lifestyle choice contributes to an overall economic prosperity and growth and fosters **environmental appreciation** for those spaces and places that are so dear to all

1.0 the value of recreation

Recreation is essential to life and community health. Recreation is the primary vehicle for the citizens of St Albert to achieve physical and mental health, well being, and be nourished through both personal and community development. By definition, recreation is "...all those things that a person or group chooses to do in order to make their leisure time more interesting, more enjoyable and more personally satisfying".¹ Recreation is very important to the residents of St Albert with 85% of residents in the City of the belief that recreation is important to quality of life and 56% placing leisure as a higher priority than work.

Recreation contributes to community and quality of life in many different ways. Recreation provides an outlet for residents to participate and enjoy physical activity. The benefits of physical activity are proven to reduce health problems and positively impact both physical and mental well being. Recreation is key in positive physical and mental development and has been proven to improve social skills—residents who participate in recreation are more likely to be physically and mentally healthy.

Recreation events and programs draw visitors and provide a positive economic impact to the City. Seventy-two percent (72%) of residents agree that recreation contributes to the local economy, 42% reported that quality recreation services, facilities and opportunities attract new businesses. Many of the recreation services and events

¹ *National Recreation Statement, 1974*



offered in the City accommodate both local and non-local users and two thirds of residents stated that recreation drives local tourism.

Perhaps most importantly, recreation builds community, while being fun. Ninety-five percent (95%) of residents indicate that recreation services, facilities and opportunities contribute to fun. When residents are having fun, they are more connected with and proud of the city in which they live. Eighty percent (80%) of residents state that recreation contributes to civic pride while 80% of residents state that recreation contributes to community identity. This sense of community connectedness has innumerable benefits to quality of life and is paramount to sustaining the standards of living we all enjoy as residents of the City and the broader province of Alberta.

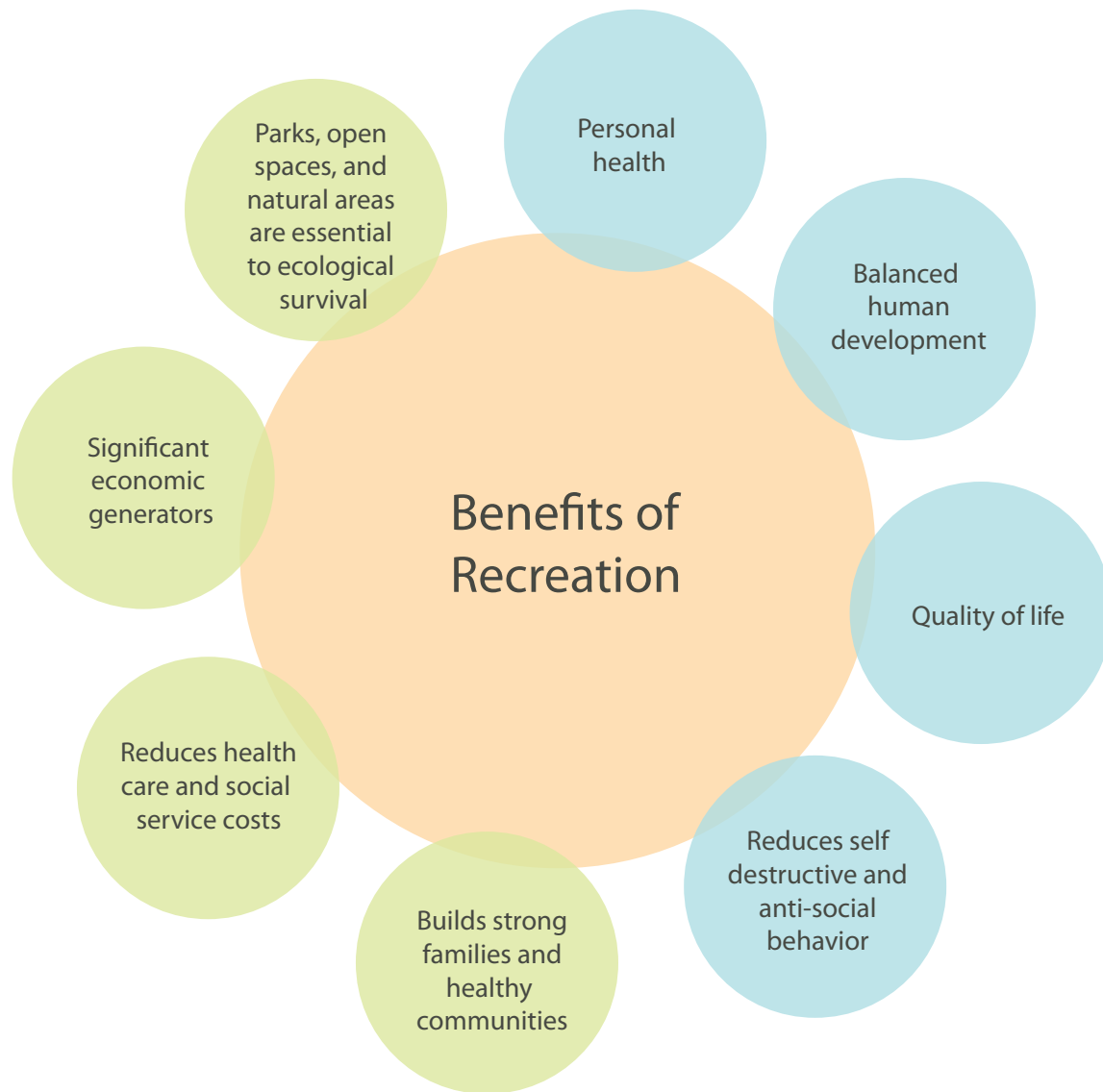
The abundance of benefits of recreation can be found everywhere—sports, fitness, festivals and events. These all play vital roles in our lives. Although it has been well known for decades that recreation benefits the mind and body, it is now clear that the benefits extend so much further.

The resulting benefits of recreation are much more than activities we do in our leisure lives; recreation has become a keystone of healthy individuals, families, groups and organizations and of vibrant and healthy communities.

St Albert has a long and proud history of building a community that embodies recreation to its very core. The creation and sustainability of the Red Willow Park Trail system, the community and sport groups that reach so many citizens through the services they provide, and the recreational amenities that provide the venues needed to participate in recreational pursuits are just a few highlights that continue to make St Albertans envied for their healthy lifestyle and vibrant community. The City and its residents embrace outdoor recreation through a vast parks and open space system furthering its identity as a Botanic Arts City. The City's parks system serves a variety of functions of which recreation is one.

Recreation is as important now as it has ever been. Research indicates that increased incidence of health issues such as childhood and adult obesity, heart disease and type II diabetes is due to, in large measure, lack of physical activity. Recreation leads to work life balance in a fast paced, industrialized economy and provides constructive, positive outlets for City residents to enjoy their leisure time.

The following Recreation Master Plan provides strategic direction for the City of St Albert and associated stakeholders as to how to sustain and enhance recreation in the City, ultimately compounding the benefits already realized by residents of the City of St Albert.



*Blue indicates personal benefits.
Green indicates community benefits.*



2.0 methodology and purpose

2.0 methodology and purpose

Through statutory requirements of the Municipal Government Act (MGA) and effective management practices, the City of St. Albert operates with the support and guidance of numerous plans, reports, policies, and bylaws. It is important to recognize that the information contained within existing planning documentation is instrumental in the development of strategic direction for the provision of recreation. Some of the existing planning information referenced in the development of this Master Plan included, but was not limited to, the 2009 Integrated Community Sustainability Plan, Municipal Development Plan (2010) and the City Business Plan 2010–2012.

This Recreation Master Plan provides a framework that will deepen the roots of recreation in St Albert and strengthen the community bonds that tie recreation enthusiasts. It provides an approach that commits to: engaging citizens in decision making; generating public value through recreation; and providing services to enrich citizens' lives. It also commits to an ever evolving service delivery model that responds to and reflects citizen need.

This Plan has been developed to provide long term guidance for "all things recreation" for the citizens of St Albert. It reflects what was heard through public engagement and it incorporates best practices and leading edge concepts that were discovered through extensive research.

The Plan has been achieved through thorough public consultation, background research and an accurate assessment of the existing condition and use of recreation infrastructure in the City. The strategic direction of the City has been encapsulated in the planning recommendations as have the values of residents.

Method	Contacts	Responses	Regional Resident Representation
Household Survey (Telephone)	1,496	400	1,161
Stakeholder Group Survey	251	54	20,000+
Youth Survey	n/a	20	20
Stakeholder Group Interviews	n/a	19	n/a
Recreation Groups Discussion Sessions	n/a	25	n/a

Members of the Master Plan development team met individually with City stakeholders, administered online and telephone surveys and hosted public meetings. Research was conducted to see how the City of St Albert compares to its peers in terms of recreation provision and much consideration was given to the plethora of complimentary City planning processes and associated intended strategic direction.

The Master Plan was developed under the guidance of a project steering committee comprised of pertinent members of City administration and Council. This group also received input from a recreation working committee comprised of community members with a vested interest in the City of St Albert and recreation.





3.0 the state of recreation in 2011

3.0 the state of recreation in 2011

Residents of St Albert have access to a variety of recreation facilities and programs. These facilities and programs are provided by the public, private and non-profit sectors and have a significant impact of the quality of life of city residents and in many cases further the cities image as a Botanic Arts City.

The City of St Albert plays a major role in the provision of recreation facilities and services both directly (through the development of parks and recreation amenities, ownership and operations of facilities and delivery of programs) and indirectly (in partnership with local non-profit stakeholder groups utilizing a philosophy of community development). The City owns and operates major indoor recreation facilities including Servus Credit Union Place, Fountain Park Recreation Centre, the Akinsdale/Kinex Arenas, as well as a number of smaller facilities and spaces. The City also owns and maintains multi-use trails, neighbourhood parks, ball diamonds, soccer fields, playgrounds, outdoor ice rinks, football fields and a number of other outdoor recreation venues. In addition, the City acts as a facilitator in assisting and empowering not-for-profit groups and agencies who deliver recreation services. This is undertaken through many formal and informal agreements between these groups and the City as well as many other less formal relationships with volunteer groups.

The City delivers recreation services through the guidance of the Community and Protective Services Division. Two city departments, along with hundreds of local volunteers and a number of not-for-profit sector organizations, are responsible for the overall provision of recreation in the city.

The State of Recreation report (Under separate cover) outlines a variety of aspects of current recreation service delivery within the City of St Albert and beyond. (An overview of the household survey, stakeholder group input and trends information is provided later in this section.) For more details, refer to the Technical Data Report. Based on the findings of a thorough public engagement process and due diligence with other research activities, the report identifies a number of areas of focus and infrastructure priorities for the City in evolving the delivery of municipal recreation services. The areas of focus identified for consideration would see the City:

- ensure community health and well being
- intensify community development efforts
- invest in recreation infrastructure
- celebrate and communicate recreation
- seek out new funding sources

Further to these delivery issues, infrastructure demands have been identified for both indoor and outdoor resources. These demands have been ranked according to frequency of response through **a number of needs assessment criteria**. The resulting (and following) list reflects a snapshot in time of this ranking. It is important to note that the facility priorities presented in the following table are a synthesis of the priorities identified from the survey work undertaken (and presented separately in this section).

Table 1: Needs Assessment Priorities

Top Ten Indoor Priorities	Top Ten Outdoor Priorities
1. Fitness / wellness facilities	1. Child playgrounds
2. Ice arena facilities	2. Open spaces (parks, green fields)
3. Leisure swimming pools	3. Water spray parks
4. Gymnasium type spaces	4. Bike parks (BMX, mountain bike)
5. Program rooms	5. Comprehensive trail system
6. Indoor child playgrounds	6. Sports fields (i.e. soccer, football, etc)
7. Community meeting rooms	7. Ball diamonds
8. Before and after-school care facilities	8. Dog parks
9. Indoor climbing wall	9. Picnic areas
10. Indoor field facilities	10. Skateboard parks

The prioritized list will serve as the basis to update the future capital plans, lifecycle management plans and recreation growth plans to continue to effectively serve the City.

research synopsis—the state of recreation

Household survey—selected findings

- 85% of households agree that recreation is important to the quality of life in St Albert
- 82% of households are satisfied with the availability of recreation opportunities and services in St Albert
- Residents said that recreation contributes to:
 - community identity (80%)
 - civic pride (80%)
 - community building (75%)
 - local economy (72%)
- Regarding the City’s approach to the delivery of recreation services
 - it is important to provide service through partnerships (83% households agree)
 - it is important to host provincial recreation and sporting events (76%)
- Approximately one third (37%) of households stated that new/upgraded facilities are needed
 - Top indoor priorities from households surveyed include: fitness and wellness facilities, climbing walls, child playgrounds and community meeting rooms
 - Top outdoor household priorities included: open spaces, picnic areas, playgrounds, and sports fields
 - 72% of households are willing to pay additional property taxes given community needs are better met

Youth survey—selected findings

- Priorities
 - Indoor: climbing wall, gymnasium spaces, arcades, fitness/wellness facilities, child playgrounds
 - Outdoor: skateboard parks, campgrounds, swimming pool

Stakeholder group survey—selected findings

- Recreation services, facilities and opportunities engender civic pride
- Recreation is a very important aspect in attracting residents and businesses to the community
- Residents should be the priority for recreation provision
- Partnering is important with the City and each other; 72% of groups are willing to partner with the City
- Facilities would be able to host provincial level events
- The City has provided a lot in terms of recreation facilities and services
- Approximately three-quarters (77%) said new/upgraded facilities are needed
 - Indoor priorities from stakeholders included: community meeting rooms, social/banquet facilities, gymnasium type spaces, program rooms, and indoor field facilities

- Outdoor priorities included: picnic areas, open spaces, fitness equipment, playgrounds, and trail system
- 50% of groups are willing to pay increased user fees/facility rental costs given community needs are better met
- The City needs to become more involved in the communications and promotion of programs in the community and needs to continue to support volunteer delivery facilities and programs

Selected provincial trends

- 97% of Albertans feel their communities benefit from recreation and parks services
- Alberta municipalities are spending more on recreation than ever before. As such are having to work with both the private sector and non-profit sector through operating and sponsorship agreements. Partnerships are increasingly becoming important in the delivery of recreation services
- Future recreation space must be developed to provide multi-use and flexibility as new activities emerge

- Recreation space must be able to accommodate structured and spontaneous use
 - To address issues with declining child activity levels and the 3p.m. to 6p.m. programming gap, afterschool programming is important
 - There is a need to bring children out of doors
 - Sport tourism and event hosting can have a positive economic impact on a community/region
 - While the role of the volunteer is becoming increasingly important in the delivery of recreation services, attracting and retaining volunteers is becoming more difficult
 - The availability of time during which people can participate in sporting and recreational pursuits is lessening. There is a greater emphasis on providing unstructured or spontaneous opportunities
 - From 1192 to 2005 participation of children aged 5 to 14 declined from 57% to 51%
 - Childrens participation in sports more than doubled (24% to 62%) if parents were involved, even as spectators
 - The population is aging and over the next 20 years there will be a higher proportion of middle and older aged adults seeking leisure lifestyles
- Leisure malls or multiplex facilities provide structured and spontaneous use opportunities and enable all family members to participate in different recreation opportunities simultaneously under the same roof
 - A growing trend to ensure the indoor recreation environment interacts seamlessly with the outdoor recreation environment
 - Sports fields are increasingly being developed in groupings to facilitate tournaments and leverage support amenities (i.e washrooms, concessions)

Understanding the state of recreation in St Albert in 2011 is vital in planning for future recreation service provisions. The aforementioned summary and the State of Recreation report has identified opportunities for improving recreation service provision in the City and has lead to the following recreation master planning concepts and initiatives.



4.0 a master plan for recreation

4.0 a master plan for recreation

The following Plan is intended to address the five main priorities identified in the 2011 State of Recreation report. Ultimately, the ideas and tactics outlined herein will provide direction for the City of St. Albert and associated stakeholders in the delivery of quality recreation opportunities for residents and visitors of St Albert.

Plan Vision: **St Albert: An active and engaged community**

Active communities are healthy and proud. Recreation is a catalyst for getting residents and visitors active—mentally, physically and socially. In order for people to use recreation, they must be engaged not only in the activity in which they are participating, but also in their community. St Albert engages residents through recreation participation and engages delivery partner groups in recreation service delivery.

Plan Mission: **Creating quality of life and building community through recreation**

Recreation defines, in large measure, how City residents use their leisure time. The health and social benefits of the physical and mental activity associated with recreation undoubtedly improve quality of life in St Albert.

The Guiding Principles of the Recreation Master Plan are as follows:

Create a city where people want to live

- Quality recreation defines communities. Opportunities for being physically and mentally active both in spontaneous and scheduled formats, during leisure time are sought after by Albertans and promote inclusion

Celebrate recreation

- Recreation activities are a product of services provided by the City and its delivery partners. These activities are enjoyed by residents and visitors and should be celebrated and shared

Cultivate the recreation community

- Recreation adds to the quality of life in St Albert. Enhancing the current compliment of opportunities in the city will only increase the positive benefits residents and visitors currently enjoy

Foster entrepreneurship and innovative businesses

- Due to shifting levels of public support, the City, along with its partner groups, must think about recreation in new ways. Business models focusing on sustainability are paramount in the ability for recreation to enrich the lives of residents and visitors into the future

Collaborate and build partnerships

- Recreation in the city are already delivered through mutually beneficial partnerships. Moving forward,

existing partnerships must be nurtured and the scope and breadth of where the City looks to partner must extend beyond delivery groups and into other sectors such as health, education and crime prevention in order for the benefits of recreation to be fully achieved and the use of public funding optimized

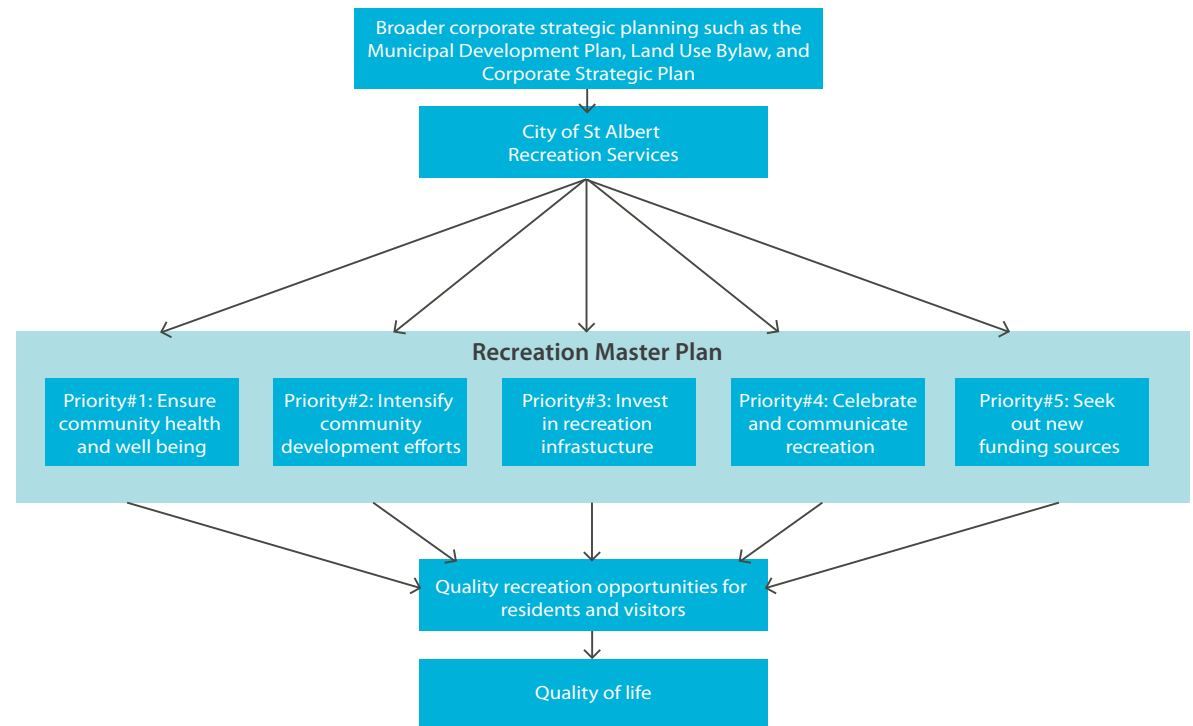
Create an authentic and shared identity

- Recreation defines communities and builds community cohesiveness. This is done through a blend of community services, private service providers, and city service. The true collaboration of these various stakeholders is what builds community through recreation.

Plan Outcomes: The expected outcomes of this plan are:

- To create positive change or impacts in the lives of St. Albert residents:
- That staff, volunteers, and partners, understand, value, and support the long term vision of this plan;
- To ensure that the programs, services, and functions provided through this plan are relevant to citizen needs;
- To commit to supporting community development efforts in recognition that this contributes to the overall plan’s success:
- To value facilitation, partnership, and capacity building in others as a way of achieving and sustaining the resources required to achieve success in the recreation community.

Figure 1: Planning Context



The following sections provide guidance for each of the five priority areas identified in the 2011 State of Recreation report.

4.1 priority #1: ensure community health and well being

This priority stream is paramount to recreation and indicates the need for dynamic and creative planning as well as targeted programming that considers the ideas presented in the presented recommendations.

The planning must ensure strategic provision of recreation services to all genres of City residents, engage the relevant community stakeholders and be nimble enough to respond to demographic shifts and trends in society preferences.

Fundamentally, the reason why the City and its partner groups provide recreation opportunities is to improve community health and well being. Healthy, active communities are communities where people want to live. Eighty five percent of St. Albert households agreed that recreation is important to the quality of life while seventy five percent confirmed recreation builds community and leads to personal enrichment and education. Community health and well being are major outcomes of recreation and thus a driving force in recreation provision. For the purpose of this discussion, improvement of community health and well being will be focused on increasing overall participation in recreation pursuits thereby leading to improved overall quality of life.

Community participation in recreation activity has far reaching benefits, beyond actual participation in a program or activity. Recreation includes both physical and mental activity and is both preventative and therapeutic (in terms of recovery) in regard to many illnesses. Alberta is seeing epidemic increases in the incidence of chronic and costly illnesses such as obesity and diabetes even as evidence mounts that recreation and active living can significantly mitigate such conditions. Alberta's health depends on enriched investment in prevention and wellness services and opportunities for the fitness and wellness afforded by parks and open spaces.¹

Recreation also provides a constructive outlet for "at risk"/"at hope" members of the community and acts as a major form of social inclusion/integration in building community pride and cohesiveness. For these reasons, collaboration in generating recreation initiatives throughout the City with other "quality of life" providers, such as health services, education and crime prevention is advised. Collaborating with other sectors in improving community health and well being through recreation is integral and can also ensure that the benefits of recreation participation and the current and future investment in recreation made by the City are fully realized and exploited.

¹ A Place to Grow, Alberta's Rural Development Strategy, Page 3, February 2005

Meeting or exceeding resident expectations for existing and new recreation opportunities is important as the value of recreation to residents is clear. Improving meaningful participation in existing activities and focusing on future program and spontaneous priorities will sustain existing participation and build new user markets. Key to sustaining and increasing participation in recreation is providing environments that allow both spontaneous and structured activities, a mix of indoor and outdoor opportunities and focusing on provision for all ages and abilities. Residents of the city should be encouraged to be more active and engaged in recreational pursuits.

recommendation #1: engage the broader community

From a planning and delivery perspective, a philosophy of collaboration from all related “quality of life” service providers, including health, education, crime prevention and others, has to be adopted for overall community health and well being to be improved. For instance, working with Alberta Health Services (AHS) in identifying local health issues and creating programs that address identified issues integrating the resources of both the City and AHS will ultimately lead to more effective market penetration and optimized use of public funding. **Including all pertinent “quality of life” stakeholders in issue identification, decision making and solutions-based recreation programming will ensure that the benefits of recreation to the residents of St Albert are realized.**

From a broad, community wide basis the City, with its “quality of life” service provision partners should develop an **Active Community Strategy** outlining key goals and objectives, measurable outcomes and based on targeted preventative or therapeutic purposes. This strategy would be multi-dimensional including promotion of measurable outcomes associated with physical activity, healthy eating and healthy lifestyles. In essence, it would formulate a proactive approach to building a healthy community. This collaborative strategy would have to be the product of fruitful engagement of recreation,

health, crime prevention, education, social and other community stakeholders and would extend far beyond the scope of recreation. City recreation delivery agents are positioned as the primary candidate to take a lead role in developing an Active Community Strategy.

The City directly operates major facilities and provides recreation programming to the community. The City of St Albert has over 80 groups and neighbourhood associations that it supports in the delivery of recreation facilities and/or programs throughout the city. In improving overall participation in recreation and in using recreation as a catalyst for community pride and connectedness, these neighbourhood associations (geographically dispersed throughout the city) are a prime candidate for **neighbourhood based programming** and community engagement. The City can, and does, partner with these associations in meeting resident needs through neighbourhood specific services. The City could also take the idea one step further in facilitating **associations based healthy and wellness challenges or events or traditional block parties**.² Measurable challenge criteria could include hours of physical participation, calories consumed or “communal” weight loss. Neighbourhood challenge programming could also include more traditional sports/Olympic type competitions to build neighbourhood camaraderie, excitement in the community and lead to increased participation in healthy, constructive activities.

recommendation #2: seek out opportunities to engage the community

The 2011 State of Recreation report outlines a number of key program areas for future focus based on today’s market place and current resident demand. Although these program initiatives are important for future consideration and are outlined below, it is important to note that quality recreation programming has to be flexible and dynamic and must respond to societal value shifts. It is also important to note that program delivery in the City of St Albert is collaborative involving the private,

² Such as a neighbourhood weight loss challenge or sport tournament.

non-profit and public sector through a combination of direct and indirect public service delivery.

A focus on **after-school recreation programming** is an ideal medium for cross-sectoral collaboration. The issues surrounding double income families and the 3 p.m.–6 p.m. gap in activity choices for youth are under consideration in many different contexts. Developing programs with education, crime prevention and health service providers, the City has the ability to facilitate needed programming and to become an industry leader in addressing this increasingly important area of after-school recreation programming. This includes not only the facilitation of the actual program but also must address transportation, affordability and promotions and marketing aspects of afterschool programming.

The role of municipalities in providing programming for youth is well justified and appropriate; **however, municipalities also have a role to play in programming for adults**. Currently recreation programs employ the physical literacy model. A key reference in this discussion is to the Canadian Sport For Life (CS4L)³ Strategy, which provides an overview of seven stages of “physical literacy”. The Plan indicates that three of these stages specifically pertain to municipal based public programming, namely 1) Active Start, 2) FUNdamentals (both directed towards youth) and 3) Active for Life (directed towards young, middle aged and older adults). Although the connection between the CSFL and municipal programming is in the process of gaining momentum in many municipalities, the basis of the Plan—in that it promotes partnering between municipalities and sport/recreation organizations in overall physical literacy and activity—is very innovative and should be an important consideration for future City facilitated programming. Programming for adults must include specific focus on **seniors, shift workers** and **those with sedentary lifestyles** as well as the general population.

³ For more information, please refer to: <http://www.canadiansportforlife.ca/default.aspx?PageID=1172&LangID=en>

recommendation #3: engage the youth

Focusing on youth will be important moving forward not only to combat issues such as obesity and inactivity but also to engage young people in the community and groom them to be future leaders. Programming intent should not only focus on outdoors, physical activity and afterschool but also on providing youth opportunities to volunteer.

Other key areas for future recreation programming and opportunity provision as identified in the 2011 State of Recreation report include:

- programs that enable **children** to experience **nature** and the quality botanic arts opportunities in St Albert, as well as becoming more comfortable, in general, in the outdoors.
- **fitness and wellness programs for all ages**, including “episodic experiences” eg circuit training , yoga
- opportunities for **spontaneous recreation** participation for all age groups (non-programmed, including unstructured participation)
- opportunities for **community gathering**, ie gardening
- opportunities for all to **interact with and experience nature** (i.e. community gardens, interpretive programs) and participate in botanic arts activities
- opportunities for **active transportation** (non-mechanized)
- provide opportunities for unrestricted **children’s play**

*These program priorities should be reassessed every two years. it is important to note that the city can play a role in facilitating program delivery (both direct or indirect) in the areas identified. The city may also have a role to play in ensuring programs and opportunities are assessable physically, economically, and in terms of transportation to and from program locations.

The provision of recreation based infrastructure in the city is a catalyst for a healthy community. Specific priorities will be discussed in later sections of the Plan but the concept of focusing on recreation infrastructure balance (geographic and activity choice) is key in maximizing overall community-wide participation.

Promising Practice:

High Five is a national certification program for providers of recreation programming for youth. The program is based on the five principals of healthy child development. The City of Calgary utilizes High Five training for its frontline staff and have over 420 certified staff who are directly involved in programming for youth. (www.highfive.org)



4.2 priority #2: bolster community development

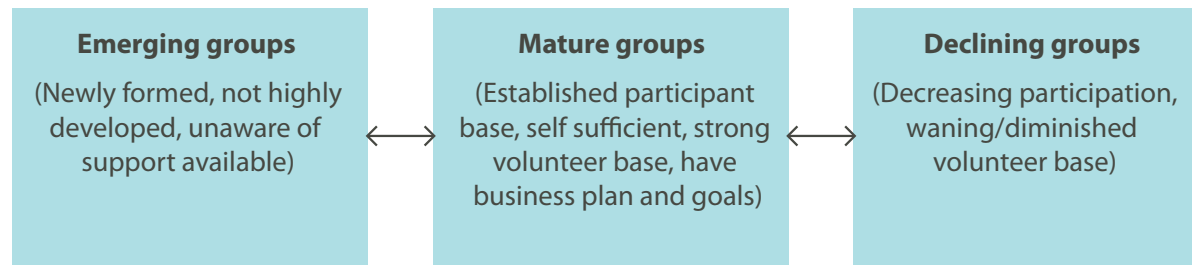
This priority stream identifies the need to consider the City's Community Development Plan, as a long-range community development framework. The City will purposefully work with and recruit new groups in the future to create community, deliver recreation and maintain and enhance recreation infrastructure.

The City of St Albert currently employs a community development philosophy in the provision of recreation programs and facilities through partnerships with local non-profit volunteer groups. Although the City provides direct programs and facilities where needed, the merits of partnering with groups in the provision of facilities and programs are realized throughout the city. This approach is seen across many Alberta communities and reflects a growing trend towards partnerships in both the provision and development of recreation resources and opportunities. Partially due to declining sources of public funding for recreation services and diversifying needs of residents, partnerships are seen as an important consideration in providing public recreation opportunities by 83% of City households and 86% of local delivery groups.¹

Many of the partnership arrangements the City has in place with organized groups are formalized outlining roles and responsibilities of all parties. In some cases the arrangements involve leasing facilities and spaces to groups; in other instances the agreements outline maintenance arrangements for infrastructure. Whatever the approach the goal is to work towards sustainability. This community development approach is manifested through the City collaborating and building partnerships in the provision of recreation opportunities. Community development facilitation by the City ultimately fosters entrepreneurship (through group suitability goal setting) and innovation in local groups. It also cultivates sport and recreation in the community. Although support from the City was valued by local recreation delivery partner groups, increased assistance in communications and operations was mentioned by some.

The key to a community development approach in service provision lies in the strength of partner non-profit volunteer groups. The evolution of a non-profit group involved in recreation service provision is explained as follows.

¹ Indicative of those groups who participated in the input gathering stages of the process as outlined in the State of Recreation report (under separate cover).

Figure 2: Group Evolution Model

Through working with and assisting local community groups, the City fosters and sustains partnerships that create buy-in and engagement within the community, optimizes the use of public funds and provides a diverse spectrum of quality facilities and services for all city residents.

The adoption of a “group evolution model” could explain roles and responsibilities for the City and partner organizations, address apparent inequalities in existing support for groups and outlines a transparent and equitable process on how groups can engage and partner with the City.

recommendation #1: understand common issues that community groups face and develop strategies to fill those gaps

A key success factor in employing a community development approach to recreation service provision is in the equitable treatment of potential partners and groups. Although tradition has dictated apparent inequity in some of the existing agreements the City has in place with groups, the discrepancy is in fact a product of societal values and the differing levels of maturity between partner groups. That being said, moving forward a **transparent protocol for dealing with potential groups**, outlining roles and responsibilities and the expectation placed on public investment, should be developed. The City is currently in the process of developing such protocol and a standardized approach to dealing with potential partners. Key elements to treating groups equitably are defining a base level of service provision which the City would be responsible to



provide (i.e. a backstop and bases on a ball diamond) and a specialty level of service provision for which the group would be responsible (i.e. lighting, bleachers and home run fences on a ball diamond). It is important to note that equitable treatment is not the same as equal treatment. Due to a variety of factors the interaction between the City and community groups should not be identical but it should be equitable (fair, reasonable). In building the protocol for dealing with groups, the City must develop an understanding of the resources that can be levered to assist partner groups in different stages of evolution. Conducting an analysis to identify what tasks and functions partner groups are most challenged with and how the City can potentially assist is paramount.

By **communicating on a consistent basis** with recreation delivery partner groups, the City will be able to identify areas where volunteer groups require support. This will afford the City the ability to assist groups regardless of their evolution, leading to sustained program provision for residents and visitors.

Assistance to groups could take many forms.

Assistance in preparing business plans can help groups strategically approach the future with sustainability in mind. Helping groups **identify and apply for grants or solicit program sponsorship** can help alleviate financial pressures faced by some groups.

Volunteers are key to the sustainability of non-profit groups and associated events. As the nature of volunteerism is changing, soliciting volunteer involvement also must change and adapt. CIVC (Community Information and Volunteer Centre), plays a primary role in supporting volunteerism in the community. Given trends in recreation based volunteerism, the city may need to work ever more closely with CIVC in future.

recommendation #2: integrate recreation and sport tourism

Recreation and sport tourism is a significant contributor to overall community sustainability through availability of recreational opportunities, through showcasing various recreational pursuits, by maximizing the use of recreation infrastructure and by enhancing the local St Albert economy by inviting visitors to the City to participate and view the sporting and recreation events. Recreation and sport tourism events, in most cases, are a product of the involvement of local delivery groups, the City, the business community and a strong and engaged volunteer community.

With the quality and quantity of recreation facilities and spaces offered in the community, the City is able to host local, major provincial, national and international sporting events. With its community image as a Botanic Arts City, the opportunity for outdoor recreation tourism is also apparent. Recreation and sport tourism related to major provincial, national or international events can have much longer lasting impacts in communities as well as injecting non-local spending during an event. As well, the hosting of major sporting events can result in lasting legacies in the community and provide other social benefits. Major events provide an opportunity for the City and its residents to celebrate sport and recreation, cultivate sport and recreation in the community and create an authentic and shared identity for the city. And, of course, major events provide exciting and attractive volunteer opportunities.

As well, collaborative planning and facilitating sport and recreation tourism events within the community involving the public, non-profit and private sectors

can lead to innovation, foster entrepreneurship and innovative businesses and create partnerships in the community.

Recreation and sport participation by visitors to St Albert generates spending in the community and provides an opportunity for the City to “tell its stories” and “sell its features”. Promoting and facilitating non-local recreation and sport events has to consider working with groups to get events in the community but also has to consider how non-local attendees and participants can be assured to learn about the community and contribute to St Albert’s economy as opposed to adjacent municipalities’. Sport and recreation events have to be seen as facilitators of exposure and activity for not only sport and recreation groups but also for historic venues and culture services, as well as local business to promote general economic development in the city.



The City of St Albert has diligently developed an **Event Hosting Strategy** which encompasses sport and recreation event hosting as well as broader special events in the community. The Event Hosting Strategy, facilitated by a multi-disciplinary committee, outlines a number of key initiatives aimed at increasing the quality and quantity of tourism events in the community. Further, the City has developed a **Tourism Master Plan** (2007) that states investment in sport and recreation assets is important to attract tourists to the community through special events, tournaments and ongoing facility and open space delivery. Much effort and planning has gone into these two planning processes and thus it is important that recreation stakeholders present a sport and recreation perspective in the implementation of these strategic initiatives.

Collaborative event planning with recreation groups, culture groups and the private sector will occur through the implementation of the event hosting strategy. More specifically, events requiring the same



facilities should be coordinated and offset while tournaments and potential complimentary events for spectators (such as trade shows, arts exhibits) could be planned to occur simultaneously.

In terms of infrastructure design, the ability to host regional, provincial or national events should be incorporated into existing and new infrastructure, where feasible. This can include **event hosting design standards** such as requirements for program areas as well as spectator seating requirements. As well, there is opportunity to further the City's brand as a **Botanic Arts City** through its parks and green space system.

Promising Practice

The City of Kamloops (BC) has branded itself as "Canada's Tournament Capital". Key elements to the City's success in hosting events and supporting local groups include the formation of a community sport council, and event hosting package (which include an event kit trailer that groups can rent) and even a grant program for potential event hosting organizations.

4.3 priority #3: invest in recreation infrastructure

The City of St Albert plays a major role in providing indoor and outdoor spaces for recreation activities to occur by direct provision of programs and by renting the space to user groups or providing access for spontaneous recreation users. The City also partners with community recreation and sport groups in a variety of ways in the provision of recreation environments. The most heavily utilized recreation infrastructure in the City according to the household survey were trails (85% of responding households claimed use of the City trail system), parks (82%) and Servus Credit Union Place (69%).

Quality and diversity in a community's recreation environment translates into a community in which people want to live. Recreation infrastructure enables sport and recreation to occur and evolve in a community and, by virtue of the types of facilities provided, can create an authentic and shared identity or community image. 80% of household survey respondents believe that recreation builds community identity and improved civic pride.

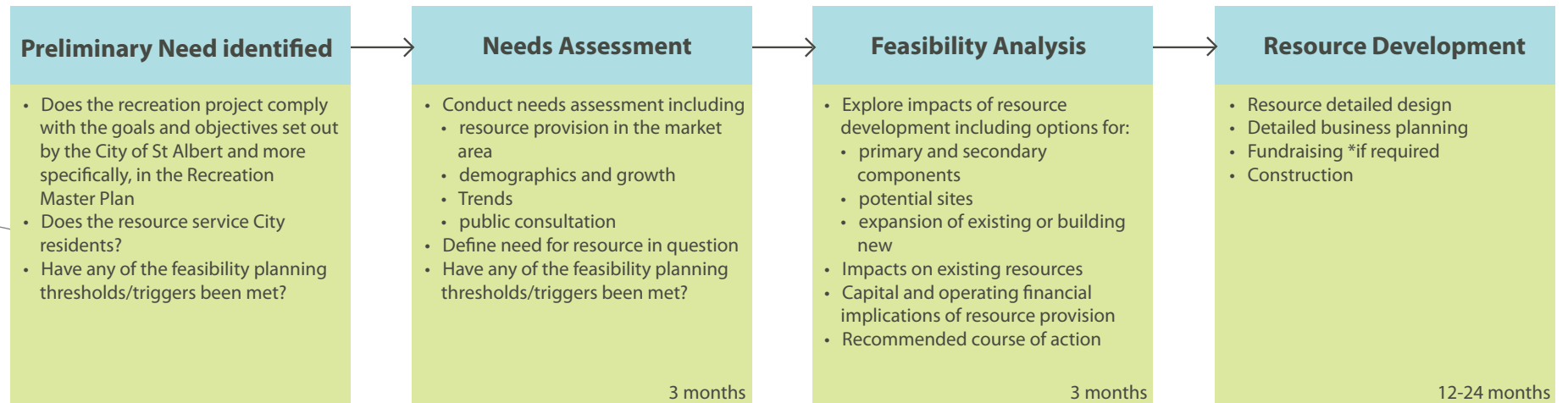
Solid management and provision of recreation infrastructure in the City requires a prudent

management philosophy and an adopted transparent and equitable process to determine the best use of public funds in the context of diverse and changing community needs. As a snapshot in time, the City also requires guidance on specific activities that are—or will be demanded in the future—by residents. Key infrastructure priorities as identified through the State of Recreation report include fitness and wellness areas, ice arena facilities, leisure swimming pools, playgrounds, open spaces and water spray parks. As society evolves, so too does preference for recreation opportunities. Thus recreation infrastructure management must be dynamic and adaptable to. Constant dialogue with residents as well as multi-use design will ensure that the recreation needs of both today and tomorrow resident populations can be met.

Where participation is sustained, prudent infrastructure management suggests that the City work to maintain and/or enhance existing infrastructure, including the potential repurposing of underutilized facilities, prior to building new facilities or offering new programs. Looking after the City's existing recreation infrastructure is key to sustaining existing services levels and ensuring that recreation can continue to contribute to local quality of life.

This priority stream indicates the need for a long-range infrastructure plan that addresses recreation needs of residents for the next 20–30 years, incorporates management tools to consider new recreation projects, ensures management of existing infrastructure, and incorporates a community development model that seeks opportunities for the City to partner with community groups for new recreation infrastructure.

Figure 3: Resource Planning Framework



recommendation #1: adopt a consistent infrastructure development process

Municipalities and other public agencies have a responsibility to relate decision making regarding the disposition of public funds to sound, diligent protocol and processes. This means that all decisions with implications for public generated funds (namely, through taxes) should be made based on sound research, public engagement and with the most up-to-date pertinent information as possible.

More specifically, with regard to the development of public indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, the ideal public decision making process has a number of steps.

The process outlined above can take between 18 and 30 months depending on the ability for decision making to occur in a timely fashion and the propensity of the general public to engage in constructive feedback.

Major public investments in indoor and outdoor recreation facility infrastructure should consider market feasibility analysis and business planning, as well as the broader City planning context, prior to final decision making. This applies not only to initiatives championed by the municipality, but also to those projects led by not-for-profit groups and associations wherein public funds are required for the capital and/or ongoing operations of facilities.

The market feasibility and business planning process typically pre-empts decisions on investment and sourcing of capital well in advance of development, often up to two years prior. As such, timing for major development initiatives could take between two and four years in the making, recognizing the need for public engagement, concept planning, detailed planning, tendering and construction.

The following discussion relates to guidelines and thresholds determining when and how the City will engage in feasibility analysis and for the justification of public funding support for recreation and culture resource delivery.



The following feasibility analysis requirements ensure that the information provided to decision makers is complete and appropriate for making decisions regarding public funds:

- there must be public engagement in the planning process
- a market assessment for component service delivery functions must be completed
- a thorough and transparent site/location analysis must be completed
- there must be a biophysical/environmental impact assessment
- there must be a concept development plan including infrastructure planning, costs and impacts of ongoing operations
- the project must conform to the broader regional/ municipal strategic planning
- business planning outlining capital partners, operating partners, sources of capital, capital amortization and projection of operating costs must be completed

Note: The acquisition of land for municipal and environmental reserves does not require a feasibility analysis as described in this section, but should be based on approved statutory plans, standards, and guidelines.

The following feasibility planning “triggers” outline when the City should initiate (or facilitate in the case of a non-profit-based project) feasibility analysis and business planning. Market feasibility analysis and business planning could occur when one or more of the following criteria are met:

- facility spaces currently being offered approach capacity on a sustained basis
- proposed public investment is contained on **publicly-owned or long-term lease lands** (leases beyond 50 years)
- facility or facility spaces currently being used have **less than 25% remaining lifecycle** as a functional resource (as determined by ongoing lifecycle planning)
- current demands and future demands (as impacted through expression of needs, as a function of **public input, trends and majority impact**) and/or market growth can be proven
- the facility in question and program services proposed provide **equal access** for all residents as a public service

- facility type and function **conforms to current recreation functions** of the regional municipalities or new functional areas as contained within the broader strategic planning
- facility type and function are **not currently or adequately provided** through other agencies or private sector services in the City or broader Capital Region
- **operational or capital partners** of any development proposed **are established** as registered societies and collectively represent sufficient membership or market members to sustain use of the development for the life of the development (typically set at 40 years for public buildings)
- the **external** volunteer and/or non-profit group leading a facility development initiative has, or has access to, **significant non-municipal capital and/or operating non-municipal resources.**

recommendation #2: develop and adopt an infrastructure management plan for all recreation spaces

An Infrastructure Management Plan must address capacity and utilization issues as well as ensure sustainability of existing recreation spaces. This plan will consider both capacity and underutilized positions and will develop strategies to manage both, for example if capacity is an issue new development will be an option, for underutilized spaces either new users or partnerships will be considered, re-purposing options etc until end of life is reached. It will be based on a number of infrastructure considerations (listed below and further explained in the appendix) and ultimately position the City to optimize public investment on recreation infrastructure.

- land banking
- life cycle planning
- geographic distribution
- recreation and culture
- spontaneous and structured opportunities
- stand-alone versus a multiplex approach
- expansion and enhancement versus building new
- event hosting design specifications
- repurposing of existing facilities (i.e. sport fields and clubhouses)

Life cycle planning for public recreation facilities is very important as it ensures existing services can be sustained. The concept entails major capital maintenance to be allocated to annual operating budgets. Proper life cycle management suggests that facilities could be offered in perpetuity as ongoing investment and upgrades would be planned for and completed, avoiding overall facility deterioration.

In many cases, a percentage of overall facility capital replacement value is applied on an annual basis and held in a reserve for future upgrades and/or enhancements. As recreation facilities are becoming more dynamic, it is suggested that necessary

repairs should be incorporated but so too should potential reprogramming of spaces and amenity refresh. For example, the replacement of a pool mechanical system should be planned for and budgeted annually so that replacement can occur when required and in a timely fashion without impacting other budget priorities. At the same time, due to the nature of leisure amenities in Alberta pools, an amount should also be saved annually for the “refresh” of leisure amenities to render the facility exciting, unique and thus achieving consistently high levels of use.

recommendation #3: enhance parks and open space planning and management

The City offers a vast quality inventory of parks and open spaces. These spaces are well utilized and valued by residents and effectively contribute to creating a community where people want to live as well as celebrate and cultivate outdoor sport and recreation in the community.

City parks and open spaces are utilized year round and provide opportunities for spontaneous and structured activities. Some of the most desired activities of residents including walking and bicycling, occur throughout the parks and open space system. A quality, vibrant parks and open space system also further strengthens the City’s image as a Botanic Arts City.

The development of a **Parks and Open Space Master Plan** would ultimately include a detailed parks classification system and hierarchy, the refinement of development expectations and maintenance standards for parks resources and the incorporation of new trends in parks provision such as trails (both recreation and active transportation uses), naturalization and specialty activities.

Promising Practice:

The City of Edmonton approved an Urban Parks Management Plan¹ in 2006. The plan guides the acquisition, development, maintenance, preservation and use of parkland between 2006-2016 and provides strategic direction for all river valley and ravine parkland as well as all school and park sites outside the river valley.

¹ http://www.edmonton.ca/attractions_recreation/parks_rivervalley/urban-parks-management-plan.aspx



4.4 priority #4: seek out innovative funding opportunities

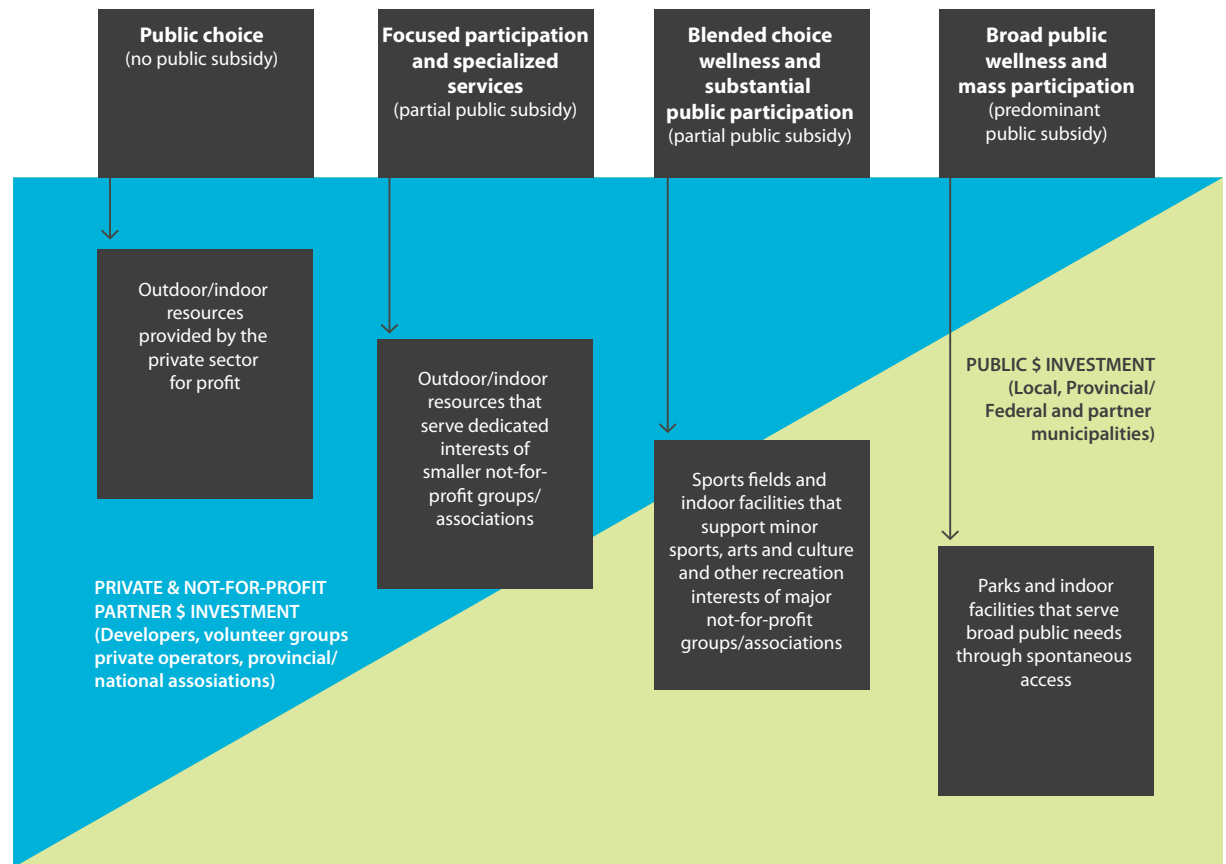
This priority stream emphasizes the need for public recreation professionals to look at new ways to generate funding for recreation services. Leveraging public investment is key in enhancing and expanding recreation as a core municipal service.

It is a fact that municipalities bear the majority (90%) of costs related to community recreation provision. Although Provincial and Federal government grants contribute to capital upgrades and new facility development in some cases the primary responsibility for both capital and operating recreation infrastructure and programming is born by users and local taxpayers.

The leveraging of this public investment into external sources of funds is key in both sustaining and expanding recreation service provision in the future. The City already leverages public spending on recreation through the collection of user fees, through partnerships with non-profit groups in providing recreation opportunities and through private sector sponsorship of recreation assets (primarily at Servus Credit Union Place).

The following funding opportunity spectrum is presented to guide future municipal expenditure on recreation infrastructure development. The spectrum explains that facilities accessible by the entire community and that are within the City's "base" level of service (such as walking trails, playgrounds, etc.) should be a municipal responsibility. As recreation infrastructure becomes more specialized and less accessible by the general public (i.e. major sports field facilities, ice arenas, etc.) funding should come from a combination of public taxes, user fees and private/non-profit investment.

Figure 4: Funding Opportunity Spectrum



Further leveraging public resources in the provision of recreation services is important in order to optimize the impact of public funds in the provision of recreation facilities and services. An examination of existing revenue streams (user fees) is necessary to ensure that the fees provide an appropriate balance between revenue generation, affordability, access and other performance indicators. Other less traditional sources of revenue need to be considered as well.

recommendation #1: consider new avenues of funding for recreation services

Sponsorship opportunities provide private sector access to asset branding with existing or new recreation facility spaces or programs. The success of sponsorship programs is dependent upon the level of private sector interest/availability in the community and the perceived tangible (impressions) and intangible (image) return on investment an opportunity may offer.

Facility, parks and open space should be designed, where feasible, with consideration given to maximize exposure of potential sponsors. This would entail the involvement of sponsorship expertise within the City being involved in the detailed design process should facility upgrades or new facility development occur.

Promising Practice

The Franklin's Paine Skatepark Fund was developed to advocate and fund the development of free, public spaces to skateboard in the Philadelphia Area and to provide educational programming opportunities through skateboarding to local youth. The non-profit group was established by both skateboarders and business professionals and has initiated on the ground development of skateboard areas throughout the local area as well as the development of a Master Plan for Philadelphia Skaeboarding.

The use of sponsorships to generate revenues for City recreation services must balance tradition and community image with monetary gain.

Other revenue sources could include major **regional cost sharing** programs, and the formation of an arms length foundation to support recreation programming and facilities.

The formation of an arms length **foundation for parks and recreation** may be appropriate; however, further exploration is required in assessing the feasibility of such a venture, especially due to the existence of the Arts and Heritage Foundation in the City and the potential to dilute existing sponsorship and philanthropic markets.

4.5 priority #5: celebrate and communicate recreation

The City currently communicates the provision of recreation services and facilities in a variety of ways. Externally, the City provides a communications function on behalf of the programs and services it offers, as well as on behalf of program partners throughout the community in order to reach potential recreation user markets. A key areas where local recreation delivery groups indicated a need for City support was in communicating respective opportunities to potential participants.

Internally, the City communicates between the different departments directly involved in the provision of recreation as well as departments involved in other areas of City services provision (such as Culture Services, Planning and Development, and Engineering) and with its program partners who deliver recreation programs and facilities directly to the local user market. The purposes of this communication are varied. In some instances it is simply for awareness. On other occasions the intent of the communication may be to ensure an effective application of resources, to solicit cooperation, to coordinate efforts or a number of other purposes. Communication mechanisms used for these efforts

include interpersonal messaging, formal or scheduled meetings, ad hoc written or electronic messages and even those public communication methodologies described below.

In terms of external audiences, the City currently utilizes annual publications (recreation program guides, adult education guide) as well as the City's website, local media such as television and newspaper advertisements and targeted on site bulletin boards and posters (at high traffic areas throughout the City). It is important to note that the City has a Corporate Communications and Marketing Department that specializes in marketing and communication for the City as a whole. It provides support to departments in formulating and applying communications efforts.

Amplifying communications between the City, its partners in recreation provision and the general public has been identified as a priority. This includes communicating to the general public those programs and facilities that the City directly provides, but also sharing how the efforts of volunteer groups translate into recreation opportunities for residents.

This priority stream outlines the importance of communications between all City recreation stakeholders—internal and external. The focus of this communication includes identifying how the City can assist and improve upon service delivery as well as how to portray the benefits and successes of recreation with the broader community.

In relation to the guiding principles for the project, enhanced communications will undoubtedly help the City and its recreation stakeholders celebrate sport and recreation, cultivate the sport and recreation community and create an authentic and shared identity.

recommendation #1: coordinate communications efforts

Coordinating communications protocol and methodology creates a single point of access for residents and groups seeking recreation opportunity and program information, intensifies (and likely optimizes) investment in communications efforts and inadvertently **builds stronger partnerships** throughout the recreation services delivery system. Ultimate coordination of effort will strengthen broad messaging, reduce duplication in delivery and improve overall impact of communications efforts. This coordination entails both internal coordination (within the City) as well as external coordination with other recreation service providers.

Target market outreach represents the actual delivery to, and penetration of, recreation target markets. These targets currently include residents and users who currently participate in programs and activities as well as those who do not currently participate in programs and activities but who may in the future.

To ensure continual improvement and deepen target market penetration, it is important to measure the success of communications efforts. **Measurable implementation** implies that communication efforts are perpetual and dynamic. This is necessary due to changes in society, such as the recent onset of internet-based social media, as well as evolving key messages and target markets.

recommendation #2: share the benefits of recreation and promote casual recreation

Although many of the benefits of recreation are intrinsic and are commonly understood, not all users and target markets are aware of the health and wellness impacts of recreation participation, the involvement of volunteers in delivery of programs and other positive messages about recreation that may attract higher levels of participation and strengthen the overall recreation community in the city. For this reason, the City should annually develop **key messages outlining the positive impacts of recreation** in general, as well as specific programs for the residents and the community as a whole. Key messages should also identify easily accessed opportunities, like a stroll along a trail, taking your dog for a walk, or riding a bike. These messages should include general information about the benefits of recreation and the associated value residents place on recreation, an overview of recreation participation in the city and a clear depiction of public investment in recreation and associated impacts. Key messages can also build community pride in recreation infrastructure, both indoor and outdoor, and further embrace the communities image as a botanic arts city.

The development of this information will start with the “2011 State of Recreation Report” as a foundation and will need to be updated, through consultation and research, on an ongoing basis perhaps translating into an **annual Recreation Successes report**. The annual reporting will be a key resource for the City in attaining internal and external funding commitment. It will also be instrumental to the development of key messaging for promotions and marketing efforts. User participation (demonstrated through partner organizations) could be collected annually when program guides are developed and public input can be collected independently or as a “tag along” to other City sponsored public engagement processes. The **involvement of other sectors**, such as health care, education and crime prevention, would help build a broader case for recreation and help to explain the magnitude of positive impact that recreation services have in the city. The information collected and shared will fortify the importance of recreation in the city and allow recreation providers to share successes with the community.

recommendation #3: optimize the use of existing and new media to communicate recreation

The City currently utilizes a variety of means to communicate recreation opportunities. These efforts should be **measured** in terms of market penetration (estimated impressions per dollar spent) and markets reached (age demographic, current recreation participation and socio-economic factors). Where duplication of markets reached exists, resources should be reallocated based on **cost benefit analysis**. Specific areas where reallocation of existing resources, or the channelling of new communication resources, could include:

Social Media

The creation of a City-wide sponsored email list server (already implemented by Servus Place for pass holders) Facebook site and/or City Recreation Twitter account can be a cost effective and immediate way for information to be shared. This information could be program or facility specific (i.e. discount swim at the FPRC today only!) or could be simple information sharing from the benefits catalogue (i.e. 10,000 people in St Albert are active every day).

Customer Relations Management (CRM) System

The development of a CRM would require major investment and would automate information sharing and data collection for existing stakeholders in the provision of, and participation in, recreation services in the City. A CRM system would provide users and user groups the ability to input information independently and would enable efficient and immediate¹ information sharing with registered users.

Editorial

In conjunction with local newspapers, the writing of an editorial on recreation services and health and well being would help the City share the benefits of recreation and allow for more focused “current issues” presentation of recreation benefits and opportunities. If a partnership arrangement can be struck with the local newspaper, the cost would be minimal given that someone capable of writing a column is engaged in the City.

¹ If administered in coordination with email list servers and other social media methods

Promising Practice

Strathcona County Recreation, Parks and Culture staff are responsible for providing a local newspaper with a weekly editorial on active and healthy living. The article typically includes interesting research regarding participation in recreation activity and connects residents to real recreation opportunities throughout the County and broader region.





5.0 summary

5.0 summary

Recreation is essential to community health and well being, community pride and community connectedness. The City plays a major role in the delivery of recreation opportunities for both residents of and visitors to the City of St Albert. This Recreation Master Plan has been presented through an issues based approach, intended to enhance the already far-reaching benefits recreation provides in the city.

Plan Vision:

St Albert: Active and engaged

Plan Mission:

Creating quality of life and community building through recreation



Partnerships in the delivery of recreation are vital in providing the current quality and quantity of recreation programming available to regional residents. Further strengthening of existing agreements with non-profit and public partners that provide recreation will be key in sustaining existing service levels and in meeting new demands. The future strength of recreation provision in the city will also be heightened by information sharing, lobbying and programming (cross-sectoral). **Partnerships in conjunction with direct delivery of recreation are the foundation of recreation delivery in St Albert.**

Communication and promotion of the opportunities available to city residents as well as the benefits of participation is important to build a case for continued, and increased, support of recreation.

Explaining how recreation participation benefits individuals and communities will ultimately create a healthier city. An understanding of the levels of participation in recreation activity in the city is paramount as is a common understanding of how recreation participation impacts the health, education, crime prevention and other sectors.

Integration with other City functions and planning including the impacts that recreation has on tourism—through the Tourism Master Plan and the Event Hosting Strategy (when implemented)—is an important consideration in ensuring recreation is always top of mind in planning new growth areas, providing municipal function and realizing that recreation and parks are essential services. The potential link to City transportation planning and the

City's trail system may become more apparent as the use of trails evolves to include active transportation as well as traditional recreation uses. **Recreation and parks are essential community services.**

Recreation stakeholder engagement in planning, assessing and visioning for the future is important because delivery and participation in recreation activities is truly a collaboration of the community. New recreation management tools and guidelines, as well as infrastructure priorities and initiatives are presented as follows:

Key management tools and guidelines recommendations

- A transparent and equitable **Partnership Protocol** is being developed to formalize and standardize how the City partners with groups. This protocol must keep in mind the strengths and limitations associated with non-profits groups and understand that City support should be dynamic as groups evolve
- The City can play a role in **strengthening the volunteer community** through attraction, retention and recognition of volunteers. This could include the facilitation of a volunteer database, annual information sharing events with groups and volunteers and the potential development of a recreation volunteer support centre
- Residents and businesses within the city benefit from recreation and sport tourism. The City should **support groups that facilitate tourism through recreation and sport**. Further the City could play a role in coordinating all stakeholders to ensure that the benefits of event hosting and tourism are fully realized throughout the community

- The City has an opportunity to **market recreation service sponsorship on a city-wide basis**. Packaging opportunities specific to potential sponsors will ultimately lead to added value and exposure while affording recreation needed funds for future initiatives
- The development of an **Parks and Open Spaces Management Plan (POSMP)** has been a priority for the City for many years. The formulation of the UPMP should be facilitated to meet the future objectives of parks providers in the City and should provide the information outlined in the UPMP Terms of Reference (under separate cover)

Key infrastructure and program priorities

All future infrastructure investment, whether enhancement of existing facilities or building new facilities and spaces, should consider the following:

- land banking
- life cycle planning
- geographic distribution
- recreation and culture
- spontaneous and structured opportunities
- stand-alone versus a multiplex approach
- expansion and enhancement versus building new
- event hosting design specifications
- repurposing of existing facilities

That being said, it is recommended that initial focus be placed on enhancing existing facilities and/or re-purposing existing spaces. Initial ideas include:

- the re-purposing of the neighbourhood clubhouses to accommodate enhanced recreation opportunities (potentially including, but not limited to, fitness/wellness and indoor child play)
- investing in the Akinsdale/Kinex Arenas to ensure future sustainability
- enhancing Servus Credit Union Place to meet community needs and sustainability targets

With the realization that once existing infrastructure is enhanced, new facilities and spaces will be required to handle changing societal preferences and larger population base. New infrastructure ideas include:

- the development of a support centre for non-profit recreation delivery organizations.
- Strategic land acquisition for future major indoor/outdoor facility development.

Other initiatives identified herein, not specifically related to infrastructure, include:

- the creation of a **Recreation Successes** reporting process outlining the specific benefits of recreation to St Albert to be used in generating public messaging and in strengthening the case for recreation investment
- a **recreation communications program** outlining key messages related to recreation and utilizing existing media as well as social media and potentially an editorial in the local newspaper
- providing added **volunteer support**, including a volunteer roster, assistance/services to organizations

at different stages of evolution and the hosting of a forum for information and expertise sharing amongst delivery organizations

- the adoption of the **Active Community Strategy**, involving all impacted sectors including health, education, crime prevention and others, ultimately coordinated the ongoing efforts of all sectors, creating clear and agreed to messages and goals and optimizing the use of resource
- focusing on **after-school programming** (3 p.m. – 6 p.m.) in partnership with schools and utilizing the Canadian Sport 4 Life strategy in developing **programs for all ages**





6.0 implementation

6.0 implementation

This Recreation Master Plan is the product of thorough stakeholder engagement and is built upon the premise that plan implementation will be a product of collaboration with public service providers in different (but related) sectors, recreation delivery stakeholders, users and participants. From a City perspective, the rollout of the Plan must occur in conjunction with other planning processes within the Community Services department and beyond.

The strategies presented to meet identified needs and the planning guidelines and management tools contained in this Recreation Master Plan will only have value if they are utilized and implemented by the City on an ongoing basis. The application of the information contained in this Plan is explained below.

The Plan vision and principles form an integral foundation for the delivery of recreation programs, facilities, trails, parks and open spaces in the city. This foundation should be revisited any time a decision regarding service provision or future development or operation is made.

The resource planning framework and funding opportunity spectrum outline a transparent process for recreation infrastructure development to occur on an equitable and fair basis. These management tools will promote maintaining a balance between public service provision and the unique needs of special interest groups.

Finally, the recommendations regarding future recreation infrastructure and programs are included to provide the City with valuable foresight. Proactively identifying resource requirements now for the future ensures that, where possible, the impacts of future development on the local tax base can be minimized.

The Plan is also valuable in presenting various community needs from the City's perspective and relating to various stakeholders that future development of any kind will have to be a collaborative effort from the broader community.

The following is the recommended strategy for City recreation administrators in implementing the Master Plan.

**Table 2:
Implementation Seclude**

	Start Up Schedule				Annual Resources
	Immed- 2yrs	2yrs- 5yrs	5yrs- 10yrs	10yrs- 15yrs	\$ = <\$50K \$\$ = \$50K-\$100K \$\$\$ = 100K-\$1M \$\$\$\$ = 1M+
Ensure community health and well being					
• Neighbourhood-based programing	✓				\$\$
• Active community strategy	✓				\$
• After-school program focus	✓				\$
• Long term athlete development plan focus		✓			\$
• Children and nature program focus	✓				\$
• Nature based program focus		✓			\$
• Active transportation program focus		✓			\$
Intensify community development efforts					
• Protocol for dealing with groups* underway	✓				n/a
• Independent organization engagement		✓			\$
• Volunteer group gap analysis and assistance		✓			\$
• Volunteer resource centre for recreation groups			✓		\$\$\$\$
• Event hosting strategy	✓				\$
• Collaborative event planning	✓	✓			n/a
• Coordinating tournament packages	✓				n/a
Invest in recreation infrastructure					
• Infrastructure Management Plan	✓				\$

	Start Up Schedule				Annual Resources
	Immed- 2yrs	2yrs- 5yrs	5yrs- 10yrs	10yrs- 15yrs	\$ = <\$50K \$\$ = \$50K-\$100K \$\$\$ = 100K-\$1M \$\$\$\$ = 1M+
• Develop an Urban Parks Management Plan (UPMP)	✓				\$
• Servus Credit Union Place enhancement			✓		\$\$\$\$* *capital \$10-15M
• Fountain Park Recreation Centre enhancement			✓		\$\$\$\$* *capital \$2-\$4M
• Akinsdale / Kinex Arenas enhancement		✓			\$\$\$\$* *capital \$1-\$3M
• Community clubhouse enhancement		✓			\$\$\$* *\$0.5-\$1.5M
• Riel Park enhancements		✓			\$
• Skate Park Enhancements	✓				\$\$\$
• Red Willow Park enhancement		✓			\$
Celebrate and Communicate					
• Communications program	✓				\$
• St Albert recreation success reporting		✓			\$
• Social Media Campaign	✓				n/a
• Customer relations management system		✓			\$\$
• Editorial	✓				n/a
Seek out new funding sources					
• City-wide sponsorship campaign		✓			\$\$





7.0 conclusion

7.0 conclusion

The intent of this Recreation Master Plan is to provide an accurate depiction of the present and future needs for recreation infrastructure and programs in St Albert and outline strategies as to how to meet identified needs in the future.

The primary components of the Plan were presented, in draft format, to community stakeholders during a stakeholder review period. The majority of those providing feedback were comfortable with the strategic direction outlined herein and were enthused about the positive influence the Plan could have on the community. Detailed results of the stakeholder review are included in Appendix 4.

This Plan has been developed based on broad public engagement, due diligence and compilation of varying levels of internal and external qualitative and quantitative information. Needs identified and planning guidelines and management tools contained herein are built upon the inputs of many different stakeholders and represent a balanced approach to meeting needs with available public resources.

Although the content and recommendations contained herein are not binding once approved by City Council, the Plan

will become a key reference point in future decision making regarding recreation infrastructure and programs.

The underlying theme in this Plan and its various recommendations and guidelines is that the delivery of recreation programs, facilities, trails, parks and open spaces is dependent upon a collaborative effort. Although the City has overseen this Plan and many of the recommendations are most pertinent for the City administration and staff, the fact remains that these services and facilities are a product of the dedication and perseverance of all stakeholders, including the volunteer sector, other levels of government and the private sector.

This document is meant to aid the City in making the right decisions for future recreation infrastructure and programs. The planning guidelines and management tools provided will ensure that the City is able to deal with other delivery stakeholders in an efficient, fair and equitable fashion. As well, the infrastructure and programming recommendations provide a strategic approach to sustaining existing service levels while provide exciting, unique and necessary environments and programs to enrich the quality of life of regional residents and visitors alike.





appendix 1

appendix #1: participating groups

Stakeholder Group Survey Respondents

1. Bertha Kennedy Catholic Community School
2. Big Lake Environmental Support Society
3. Cornerstone Pentecostal Fellowship
4. Dynamyx Gymnastics Club
5. Ecole Sir George Simpson J.H. School
6. Edmonton Tumblewood Lapidary Club
7. Fastball St Albert Association
8. Floral Art Society
9. Friends of the Northern Alberta International Children's Festival
10. G.P. Vanier School
11. Gators Triathlon Club
12. Girl Guides of Canada
13. Grace Family Church
14. Greater St Albert Sports Academy
15. Heart & Soul Singers
16. Keenooshayo Elementary School
17. Kinsmen Club of St Albert
18. Prématernelle La Boîte à Surprises
19. Musée Heritage Museum
20. Profiles Art Gallery
21. Richard S. Fowler Junior High
22. Rotary Club of St Albert Saint City
23. Saints Volleyball Club
24. Sir Alexander Mackenzie Elementary School
25. Society of Friends of the St Albert Public Gardens
26. St Albert and District Fish & Game Association
27. St Albert Chamber of Commerce
28. St Albert Citizens' Patrol Society
29. St Albert Community Band
30. St Albert Historical Society
31. St Albert Host Lions Club
32. St Albert Minor Baseball Association
33. St Albert Minor Football Association
34. St Albert Painters' Guild
35. St Albert Ringette Association
36. St Albert Singers Guild
37. St Albert Skating Centre
38. St Albert Summer Swim Club – Sailfish
39. St Albert Tennis Club
40. St Albert Tigers Baseball Association
41. St Albert Youth Community Centre
42. St Albert Ballet Academy Inc
43. St Albert Karate Club
44. St Albert Men's Slowpitch Association

45. St Albert Rotary Music Festival
46. St Albert Rugby Football Club
47. St Albert SLAM Basketball
48. St Albert Soccer Association
49. Surgeon Foundation
50. The Art of Dance
51. Vital Grandin Catholic School
52. WonderFun Hockey
53. St Albert Track and Field Club
54. Braeside Community Working Group

Discussion Groups

1. St Albert Minor Football
2. St Albert Minor Baseball
3. St Albert Hockey
4. St Albert Ringette Association
5. Sr Albert SLAM Basketball
6. St Albert BMX (2)
7. Fastball St Albert
8. St Albert Skating Centre
9. Dynamyx Gymnastics Club
10. Edmonton District Cricket League

11. St Albert Men's Slowpitch Association
12. St Albert Tennis Club
13. WonderFun Hockey
14. Deer Ridge Neighbourhood Group
15. Sailfish Swim Club
16. Recreational Badminton

Stakeholder Group Interviews

1. Olympian Swim Club
2. St Albert Chamber of Commerce
3. St Albert Curling Club
4. St Albert Inline Hockey League
5. St Albert Senior Citizens Club
6. St Albert Roadrunners and Triathlon Club
7. St Albert Rugby Football Club
8. Air Cadets



appendix 2

appendix #2: infrastructure direction

The following table outlines strategies for major recreation infrastructure offered by the City of St Albert.

Facility	Current Supply and Demand	Strategy for Existing Facilities	Strategy for New Facilities	Next Steps
Indoor Ice Arenas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of prime time use (6,600 hours at five sheets, 97% of prime time ice) • Prime time ice could be expanded to include early mornings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct necessary repairs to the Akinsdale/ Kinex Arena facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate into new facility development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a feasibility study once planning triggers are met
Dry-land Field House / Gymnasium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of the field houses/gymnasium at Servus Credit Union Place is significant and includes spontaneous and structured activities • School gymnasias are utilized by the community through a joint use agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to monitor usage of existing facilities and consider repurposing areas to achieve higher use if required • If excess demand exists, work to expand usage of existing facilities (school gymnasias) prior to contemplating new facility development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate into new facility development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a feasibility study once planning triggers are met
Aquatics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program and leisure aquatics are provided at Servus Credit Union Place (leisure focus) the Fountain Park Recreation Centre (program focus) and Grosvenor Outdoor Pool (outdoor focus) • Demand for program spaces and competition venues will persist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to program each facility as a specialty facility (i.e. program, leisure, outdoor) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate into new facility development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a feasibility study once planning triggers are met

Facility	Current Supply and Demand	Strategy for Existing Facilities	Strategy for New Facilities	Next Steps
Fitness/ Wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fitness/wellness spaces are offered at Servus Credit Union Place as well as private operators throughout the City 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider potential expansion/ repurposing of spaces at Servus Credit Union Place and position the facility as the “home-base” for fitness/wellness • Build out fitness/wellness space at the Fountain Park Recreation Centre where available • Assess the feasibility of repurposing club house space to include fitness wellness areas creating “fitness pods” in neighbourhoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate into new facility development as well as repurposing existing facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a feasibility study once planning triggers are met
Indoor Child Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently provided at Servus Credit Union Place and the Fountain Park Recreation Centre, as well as clubhouses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential expansion at existing facilities if warranted • Including indoor child play in facilities that offer fitness / wellness is desired, therefore if new fitness ‘pods’ are developed, indoor child play should also be explored. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate into new facility development as well as repurposing existing facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a feasibility study once planning triggers are met
Skateboard Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently provided at Red Willow Park, adjacent to the Water Spray Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential expansion and repurposing exists as this amenity no longer meets all community needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider repurposing and/ or locating as best practices dictate that this amenity be increased in size and become a truly mixed use amenity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a feasibility study once planning triggers are met
Community / Botanic Gardens		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor use at new facilities and assess capacity use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If warranted, look to add new complimentary (geographic and type of amenity) garden areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a feasibility study once planning triggers are met

Facility	Current Supply and Demand	Strategy for Existing Facilities	Strategy for New Facilities	Next Steps
Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Spaces are currently offered through the city and include both active (sports fields, etc...) and passive (open green fields) areas • Community botanic gardens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to acquire, plan and maintain open spaces through the development process and look to acquire new open spaces in existing areas if feasible when opportunities permit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisition of amalgamated lands (10 acres at a minimum) for a major facility / areas development should occur on an ongoing basis beyond neighbourhood-level open spaces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop more definition and strategic direction through a Parks and Open Spaces Management Plan.
Playgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playgrounds are currently offered throughout the City in neighbourhoods, at major park sites and on school sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all playgrounds are maintained to CSA standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to provide playground apparatus in new neighbourhood and major parks sites through the development process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop more definition and strategic direction through a Parks and Open Spaces Management Plan
Sports Fields and Diamonds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sports fields are currently offered throughout the community at neighbourhood parks, school sites and at tournament venues (e.g. Riel Park), in some cases through partnerships with community groups such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Albert Men's Slow Pitch Association • St Albert Minor Baseball • St Albert Soccer Association • St Albert Rugby • Artificial turf has also been introduced at Riel Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the varying demands on open spaces throughout the City, when excess demand persist for sports field opportunities to intensify, use of existing facilities (i.e. artificial turf) should be explored prior to creating new fields/diamonds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where partnerships are available, the City should look to user groups to provide input, funding and/ or operational expertise, where available, in the development of new facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop more definition and strategic direction through a Parks and Open Spaces Management Plan • Conduct a feasibility study once planning triggers are met

Facility	Current Supply and Demand	Strategy for Existing Facilities	Strategy for New Facilities	Next Steps
Asphalt Trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trails are offered throughout the community Renewed focus on trails as a form of transportation (active) should be considered in trails planning and development as well as traditional recreation purposes News cross country ski tracks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that existing trails are connected, safe and able to provide for recreation and active transportation uses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to develop new connected trails where new development occurs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop more definition and strategic direction through a Parks and Open Spaces Management Plan
BMX/Extreme Sports Venues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An upgraded BMX park is available at Riel Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor use of existing facilities and consider repurposing (if warranted) to meet new identified needs prior to building new 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If new facilities are demanded, seek development and operational partnerships for specialty facilities through the "partnership protocol" process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a feasibility study once planning triggers are met
Spray Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The City offers one major spray park venue (Woodlands Water Play Park) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to operate the existing venue and ensure it is sustained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If new spray park facilities are warranted (once feasibility is assessed) provide new facilities to be complimentary (geographic and type of amenity) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a feasibility study once planning triggers are met
Off-leash Dog Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The City is currently developing two new off-leash dog areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor use at new facilities and assess capacity use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If warranted, look to add new complimentary (geographic and type of amenity) off-leash dog areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a feasibility study once planning triggers are met



appendix 3

appendix #3: infrastructure considerations

Land banking

Land banking is a strategy of purchasing a parcel (or parcels) of land and holding it (or 'banking' it) for typically five or more years for future sale or development. It is an important, if not crucial, aspect of municipal strategic planning, as it ensures sufficiently sized lands to develop future public facilities.

The City currently has a large portion of land in the northwest (Badger) that could be available for major facility development. Aside from that site, the City does not have any other choices should major facility development need to occur. This suggests that the creation of larger publicly owned parcels will have to occur through land purchase and/or a combination of land purchase, the taking of public reserve, or reserve-land swapping, as is sometimes the case when industrial subdivision reserves are allocated by municipalities.

It is important to note that the City currently acquires land through the development process and does not take cash-in-lieu as do some other municipalities

In any case, the fundamental aspects of ideal site selection are that the site is:

- adjacent to major collector roads
- highly visible to attract sponsorship investment and wayfinding by visitors to the Region
- coordinated with pedestrian routes and existing or planned public transportation
- sized appropriately and adaptable for a combination of indoor and outdoor functions
- adjacent to compatible developments including retail, hospitality and higher density zones
- geographically located in the City with balanced access by all residents

Life cycle planning

Life cycle planning for public recreation facilities is important as the concept requires major capital maintenance to be allocated to annual operating budgets. Proper life cycle management suggests that facilities could be offered in perpetuity as ongoing investment and upgrades would be planned for and completed, avoiding overall facility deterioration.

In some cases, a percentage of overall capital value is applied on an annual basis and held in a reserve for future upgrades and/or enhancements. As recreation facilities are becoming more dynamic, it is suggested that necessary repairs should be incorporated, but so too should potential reprogramming of spaces and amenity refresh. For example, the replacement of a pool mechanical system should be planned for and budgeted annually so that replacement can occur when required and in a timely fashion without impacting other budget priorities. At the same time, due to the nature of leisure amenities in Alberta pools, an amount should also be saved annually for the “refresh” of leisure amenities to render the facility exciting, unique and thus achieving consistently high levels of use.

Geographic distribution

The City of St Albert is a large and growing community. Due to its proximity to the City of Edmonton, growth in the community is limited to the north and west. Much of the City’s existing indoor recreation infrastructure is located in the south and east. Although many indoor recreation facilities can be considered destination facilities, it is important to consider geographic distribution of indoor and outdoor recreation environments to ensure access is available to all residents. That being said, there are some facilities and spaces that the City currently provides, such as parks, community clubhouses and playgrounds, that are not destination facilities and should also be provided on a geographic basis.

Recreation and culture

Recreation and culture are relevant and significant contributors to quality of life in the St Albert region. Traditional perspectives regarding recreation—sports and physical activity and culture—primarily encompassing creativity and artistic expression have defined these two important components of quality of life as mutually exclusive. Debates surrounding big “C” culture and small “c” culture further complicate the definition of culture and how it relates to quality of life. Additionally these debates have distanced cultural activity even further from the public perception of recreation. Although this is commonplace in Alberta communities, it cannot be ignored that recreation and culture, in their traditional senses, share a number of common characteristics. Recreation and culture each:

- allow participants to differentiate and express themselves
- are products of participant choice in how to spend leisure time
- have been proven to have positive benefits to personal development for all ages
- have been proven to promote community pride and cohesiveness
- promote and improve upon overall quality of life

Because of these similarities, the separation of recreation and culture should be avoided, especially when planning, designing and operating environments in which both recreation and culture activities can occur. This is not to suggest that cross-programming of recreation and culture activities can, or will ever, occur. It does, however, suggest that if the use of already limited public funds for recreation and culture are to be optimized, the provision of environments that support and integrate recreation and culture as much as possible is necessary.

The concept of included elements for both recreation and culture activities in facility development and operations does not only hold true for the development of future new regional recreation and culture facilities, but it can also be applied to existing facilities. Opportunities to showcase local artists should be explored at existing traditional recreation facilities in the region. Exposure to recreational pursuits, perhaps in themed performances or exhibits, should be hosted at existing traditional culture venues.

Spontaneous and structured uses

The popularity of spontaneous use recreation opportunity is well documented throughout the “2011 State of Recreation” report. Areas that offer spontaneous use in the City are well utilized. There has been a significant drop in structured recreation participation over the past 15 years¹ and the abundance of shift workers and busier lifestyles in the region all lead to a need to increase the provision of spontaneous use recreation outlets for city residents. This is not to say that traditional team sports/structured activities and the environments that support them should be ignored. Conceptually, the provision of traditional recreation facilities, such as ice arenas and indoor soccer facilities, have been focused on structured rental use and thus a large portion of the population, those demanding spontaneous use outlets, have not been considered in major indoor facility development.

Prudent planning for indoor recreation and culture should consider both

¹ “Participation rates in sport have dropped from 45% to 28% between 1992 and 2005”. *Sport Participation in Canada (StatsCan, 2005)*

structured/scheduled use areas as well as unstructured/spontaneous use areas. Defining requirements and parameters around the planning and provision of traditional schedule use venues is relatively straightforward, as standards exist for most environments and there is an abundance of comparable facilities to look at in the Province and beyond. Spontaneous use areas, however, are a relatively new concept and the supply/demand relationship of these areas is not as straightforward as is the case with programmable/rentable spaces. This is primarily because capacities cannot be clearly identified for spontaneous use areas. as the point at which a facility is “too busy”, and thereby prohibitive of participant use, is subjective and based on individual perception.

There are two main types of spontaneous users. The first is the spontaneous user who participates in the activity as his/her primary intent in visiting the respective facility. For example, Jenny visits Servus Credit Union Place to use the fitness centre. The second is the user who participates in the activity even though it was not the initial intent in visiting the facility. For example, Jenny uses the fitness centre at Servus Credit Union Place because she has to bring her child to play ice hockey. This user can also participate in other spontaneous use activities. For example, Jenny visits Servus Credit Union Place to use the fitness centre, but also uses the hot tub and walking track (secondary activities).

Recognizing that spontaneous users are comprised of both user types, future planning for spontaneous use facilities should consider the following:

- Spontaneous use areas provide users the opportunity to participate at irregular

times, thereby enabling users to partake in physical activity or creative/social endeavours even if they cannot commit to signing up for a scheduled team or program. Therefore, spontaneous use areas must provide optimal flexibility in hours of operation.

- Spontaneous use activities are best offered in clusters depending on the type of activity and the adjacent facility amenities (i.e. drop-in child care adjacent to fitness/wellness spaces). Therefore, spontaneous use opportunities should be provided in clusters that work well together.
- Spontaneous use activity-clusters should be designed to promote cross use and convenience for potential users. Clusters that seem to work well include:
 - fitness/wellness and child minding
 - fitness/wellness and major scheduled use activity (i.e. arenas, field houses, etc.)
 - fitness/wellness and therapeutic aquatics
 - leisure skating and ice arenas
 - social gathering and community gardens
 - parks/trails/gardens

Considering these points, it is apparent that many future spontaneous use spaces should piggy-back major programmable/rentable spaces. As well, many of the existing facilities that offer spontaneous use in the City may warrant expansion.

If these things are considered in the expansion/enhancement of existing, or in the development of new, recreation spaces the disparity amongst structured uses, spontaneous uses and the associated participants of each will be minimized.

Stand-alone versus a multi-plex approach

The tangible and intangible benefits associated with a “multiplex” approach, or the “leisure mall concept”, are well documented. Economies of scale in facility operations, in staffing, administration, purchase of supplies, contracted services, utilities and marketing have been proven in existing facilities such as Servus Credit Union Place.

Operationally, multiplex facilities have proven to be excellent in terms of staff efficiency. The large number of activities under one management system versus a separate management system for independent facilities provides cost-reduction opportunities. Energy conservation with respect to sharing of systems between the facilities and making use of cold and warm systems to develop energy transfers provides operational savings compared to stand-alone facilities of a similar size.

Perhaps the most important aspect of facility development, however, is both client/public satisfaction with the variety of activities available in the facility and how they enhance family cohesiveness and quality of life. Users of multiplex facilities have opportunities to partake in a variety of recreation and culture activities while other family members and friends are using other portions of the facility. Facility use is extended by the opportunities to not only partake in the recreation or culture activity of choice but also share in other social activities such as food, retail and professional health services and common public/social gathering areas.



The overall capital cost of multiplex facilities is also expected to be less than the comparative cost of building a number of stand-alone facilities. The efficiencies of scale and the attractiveness of the size of multiplex projects to construction industry stakeholders have resulted in excellent bidding and construction services related to these types of projects. Several millions of dollars are typically saved on the overall capital construction compared to a series of stand-alone facilities. Capital cost is, however, crystallized within a two to three year period as opposed to being phased out over a number of additional years if carried out as separate projects.

The disadvantages of the multipurpose all-in-one concept relates to the scale of the facility, its cost to construct and the amount of land that it occupies. Options looked at with respect to the City of St Albert indicate that there are relatively few existing sites that would be capable of accommodating the overall scale of a multiplex facility. Fortunately, in the case of planning for indoor recreation facilities in the City, there are no immediate requirements for new major multiplex facility development and, as such, the planning for and acquisition of site parcels large enough to accommodate such facility development can occur in a timely and diligent fashion.

Expansion and enhancement versus building new

Considering that the city currently has a wide variety of indoor recreation facilities, it is important to focus on maintaining existing infrastructure and sustaining existing services prior to developing new facilities on new sites. Maintaining existing facilities first will ensure that existing service levels are maintained and that programs currently subscribed to can continue to be offered. In considering the development of new facility components, if new facility components can be added to existing facilities significant costs savings in site acquisition, servicing and administrative and common-area development can be achieved. Adding to existing facilities can also promote the multiplex approach at those sites, thereby realizing the benefits of this approach to facility development, as discussed in the previous section. Enhancement of facilities also includes the potential repurposing of underutilized outdoor and indoor spaces thereby optimizing the use of public funds

Repurposing of existing facilities

The repurposing of existing indoor and outdoor facilities has great potential for meeting the needs of expanding programs/activities as well as meeting the needs of newly introduced activities in the community. In order to effectively do so, facilities considered for repurposing must be analysed in terms of existing usage levels, the costs associated with sustaining existing services and the adaptability of the facility and/or space in accommodating a deferent use. As even the most underutilized spaces in the city are valued by some residents, appropriate justification will undoubtedly be to required repurpose and existing public recreation facility. If a facility or space has been identified for potential repurposed use, the City must engage the local community, users of the facility and the

expertise required to assess opportunities associated with sustained or repurposed uses (architectural and engineering assessment). Once information is collected, administration and Council must consider the costs and benefits associated with repurposing and make a move forward decision.

Specific infrastructure priorities

The following discussion provides direction on the future state of existing recreation infrastructure in the community. For more detail on specific direction by infrastructure type (i.e. ice arenas, off leash dog areas, etc.) please refer to Appendix #2.

It is important that consideration is given to the infrastructure development process, feasibility triggers and funding framework. Also, future investment should consider the following (more detailed information regarding each consideration found in Appendix #3):

- land banking
- life cycle planning
- geographic distribution
- recreation and culture integration
- spontaneous and structured uses
- stand-alone versus a multiplex approach
- expansion and enhancement versus building new

When contemplating areas where investment has already occurred in recreation infrastructure (i.e. existing facilities and parks) the following discussion provides future direction for specific sites.

Servus Credit Union Place

Servus Credit Union Place is, and will continue to be, the primary indoor recreation multiplex facility in the City. Future expansion and enhancement at the facility is somewhat limited due to site constraints but an enhancement strategy is currently being developed by the City in order to optimize operations and meet expanded community needs. It is recommended that the enhancement strategy be implemented and funded prior to considering a second indoor major multiplex facility.

Fountain Park Recreation Centre (FPRC)

FPRC focuses on indoor aquatics programming. This focus is appropriate and should continue. While the facility has potential in terms of re-purposing existing spaces, which has already occurred in some areas, major expansion to the facility footprint is not recommended. Enhancements to the existing facility could include increased indoor child play space and fitness/wellness program space.

Akinsdale/Kinex Arenas

The Akinsdale/Kinex Arena complex is a user ice facility. The future vision for this facility is that it should remain a user ice facility and it is recommended that identified required upgrades should be conducted to sustain facility operations.

Grosvenor Park Pool

Grosvenor Park Pool is the City's only outdoor swimming pool. With recent investment in site amenities and existing utilization levels, the facility should remain a centre for outdoor aquatics in St Albert.

Community Clubhouses

Each of the existing clubhouses is utilized for community gathering, meetings and special events. Although the facilities are utilized, potential re-purposing of the spaces could provide an opportunity for enhanced satellite recreation service provision geographically throughout the City and create a stronger sense of social connectedness and sense of belonging in neighbourhoods. If space is available, fitness/wellness spaces as well as indoor child play space would likely increase usage at each facility and each could become partnership operated and/or generate revenue for the department while increasing community impact and overall physical activity. The potential to include other recreation opportunities in each of the clubhouses should be explored in direct consultation with neighbourhood associations.

Riel Park

The build out of Riel Park is in progress. The variety and massing of outdoor spaces at the site, and the quality of those spaces, positions the park as the primary multi-purpose outdoor activity venue in the City. Completion of the site vision, including permanent change room facilities and other site amenities, should be completed as funding permits prior to developing new primary multi-purpose outdoor sites.

Red Willow Park

Red Willow Park is a well utilized component of the City's recreation infrastructure. It also has an important role in the City's trail system. Although the park has an existing Master Plan, update of this plan should be considered to encompass new areas of the City including Red Willow Park West, Lois Hole Provincial Park and the White Spruce Forest to outline and update needed improvements and potential expanded or enhanced use.

Carrot Creek Greeway Expansion

Carrot Creek and the Sturgeon River are two watersheds that drain into Big Lake on the west side of St. Albert. Carrot Creek provides for the potential development of a north-south multi-purpose greenway within the area, and significant potential for trail development due to the existing natural diversity of landscapes. The development of a future north-south trail (if possible) along Carrot Creek, eventually connecting to Lois Hole Centennial Park and to the Red Willow Urban Park would provide additional recreation opportunities for residents. This would also provide enhanced connectivity between the existing trail systems within neighboring municipalities and provide additional opportunities to educate the public regarding the history of the region.



appendix 4

appendix #4: stakeholder review results

The draft Recreation Master Plan was presented at an open house in winter 2011 as well as made available online for public stakeholder review. Stakeholders were asked to review the material and provide feedback via a feedback form on the draft Master Plan content. 144 responses were collected and are presented in the following overview.

- 79.9% of respondents indicated that recreation is important to their quality of life
- The five priority areas were listed and respondents were asked which they felt will positively impact their life:
 - 78.3% noted the priority “Ensure community health and well being”;
 - 77.5% noted the priority “invest in recreation infrastructure”;
 - 58.7% noted the priority “bolster community development”;
 - 56.5% noted the priority “seek out new funding opportunities”; and
 - 52.9% noted “celebrate and share community recreation”.

- When respondents were asked how the Recreation Master Plan will enhance the provision of recreation in St. Albert, the following were the most frequently mentioned responses:
 - 70.2 % responded with “supporting the work of recreation and sport groups”;
 - 70.2% responded with “maintaining or improving parks and open spaces”;
 - 69.2% responded with “improving citizens overall quality of life”;
 - 65.4% responded with “providing opportunities for participating in recreation everyday”; and
 - 62.5% responded with “providing a solid plan for recreation for the next 10 years”.



