

City of Edmonton Engage and Play Shaping Public Recreation in Edmonton Final Report



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1. Executive Summary

Introduction

As Edmonton grows towards a population of two million, the "Engage and Play: Shaping Public Recreation in Edmonton Final Report" presents a comprehensive evidence-based summary of current and future recreation needs of the diverse and evolving population in Edmonton. This report is based on three primary research components—including a statistically representative phone survey of 1,867 Edmontonians, a large-scale qualitative research component (26 focus groups with residents and community groups and 7 interviews with partner organizations), and a jurisdictional scan of 7 major Canadian cities.

The findings and recommendations outlined below are intended to inform strategic investments, programming shifts, and administrative improvements. The goal is to ensure all Edmontonians have equitable access to safe, welcoming, and high-quality places to be active, build community, and enhance their quality of life, aligning with the strategic directions of **Edmonton's City Plan** [\[link\]](#) and the **Approach to Community Recreation Facility Planning in Edmonton** [\[link\]](#). Findings below include a district level analysis, and areas where there are statistically significant differences across district(s) are highlighted.

Current State of Recreation

- **Participation & Motivations:**
 - While 91% of Edmontonians believe recreation is essential, participation varies. 56% of adults and 72% of children are active weekly.
 - The top activities for adults are walking (32%), strength training (30%), and swimming (30%), with a strong preference for unstructured, flexible options. For children, the top activities are swimming (51%), soccer (32%), and basketball (24%), mostly in structured programs.
 - 47% of Edmontonians want to start new activities or do more active recreational activities than they do today, especially in West Henday (60%), among established migrants (59%), families with young children in the home (59%), racialized people (53%), and women (51%).
- **Satisfaction:**
 - Overall satisfaction with City-offered recreation is moderate at 62%. Satisfaction is highest in Mill Woods and Meadows (70%) and Northeast/Horse Hills¹ (69%). However, satisfaction is significantly lower in West Henday (51%), among racialized individuals (56%) and persons with a disability (54%).
- **Barriers to Participation:**

¹ Northeast and Horse Hills Districts were combined due to low population

- The primary barriers preventing Edmontonians from being more active are lack of time (58%), health issues (17%), and financial constraints (12%).
- Certain groups face greater barriers. High inactivity rates are notable among:
 - Persons with a disability (47% inactive), with 29% saying health is a barrier
 - Low-income residents (41% inactive), with 51% saying lack of time is a barrier, 20% say financial constraints are a barrier
 - Seniors (37% inactive), with 22% saying health is a barrier.

Partnerships and Community User Groups

The relationship between the City and its community user groups organizations that the City partners with to deliver recreation programs and facilities (referred to in this report as partner organizations) is foundational to recreation delivery, characterized by strong collaboration and mutual respect. Partners value the City's support, particularly the expertise and consistency provided by dedicated staff like Sport Partner Liaisons, and the clear, stable processes for facility allocations. However, this vital partnership can be improved by addressing some challenges. Community user groups have identified challenges with facility booking systems (delays, technical glitches), and a lack of available and affordable space. Organizations involved with delivering recreation facilities or enhancements are challenged by the length and complexity of City approval processes for permits and facility improvements. These issues create barriers, leading to volunteer burnout and missed funding opportunities, undermining the full potential of these collaborative efforts.

Facility, Amenity, Programming Needs

Two-thirds (65%) of Edmontonians perceive a need for new or additional recreation facilities, amenities or programming, a sentiment that is strongest in some areas, such as Southwest/Rabbit Hill (77%), West Henday (77%), and West Edmonton (76%). Demand is highest for:

- Multipurpose Recreation Centres: Fifteen percent of Edmonton residents² expressed a need for additional multipurpose recreational facilities (note that this does not differentiate between large, medium and small facilities). These facilities allow families to stack activities, something articulated in the qualitative research as important to many, and directly addressing the time barrier experienced by more than half of Edmonton residents.
- Aquatics: 11% of Edmontonians perceive a need for indoor pools. Swimming is a top participating activity for both adults and children. Qualitative results showed an intense, city-wide demand for swimming lessons, which are viewed as an essential life skill.
- Courts: 10% see a need for new indoor courts, which will support fast-growing sports like pickleball, basketball, and volleyball.
- Arenas: 8% of Edmontonians see a need for new indoor arenas. Demand for ice time, particularly for hockey, currently exceeds supply by over 20%, based on the State of Sport Report (CRC).

² Quantitative Report, page 86-88

Hockey is currently the 4th most popular sport among children, and is growing, which differs from trends seen in other municipalities.

- Indoor Turf/Fields: 7% see a need for more indoor fields and turf. Qualitative results show that there is a strong interest in playing traditionally outdoor sports year round (e.g., soccer). There is also an emerging need for cricket pitches.

Conclusions

Findings from this three-component research confirm that the City of Edmonton's current supply of recreation and sport opportunities, while extensive, does not uniformly meet community needs. The City has an opportunity to enhance its responsiveness to emerging trends. Proactive investment and adjustments to policies are essential to ensuring equitable access and long-term relevance.

Highlights of Key Recommendations

Recommendations have been structured into four main areas - Facilities and Amenities, Programming, Policy and Administration, and Supporting Equitable Access to Recreation. The recommendations are extensive, and are briefly summarized below.

Facilities and Amenities

1. **New Multipurpose Centre Development:** We recommend that the City stays on course for full construction of the Lewis Farms Facility and Park Project, the designed but unfunded Rollie Miles Recreation Centre, and the design and construction of Heritage Valley Community Recreation Centre. These facilities are critically needed to serve underserved communities or support the needs of central neighbourhoods, directly addressing the highest perceived needs in the city.
2. **Purposefully Plan Allocation of 50 meter pools**
 - Plan the allocation for 50-metre pools to balance high-performance sport needs with community access for recreational swimming and swimming lessons. This includes both Peter Hemingway Aquatic Centre and the upcoming Lewis Farms Facility.
3. **Expand Court and Field Inventory Strategically:**
 - Develop additional multipurpose court space (indoor and outdoor) to meet the exponential growth of pickleball and sustained interest in basketball and volleyball.
 - Meet the growing needs of soccer by offering more year-round facilities (indoor or air supported), and by planning for additional fields that can support 11 vs. 11 play. When adding soccer capacity, focus on Southwest/Rabbit Hill in particular.
 - Plan for modest increases in baseball diamond inventory in underserved areas (Southwest/Rabbit Hill, Southeast, and West Edmonton).
 - Consider development of a new cricket pitch, in Southwest/Rabbit Hill or Ellerslie, where potential demand is higher.
4. **Address Ice Shortage and Arena Maintenance:**
 - Solicit public and private partnerships to increase the inventory of indoor ice surfaces to alleviate the current shortfall.

- Prioritize strategic decisions regarding the maintenance and repair versus potential replacement of existing, aging arenas to prevent further capacity loss.
- 5. **Enhance Outdoor Spaces:** Improve the connectivity of the trail and pathway network for walking and cycling. Enhance city parks with essential amenities like shade, seating, and washrooms to support longer, more comfortable use by families and community groups.

Programming

1. **Increase Capacity for Swimming Lessons to Meet Demand:** Address demand for swimming lessons by implementing innovative solutions seen in other municipalities, such as lifeguard/instructor recruitment incentives, partnerships with private pools, and offering premium-priced, smaller classes with lower student to instructor ratios for better learning experience, to meet diverse needs.
2. **Support Growing and Unstructured Activities:** Expand drop-in times and introductory programming for high-growth sports like pickleball, basketball, and volleyball. Increase unstructured "stick-and-puck" ice times to meet public demand for flexible, informal hockey.
3. **Focus on Lifelong and Inclusive Fitness:** Develop age-appropriate fitness programming that supports adults transitioning their activities due to age or injury, including seniors as well as middle aged adults. Promote orientation programs for strength training, a high-growth area.

Policy and Administration

1. **Modernize Digital Platforms:** Urgently redevelop the Move.Learn.Play website and program booking systems to be user-friendly, reliable, and centralized. The system should feature robust search filters, live capacity counters for drop-in programs, and a simplified interface. Similarly, modernizing the booking system for community user groups will support these groups.
2. **Streamline Partner Processes:** Refine the City's approval and permit process for partner organizations to be clear, timely, and efficient. Empower Sport Partner Liaisons with greater decision-making authority to reduce administrative burden on volunteers and strengthen these vital relationships.

Supporting Equitable Access to Recreation

Just over one-quarter (29%) of Edmonton residents are inactive (never participating in active recreation. Equity deserving groups are less active than other Edmonton residents (inactivity rates among persons with a Disability: 47%, Low income residents: 41%, Residents aged 55+ years: 37% and Migrants (<5 yrs/5+ years): 37%/33%.

Develop **EDI performance indicators**, as recommended in the Equitable Recreation Programming Audit - Spring 2024.

1. **Review program registration practices** to prioritize local access and mitigate inequities caused by technology or time-based barriers. Potential solutions could include offering equity deserving

groups early registration, including geographic limits, as illustrated in a recent City of Toronto pilot.

2. **Address physical accessibility** by supporting community partners in grant applications and staff training (for coaching adaptive sports). Partner organizations have already offered adaptive sports programming and are keen to do more, but may not always have the funding or expertise needed to do so.
3. **Address financial accessibility** by expanding free or sliding scale programming, and enhancing/expanding opportunities for free and unstructured play within the community, such as Community League free swim days.
4. Continue to conduct formal **safety audits** of facilities and surrounding areas to ensure all Edmontonians feel safe and welcome.

Conclusion

By embracing these recommendations, the City of Edmonton can continue to deliver a responsive, equitable, and modern recreation system that meets the needs of its residents today and fosters a healthy, connected community.

2. Context

2.1. Context of this Report

Preamble

The Community Recreation and Culture Branch (CRC) delivers public recreation, sport and leisure activities that take place in a variety of facilities, parks and open spaces, such as ice arenas, leisure and recreation centers, outdoor pools, golf courses, neighbourhood parks and attractions. In addition, CRC works with numerous partners to provide recreation programming in various ways. This can be through providing space in City facilities, and partnering with organizations to provide space and deliver recreation programs and facilities (e.g., through lease, license or management agreements).

The City of Edmonton has reached a population of 1 million residents (2021³), with growth expected to reach 2 million residents by approximately 2065⁴. The Community Recreation and Culture Branch (CRC) in the Community Services Department wants to ensure that it is planning active recreational facilities, amenities and programming that supports a growing Edmonton.

Strategic Direction

Future planning in community recreation is informed by the following:

Edmonton's City Plan [\[link\]](#) sets strategic direction for the way Edmonton grows, its mobility systems, open spaces, employment and social networks. As part of the planning process, the City Plan asks “What choices do we need to make to be a healthy, urban and climate resilient city of two million people that supports a prosperous region?”.

The City Plan Community of Communities Priority⁵ signals the importance of community recreation: *Edmontonians complete 50% of their trips using active transportation and transit, and that the city consists of 15-minute districts that allow people to complete their daily needs.*

In addition, growth projections for Edmonton, including growth patterns of communities within the city informed recommendations on future facility and programming needs.

CONNECTEDMONTON [\[link\]](#) is Edmonton's Strategic Plan for 2019 - 2028. It sets the direction for Edmonton's future and outlines where the City needs to change today to realize the City's vision for Edmonton in 2050. Within the the strategic plan is the Healthy City Goal: *Edmonton is a neighbourly city with community and personal wellness that embodies and promotes equity for all Edmontonians.*

³ https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/facts_figures/population-history

⁴ Edmonton City Plan, page 1

⁵ Edmonton City Plan, page 23

In 2018, the City published the **Approach to Community Recreation Facility Planning in Edmonton** [\[link\]](#).

The Approach:

- Provides a transparent way to plan, prioritize, and provide publicly-supported community recreation amenities
- Helps the City manage competing priorities
- Provides an objective tool for making strategic decisions to help guide assessment of the demand for and prioritization of recreation amenities and facilities
- Presents an approach to balancing infrastructure renewal and growth.

As outlined in the **Approach to Community Recreation Facility Planning in Edmonton**, the City of Edmonton will take a holistic and sustainable approach to recreation, aiming to meet the full spectrum of community recreation needs. Edmontonians will have access to safe, welcoming places to:

- Socialize
- Be creative
- Play, learn and develop physical literacy
- Be active and exercise
- Build community
- Participate/excel in their desired sport or activity

Research Intent

This comprehensive, multi-disciplinary research project is intended to gather relevant information to inform prioritization and decision making in sport and recreation planning and capital planning.

Specifically, this research aims to identify current and future recreation needs citywide and at the district level to understand the recreation needs and expectations of community members and a wide range of interested parties. This includes validating and assessing individual preferences and social benefits of recreation services received, and barriers to use.

This research also supports Recommendation #1 in the **Equitable Recreation Programming Audit 2024** [\[link\]](#):

“In collaboration with the Community Services Department’s communications area, improve how the Community Recreation and Culture Branch obtains information on recreation programming needs from the broader community to identify access barriers and inform equitable recreation program planning.”

Details about supporting documentation that was used in the development of this research and the recommendations can be found in the [Appendix](#).

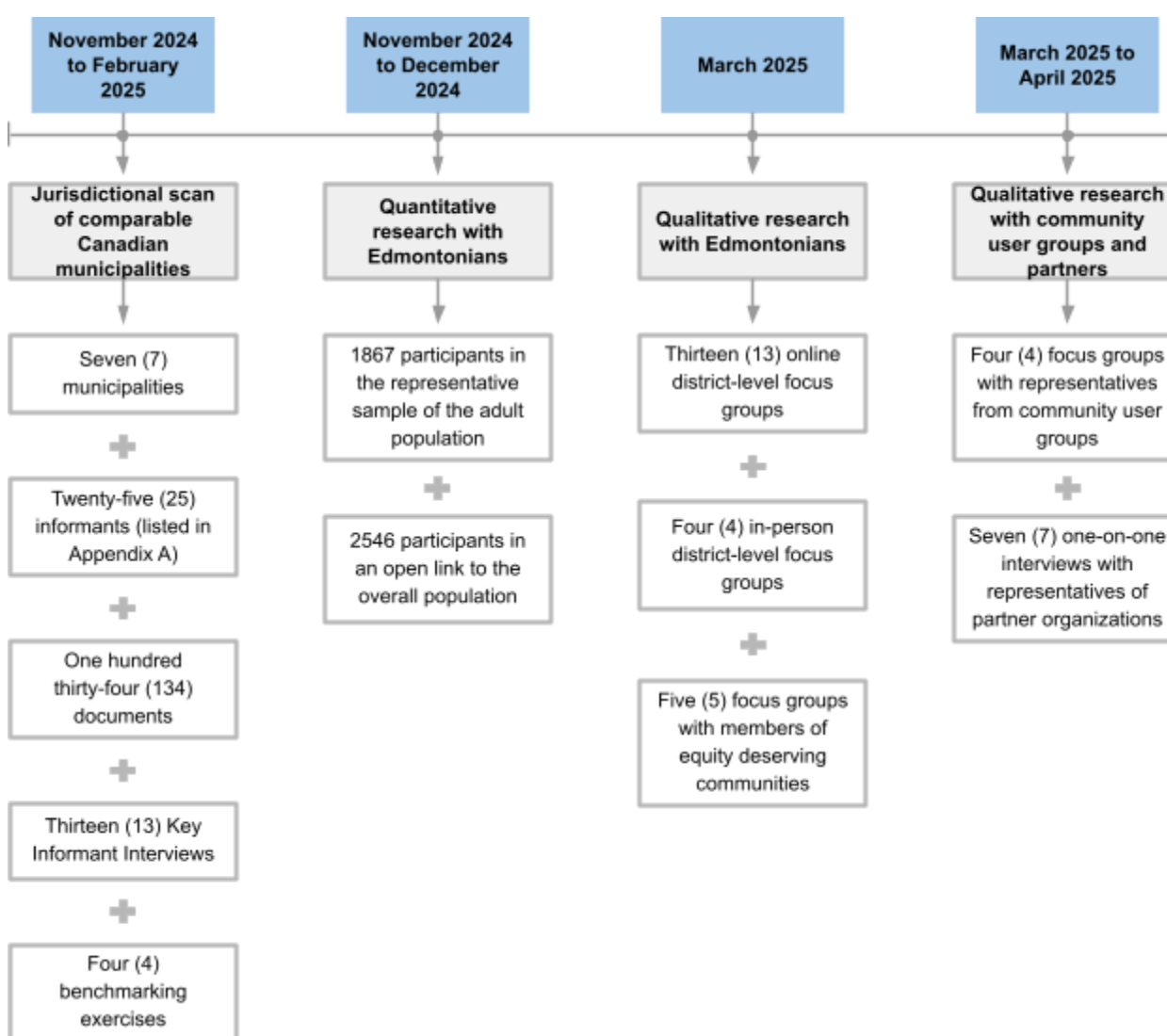
The study is focused exclusively on needs for sports and active recreation defined as follows:

- **Active recreational activity:** any activity that an individual freely chooses to do for fun, social interaction, fitness or relaxation, and requires them to be physically active.
- **Sport:** any competitive active recreational activity, where a contest is held between two or more people to determine a winner, whether for fun or organized by a sport organization or league. It includes observation of formal rules and regulations, participation either individually or as a team, and may or may not include a coaching or officiating or judging components.

2.2. Methodology of the Research

The City of Edmonton's Community Recreation and Culture (CRC) Branch provides diverse opportunities for public recreation, sport, and leisure activities in facilities and parks across the city. To ensure these services meet current and future needs, the City conducted this comprehensive study to assess recreation needs at both district and citywide levels.

The study had multiple primary research components including a jurisdictional scan, quantitative research⁶, and qualitative research, as depicted below.



⁶ Quantitative results in the final report are from the representative sample only. Open link results are available in the Quantitative Report.

The **primary objective of the jurisdictional scan** was to identify best practices and innovative approaches from other municipalities that could be adopted or adapted to address similar issues or challenges in Edmonton. The jurisdictional scan findings inform policy direction, service improvements, operational model adjustments, and offer insights into how other jurisdictions fund capital and operating costs related to recreation.

The **primary objective of the quantitative research** was to identify current and future needs of Edmontonians in regards to sports and active recreation activities. Specifically, the research was designed to understand (i) where Edmontonians are at in terms of active recreation; (ii) what their perceived future needs are; and (iii) what Edmontonians might need from the equity lens. When answering each of these questions, the quantitative research took into consideration:

- District-level recreation needs, including options related to service provisions and potential infrastructure needs;
- Preferences and perceptions by various demographics that may influence recreation planning;
- Unique circumstances and recreation needs of persons with disabilities, the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, migrants, Indigenous Peoples and racialized people; and
- Access barriers to inform equitable recreation program planning.

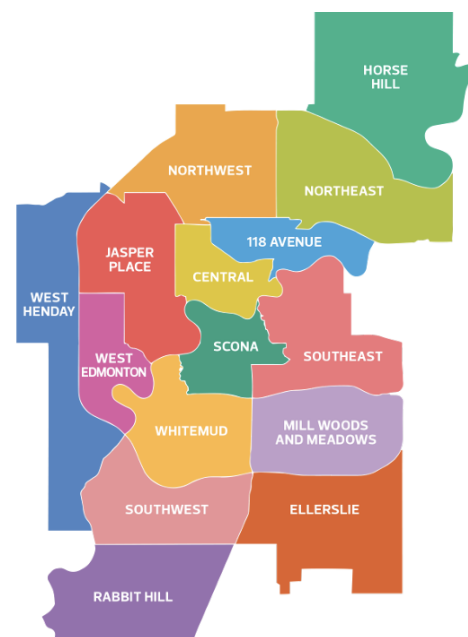
The **qualitative research was designed** to understand how the community prioritizes active recreation, to understand the most common barriers preventing individuals from using City recreational programming or facilities (as identified in the quantitative research), and to gather suggestions on amenities and programming that support active recreation. When speaking with community user groups and partner organizations, the City further wanted to understand how it can support these organizations better in program and facility delivery.

2.2.1. Who provided feedback?

Edmonton residents: Individuals aged 18 and older who reside in one of the 15 districts of Edmonton, displayed on the map.⁷

Community user groups: A non-profit community group with a mandate to provide a program or service to a specific group, and/or area of the city, and/or the entire city.

Partner organizations: An organization that has a formalized relationship with the City of Edmonton to provide recreation opportunities. These organizations can include both the public sector (e.g. community organizations, education sector) or the private sector.



⁷ Due to population size, the Southwest and Rabbit Hill districts were merged into a single unit. Similarly, Northeast and Horse Hill are presented together in the results.

Other municipalities: Seven municipalities⁸ provided expertise, documents, and benchmarking information about active recreation.

The **Edmonton State of Sport Report**⁹ focuses on participation in structured sports as well as the facilities that support participation. Authored by the Sport Partner Liaisons of the Partnerships and Event Strategy Section of CRC, it provides key information on the current state of recreation facilities and amenities, as well as observed participation trends.

2.2.2. How was data collected and analyzed?

Quantitative survey with Edmonton residents: A total of 1,867 quantitative surveys were collected through a randomized phone survey targeting Edmonton residents aged 18 or older within the specified districts. The survey employed a probabilistic sampling approach, ensuring the results are statistically representative of the population in those areas. To enhance representativeness, the data was weighted to reflect the most recent Statistics Canada age and gender distributions for Edmonton. The margin of error for the aggregate sample is $\pm 2.3\%$, 19 times out of 20. Details of the survey composition can be found in the [Appendix](#).

In addition to the phone survey, 2,546 individuals completed an open link survey made available to all residents of Edmonton and the Greater Edmonton Area who were interested in participating. To qualify, respondents needed to be 18 years of age or older. District information was not required for this group. As this was not a probabilistic sample, a margin of error does not apply. Quantitative results in the final report are from the representative sample only. Open link results are available in the quantitative report.

Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) was applied to identify how people with different lived experiences may experience active recreation and sport participation differently. Survey questions were intentionally designed to surface these differences, and special attention was given to ensuring equitable representation of diverse population groups within the final dataset. This approach supports the development of inclusive and responsive policies, programs, and initiatives.

Results from both surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics. This includes crosstabulations by district and by the equity deserving groups identified in the GBA+ analysis, to identify key trends, patterns, similarities, and differences. For the representative sample results (phone survey), differences were highlighted where results were statistically higher or lower than those of the corresponding comparison group.

Qualitative focus groups with Edmonton residents: Members of the general public who completed the quantitative survey were invited to participate in follow-up qualitative research. In total, 17 district-level focus groups were conducted, including both in-person and virtual sessions (which provided accessible

⁸ Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary, Mississauga, Hamilton, Winnipeg

⁹ State of Sport, page 4

options for participants, balanced against the impact of in-person discussions). Additionally, five focus groups specifically engaged equity-deserving communities to better understand their unique experiences and needs. Details of the focus group composition can be found in the [Appendix](#).

Qualitative focus groups and interviews with community user groups & partner organizations:

Community user groups and partner organizations were recruited directly using contact information provided by the City. Four focus groups were held with representatives from community user groups focused on sport fields, gymnasiums or courts, rinks, and aquatics. Seven one-on-one interviews were conducted in early April 2025 with representatives of partner organizations that operate recreation facilities in collaboration with the City. These organizations ranged from grassroots, volunteer-led groups (e.g., Edmonton Mountain Biking Alliance) to professional operators (e.g., Snow Valley Ski Club), offering a diverse range of perspectives on facility use, service delivery, and community needs.

The qualitative data, including recordings, transcripts and summary notes from the moderators, were analyzed with the support of Notebook.lm software. Content was categorized into themes and sub-themes. Each discussion group or interview was summarized by one team member and reviewed by the lead moderator. Thematic analysis identified common and unique sub-themes which formed the basis of the qualitative report.

Jurisdictional scan: The jurisdictional scan employed both qualitative and quantitative methods, including key interviews with municipal representatives, and document review. Conducted between November 2024 and February 2025, the research involved participation from seven municipalities: Toronto, Montréal, Calgary, Winnipeg, Mississauga, Vancouver, and Hamilton. In total, 25 municipal representatives contributed through 13 key informant interviews (KIIs), and 134 documents were reviewed. The research team worked in close collaboration with the Community Recreation and Culture (CRC) branch to identify participants and relevant materials.

Municipalities were selected by CRC project leads, and municipal representatives were contacted through a combination of direct outreach by a CRC Director and follow-up communication from the consulting team. Interviews followed a structured guide developed collaboratively with CRC staff, alongside a benchmarking template used to gather consistent data across jurisdictions. Representatives were also invited to supplement a curated document list with additional relevant materials. Benchmarking templates were completed by participants or supplemented by publicly available sources.

The qualitative data (including interview transcripts, reviewed documents, and relevant website content) was analyzed using Atlas.ti software. Content was categorized into eight thematic areas with sub-themes: (1) Financial Management, (2) Services Offered, (3) Community Engagement, (4) Levels of Service and Performance Measurement Indicators, (5) Partnerships and Asset Management for Growth and Renewal, (6) Climate Resilience, (7) Safety and Security, and (8) Trends in Recreation. A separate document was created for each municipality, with data organized according to these themes. As templates were completed, they were reviewed by the CRC team to ensure alignment with project goals, and then shared with municipal representatives for validation and additional input.

2.2.3. How were findings translated into recommendations?

Recommendations Are Based On Primary Research Findings

The final recommendations across the three primary research components were grounded in a comprehensive analysis of the results of each research component, which revealed patterns in participation, satisfaction, barriers, and needs.

The **jurisdictional scan** offered considerations for the City of Edmonton related to eight core thematic areas:

- Financial Management
- Services Offered
- Community Engagement
- Levels of Service and Performance Measure Indicators
- Partnerships and Asset Management for Growth and Renewal
- Climate Resilience
- Safety and Security
- Trends in Sport and Recreation

The report was shared with municipal representatives for validation, to ensure the results accurately reflected the perspectives of the municipalities that participated.

The analysis of the **Quantitative Survey** provided a robust and representative understanding of the current perceptions and experiences of Edmonton residents, as well as their future needs and intentions with respect to active recreation and sport. Results were first summarized and reviewed at a citywide level, and compared to the “What We Heard” components of the **Approach to Community Recreation Facility Planning in Edmonton** to evaluate consistent and shifting patterns in active recreation within the City.

Using comparative analysis across districts and equity deserving groups identified in the GBA+ analysis, commonalities and differences were identified and highlighted to identify needs that span the city vs. more localized needs. Considerations were identified as preliminary recommendations.

The **Qualitative Focus Groups** were designed to contextualize the results found in the quantitative survey, as well as to add new insights around barriers to activity, and in needs for new programming, amenities and facilities. Themes in the results from the focus groups were evaluated for triangulation (themes that are consistent across demographics or districts) or ones that were localized. Considerations were identified as preliminary recommendations.

Recommendations Include Four Categories

The preliminary recommendations that arose from the primary research were evaluated against the key guiding documents listed in the [appendix](#) and discussed by the senior team at Advanis. Five of the team leads hold the [Certified Analytics and Insights Professionals \(CAIP\) designation](#). The remaining team lead is a credentialed evaluator with the [Canadian Evaluation Society \(CES\)](#). The lead researchers have completed [Gender Based Analysis Plus \(GBA+\) training](#).

Recommendations that related to **facility and amenity needs** were compared to the **State of Sport: Edmonton Sport Reports - Research Support 2025 Volume 1**, the **2025 CRC State of Sport & Recreation Amenity Inventory** and to the **Approach to Community Recreation Facility Planning in Edmonton** to identify if the future needs of residents are being met by facilities that are in construction or planning phases, if new facility planning needs are required, or if innovative solutions cited in the jurisdictional scan or put forward by community user groups or partner organizations could be added to the recommendations.

Programming related recommendations were developed by evaluating the needs expressed by the community through the quantitative survey, and contextualized in the qualitative research. Where programming demand is expected to rise, we provided recommendations at a city level.

Policy and administration recommendations were developed by evaluating the barriers and needs of the community as identified in the research and compared to best practices uncovered in the interviews with other jurisdictions as well as partner organizations.

Recommendations that addressed equity were developed by applying the GBA+ analytical techniques (identify issues, challenge assumptions, research, make recommendations) and by conducting comparison with the best practices seen in other jurisdictions and partner organizations. To ensure alignment with City principals, a thorough review of the Equitable Recreation Programming Audit - Spring 2024 was completed.

Recommendations Are Prioritized

Advanis prioritized recommendations into key recommendations and other recommendations based on our expertise and evaluation of the urgency of the need as expressed in the primary research engagements:

- **Key recommendations** are meant to address issues that will have the greatest impact on recreational programming, either because they address an urgent need, are widespread in their need (within Edmonton as a whole, or in specific districts or equity deserving communities), or move the City forward in meeting the strategic goals as outlined in the context of this research.
- **Other recommendations** are those that are less widespread, or were identified in one component of the research engagement only. While important, they may represent niche needs, or those that are already in progress within the city.

Recommendations Need To Be Considered Along With Other Factors

A final step in formalizing the recommendations is assessing their feasibility and actionability, which generally involves a multi-pronged analysis:

- **Economic Cost:** Are the recommendations financially viable? Can they be implemented within existing budgets, or would they require significant new investment?
- **Political Will:** Is there likely to be sufficient political support for the recommendations? This requires understanding the political climate, as well as the priorities of current decision-makers, and the interests of various third-parties.
- **Potential Implementation Challenges:** What are the logistical or operational hurdles to putting the recommendations into practice? This considers the capacity of municipal departments, the need for new infrastructure, or potential resistance from target populations or implementing bodies.
- **Legal and Regulatory Context:** Do the recommendations align with existing laws and regulations, or would it necessitate significant legal and/or regulatory changes?

Best practice is to conduct workshops and discussions with relevant experts within the organization (in this case, the City) to address these questions and finalize the recommendations. Note that this step was not conducted as part of the development of the recommendations outlined in this report.

2.3. Glossary

A glossary of terms used in the report can be found in the [Appendices](#).

This symbol represents Gender Based Analysis+ (GBA+). The "plus" indicates that it considers factors



beyond sex and gender, such as age, race, ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation, recognizing that these factors intersect and create unique lived experiences. The symbol is used throughout the report to highlight findings related to the lived experiences of different communities within Edmonton.



This symbol represents children and youth and is used throughout the report to highlight results that focus on children and youth. Survey questions about children's activities focused on children and youth aged 6-17. Analysis of family composition focused on families with children under aged 13 vs families with youth aged 13-17.

3. Participation in sports and active recreation activities

3.1. Participation in Active Recreation

3.1.1. In Edmonton

Half (56%) of Edmontonians participate in [sports](#) and [active recreation](#) at least once a week, 15% are active less frequently (less than once per week) and 29% indicate that they never engage in sports or active recreation¹⁰.

Participation in active recreation activities and sports

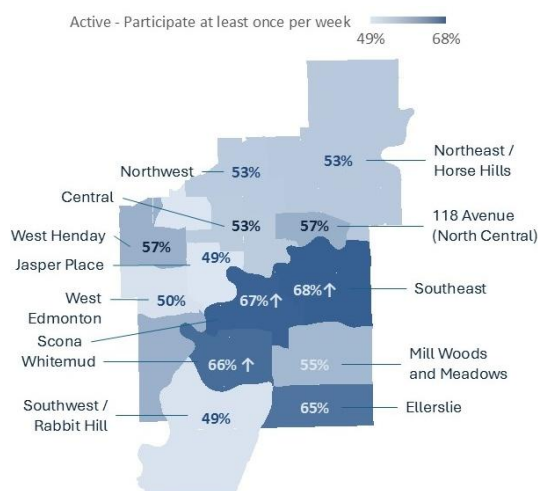


Adults who participated in discussion groups indicate that they enjoy activities that they participated in as a youth.

"I play hockey probably way too much. I'm a goalie, so I can literally play two times a night, every night." (West Henday, Male Age 45-54)

Residents of Whitemud (66%), Scona (67%) and Southwest (68%) tend to be more active¹¹, while

residents of Jasper Place (44%) and Northwest (35%) are more likely to be inactive.¹² Jasper Place residents are less likely to view recreation as essential and more likely to cite health as a barrier, while Northwest residents tend to have lower full-time employment and a greater need for awareness of available programs, both factors that may influence participation¹³.



¹⁰Quantitative Report pages 22.

¹¹ See [Glossary of Terms](#) for definitions of activity levels.

¹² Quantitative Report pages 24.

¹³ Quantitative survey questions SUP, BARR, EMP, DISSAT.

3.1.2. Equity Deserving Groups



Residents are curious about new activities. From the quantitative survey, we saw that interest in new activities is high among those with young children, those who migrated to Canada five or more years ago, racialized individuals, and women.

“I usually decide what activities I want to do based on what I enjoy and what I’m curious about. So for example, when I was a kid, I used to do some swimming, I used to play volleyball, I used to play soccer. That kind of helped me realize that I liked staying active. So now I just look for activities that give me the same feeling.” (Northwest, Female Age 25-34)¹⁴

Inactivity in Edmonton is 29%. Inactivity is more common among individuals living with a disability (47%), those with low income¹⁵ (41%), seniors (37%), established migrants (33%), and women (31%)¹⁶.

3.1.3. Children



As reported by their parents or guardians, children are more likely to be active at least once a week (72%), but still 20% are reported as not being active at all¹⁷. Parents of inactive children report that the most common reasons that they are inactive are lack of time and lack of motivation.¹⁸

Most parents in the discussion groups noted that it was not negotiable that their children be active, which may explain the higher activity levels among children when compared to adults.

“We also have a requirement for our kids that they are involved in at least one physical thing, but ideally two. So if they want more screen time, they have to be involved in two things. So you know, it’s a basic bartering system.” (West Henday, Female Age 45-54)¹⁹

3.2. Participation by Activity & Future Participation

3.2.1. In Edmonton

The top three active recreational activities among Edmontonians are walking, strength training and swimming. The top three activities are the same in all districts other than Jasper Place, where strength training is not as common.²⁰

¹⁴ Qualitative Report page 16.

¹⁵ See [Glossary of Terms](#) for definitions of groups of interest.

¹⁶ Quantitative Report pages 25.

¹⁷ 8% are infrequently active (less than once per week).

¹⁸ Quantitative Report pages 70.

¹⁹ Qualitative Report page 18.

²⁰ Quantitative Report pages 31.

Adults (aged 18+) are more likely to participate in active recreation in an unstructured way²¹ (as in a drop-in program, open court use, or on their own or with friends), except for team sports (e.g., soccer, ice hockey), which are practiced more often in a structured way (by joining a program, club, league). In contrast, children are very likely to participate in structured active recreation, with swimming, soccer, basketball and ice hockey most common. The qualitative research verifies this observation. Qualitative participants explain that unstructured activities give them flexibility to be active when their schedule permits. For example, adults will work out on their way to or from work, or while their children are attending their own sports practices²². The relative priority of activity in an adult's life is lower compared to their children. While some make a point of scheduling time for structured activities or for their own fitness, others say that they defer to the needs of their children, work, or other family commitments.

"So fitness for myself is equally important. I think enough has been talked [said] about kids too... I would like to have some working machines, and some classes that will happen maybe at the simultaneous time as my kids are in swimming or something like that, so that I can catch a break and maybe go to yoga or pilates." (Ellerslie, Female Age 35-44)²³

The most common activities Edmontonians regularly engage in are:



walking (32%)



strength training (30%)



swimming (30%)

Other activities with high engagement include cycling (13%), soccer (11%), jogging (10%) and basketball (9%).²⁴

²¹ Quantitative Report pages 28, 30.

²² Qualitative Report page 16.

²³ Qualitative Report page 17.

²⁴ Quantitative Report page 27.

The Edmonton State of Sport Report²⁵ focuses on participation in structured sports and has identified the following sports with the highest number of participants (children and adults combined). All of these sports align with the quantitative survey findings, appearing in the top 15 activities among adults and top 20 activities among children.

- Golf
- Soccer
- Diamond sport (Baseball/Softball/Slow Pitch)
- Volleyball
- Biking
- Paddle Sports (canoeing, kayaking, standup paddleboarding, rowing, and dragon boating)
- Ice Hockey

Four of the top five activities among adults (soccer being the exception) are completed mainly as an unstructured activity. As such, meeting the needs of adults for these activities primarily requires ensuring appropriate facilities and amenities (e.g., safe pathways for walking or cycling) and introductory programming (e.g., to learn strength training).

Swimming lessons continue to be in high demand, a trend seen not just in Edmonton, but in other municipalities that participated in the Jurisdictional Scan. Parents view swimming lessons not just as an active recreational activity, but as an important life skill. As such, continued focus on increasing available swimming lesson slots is warranted. In other municipalities, demand for swimming lessons outreaches supply.

“Swim lessons are not negotiable ‘till he learns how to swim. He is going to do swim lessons every time that we can fit it in our schedule.” (District 3 (Southeast), Female Age 35-44)

²⁵ State of Sport, page 4

In the table below, we summarize the current participation level among adults, the expected increase in future participation (based on adults who want to start or do more of each activity) and commentary on communities or individuals with significantly higher levels of participation.

Activity & Current Participation Level ²⁶	Trend in Future Participation Intent ²⁷ ↑ 5% or more want to start or do this activity more often ↔ 0-4% want to start or do this activity more often	Notes ²⁸
Current High Participation		
 Walking (32%)	↔	Current participation: higher among Seniors (52%), Persons with a disability (43%), Women (37%)
 Strength Training (30%)	↑	Current participation: higher among Racialized individuals (37%) Future intention: higher interest in starting or participating more among people with young children
 Swimming (30%)	↑	Current participation: higher among People with young children (51%), established migrants (38%), racialized individuals (36%) and women (35%) Future intention: higher interest in starting or participating more among established migrants and women
Current Moderate Participation		
 Cycling (13%)	↔	Current participation: higher in Scona (34%), Southeast (25%) State of Sport has identified this sport as having a high number of participants Future intention: higher interest in starting or

²⁶ Quantitative Report page 27.

²⁷ Quantitative Report page 75.

²⁸ Quantitative Report pages 31, 32, 76, 77 State of Sport (throughout).

		participating more among established migrants
 Soccer (11%)	↑	Current participation: higher in Southwest/Rabbit Hill (21%), and among those with young children (16%) and racialized individuals (18%)
 Jogging/Running (10%)	↔	No significant district or demographic differences
 Basketball (9%)	↑	Current participation: higher among established migrants (14%) and racialized individuals (14%)
 Golf (8%)	↔	No significant district or demographic differences
 Yoga/Pilates/Barre (7%)	↑	Future intention: higher interest in starting or participating more among women
 Hiking (7%)	↔	No significant district or demographic differences
Current Low Participation		
 Ice Hockey (6%)	↑	No significant district or demographic differences
 Tennis (5%)	↑	State of Sport has identified this as growing in participants. Future intention: higher interest in starting or

Pickleball (6%)		participating more among seniors
 Badminton (5%)	↑	Future intention: higher interest in starting or participating more among Southwest/Rabbit Hill and migrants
 Volleyball (5%)	↑	State of Sport has identified this as having a high number of participants Future intention: higher interest in starting or participating more in Northwest/Horse Hills
 Group Fitness (5%)	↑	No significant district or demographic differences
Additional sports with < 5% mention, please reference the Quantitative report, page 111		

Following a review of mainstream structured sports in Edmonton, the City has identified growth trends in participation across pickleball, cricket, recreational paddle sports²⁹, disc golf, and Nordic skiing.

Activity choices for adults change over time as people move through life stages (modifying activities as they age was a common inflection point). For example, participants in the qualitative discussions mention having to modify their activity choices due to injury or risk of injury. Examples include replacing outdoor trail running for a treadmill or indoor flat track, seeking warm water pools, using an e-bike to allow them to continue to enjoy day-long outings, engaging in yoga or pilates to maintain flexibility. Often, injuries precipitate a complete change in activity (e.g., a marathon runner with an Achilles tear switched to swimming). In other cases, a more permanent disability leads people to seek out programming with their needs in mind (e.g., boxing for people with Parkinsons).³⁰

3.2.2. Equity Deserving Groups



The top three activities are consistent among many demographic groups. We highlight some strong preferences:

²⁹ Paddle Sports (canoeing, kayaking, standup paddleboarding, rowing, and dragon boating)

³⁰ Qualitative Report page 16-17.

- Walking (32% of Edmontonian adults participate) is common among seniors (52% participate), those with disabilities (43% participate), and women (37% participate);
- Strength training (30% of Edmonton adults participate) is more common among those with only teenage children (39%) and racialized individuals (37%);
- Swimming (30% of Edmonton adults participate) is more common among those with young children (51%), established migrants (38%), racialized individuals (36%) and women (35%).³¹

Other activities tend to have a more localized popularity. Soccer (11% of Edmonton adults participate) is also more common among those with young children (16%) and racialized individuals (18%). Basketball (8% of Edmonton adults participate) is more common among established migrants (14%) and racialized individuals (14%).

3.2.3. Children



Among children, the top activities (in both structured and unstructured recreation) are³²:

- Swimming (51%)
- Soccer (32%)
- Basketball (24%)
- Ice hockey (16%).

Other common activities among children include:

- Martial arts (13%)
- Ice skating (12%)
- Volleyball (9%)
- Dancing (9%)
- Strength training (9%)
- Cycling (8%)
- Gymnastics (7%)
- Walking (6%)
- Badminton (5%)
- Football (5%)
- Baseball (5%)
- Downhill skiing (5%)

³¹ Quantitative Report page 32.

³² Quantitative Report page 29.

Children are much more likely than adults to participate in structured activities. Among the top four activities noted above, 60-92% of participants do so in a structured way.³³ This does not negate the importance of providing opportunities for unstructured activity as well - for those same top four activities, 41-68% of participants do so in an unstructured way.

For children, friends or family influence their choices of activities to 'try' a sport or active recreational activity. Parents often start their kids in activities that their children enjoy, whether unstructured (walking, playgrounds, cycling) or structured (typically sports like soccer, basketball, or hockey). Swimming is both an active recreational activity and a lifeskill that is required by many parents.

Parents prioritize activity for their children. *"I coach soccer for my children through our Community League. Most of my free time is given to them and their sports and recreation."* (Central, Female Age 35-44)

Parents are willing to have their children try a variety of activities until they find ones that their child strongly enjoys, with the influence of other children (friends or classmates) factoring into the choices of activities to try. Many parents indicate that, for them, the priority was that the child was active and participating, with less concern about what the specific activity was. *"It's just kind of non-negotiable that we are active on an almost daily basis."* (Mill Woods and Meadows, Female Age 35-44)³⁴

Active families use unstructured activities in their neighbourhood as a family bonding time, and as a way to build in the habit of being out and active with their children.³⁵

³³ Quantitative Report page 30.

³⁴ Qualitative Report page 17-18.

³⁵ Qualitative Report page 17-18.

3.2.4. Other Trends influencing Activity Choices & Programming

Unstructured Activities³⁶

There is a strong trend in Edmonton towards unstructured active recreational activities. Indeed, the activities with the highest participation rates among adults are unstructured (walking, strength training, swimming, cycling). This aligns with the trend of lack of time as the top barrier to participation - unstructured activities offer the most flexibility to time pressed individuals.

Although children are more likely to engage in structured activities (swimming, soccer, basketball and ice hockey are the top activities), these are frequently augmented with family based unstructured recreation. We also heard qualitatively that participants in structured sports want to enjoy unstructured versions of this (e.g., demand for 'stick-and-puck' drop in programming).

Other municipalities are observing similar declines in traditional, structured team sports and increases in flexible, self-directed recreation, although variations are present between cities and activity types. Organized sports are seeing declines, particularly among youth. Again, although variations are present between cities, municipalities are responding by decreasing structured team sport opportunities and increasing flexible self-directed recreation. Informal, drop-in and lower-cost activities such as pickleball, strength training, cardio fitness and novelty activities (e.g., quidditch, futsal, winter disc golf) are becoming more popular. Some cities report that younger generations are opting out of long-term sports commitments, preferring drop-in programs or casual play models over structured leagues.

Age Based Changes in Activity Preferences

The aging population is also driving changes in recreation demand. There is a higher demand for low-impact activities, such as yoga, aquafit, and tai chi, as older adults prioritize health and mobility. Cities are responding by expanding their senior-friendly fitness offerings and modifying facilities to improve accessibility. Meanwhile, the rise of outdoor recreation—such as trail use, cycling, and urban walking paths—has been amplified, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, which shifted many people toward nature-based fitness options.³⁷

Whole Family Activities³⁸

Lack of time is the number one barrier to participation in active recreational activities. Families indicated in the qualitative research the importance of being able to find programming or drop-in activities that all members of the family can participate in. This can have an impact on programming schedules within a facility (e.g., if older youth programming is later in the evening than programming for younger children, it is harder for a family to attend together), on the breadth of programming offered within a facility (e.g., artistic, cultural, or educational activities can supplement active recreation when planning a family outing), and on the types of facilities built (combining recreation with libraries is a common and popular

³⁶ Qualitative Report pages 8, 9.

³⁷ Jurisdictional Scan pages 80.

³⁸ Qualitative Report pages 8, 9, 20-22, 32-34, 38.

trend).

Year Round Participation in Competitive Sports³⁹

There is a strong trend towards single sports focus - for participants, particularly youth participants, to select their preferred sport and want to participate in it year round. This places additional pressure on indoor facilities in particular, as traditionally outdoor sports require amenities to support indoor programming in fall / winter / early spring.

³⁹ Qualitative Report pages 12, 14, 17, 29, 31, 39, 42, 51, 52.

3.3. Comparison with Other Municipalities

3.3.1. Trends by Activity

Below are the most common activities in the municipalities that participated in the Jurisdictional Scan, the trends in participation, and commentary on the trend.⁴⁰

Activity	Trend in participation in other municipalities ↑ growing participation ↔ flat/no growth in participation ↓ declining participation	Notes about the trend in other municipalities	Trend In Edmonton 
 (summary of qualitative assessment of participation trends from other municipalities)			(Summary of the trend from quantitative survey)
 Baseball/Softball	↔	Mixed, participation declines in some municipalities and resurgence in others	Low participation and low intent in the future.
 Basketball	↑	Recognized as a sport that is accessible for all ages and abilities. Growing among youth in both structured and unstructured format	Moderate current participation with high future intent.
 Cricket	↑	Participation growth driven by demographic shifts	Low current participation with low / niche future intent.
 Golf	↔	No substantive growth seen.	Moderate current participation with modest future intent.

⁴⁰ Jurisdictional Scan pages 80-82.

 Hockey	↓	With the exception of Winnipeg, declines in enrollment (perception is due to costs and competition from other activities). Demand for informal activities (e.g., stick & puck, 3-on-3) is observed.	Low adult participation but high future intent. Moderately high participation among children. Edmonton, like Winnipeg, seems to diverge from the national trend.
 Pickleball	↑	Originally popular with older demographics, seeing growth in younger demographics. Exponential growth in some municipalities has created competition for court times.	High future participation intent.
 Soccer	↔	Decline in overall participation in some cities, holding steady in others. Increased demand for high quality fields, and for year round artificial turf access for competitive play.	Moderate adult and high youth participation with high future participation intent. Edmonton is seeing similar demands for year-round play and for high quality fields for competitive play.
 Swimming	↑	Many cities across Canada are struggling to meet the high demand for children's swimming lessons, resulting in long waitlists and significant challenges in serving community needs. Challenges include frequent pool closures for maintenance and a shortage of qualified swim instructors	High participation among both adults and children with high future participation intent. Edmonton experiences many of the same struggles observed in other municipalities.
	↑	Usage has returned to pre-Covid levels in cities that offer fitness centre access. Increased	High current participation in strength training with high future participation intent.

Fitness Centres (e.g., Strength Training & Cardio)		fitness/active living programming is being offered	
 Winter Activities	↑	Golf courses and other public lands are being utilized in new ways to meet demand for winter outdoor activities, such as winter walking trails, snow shoeing, disc golf during winter, and winter golf	Cross country skiing, disc golf and snowshoeing have low current participation.

Diversification is emerging as a trend in jurisdictions across Canada, where new and niche sports as well as health trends are influencing cities to become innovative in their offer of activities, and because patrons are increasingly open to try new things. Some activities are not widespread but show localized growth. E-sports, hybrid and virtual fitness programs are being explored in some municipalities but are still emerging. Disc golf, skateboarding and BMX biking have (re) gained traction in select areas, but their expansion depends on land availability and investment in dedicated courses or parks.

Some examples of activities *described by other municipalities as new or niche* include:

- Rock climbing
- Indoor cycling
- Rugby, Lacrosse
- Ultimate Frisbee
- Yoga
- Mindfulness meditation
- Paddle sports
- Kayaking
- Stand-up paddleboard
- Disc golf
- Winter golf
- Snow shoeing
- Futsal
- Skateboarding
- BMX freestyle
- Quidditch
- Soccer tennis

4. Motivations & Barriers

4.1. Motivation to Participate in Active Recreation

4.1.1. In Edmonton

Why are Edmontonians Active?

Virtually all Edmontonians believe that recreation is essential to quality of life (91%). This belief is shared by residents of all districts - highest in West Henday (95%) and lowest in Jasper Place (83%).⁴¹

Health and well-being (79%) is the main motivation for Edmontonians to participate in sports and active recreation. Other significant reasons include recreation and enjoyment (31%) and social connection (29%).⁴²

"The more there are opportunities, especially free opportunities and public opportunities for people to recreate, the more they're going to meet new people the more the spaces are activated, which increases well-being." (118 Ave North Central, Female Age 35-44).

Desire to be more active in the future

Along with motivations to be active today, we evaluated the desire of Edmontonians to be more active in the future. Nearly half of Edmontonians (47%) are interested in becoming more active, starting new activities or doing more of what they currently do.

47% of Edmontonians want to **start new activities or do more active recreational activities than they do today**

A desire to be (more) active is highest in West Henday (60%).⁴³ This may stem from limited local access to recreation. West Henday residents are the least satisfied with current opportunities, the least willing to travel long distances, and the most likely to report that their

preferred activities aren't available nearby⁴⁴. Residents in this district are currently moderately active compared to other districts.

⁴¹ Quantitative report page 61-62.

⁴² Quantitative report page 64.

⁴³ Quantitative report page 75-76.

⁴⁴ Quantitative survey questions: SAT, MDIS, BARR.

4.1.2. Equity Deserving Groups



Health and well-being is the main motivation across adults in all districts and demographics, and social connection is particularly important for new migrants (51%), those with young children (35%) and women (33%).⁴⁵ Active families use unstructured activities in their neighbourhood as a family bonding time, and as a way to build in the habit of being out and active with their children.

"We just got back from walking our dog in the park, which was nice, and we can all do that together."
(118 Avenue, Male Age 35-44)

"Activities that we can all do together as a family are definitely really popular." (118 Avenue, Male Age 35-44)⁴⁶

The desire to be more active in the future is higher among women, as well as established migrants, racialized people (both of whom experience time barriers more often than other groups), and families with young children in the home (who qualitatively report deferring their own fitness in favour of their children).

When describing the ways that they are active, qualitative participants in many of the equity deserving communities intersperse active recreation with crafts (e.g., sewing, cooking) and hobbies (e.g., card games, community gardening) to a greater degree than heard in the district focused groups. Social connections and being in the company of others are important considerations. They also appreciate social services (e.g., library, language supports, job finding) being available to them in an accessible location such as a community recreation centre. The intersection of active recreation and cultural or artistic hobbies was seen as important, particularly for new migrants, racialized Edmontonians, seniors, and the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Dance, art, and social gatherings are just as important as active recreation when it comes to spending time outside the home.

Partner organizations appear to be aware of the need to appeal to communities beyond their traditional user base, and are taking steps towards this goal. They acknowledge that Indigenous communities and the teen population may be underserved by current programming. Women also appear to have more challenges (like lack of time, childcare, and affordability) that inhibit participation in structured activities that partner organizations offer.



4.1.3. Children

Among children, recreation and enjoyment (52%) is as important a motivation as health and well-being. (53%).⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Quantitative report page 66-67.

⁴⁶ Qualitative Report page 18.

⁴⁷ Quantitative report page 65.

4.2. Travel Time and Distance

The specific location where Edmontonians will engage in activities is selected mainly based on distance (56%). This highlights the importance of the City continuing to work towards fulfilling its basic commitment to residents, as articulated in the **Approach to Community Recreation Facility Planning in Edmonton** (that every resident will have a place to connect, be active and participate in recreation outdoors within 400 metres of their residence).

For children's activities, distance (45%) is also the main factor, but choice is also influenced by where a specific activity is offered (23%)⁴⁸, particularly when children are part of a league or a club. Distance is the main driver of choice across all districts and demographics, but social and family oriented factors are also important for those with young children (14%), new migrants (24%) and women (12%).⁴⁹

A private vehicle is the dominant mode of transportation to activities (77%) in most districts (Scona and Central are lower). **Average travel time is about 18 minutes**, but up to 33 minutes would be acceptable, on average.⁵⁰ Travel time is lower in 118 Avenue (North Central) at 14 minutes. Residents in West Henday have the lowest acceptable commute time, at 28 minutes.

While qualitative participants indicate a willingness to travel further/longer for important activities (e.g., competitive sports, specialized facilities) or for longer duration activities (e.g., a tournament, a family outing), they value having closer facility choices for recurring activities (e.g., weekly sports practices or recreational games, swimming, gym visits). Participants note that they feel the burden of a longer travel time particularly when the activity duration is shorter and during the "rush" of weekday evenings. Insufficient parking adds to the perception of travel time, adding valuable minutes to the time taken to get to a facility.⁵¹

"I think, towards the Southwest... there isn't a swimming pool nearby unless you go far. So I think that's a bigger factor because we have to drive at least 20 min to get to a facility." (Southwest/Rabbit Hill, Male Age 45-54)

"[On the North end] we are constantly driving. And that is a really big thing here on the North end that we're driving a lot, right? We are driving further distances than really anywhere else in the city." (Northeast/Horse Hills, Female Age 25-34)

⁴⁸ Quantitative report page 44-45.

⁴⁹ Quantitative report page 47.

⁵⁰ Quantitative report page 52-54.

⁵¹ Qualitative report page 7.

4.3. Barriers to Participation

4.3.1. In Edmonton

The main barriers (reasons that they are not active or not active more often) faced by Edmontonians to start participating or participate more in sports and active recreation are⁵² :



lack of time (58%)



health issues (17%)



lack of motivation⁵³ (14%)



financial constraints (12%)

barr -What are the main reasons why you don't participate in active recreation activities and sports [more often]?

Lack of time is the most common barrier across all districts, with highest incidence in Southwest/Rabbit Hill (71%) and lowest in 118 Avenue (44%).⁵⁴ Southwest/Rabbit Hill has the highest proportion of families with children in the home, which correlates to experiencing a lack of time barrier.

In order to solve the lack of time for families with children in the home, focus group participants expressed a desire for programming that includes activities for all family members that run concurrently. This is true for programming as well as for family 'fun' time. Many participants expressed a desire to attend activities outside of the busy after-school/weekday evening time. Weekend evenings might be a popular time for unstructured activities (free skate/swim or drop-in sports activities).⁵⁵

"So I have two jobs, and 3 kids. So the time is restraining right there. Like for me, my older daughter gets home at 4:30, right? By the time I'm done working, by 5:00, I pick up my daughters at daycare [...] So by

⁵² Quantitative report page 69.

⁵³ Note that lack of motivation was not covered in the qualitative discussion guide

⁵⁴ Quantitative report page 71.

⁵⁵ Qualitative report page 7.

then you pick them there by 5:30. You're looking at time. What then? Do I have to go swimming? Because now I have to prepare supper and get them to bed by 8 / 8:30 for the next day. Right? So the only option I have, it's over the weekend right? And on the weekend my Sunday is completely full. I only have Saturday, and that's the only time I have to spend with them and their dad. And so it gets complicated, plus my husband works out of town." (District 2 (Central), Female Age 35-44)

Health issues impact the ability of 17% of Edmonton residents to be active. Along with physical and cognitive disability, age and age-related injuries are commonly mentioned in focus group discussions – joint pain, longer recovery, and general feeling of being less capable compared to their ‘younger selves’ are commonly noted. Unstructured activities such as walking are impacted by weather, and by poor ice and snow removal on sidewalks, making residents less comfortable (if they are medically fragile or concerned about safety)⁵⁶

"After my pregnancy, I've got a frozen shoulder. So my mobility is limited on my left hand. There are some restrictions in my mobility. If they could explain, like, 'Okay, if you are using it, and you have a frozen shoulder, maybe don't use this much weight,' or 'This is the minimum weight that you can go up to,' that would help. If there were more people around on the floor who could be approached, that would be great." (Whitemud, Female Age 35-44).

Financial constraints impact 12% of Edmontonians. Due to cost pressures, some families in the qualitative discussions note that they are limiting the number of activities that they choose for each child to participate in. Limitations on eligibility of the Leisure Access Program mean that people who struggle to afford recreational activities feel that recreation is not attainable.⁵⁷ This was particularly noted among people whose income (just) exceeds eligibility, but who are not able to afford recreation offerings at full cost. We observed in the quantitative survey that financial barriers were present in many neighbourhoods across the city.

"I don't feel welcome and included because I'm not eligible for the Leisure Access Pass [Program]. And yet I can't afford even a drop in now and then. [...] I live in Mill Woods, there's a rec centre right down the road. I should be able to go hop over there and do a drop in yoga class, or swim some lanes, or sit in the hot tub, and it just feels so out of my reach." (Mill Woods and Meadows, Female Age 35-44)

Some qualitative participants have taken advantage of the value memberships to attend smaller facilities at a lower cost while others were not aware of this option - increasing awareness through marketing communications could bridge this gap.

Community user groups and partner organizations also noted that financial constraints are impacting their members. Partner organizations have noted a trend that family memberships have been in decline, as families in Edmonton struggle with their everyday expenses, they have less discretionary income available for recreation memberships. In fact, the age group that is growing in recreation are empty

⁵⁶ Qualitative report page 7.

⁵⁷ Qualitative report page 7.

nesters.

Availability: Ten percent of Edmontonians are dissatisfied with the sports and active recreation opportunities that the City of Edmonton is currently offering.⁵⁸ The main reasons for dissatisfaction mentioned by Edmontonians include lack of facilities in their community, lack of their preferred programs and cost.

When asked to explain why they were dissatisfied, comments provided on the survey included:⁵⁹

“Swimming lessons are particularly difficult to coordinate and more availability for affordable skating lessons would be nice. Multisport programs would be beneficial for families interested in sampling multiple sports to determine what they would be interested in taking part in for a longer period of time. This would allow parents to let their kids explore before committing to a lengthy program they discover they aren't interested in.” (Woman, age 45-54, Jasper Place)

“Cost was a barrier, as well as just availability of times and locations.” (Woman, age 35-44, Southeast)

“Hard to get into programs. Swimming is always full. [The] recreational centre is too far for us - need one in our community. Fees are also a little bit high. (Woman, age 35-44, West Edmonton)

4.3.2. Equity Deserving Groups



Lack of time is a significant barrier for those with young children (70%) or only teenagers (80%), for established migrants (71%) and racialized individuals (69%).

“So fitness for myself is equally important. I think enough has been talked [said] about kids too... I would like to have some working machines, and some classes that will happen maybe at the simultaneous time as my kids are in swimming or something like that, so that I can catch a break and maybe go to yoga or pilates.” (Ellerslie, Female Age 35-44)

Health is a more common barrier among individuals living with a disability (50%), seniors (40%), Indigenous individuals (31%), and those with a lower income (26%).⁶⁰

4.3.3. Children



The main barriers parents and guardians report to getting their children more engaged in sports or active recreation include children lacking time (56%), financial constraints (20%), and children

⁵⁸ Quantitative report page 56.

⁵⁹ Quantitative Report page 59.

⁶⁰ Quantitative report page 72.

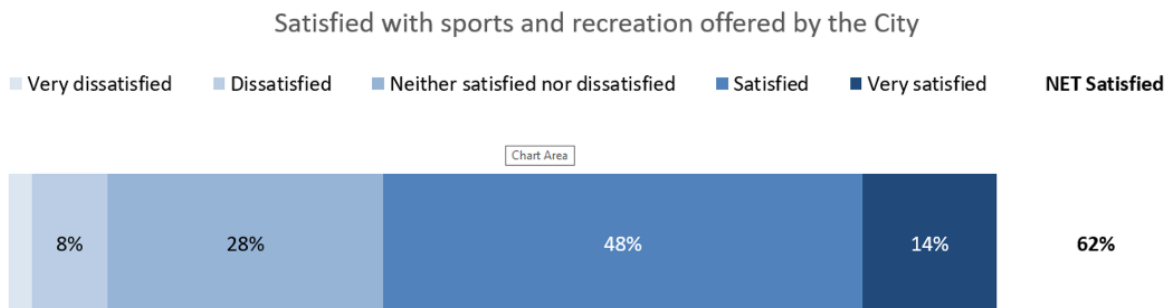
lacking the motivation (17%).⁶¹

5. Satisfaction

5.1. Satisfaction among Community Members

5.1.1. In Edmonton

Three-in-five Edmontonians (62%)⁶² are satisfied with the sports and active recreation opportunities that the City of Edmonton is currently offering - though only 14% are “very” satisfied.



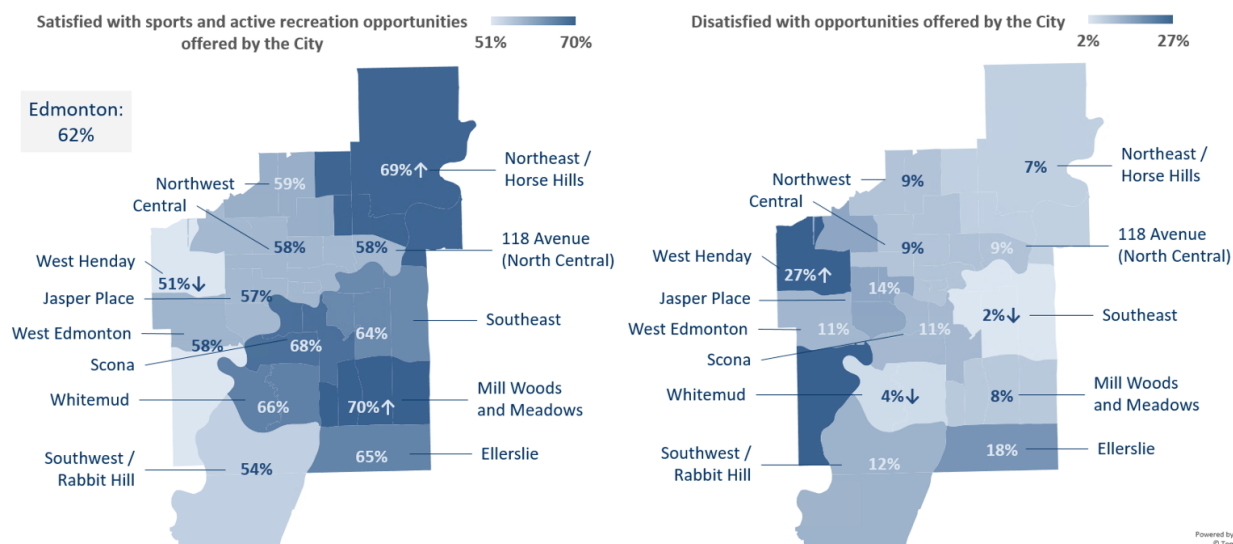
Satisfaction is highest in Mill Woods and Meadows (70%) and Northeast/Horse Hills (69%); and lowest in West Henday (51%).⁶³

- Mill Woods and Meadows residents are less likely than other residents to think that new recreation facilities are needed. They are more likely to be motivated to be active by enjoyment of recreation, less by health. Residents in this district are currently moderately active compared to other districts.
- Northeast/Horse Hills residents are less likely than others to cite being too busy with work as a barrier to being active. They are equally likely as other districts to see a need for new facilities and amenities. Residents in this district are currently moderately active compared to other districts.
- West Henday residents are the least willing to travel long distances, and the most likely to report that their preferred activities aren't available nearby. They are more likely to say that new/additional facilities and amenities are needed. They are more likely than residents in other districts to say that lack of access to facilities is a barrier to being active. Residents in this district are currently moderately active compared to other districts.

⁶¹ Quantitative report page 70.

⁶² Quantitative Report page 56

⁶³ Quantitative Report page 57.



5.1.2. Equity Deserving Groups



Satisfaction is lower among racialized individuals (56%) and those living with a disability (54%).⁶⁴

Awareness and education of the needs of various communities was recommended in the **Equitable Recreation Programming Audit - Spring 2024** conducted by the City.

In qualitative feedback, community user groups highlighted the importance they place on City staff who are sensitive to their social needs. They provided ways to further support their needs, including:

- Prioritize booking for accessibility-serving groups at accessible facilities.
- Implement gender-sensitive policies such as appropriate lifeguard staffing.
- Review change room use policies to support culturally diverse and faith-based users.⁶⁵

"[Contact] has been incredibly successful and quick to respond. She understands and she appreciates the diverse needs, you know. I did not have to start from scratch to explain why Muslims' faith-based organizations need this segregation of males and females. She would just know it. She has amazing cultural awareness of our Ramadan for instance. Right now, this is the month of Ramadan and she keeps track of it." (Community User Group - Aquatics)

⁶⁴ Quantitative Report page 58.

⁶⁵ Qualitative Report page 50.

As part of the quantitative research component, criteria was developed to identify ways that active recreation is not meeting the needs of an equity deserving community. We evaluated the experiences of:

- Edmontonians who are racialized / visible minority
- Persons with disabilities
- Indigenous people
- Migrants (<5 years, 5+ years in Canada)
- Low income (<\$60,000) Edmontonians
- 2SLGBTQIA+ Edmontonians
- Women
- Another gender⁶⁶
- Seniors (55+)
- Households with children (Ages <13, 13-17 only)

If a sub-group of Edmontonians has at least one of the following criteria, they are identified as in need of additional support to fully participate in active recreation within the City of Edmonton:



- LOW level of participation in sports or active recreation
- HIGH level of inactivity
- LOW satisfaction with current recreational options offered by the City
- HIGH dissatisfaction with current recreational options offered by the City
- HIGH interest in becoming (more) active
- HIGH perceived needs for more facilities or programs
- HIGH barriers to participation

LOW or HIGH were defined by identifying statistically significant differences when comparing an equity deserving group to their counterparts. (e.g. if participants with low income had statistically lower levels of participation or satisfaction compared to participants with higher income).

Higher barriers and greater needs are concentrated among people with disabilities, racialized groups, migrants, low-income residents, and parents. Time and health limitations are especially significant barriers within these groups, often preventing participation despite high levels of interest. In communities such as migrants and racialized populations, where interest in recreation is strong, participation remains low, suggesting lack of time and access challenges rather than a lack of motivation.

⁶⁶ Low base size of n=20

Through this equity lens, five districts and 10 equity deserving groups were identified as having needs that warrant special consideration, as outlined in the highlights below.

We see that low income residents, older residents (55+) and persons with disabilities are more likely to be inactive, with health as a high barrier to activity. Migrants are more likely to be inactive as well, but time is the barrier that is high. While parents with teens have similar activity levels to the baseline, they perceive a high need for new facilities, amenities and programs, and experience time as a significant barrier. Jasper Place residents are less likely to view recreation as essential and more likely to cite health as a barrier, which may account for their higher levels of inactivity.

- **High inactivity rates (Baseline: Edmonton 29%)**
 - Jasper Place district 44%
 - Persons with a Disability: 47%
 - Low income residents: 41%
 - Residents aged 55+ years: 37%
 - Migrant (<5 yrs/5+ years): 37%/33%
- **High perceived need for facilities, amenities or programs (Baseline: Edmonton 65%)**
 - West Henday & Southwest/Rabbit Hill districts: 77%
 - West Edmonton: 76%
 - Migrant (<5 yrs/5+ years): 72%/70%
 - Parents with teens (13–17): 74%
- **Time as a high barrier to being active (Baseline: Edmonton 58%)**
 - Southwest/Rabbit Hill district: 71%
 - Parents with teens (13–17): 80%
 - Parents with young children (<13): 70%
 - Racialized residents: 69%
 - Migrants (<5 yrs/5+ years): 62%/71%
- **Health as a high barrier to being active (Baseline: Edmonton 17%)**
 - Persons with a Disability: 50%
 - Residents aged 55+ years: 40%
 - Indigenous residents: 31%
 - Low income residents: 26%

5.1.3. Feeling Welcome and Included

Overall, Edmonton residents who participated in the qualitative research component indicated that they feel welcomed and included at City recreation facilities. Qualitative participants identified several ways that make them feel unwelcome/not included and potential improvements to make them feel more welcome. This includes:

Overcrowding: is a significant detractor mentioned by residents. Pools and courts are especially crowded as they are both used for different activities in the same spaces (e.g., lane swim and free swim in the same pool, or basketball and floor hockey on the same court). Additionally, some residents mentioned having traveled to facilities only to be turned away by staff due to crowding (capacity being reached). Residents also mention that overcrowding (busyness in corridors, changerooms) leads to negative feelings about being within the facility.⁶⁷ *“Knowing in advance that the facility I’m going to -- because this happens at Commonwealth [Community Recreation Centre] fairly frequently-- actually has space for me [would be an improvement]. Because we may make the whole journey over there and then the pool is closed to new entrants for X amount of time, because they’re full. If I knew in advance that I’d have a spot for sure, I’d be more likely to make the journey.” (District 3 (Southeast), Female Age 35-44)*

Safety: is a concern when visiting recreation facilities. Concerns with break-ins, finding people hiding in dressing rooms (at an arena for example), or a feeling of discomfort in the areas surrounding facilities, including transit stops, were all cited as causes for concern. Some suggest the presence of more visible security to increase the feeling of safety within and around City facilities. However, for other visitors, the presence of existing security evokes negative feelings due to their past experiences. Some prefer the idea of smaller community facilities where a heavy security presence might not be necessary, but where staff would still be able to solve arising security concerns.⁶⁸ *“The more there are opportunities, especially free opportunities and public opportunities for people to recreate, the more they’re going to meet new people the more the spaces are activated, which increases well-being and also increases safety because you have this intentional activation of spaces, right?” (118 Ave North Central, Female Age 35-44)*

Orientations: Orientations from staff or volunteers for new centre visitors would help increase a sense of belonging among new visitors. This is especially true for weight rooms, where centre-goers may not have previous experience using weight equipment, or gym courts for people interested in dropping into a sport they have little experience with (e.g., pickleball). This approach can also be used during youth drop in, to support younger participants and to promote fair and fun play.⁶⁹

Cleanliness: The cleanliness, maintenance, and upkeep of facilities play a significant role in welcoming recreation centre users. The cleanliness of pools, washrooms, and changerooms are especially important, as is the upkeep of workout equipment.⁷⁰ *“I’m so glad that I don’t have to use [family*

⁶⁷ Qualitative report page 21.

⁶⁸ Qualitative report page 22.

⁶⁹ Qualitative report page 23.

⁷⁰ Qualitative report page 22.

changing rooms] anymore, because my boys are old enough that they can go into the men's locker room. They are freaking disgusting, like they need to be cleaned more often. I just could never stand going into the family changing rooms because it was disgraceful.” (Ellerslie, Male Age 35-44)

Changerooms: Additionally, some residents note that having changerrooms where they feel comfortable contributes to a sense of inclusivity. They state that an increase in the number of private changerrooms or family changerrooms is needed in older facilities so parents with children can supervise and support their children (as opposed to sending a young child of another gender alone into a changerroom).⁷¹

Staff Friendliness: Across all areas of Edmonton, residents emphasize that friendly instructors and staff (e.g., front desk) are key to making patrons feel welcome and included. Residents prefer to be greeted when entering a facility or class, both by front-desk staff and instructors. This contributes to the overall social connection that residents desire when visiting a community recreation facility. Residents mentioned that they also look for a sense of community, where, as one West Edmonton resident suggested, they can shop, eat, and workout in the same location.⁷²

⁷¹ Qualitative report page 23.

⁷² Qualitative report page 20.

5.2. Satisfaction among Community User Groups and Partner Organizations

As noted in the [methodology](#), community user groups and partner organizations provided their perspectives on the state of active recreation, future trends, and aspects of their relationship with the City of Edmonton through qualitative focus groups (community user groups) and individual interviews (partner organizations). Community user groups participated in groups formed based on the type of amenity they use (gym, field, aquatics, arena). Details about the community user groups and partner organizations who participated in the research are included in the [Appendix](#).

5.2.1. Community User Groups⁷³: Areas of Satisfaction

Positive Aspects of the Relationship with The City of Edmonton

- Booking Process:** The booking process and communication with the City are generally viewed positively across community user groups. The City's annual process of engagement for facility allotment is consistent and relatively clear. User groups value the annual outreach with reminders about the upcoming allocation process. The ability for regular users to maintain stable booking times year after year is highly valued, contributing to the predictability needed for program planning and community engagement.⁷⁴ Established user groups sometimes experience smoother booking processes for their regularly used spaces because they benefit from seniority, which appears to give them a priority or advantage in securing the same booking times and locations each year due to their long history of consistent usage. *"I appreciate how the City each year will start the process of engagement and be like 'hello group from last year, we're reaching out as the allotment starts.' That's always been a pretty consistent and relatively clear process in the very least kind of knowing there's a couple of steps and then you'll have further followup. That's always been nice and helpful."* (Community User Group - Gym)
- Communication:** City staff are generally seen as helpful, responsive, and patient— particularly booking staff, who are praised for their supportiveness towards individuals less familiar with the process, as well as for being forgiving regarding deadlines.⁷⁵ *"We've had great luck with [contact]. She's always willing to help us change around times or days if we need it. We do have seniority for [a specific pool]. So getting days has never really been a problem for us."* (Community User Group - Aquatics) City staff are described as very responsive to urgent needs, such as grass cutting before tournaments.
- Affordability of School Bookings:** Several groups highlight the importance of school bookings to support their programming. With rates reported as low as \$3.30 per hour for a small gym, and other schools like Joey Moss offering gyms for around \$12 per hour, accessibility for community programs is high. The City's long-standing partnership with School Boards through the [Joint Use Agreement](#) is the driver behind reciprocal City and School facilities access. This affordability is a

⁷³ See [Glossary of Terms](#) for definitions of groups of interest.

⁷⁴ Qualitative report page 41.

⁷⁵ Qualitative report page 41.

significant advantage compared to private facilities like the Saville Community Sports Centre at the University of Alberta, where costs can reach \$65 per hour.⁷⁶

5.2.2. Community User Groups⁷⁷: Barriers and Challenges for Facilities / Booking⁷⁸

Community user groups provided common barriers and challenges that they face when booking and using City recreation facilities. We've highlighted these by the amenity that they are booking.

- **Court:**
 - It is commonly assumed that there is sufficient gym space available in the city when school facilities are considered; however, not all schools allow external bookings. Participants emphasize that the City needs to make existing gym spaces (especially the more affordable school gyms) available as often as possible.
 - Users of courts within City facilities (vs. schools) note that it can be challenging to keep the general public off the court during times of private bookings, and would appreciate staff support in educating and monitoring encroachment on private bookings.
- **Field & Turf:**
 - Sports like indoor cricket and indoor football face specific barriers. Participants report difficulties in getting enough spots for cricket (with only Kinsmen Sports Centre available), especially over the past three years as the sport grows rapidly with newcomers.
 - Football groups express frustration with the lack of priority at the Commonwealth Field House, the only city-owned facility with proper football dimensions and lines. They compete with groups that could use other spaces and often cannot get access to their preferred venue due to rollover privileges granted to long-standing users, making new field time nearly impossible to secure.
- **Ice:**
 - The most significant issue is a perceived lack of available ice, with surfaces being decommissioned without replacement and repeated delays in planned developments such as Lewis Farms Recreation Centre.
 - Concerns about late ice times are common, with the earliest availability often at 10:15 PM. These times do not allow for sufficient rest, negatively impacting youth health and academic performance. Participants criticize the City's stance that "it is up to the family/individual to choose to attend or not.". Concerns are also raised about changes in ice time distribution, with more ice being allocated to minor hockey, forcing adult

⁷⁶ Qualitative report page 42.

⁷⁷ See [Glossary of Terms](#) for definitions of groups of interest.

⁷⁸ Qualitative Report pages 45-49.

leagues into later slots.

- Participants also question the trend toward large, centralized recreation centres, which reduces the availability of neighbourhood rinks.

- **Aquatics:**

- Aquatic facility users identify a shortage of pool space, especially during peak hours, between 4 PM and 8 PM, which are mostly reserved for swimming lessons. Even large clubs struggle to find enough lanes for training. Additionally, the dual mandate to keep public lanes open even at high-performance pools like Kinsmen limits space for club bookings.
- High-performance aquatic sports such as diving and water polo are mostly limited to Kinsmen Sports Centre, leading to overuse and restricted availability. Participants suggest that a second facility could support both high-performance and competitive training groups like masters swimming, which require many lanes, without splitting into separate locations. Weekend closures at Kinsmen for events further reduce training opportunities. Delays in the reopening of Coronation Park (Peter Hemingway Aquatic Centre) are mentioned as well.

"Having the Kinsmen [Sports Centre] be a dual mandate facility when it's pretty much the only one that can accommodate diving, and water polo, and canoe polo, which gets like one night a week, which is crazy. We just went to our latest allocation and the swim clubs lost a lane to public swimming which was really difficult." (Community User Group - Aquatics)

5.2.3. Partner Organizations⁷⁹: Areas of Satisfaction

Partner organizations are grateful for the support that the City has provided, allowing them to operate with a degree of autonomy in their operations. They are appreciative of the facilities that they have been given access to, and the creativity with which the City has developed these partnerships.⁸⁰

"Overall, the City's been really great to deal with... in allowing us to operate and in understanding our needs."

Importance of Sports Liaisons

Organizations highlight the importance of their sports liaison, saying that the stability and expertise that this person provides has improved the ability to address some of the challenges noted below, particularly in navigating the complex permission.⁸¹ Consistency in these relationships is critical for partner organizations.

⁷⁹ See [Glossary of Terms](#) for definitions of groups of interest.

⁸⁰ Qualitative report page 52.

⁸¹ Qualitative report page 52.

As one partner notes, *"Fortunately, I've had [them] for probably over 10 plus years. So it's great to have that consistency with someone. Otherwise, before that there were lots of changes, and it was hard to keep them up to speed."*

"[Liaison] has been nothing short of the single most important reason why [we] have been as successful as we have been these past few years."

Importance of partnerships

Organizations have expressed excitement about joint partnerships such as the Rundle Park Paddling Centre, and Coronation Park Sports and Recreation Centre. Indeed the financial partnerships, both for facilities, and in supporting programming offerings (particularly when directed towards equity deserving groups) have been vital to the success of these organizations.⁸²

Organizations were also grateful for the support that the City has shown for festivals and major competitions, and of their understanding of the high-performance pathway that some athletes are undertaking. For example⁸³:

- The commitment to the velodrome allows the cycling community in Alberta to bid on major national and international events.
- The upcoming Edmonton Dragon Boat Festival will be an important recruitment tool for a niche sport.

5.2.4. Partner Organizations: Improving the Relationship between Partner Organizations and the City⁸⁴

Approval processes and permits

Partner organizations described *challenges with gaining approvals and permits* from the City of Edmonton, often citing lengthy processes, lack of interdepartmental coordination, and instances of overreach or a lack of understanding of the partner organization, or of the industry that they operate in. One significant challenge highlighted across multiple interviews is the *lengthy and complex nature of the approval process*, even for seemingly straightforward approvals (e.g., for painting). This long approval process makes it difficult for partner organizations to acquire grant funding from other levels of government or funding organizations, or to operate as nimbly as private businesses in the same industry - one organization lost a significant source of grant funding because they couldn't gain City approval in time.

⁸² Qualitative report page 52.

⁸³ Qualitative report page 52.

⁸⁴ Qualitative Report pages 54-56.

"Every time we bring something forward it is always with a push back. We can't do that, and then you always have to push to get through to the finish line."

Time spent in long and complex interactions with the City is time that the volunteers can't serve the recreational activities that they are passionate about— this can lead to volunteer burnout. While some of the partner organizations have paid staff, many operate with volunteers serving in board of director capacities.

"You're wasting volunteer time and energy. Three years, they wasted."

A source of the lengthy approval process is that each City department has to weigh in on proposals. One partner shared a letter they received in the form of permission to plan a mountain biking route (to walk the trail, no actual construction) that included comments from nine different branches, with 66 conditions attached. Another partner provided a similar example.

"They send it out to all the City departments, and we will invariably get back comments from six city departments, and three of them will just have boilerplate conditions."

"In past projects requiring City permission and permits it has taken us seven years and endless emails and meetings with 17 different City departments [branches] to get the permissions and Permits required to start the Buena Vista On-River Storage Site project."

Participants also described instances where City requirements seemed impractical or lacked common sense in the context of their specific operations. For example, there is a rule that all City facilities have to have bike racks, but when it was noted that the facility being built was in the middle of a golf course, the City representative was unwilling or unable to sign off on the project without bike racks included.

Industry Expertise

Partners with professional operations encourage the City to think of themselves as members not only of a municipal government, but also of the recreational industries that they support— by sending key members of CRC to attend industry events (e.g., golf, ski) to understand the best practices that are being implemented in the public and private sector in these types of facilities.

5.2.5. Digital Modernization

During the qualitative research component, evidence that the City's booking, registration and communications could be modernized to meet the needs of users was uncovered. This is an issue that other municipalities face. Technology upgrades, particularly customer relationship management (CRM) systems, are a common priority - other municipalities are transitioning to platforms to manage registration, facility usage, and financial integration. These systems offer improved user experiences and allow cities to better track service utilization.⁸⁵

Edmonton residents who participated in focus groups cited difficulty finding information efficiently. The poor usability of the "Move Learn Play" website and the City of Edmonton website makes it time-consuming and frustrating to find available activities and suitable times, potentially discouraging participation.⁸⁶

"I really wish move learn play had a facility-wide, like an Edmonton-wide public swim schedule. So on those days where I say, yeah, I've got enough time to go to whatever pool has the swim times available, [then] I can look at one thing that's in this timeframe that says, Okay, these are the pools that have public swimming right now. Because right now, as far as I can figure out, you have to go to each individual pool. So you go into this [first] one. You scroll down. You hit public swim, you close the digital assistant. 'No, I don't need you.' You go to the next page. 'No, I don't need the digital assistant,' you know, like, and you look at that, and then you have to go back out and check in another pool. And maybe if you're trying to compare 3 or 4 pools [then that's inconvenient]." (District 1 (Northeast/Horse Hill), Female Age 35-44)

Inequity in High Demand Registrations⁸⁷: Current booking practices for swimming lessons and other 'in demand' registered programs for children and youth are time consuming, stressful, and frustrating for parents. Parents desire a consistency in the time and location of swimming lessons and other registered programming. For those who have been unable to access lessons (or who miss out on registration windows for subsequent sessions), they feel unwelcome. The current system for registration erodes access to community based recreation (as there are no geographic based restrictions on registration) and creates inequality for those with less access to technology or with less flexibility in work (making them available at the times that new registrations open).

Community user groups report challenges with the City's facility booking systems, especially for gyms, fields, pools, and ice rinks, citing delays, technical glitches, and a lack of real-time communication. Email responses for gym and field bookings are often delayed, making it difficult to plan and forcing users to look for alternatives when cancellations occur. Booking by phone is often challenging, with infrequent

⁸⁵ Jurisdictional scan page 7

⁸⁶ Qualitative report page 7.

⁸⁷ Qualitative Report pages 37-38.

call returns and no weekend support for field bookings. For gym booking, users are currently unable to book directly through a live availability calendar, and must instead refer to multiple spreadsheets to determine gym size, line markings, and permitted activities.

Some community user groups note that depending on how search filters are applied, the system may produce varying results, leading to confusion and reducing overall confidence in the platform's reliability. *"You can't [unselect]. So if you go through and select sports centres on the website, you can't unselect sports centers. You have to go out and then back."* (Community User Group - Gym)

While online payments were mentioned positively for gym rentals, the requirement to pay with physical cheques for arena rentals was a significant point of concern for the participants.

6. Facility & Amenity Needs

6.1. Facilities and Amenities Capital Projects Planned

The City of Edmonton outlines its basic commitment to all Edmonton residents, in the ongoing development of a city recreational network.⁸⁸ The commitment is as follows:

- Every resident will have a place to connect, be active and participate in recreation indoors (e.g. on ice, in water, or gymnasiums and fitness centres) within 5 kilometres of their residence.
- Every resident will have a place to connect, be active and participate in recreation outdoors within 400 metres of their residence (e.g. sports fields).

The basic commitment reflects the efforts and investments in recreation made not only by the City, but also by its partners including community organizations, private industry, and other regional municipalities. Decisions regarding the prioritization of projects to meet the basic commitment will be made in the context of the larger recreation network, balanced with the need to reinvest in existing facilities and amenities.

In the Approach, the following capital projects were identified as priorities for the City. The projects and their current status (as noted in the State of Sport Report) are as follows:

Project	District	Status
South Edmonton Soccer Centre Expansion	Southeast	Completed 2022
Heritage Valley District Park Recreation Facility	Southwest	Outdoor fields completed 2022-2024 A service package was funded as part of the 2023-2026 capital budget cycle for the resources required to move the addition of a larger recreational centre to Project Development and Delivery Model (PDDM) checkpoint 1.
Rollie Miles Recreation Centre	Scona	Currently in the design phase. Detailed design and

⁸⁸ Approach to Community Recreational Facility Planning (2018) page 33.

		construction of the facility are currently unfunded.
Coronation Park Sports and Recreation Centre	Central / 118th Ave	To be completed in 2026
Lewis Farms Facility and Park Project	West Henday	To be completed in 2028
Terwillegar Heights Artificial Turf or Londonderry Artificial Turf Facility	Whitemud (Terwillegar Heights) Northeast (Londonderry)	Not funded

6.2. Perceived Need for New Facilities and Amenities (Edmontonians)

65% of Edmontonians think there is a **need** for the City of Edmonton to develop **new or additional indoor or outdoor facilities, amenities or programs** for active recreation activities and sport.

Edmontonians were asked if they felt that there was a need for new facilities, amenities or programming. Two thirds of Edmontonians agreed that they perceived this need - particularly in Southwest/Rabbit Hill (77%), West Henday (77%) and West Edmonton (76%). These perceptions align with the needs identified by CRC.



Need for new facilities, amenities or programming is also high among those with young children (74%) and established migrants (70%).⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Quantitative report pages 83 - 84.

6.2.1. Indoor and Outdoor Analysis

Edmontonians are more likely to regularly participate in sports and active recreation indoors (72% adults, 90% children) than outdoors (47% adults, 42% children).⁹⁰

Their preferred indoors facilities include⁹¹:

- recreation centers (39% adults, 55% children)
- privately owned recreation facilities (17% adults, 22% children)
- schools or universities (6% adults, 15% children)
- arenas (4% adults, 14% children)
- gymnasiums (9% adults, 12% children)
- pools (7% adults, 11% children)

Their preferred outdoor facilities include⁹²:

- parks (17% adults, 11% children)
- trails (13% adults, 3% children)
- sports fields (9% adults, 19% children)
- natural areas (9% adults, 4% children)
- playgrounds (1% adults, 5% children)
- outdoor pools (2% adults, 4% children)

	Edmonton Residents who participate in active recreation... (%)	Demographics 	Districts	Future Demand
Indoors	72% adults 90% children	Participation in indoor recreational activities is higher among: • Racialized individuals (85%) • Established migrants (84%) • Families with teenagers (81%) • Families with young children (79%) Participation in indoor recreational activities is	• Indoor participation is highest in Scona (79%), Mill Woods & Meadows (76%) • Indoor participation is lowest in Southeast (61%), Jasper Place (62%)	43% say new additional indoor facilities are needed, particularly in Southwest/Rabbit Hill (58%), West Henday (53%) and West Edmonton (53%).

⁹⁰ Quantitative report pages 34 - 36.

⁹¹ Quantitative report pages 34 - 36.

⁹² Quantitative report pages 34 - 36.

		lower among: • Seniors (60%)		
Outdoors	47% adults 42% children	Participation in outdoor recreational activities is lower among: • People with a disability (37%) • Racialized individuals (37%) • Established migrants (38%) • Women (43%)	• Outdoor participation is highest in Scona (70%), Jasper Place (67%) • Outdoor participation is lowest in Mill Woods and Meadows (37%)	18% say new additional outdoor facilities are needed, with no particular district standing out as wanting this more than others.

6.2.2. Multipurpose Recreation Facilities

Fifteen percent of Edmonton residents⁹³ expressed a need for additional multipurpose recreational facilities (note that this does not differentiate between large, medium and small facilities). The demand for multipurpose facilities is highest in Southwest / Rabbit Hill, Ellerslie and West Henday. This demand aligns with the planned facilities noted earlier in this [section](#), showing a strong justification for their development and construction.



Perceived demand for multi-purpose facilities is higher among people with young children in their household, established migrants and racialized Edmonton residents.

Multipurpose facilities are popular in part because they allow families with children to stack activities, particularly on the weekends, to make a trip to a recreational facility worthwhile and to meet the recreation needs of family members of multiple ages. In particular, demand is high on the south side of the city - increasing available space with the opening of new facilities should alleviate this pressure.

Many qualitative participants expressed a willingness to travel for higher performance or day-long recreational opportunities, supported by a high willingness to travel in most districts.⁹⁴ They also see value in having basic amenities closer to home. We believe that the trend towards larger multi-plex facilities is warranted, but that supporting community league or smaller centres for daily programming may be justified, especially in districts with lower use of personal vehicles (such as Scona, Central and Jasper Place). The planned Rollie Miles Recreation Centre may meet this need for Scona and Central

⁹³ Quantitative Report, page 86-88

⁹⁴ Quantitative Report, page 53, Qualitative Report, page 29

districts while Lewis Farms Community Recreation Centre may fulfill the need for residents of Jasper Place.

"I would like to see a lot more smaller facilities in more neighborhoods, just make it more accessible to, like, anyone where transportation or disability is like a barrier so that more people can access it. And also I'm a big firm believer in 15-minute neighbourhoods. So I'd like to see a lot more smaller facilities everywhere, please." (Brigid, Southeast, Female 35-44)

6.2.3. Aquatics

Swimming | Diving | Water Polo | Other

Current State of Amenity (State of Sport)	The City of Edmonton operates 18 indoor pools and manages five outdoor pools. Kinsmen and the soon to reopen Peter Hemingway Aquatic Center are set up for “full-pool” sport bookings and competitions. Other pools offer lanes to be booked or half rentals and this would incorporate the training of the aquatics sports clubs. Kinsmen Sports Centre serves as the premier high performance aquatics facility, with advanced infrastructure for training, programming, diving, and competition within Edmonton. Most recent aquatics facilities, built into multi sport complexes, typically offer lane swimming at the 25m length, recreational pools, children designed pool, sometimes diving pools, hot tubs and steam rooms. From an aquatic sports perspective, the aquatics needs are being met by current facility inventory, however they are running at capacity. Through observation, between general recreational drop in users and registered courses like swimming lessons, pools are well utilized and busy.⁹⁵ In mapping the distribution of facilities throughout the city, it appears that there is reasonable geographic coverage in older established communities, however with rapid community and population growth outside of the Anthony Henday, from the southwest across to southeast and the west side of Edmonton, aquatic facilities are not developed in these areas at this time. There are aquatic facilities in Master Plans however the construction of these facilities are subject to capital budget availability and may take some time to add to inventory.⁹⁶ There is aging infrastructure, both indoor and outdoor.⁹⁷
Edmonton resident perception of need for this amenity⁹⁸ <i>What new or additional indoor or outdoor facilities for active recreation activities and sports are needed?</i>	11% perceive the need for more indoor pools 4% perceive the need for more outdoor pools

⁹⁵ State of Sports Report page 25.

⁹⁶ State of Sports Report page 25.

⁹⁷ State of Sports Report page 25.

⁹⁸ Quantitative Report page 86-92

Does any district have a higher perceived need?	↑ Very high perceived need in West Henday
Does any equity deserving group have a higher perceived need?	↑ People with young children in household have a higher perceived need for indoor pools ↑ Established migrants have a higher perceived need for indoor pools ↑ People living with a disability have a higher perceived need for outdoor pools
Qualitative Findings	• Resident needs are significant, driven by high demand for swimming lessons, recreational swim, and lane swimming. • There is strong consensus among community user groups that more 50-meter pools with amenities such as dive tanks and hot tubs are needed to meet growing demand. The (re) opening of Peter Hemingway Aquatic Centre will bring on needed capacity. Clubs emphasize that capacity and quality matter more than geography; they are willing to travel to well-equipped facilities. • Support for paddling facilities (e.g., Rundle Park) have helped partner organizations to increase their paddling programming.

6.2.4. Courts

Pickleball | Tennis | Basketball | Volleyball | Badminton | Ball & Inline Hockey | Other

Current State of Amenity (State of Sport)	In Edmonton court facilities are inclusive to multisport complexes such as Booster Juice Recreation Centre in Terwillegar's gymnasium, sport specific facilities such as Kinsmen Sport Centre's field house, Confederation Park tennis courts, indoor boarded concrete ice pads, curling rink concrete pads, school gymnasiums and tarmacs, and community league facilities. As the City sees a demand for court use, in particular programming and drop in use, there is a notable need to sustain the development and addition of court facilities, in particular indoor publicly accessible spaces. School gymnasiums play an important role in developmental sport at the school level, and support organized and casual recreational use for the community. The six decades-long partnership between the City and School Boards through the Joint Use Agreement supports this by creating reciprocal use of City and school facilities access.
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	Innovative approaches to increasing capacity are underway in Edmonton, such as a recent air-spoorted dome over existing tennis courts, changing zoning by-laws to allow warehouse space to be used for recreation, and working with partners to build additional courts. ⁹⁹
Edmonton resident perception of need for this amenity¹⁰⁰ <i>What new or additional indoor or outdoor facilities for active recreation activities and sports are needed?</i>	10% perceive a higher need for indoor courts 4% perceive a higher need for outdoor courts
Does any district have a higher perceived need?	↑ Slightly higher perceived need in Southwest / Rabbit Hill and Ellerslie for indoor courts
Does any equity deserving group have a higher perceived need?	↑ higher perceived need among established migrants and racialized Albertans for indoor courts
Qualitative Findings	• High interest in informal play. • High interest among adults to try new activities which may increase demand for multi-use courts. • School gyms are an important affordable resource to community user groups. Weekend and summer availability remains a challenge.

⁹⁹ State of Sports Report page 28.

¹⁰⁰ Quantitative Report page 86-92

6.2.5. Field & Turf

Cricket | Baseball & Softball & Slow Pitch | Soccer | Disc Golf | Football | Golf | Athletics | Lacrosse | Ultimate | Rugby | Aussie Rules | Other

Current State of Amenity (State of Sport)	The City of Edmonton bookings unit plays an extensive role in managing the majority of the sport fields and turf allocation amongst sporting groups. Facility bookings are done in conjunction with sport organizations, teams, divisions, and leagues. <u>Fields:</u> The City maintains 32 premier fields and 6 staffed fields. Four premier fields are artificial turf. With soccer being the largest sport participated in within Edmonton, there is an anticipated need to increase field access and in particular indoor facilities to accommodate the growth in population and popularity in year round soccer. Current football fields meet the demand for use, but awareness of the need to maintain levels as other sports grow and place a strain on the demand for turf/fields. There are several field and turf sports, such as rugby, aussie rules, lacrosse, and ultimate frisbee which have their own playing design needs such as dimensions, lines and goals. The use of combo fields is quite common among these sports. There is a desire for these sports to have a 'home base', which might consist of storage facilities, preferential allocation, etc. <u>Cricket Pitches:</u> Cricket is on the rise in Edmonton and as we see further growth in the city, it is anticipated that we will continue to see an increased need and request from the cricket community for cricket fields around the city; currently there is short supply, which has clubs spontaneously using available green spaces. A strategic plan for cricket in Edmonton may be warranted due to the current and anticipated growth in both population and participation in the sport, including continuing to explore converting underutilized open spaces or sports fields to cricket pitches. <u>Ball Diamonds:</u> The ball diamond inventory is more extensive in the north compared to the south. There is a significant disparity in the number of diamonds available in the south west area of Edmonton. Considering the sport standards for baseball and slow pitch, there may be a need to increase the inventory of ball diamonds across Edmonton, as participation numbers are expected to rise with the
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	growing population.
Edmonton resident perception of need for this amenity¹⁰¹ <i>What new or additional indoor or outdoor facilities for active recreation activities and sports are needed?</i>	7% perceive a need for more indoor sports fields 4% perceive a need for more outdoor sports fields 2% perceive a need for more indoor track & field 1% perceive a need for more outdoor ball diamonds
Does any district have a higher perceived need?	↑ West Edmonton (8% - perceive a need for more outdoor ball diamonds)
Does any equity deserving group have a higher perceived need?	↑ families with young children have a higher perceived need for more indoor sports fields
Qualitative Findings	• High interest in informal play and in year round participation in field sports such as soccer. Community user groups to support three or four season training for sports such as soccer, football, rugby, baseball/softball and cricket. • Specialized facilities, such as Commonwealth Field House, are in high demand. Groups (e.g. Football) that require the dimensions of this field compete for allocation with other groups (e.g., soccer, lacrosse)

6.2.6. Arenas & Outdoor Ice

Ice Hockey | Ringette | Skating | Other

Current State of Amenity (State of Sport)	<u>Indoor Ice</u> Pad facilities are in high demand with user groups throughout the City. It has been recognized in previous reports and life cycle management assessments that there is a need for strategizing a plan to manage aging infrastructure and as indicated, there are specific facilities which will need immediate intervention to rejuvenate, modernize or repurpose these facilities in their current state. According to City bookings there is a shortfall in providing organizational programming by 23%, meaning that all programming requirements operate in a deficit of ice access during the prime hours of operation. With aging and insufficient facilities, a rapidly growing population, expansion of the geographical reach of residential development and growing participation in ice
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¹⁰¹ Quantitative Report page 86-92

	based sport, specifically ice hockey, there is further strain to be placed on current infrastructure predicted. There should be an assessment as to the cost benefit to adding ice surfaces as part of mega facilities compared to the need to manage smaller facilities throughout the city or the private provision of ice sheets within the city.
Edmonton resident perception of need for this amenity¹⁰² <i>What new or additional indoor or outdoor facilities for active recreation activities and sports are needed?</i>	8% perceive a higher need for arenas 3% perceive a higher need for outdoor ice
Does any district have a higher perceived need?	↑ Mill Woods and Meadows have a higher need for outdoor ice
Does any equity deserving group have a higher perceived need?	↑ Young children in household have a higher need for arenas
Qualitative Findings	• Participants in hockey are willing to travel for quality ice and reasonable ice times. • Ice surfaces at large recreation centres can create overcrowding and pressure on parking. • Community user groups are concerned about the trend towards large, centralized recreation centres and the resulting reduction in the availability of neighbourhood rinks. • Address inconsistent maintenance across arenas, including issues with ice quality, shower conditions, and lighting failures.

¹⁰² Quantitative Report page 86-92

6.2.7. Outdoor Parks and Trails

Current State of Amenity (State of Sport)	<u>Cycling:</u> The City Plan commits to biking as an active mode of transportation and a way to combat climate and reduce urban sprawl. Edmontonians enjoy a variety of different types of cycling- road, mountain, BMX, gravel and E-bike. The City has a maintenance agreement with Edmonton Mountain Bike Association (EMBA) to help maintain the single track trail network in the River Valley. EMBA is also proposing the development of a Bike Skills Park in the River Valley which was included in the Queen Elizabeth Park Master Plan. In depth conversations around mountain biking in the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System continue. Through the Ribbon of Green Strategic Plan, a recommendation is being advanced to develop a trail strategy to address the increasing use and conflict. The strategy would include education and awareness for users; a sustainable, well designed and connected trail system; and direction for maintenance, operations and engagement with community partners.¹⁰³ While the trail strategy has not yet received funding, a scope of work is currently being developed for completion with existing resources. <u>Skateboarding:</u> Because the dominant demographic participating in skateboarding and related activities are youth, location and access to these locations through public transit services would encourage access and reduce barriers to the sport. Perhaps installing skateboarding infrastructure at major multiplex facilities with amenities, such as washrooms and food/drink vendors would service skateboarding participants well.
Edmonton resident perception of need for this amenity¹⁰⁴ <i>What new or additional indoor or outdoor facilities for active recreation activities and sports are needed?</i>	Low perceived need for bike parks (1%) outdoor paths/trails (1%), outdoor skating surfaces (1%), outdoor parks (1%), outdoor gyms (1%)
Does any district have a higher perceived need?	↑ West Henday has a higher perceived need for outdoor parks

¹⁰³ State of Sport page 35.

¹⁰⁴ Quantitative Report page 86-92

Does any equity deserving group have a higher perceived need?	No demographic differences observed.
Qualitative Findings^{105 106}	• Outdoor terrain and park spaces are appreciated and used for unstructured activities and active transportation. • Increasing amenities (such as shade, seating, BBQs) in city parks further supports unstructured activities within existing amenities • Mountain biking is encouraging year round participation via winterized bikes.

¹⁰⁵ Qualitative Report page 14.

¹⁰⁶ Qualitative Report page 52.

7. How Other Municipalities Approach Recreation Planning

7.1. How other municipalities approach capital and operational budgeting¹⁰⁷

Cost recovery

Revenue generation in municipal recreation relies on a consistent model blending user fees, tax-based funding, grants, and private partnerships. Some cities recover over half their recreation service costs through user fees — whereas many recover 45 percent. Solutions to increase revenue generations often include diversifying income through concessions, event hosting, and sponsorships. Sponsorships include both name sales as well as program focused support. User fees are insufficient to cover operating costs and must rely upon municipal taxes.

Overall, there is an aim to have an equal balance (50/50) between revenue generated through users and the taxpayer contribution, but a large variation is present from one municipality to the next, with some boroughs in Montréal recovering as little as 20 percent of revenues where Mississauga estimates a recovery of almost 60 percent.¹⁰⁸ In Edmonton, based upon the originally approved budget for 2023-2026, 45 percent of the operating budget is recovered from revenue generated by users and the tax levy provides 55 percent (i.e., tax generated).¹⁰⁹

Corporate donation or sponsorships

Municipalities have implemented both income-generating and cost-cutting practices, the most common being the use of corporate donation or sponsorships. Indeed, corporate sponsorship is becoming increasingly sought after, and municipalities are developing or updating policies to address these opportunities.

Many cities also use sponsorship revenue to offset the costs of free and low-cost programming. Mississauga has been particularly successful in leveraging sponsorship, both public and private, in this respect. For example, the provincial chapter Life Saving Society sponsors a program called Swim to Survive and corporate sponsors make contributions to support free after-school youth drop-in programming.

In addition to specific revenue generating practices, some municipalities strengthen revenue generation through change which is more structural in nature. For example, in Mississauga a team is dedicated to identifying, promoting and applying to grant and sponsorship opportunities on behalf of city services, including recreation.

¹⁰⁷ Jurisdictional Scan pages 34-39

¹⁰⁸ Jurisdictional Scan pages 14-17

¹⁰⁹ Jurisdictional Scan page 30

Lack of revenue targets

A common challenge across municipalities is the lack of revenue targets. Few municipalities have established funding and revenue objectives. Although recreation department strategies provide long-term direction for services and indicate the need for funding to achieve strategic goals, beyond capital planning and budgeting process, recreation departments do not proactively engage with their city councils to align priorities with funding commitments. The exception is Hamilton, where the 2024 Proposed User Fees & Charges lists all types of user fees (e.g., admission fees, registered program fees, Sports Field Rentals, Memberships, Flex Pass) and includes the percent change in fees, as well as target recoveries across all user fees (admission, registered and drop-in programs) which range from 100 percent recovery (e.g., green fees), 50 percent recovery (e.g., user group ice rates) and 35 percent (recreation and pool admission fees). Mississauga is completing a cost recovery exercise to understand opportunities to increase cost recovery but does not set revenue targets. Instead, Mississauga aims to meet or surpass revenue targets from previous years.

7.2. How other municipalities prioritize programming¹¹⁰

As part of the master planning process, other municipalities describe the provision of two general types of programming, core (direct, citywide, universal) and secondary (indirect). Core programs are founded on accessibility and inclusivity values, with offers of basic sports literacy, leadership, staff training and fitness. Secondary programs focus on niche or specialized forms of recreation or offer competitive or advanced sport programming. Municipalities identify what a baseline or core set of services will consist of and then offer these services in collaboration with community centres. Secondary programming can be transferred to third-party organizations, run by the City alone or in collaboration with third parties. Overall, however, the more a program is specialized or competitive, the more likely it is for the City to hand it off to a third party.

Core programming includes activities such as swimming lessons, skating, introductory sports, older-adult fitness and after school or youth drop-in recreation programs. Some variation is present between cities in terms of what is included in core programming.

Maintaining flexibility while balancing citywide strategic goals and local community responsiveness is valued as a characteristic of strong programming. In Toronto, it is estimated that over 80 per cent of Parks, Forestry and Recreation programming falls under the “primary” program category. Toronto has developed the primary program model as a guideline for community centres to ensure equitable access to universal or core programming. The model prioritizes City delivery of programs at an introductory level, in group settings, as well as those that teach basic skills. It includes seven program areas, including,

¹¹⁰ Jurisdictional Scan pages 34-39

1-swimming, 2-camps, 3-skating, 4-fitness and wellness, 5-general interest, 6-seniors and 7-skiing and snowboarding. The primary program model aims to be used to review existing programming and to serve as a tool to address community programming needs, as well as to develop age-based and program-based planning.

7.2.1. How Other Municipalities Address Social Accessibility¹¹¹

Recreation divisions across municipalities implement a wide variety of equity, inclusion and diversity (EDI) measures aiming to maintain or improve the accessibility of recreation services to residents. These EDI practices and strategies can be categorized into measures aiming to reduce physical, social and financial barriers. Measures aiming to address physical barriers include the design of space, structures and equipment, as well as the proximity of services. Measures aiming to reduce social barriers include programming, culture and consciousness raising as well as the frameworks that guide positive behaviours. Reducing financial barriers includes access to supportive resources for special needs patrons and disadvantaged communities. Municipalities also implement community engagement activities and build partnerships aiming to strengthen their capacity to reach and respond to the specific EDI needs across a diversity of communities within their city and in so doing, aim to strengthen equitable access to recreation services.

7.2.2. How Other Municipalities Address Financial Accessibility¹¹²

Recreational user fees are set with consideration for, 1- equitable accessibility, 2- financial sustainability and 3-market value or competitiveness. Overall, municipalities balance the need for affordable access to sport and recreation facilities and services with the financial requirements of maintaining recreation facilities and programming. This is accomplished with a combination of subsidized programs, market-driven pricing, and partnerships with non-profit organizations. Municipalities have a fee policy, by-law or document that describes and justifies fees, charges, subsidies and accessibility. It appears that, apart from Hamilton and Montreal, all cities have some form of fee-setting centralized policy or guiding document. Municipalities tend to follow a tiered fee structure with user rates based on type of service (e.g., basic vs. premium), resident status (e.g., residents vs. non-resident) and accessibility.

Reducing financial barriers is a central component of the accessibility principle in fee policies. Subsidies and discounts to reduce financial barriers among low-income families, seniors, youth, and equity-deserving groups exist in all municipalities, with slight variations. One key difference between city-run fee assistance programs is the use of a credit system, whereby, in addition to subsidized rates, cities can offer fixed amount credits for registered programs (Calgary, Winnipeg) and memberships (Toronto, Mississauga). Fixed credits are used by all cities, apart from Vancouver, to place a ceiling on the per person per year amount of discount. Fee assistance applies to city-owned and city-operated programs and facilities. Facilities and programs operated by third parties may offer fee assistance, but they are not obliged to do so.

¹¹¹ Jurisdictional Scan pages 38-42.

¹¹² Jurisdictional Scan pages 23-30.

End of Detailed Findings

8. Recommendations

Recommendations have been structured into four main areas:

- Facilities and Amenities
- Programming
- Policy and Administration
- Supporting Equitable Recreation Opportunities

In each of the four sections noted above, highlights of the key recommendations are first summarized. This is followed by detailed justifications for each key recommendation, followed by additional other recommendations.

Key recommendations are meant to address issues that will have the greatest impact on recreational programming, either because they address an urgent need, are widespread in their need (within Edmonton as a whole, or in specific districts or equity deserving communities), or move the City forward in meeting the strategic goals as outlined in the context of this research.

Other recommendations are those that are not widespread, or were identified in one component of the research only. While important, they may represent niche needs, or already in progress within the city.

8.1. Facilities and Amenities

8.1.1. Highlights of Key Recommendations: Facilities and Amenities

- Multipurpose Recreation
 - The City has three multipurpose recreation facilities in construction, design or master planning. All are supported by the research results and we recommend that the projects be funded for construction.
 - On time completion of the Lewis Farms Facility and Park Project in West Henday (construction completion in 2028) will meet an acute need. All efforts to complete and open on schedule are critical.
 - Heritage Valley Community Recreation Centre is currently funded to Project Development and Delivery Model (PDDM) checkpoint 1 (project initiation). Planning and implementation of this facility is warranted and should move to subsequent checkpoints.
 - Rollie Miles Recreation Centre is currently unfunded for construction, but preliminary design work has been completed. Scona residents are very active, less likely to use personal vehicles, and expected to have moderate to high growth, showing a clear need for a facility in their neighborhood.
 -
- Aquatics
 - Decisively plan allocation for 50-meter pools coming online in the near future. The planned 50 meter pool at the Lewis Farms Facility as well as the reopening of Peter Hemingway will increase the capacity of the City to support aquatic user groups, but the city must clearly balance the needs of aquatic sports teams with the needs of the local community with a clearly communicated allocation plan.
- Court
 - Develop additional court space for recreational use throughout the City, particularly in Southeast and in Southwest/Rabbit Hill.
- Field & Turf
 - Meet the growing needs of soccer by offering more year-round facilities (indoor or air supported), and by planning for additional fields that can support 11 vs. 11 play. Build outdoor and indoor (year-round) soccer amenities in Southwest/Rabbit Hill.
 - Plan for modest increases in baseball diamond inventory, particularly in areas with lower inventory (the Southwest/Southeast) or in areas with higher participation (West Edmonton and Jasper Place among adults, Whitemud and Ellerslie for children).
 - Quantify the current and future participation in cricket in order to accurately assess the need for dedicated facilities. Racialized individuals and newcomers to Edmonton are more likely to live in Southwest/Rabbit Hill and Ellerslie, these are suitable locations for a dedicated facility.

- Arenas
 - Solicit public and partnership opportunities to provide additional facilities that support ice hockey. Current facilities do not support the booking needs of existing organized ice hockey (According to City bookings there is a shortfall in providing organizational programming by 23%).
 - Prioritize strategic decisions regarding the maintenance and repair versus potential replacement of existing, aging arenas to prevent further capacity loss.
- Other
 - Share with other City departments the importance of a connected network of safe bike lanes and pathways for cycling, as well as safe and connected sidewalks to support walkers.
 - Improve outdoor park structures with seating and shade to facilitate usage in all weather conditions and for longer periods of time.



8.1.2. Detailed Recommendations: Multipurpose Recreation¹¹³

Key recommendations

The City has three multipurpose recreation facilities in construction, design or master planning. All are supported by the research results and we recommend that the projects be funded for construction.

- **Lewis Farms Facility and Park Project** in West Henday (construction completion in 2028) will provide much needed recreational opportunities to an area that, according to the quantitative survey, currently has a high need for new facilities or amenities (77% vs. 65% citywide), high desire to increase participation in activities (60% vs. 47% citywide), high need for a community indoor pool (20% vs. 11% citywide), current low satisfaction (51% vs. 62% city wide) and less desire for long commutes to activities. They also are more likely than other districts to want outdoor parks (5% vs. 1% citywide).
- **Rollie Miles Recreation Centre** is currently unfunded for construction, but preliminary design work has been completed following three rounds of public engagement. Development of this facility is warranted.
 - According to the quantitative survey, residents in this neighborhood (Scona) currently have high participation rates (67% vs. 56% city wide). They are less likely than other neighbourhoods to use personal vehicles to travel to active recreation activities (57% vs. 77% citywide), making proximity of particular importance.
 - According to the same survey, Scona residents are more likely than other residents to be active outdoors, which highlights the importance of the companion project (Renewal of the **Rollie Miles District Park**).
 - Growth for this area is projected to be [moderate/high](#), justifying additional recreational opportunities, and to avoid overflow into other facilities.

¹¹³ Quantitative Report pages 51, 56-57, 75-76, 82-83, 86-87, 90-91.

- **Heritage Valley Community Recreation Centre** is currently funded to Project Development and Delivery Model (PDDM) checkpoint 1 (project initiation). Planning and implementation of this facility is warranted and should move to subsequent checkpoints.
 - Growth for the Southwest district is projected to be [high](#) and the district is currently served by a single smaller facility (Dr. Anne Anderson), which has neither aquatics, indoor turf, nor indoor ice.
 - In addition, we note that Southwest / Rabbit Hill do not currently have any community leagues in their area. Satisfaction with current offerings in Southwest/Rabbit Hills, according to the quantitative survey, is lower (54% vs 62% citywide).
 - The same survey indicated that interest in strength training is high in these areas of the city as well, so a robust fitness area for this activity is warranted.

Other recommendations:

- Offer small facilities focused on strength training that can relieve overcrowding at busy facilities such as The Meadows CRC.
 - According to the quantitative survey, participation in strength training is currently high and expected to grow in popularity. Overcrowding happens at busy facilities such as The Meadows CRC, indicating that smaller facilities within neighborhoods could sustain the inclusion of fitness and strength training equipment.
- Conduct periodic auditing of facility cleanliness.
 - Qualitative commentary collected in the same survey noted that cleanliness and maintenance of these amenities were not always up to member expectations - we recommend periodic auditing of this issue.

8.1.3. Detailed Recommendations: Aquatics¹¹⁴

Key recommendations

- Decisively plan allocation for the 50-meter pool at Peter Hemingway and Lewis Farms Facility.
 - The current project plan for **Lewis Farms** in West Henday includes a 50-metre pool, which is an amenity that community user groups across Edmonton expressed a strong desire for during the qualitative focus groups. We recommend that the City work with the West Henday community and with aquatic sports organizations to decisively plan the allocation of programming hours for the 50-metre pool.
 - We highlight this recommendation because according to the quantitative survey and the community user focus groups, this facility is simultaneously meeting two needs - a high need for recreational and community focused swimming activities in West Henday and the need for a 50-metre facility that is appropriate for high performance athletic training and competitive events (that are currently only possible at the Kinsman Sports Centre) - and we anticipate conflict in programming demands.

¹¹⁴ Qualitative Report pages 35-36.

- The upcoming re-opening of **Peter Hemingway Aquatic Centre**, along with the 2028 opening of **Lewis Farms** will greatly increase capacity for aquatics, and is supported by the quantitative survey based on current demand for aquatic programming and animation.

Other recommendations based on qualitative focus groups with residents and community user groups

- Align pool temperatures to the programming offered.
 - Ideal pool temperatures vary based on the activity and on individual preference. Align pool temps to support varied users (e.g., cooler temps in 50m pools during high performance lane swims, vs. warmer temps to support joint mobility and recovery).
- Develop citywide rules that clarify which facilities can accommodate winter paddling training.
 - Consistent rules about pool rentals to support winter training programs should be enacted to avoid issues of groups being denied access (due to reluctance among staff to allow this activity), an issue which community user groups indicate happens today.

8.1.4. Detailed Recommendations: Court

Key Recommendations

- Develop additional court space for recreational use throughout the City, particularly in Southeast and in Southwest/Rabbit Hill.
 - According to the quantitative survey, 10% Edmonton residents expressed a need for additional court space in their community - this need was equally distributed throughout the city.¹¹⁵
 - According to the same survey, racialized individuals and established migrants have a higher need for indoor courts to support their recreational activities. Currently, there are higher racialized populations in Southeast and in Southwest/Rabbit Hill. Residents in these areas in particular would benefit from additional court access to support their higher interest in badminton, basketball, and volleyball.¹¹⁶
 - Current growth in pickleball (seen in other jurisdictions as well) warrants support of indoor and outdoor facilities. Interest is seen in all districts (except for 118th Ave/North Central), according to the same survey.

Other Recommendations

- Create an “indoor green shack program” using school gymnasiums to provide an immediate boost to the availability of unstructured and drop-in court spaces during high demand (e.g., weekday evenings).¹¹⁷
 - Results from the resident focus groups suggest that high demand during weekday evenings combined with overlapping demands of these multi-use courts (e.g., the same amenity can be used for a multitude of sports) create a time based lack of capacity.

¹¹⁵ Quantitative Report pages 86-87.

¹¹⁶ Quantitative Report page 88.

¹¹⁷ Qualitative Report pages 36, 38.

- School bookings of gymnasiums currently provide an important boost to available court inventory, though this is mainly through community user groups who offer structured programming.
- We recommend that the city consider renting available space in school gyms, staffing them with a City worker who can facilitate drop-in, unstructured or other court based programming time.

8.1.5. Detailed Recommendations: Field & Turf

Key Recommendations

- Plan for modest increases in baseball diamond inventory, particularly in areas with lower inventory (the Southwest/Southeast)¹¹⁸ or in areas with higher participation (West Edmonton and Jasper Place among adults, Whitemud and Ellerslie for children)¹¹⁹.
 - The State of Sport¹²⁰ report recommends reviewing inventory against participation densities throughout the City. Participation data in the quantitative survey identifies self-reported participation, but if postal code data could be provided by community user groups to build a more robust picture, we recommend doing so.
 - Growth in baseball and softball in Edmonton is modest, according to the State of Sports report. In other jurisdictions, growth expectations are mixed, with declines in some municipalities and resurgence in others, making a clear growth trend unclear at this time.
- Meet the growing needs of soccer by offering more year-round facilities (indoor or air supported), and by planning for additional fields that can support 11 vs. 11 play.
 - The quantitative survey suggests that interest in soccer is strong and growing throughout the city.¹²¹ Qualitative focus groups indicate a strong interest in year round participation, necessitating the use of indoor turf.¹²²
 - In addition, community user groups noted that the number of full sized fields is not sufficient to meet enrollment demand, meaning that younger age groups are playing with smaller teams (e.g., 9 vs 9 vs. 11 vs. 11).¹²³
- Build indoor and outdoor soccer facilities in Southwest/Rabbit Hill¹²⁴
 - According to the quantitative survey, residents in this district are more likely to participate in soccer, but do not currently have access to city run indoor turf, and only limited outdoor fields, particularly premier fields. With high growth projected in this area, supporting the development of both indoor and outdoor fields for soccer is warranted.
- Quantify the current and future participation in cricket in order to accurately assess the need for dedicated facilities. Racialized and newcomers to Edmonton are more likely to live in Southwest/Rabbit Hill and Ellerslie, these are suitable locations for building a dedicated facility.
 - Quantitative survey findings show that currently 1% of Edmontonians play cricket,¹²⁵ but the State of Sport notes that “As new residents immigrate to Edmonton, it is anticipated that the rate at which cricket progresses will be reflected in continued development of the sport in Edmonton, the province and the nation. The cricket community has expressed interest in establishing additional infrastructure to support the sport's growth

¹¹⁸ State of Sport Inventory Report.

¹¹⁹ Quantitative results questions “Act” and “C-Act.”

¹²⁰ State of Sport page 31.

¹²¹ Quantitative Report pages 29-31, 37.

¹²² Qualitative Report pages 13, 37.

¹²³ Qualitative Report page 37.

¹²⁴ Quantitative Report pages 29-31, 37.

¹²⁵ Quantitative Report pages 29-31, 37.

and accommodate increasing demand.”¹²⁶

- Explore building year-round facility capacity.
 - Year-round uses of facilities is something that is important to some Edmontonians - who suggested in the qualitative research component that planning convertible spaces (a sports court that converted to an outdoor ice rink, or the use of roofing to extend the season of a field in fall and spring) would help to engage a community in the facilities that are nearest to them.¹²⁷

Other Recommendations

- Review allocation policies to ensure that sports with limited options (e.g., football) for facilities are given preferential allocation of the fields most suited for their sport.
- Continue to offer the “Home Field” program to sports groups that desire it.
 - In qualitative focus groups, some community user groups expressed a need for supply storage amenities at facilities to reduce the burden of hauling equipment. Representatives from an Aquatics group noted the challenge of coaches having to haul nets and balls to every pool as facilities often don't allow storage. A Fields group representative mentioned they bring all of their own equipment like cricket mats and other gear to fields, and a Gym group participant highlighted the inconvenience of having to carry equipment like soccer nets in winter time between gyms. Providing storage would offer easily accessible locations for supplies, helping to reduce volunteer load¹²⁸
 - Where possible, we recommend providing these storage facilities.

8.1.6. Detailed Recommendations: Arenas & Outdoor Ice

Key Recommendations

- Consider soliciting public and partnership opportunities to provide additional facilities that support ice hockey. Current facilities do not support the booking needs of existing organized ice hockey (According to City bookings, there is a shortfall in providing organizational programming by 26.5%).
 - According to the quantitative survey, Ice Hockey ranks 4th (at 16%) in participation among children and 11th (6%) among adults.¹²⁹
 - The same survey suggests that 8% of Edmonton residents see a need for additional indoor arenas.¹³⁰
 - According to the jurisdiction scan, participation in other jurisdictions is declining, with the exception of Winnipeg (perception is due to costs and competition from other

¹²⁶ State of Sport, page 7.

¹²⁷ Qualitative Report page 42.

¹²⁸ Qualitative Report page 46.

¹²⁹ Quantitative Report pages 29-31, 37

¹³⁰ Quantitative Report page 86

activities). Edmonton is an outlier, and the current popularity of the Oilers may support continued growth in participation.

- There are currently no City arenas in outlying communities (West Henday, Southwest / Rabbit Hill or Horsehills), with the new Lewis Farms twin pad (2028, West Henday) the only new construction planned.
- Prioritize strategic decisions regarding the maintenance and repair versus potential replacement of existing, aging arenas to prevent further capacity loss.
 - Priority should be given to ensuring that existing inventory is kept online, with proactive planning for replacement so that capacity isn't further diminished, as the State of Sport notes that existing facilities are aging.¹³¹

Other Recommendations primarily based on qualitative focus groups and jurisdiction scan

- Evaluate the cost/benefit of public development of additional facilities for ice hockey and other ice sports, based on participation rates and the cost to support this sport vs. other recreational activities. Consider how private provision of ice sports facilities could support demand.
- Offer boards at additional outdoor rinks to support the trend of informal “stick & puck.”
 - The desire seen in the qualitative focus groups among Edmontonians for “stick & puck” informal play may warrant evaluating the number of outdoor rinks that have boards in place.¹³² Demand for informal activities (e.g., stick & puck, 3-on-3) is observed in other municipalities as well.¹³³
 - Engage Community Organizations (EFCL) for potential to increase unstructured rink capacity (Evaluate financial viability models for permanent or mobile ice chillers or synthetic ice).
- To support older youth and adult users within arenas, ensure that arena users have access to working shower facilities.
- Support partner ski facilities who want to build year round amenities with approvals when required (e.g., if the facilities are on city lands).
 - Ski facilities are increasingly reliant upon summer seasonal activities to generate additional revenue.
 - Year round activities offer Edmontonians additional choice in recreational activities.

¹³¹ State of Sport Report, page 32

¹³² Qualitative Report page 40

¹³³ Jurisdictional Scan pages 35, 80.

8.1.7. Detailed Recommendations: Outdoor Parks and Trails

Key Recommendations

- Working with community partners, complete a River Valley trail strategy to determine an approved network of natural surface trails that can provide diverse trail experiences.¹³⁴
 - The City has planned new amenities (such as the incoming bike skills park) and has worked with the Edmonton Mountain Bike Alliance on maintenance of trails. During interviews with partner organizations, we heard concerns about the long term use of natural trails in the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System. We also heard that interested parties are entrenched in their respective positions.
- Share with other City departments the importance of a connected network of safe bike lanes and pathways for cycling, as well as safe and connected sidewalks to support walkers.
 - According to the quantitative survey, cycling is a popular activity for both children (8%) and adults (13%),¹³⁵ with particularly high participation in Scona and Southeast. Qualitative focus groups indicate that participants desire a connected network of safe bike lanes and pathways so that they can travel throughout the city, with minimal interactions with vehicular traffic. We recognize that pathways and bike lanes are not directly in CRC's responsibility, but encourage sharing of this information with relevant departments at the City. We also encourage the City to improve signage and communication about proper use of shared pathways (between pedestrians and cyclists).
 - Year round walking can be supported by ensuring that sidewalks are in good repair, and are cleared of snow and ice. Existing indoor facilities can support indoor walking, without requiring an indoor track (e.g., Waterloo's RIM Park CRC includes signage on the distances covered if walking the interior perimeter hallways).¹³⁶
- Improve outdoor park structures with seating and shade to facilitate usage in all weather conditions and for longer periods of time.
 - Qualitative focus groups with Edmonton residents showed that they want to spend more time in Edmonton parks, but are inhibited by lack of weather protection and adequate seating.¹³⁷

Other Recommendations

- Climbing is an activity that has a small participation rate today according to the quantitative survey, and is well served by existing private facilities. Small bouldering or rock walls (that do not require belaying) could be incorporated into outdoor park amenities.
- The quantitative focus groups indicate interest in a 24-hour access model for fitness centres, which the City may wish to consider.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Qualitative Report page 39.

¹³⁵ Quantitative Report pages 27, 29.

¹³⁶ Qualitative Report page 39.

¹³⁷ Qualitative Report page 41.

¹³⁸ Qualitative Report pages 30-31.

- Consider the ability to open (some) facilities later or on weekends, including key fob access in overnight hours. This mimics offerings of private fitness facilities which offer unstaffed access to fitness areas overnight (with safety measures in place).

8.2. Programming

8.2.1. Highlights of Key Recommendations: Programming

- Aquatics
 - Increasing capacity for recreational swimming and particularly for youth swimming lessons, including offering some innovative programming to meet the stated needs of parents, is critically recommended.
 - To build qualified lifeguard capacity to support growth, incorporate best practices as seen in other municipalities.
 - Evaluate the current booking practices with an equity lens.
 - Consider if partnerships could increase capacity.
 - Offer higher-cost, lower ratio (or longer duration) swimming lessons.
- Court
 - Expand available court times and offer introductory lessons in pickleball to meet growing demand.
 - Expand drop-in court times to meet the interest in basketball (youth and adults) and volleyball (primarily adults).
 - Monitor population growth and enrollment for expansion of structured programming in basketball and volleyball. According to the quantitative survey, interest in volleyball is highest in the Northeast / Horse Hills district, as well as West Henday, Central, and Southeast. Interest in basketball is highest in the Northeast / Horse Hills district, as well as Mill Woods and Meadows.
- Field and Turf
 - Additional indoor opportunities for year-round soccer are desired. As long as facility space is available, community organizations will offer programming that meets the needs of soccer players. We recommend no substantial changes to City offered programming for soccer.
 - As strength training grows in popularity among many age groups, we recommend promotion of the existing orientation and learning programs offered by the City.¹³⁹
- Arenas
 - Offer additional “stick-and-puck” times, especially times that allow mixed ages (e.g., parent and child).
- Other programming
 - Evaluate age appropriate fitness programming (not just for seniors)

¹³⁹ <https://movelearnplay.edmonton.ca/COE/public/category/browse/PROGPTX903>

8.2.2. Detailed Recommendations: Aquatics / Swimming Lessons

Increasing capacity for recreational swimming and particularly for youth swimming lessons, including offering some innovative programming to meet the stated needs of parents, is critically recommended. According to the quantitative survey, swimming is the most common activity that children participate in (51%) and is the third most popular among adults (30%). It is especially popular among those with young children, migrants, racialized individuals, and women. Growth is expected to continue as it is the most common activity that adults would like to start or do more of.¹⁴⁰ Given the importance of this activity to Edmontonians, we outline several recommendations to build capacity.

Key Recommendations

- To build qualified lifeguard capacity to support growth, incorporate best practices as seen in other municipalities, according to the jurisdiction scan:
 - Financial incentives such as free training or retention bonuses.
 - Lowering age requirements. In Ontario, the minimum age for certain aquatic training programs has been lowered to 15, enabling younger candidates to pursue certification earlier.
 - Reviewing work hours and location to attract local candidates to work at close-by facilities (as younger workers may have fewer transportation options).
 - Partnerships with local educational institutions allow municipalities to create internship opportunities, giving young adults practical experience in lifeguarding and swim instruction.
 - Expanding recruitment efforts to include active older adults targets a demographic that can bring experience and reliability to aquatic programs. This strategy diversifies the instructor base and helps fill staffing gaps.
- Evaluate the current booking practices with an equity lens.
 - According to the qualitative focus groups, rolling registrations (where current students maintain a timeslot over multiple sessions, even if they move up a level) would increase satisfaction for current registrants, but increases the difficulty for new registrants to find an open / available lesson.
 - Assisting equity deserving communities to register for lessons (even potentially offering an early registration window) could counteract the challenges that they have with time-based registration which is suggested by the quantitative survey as well as the qualitative focus groups
- Consider if partnerships could increase the availability of swimming lessons:
 - According to the qualitative research, private pools, such as those in private fitness centres, apartment buildings, or hotels, could create additional capacity - the City could consider if partnerships possibilities exist, perhaps pairing a private location with a City swim instructor, for example.
- Consider offering higher-cost, lower ratio (or longer duration) swimming lessons.

¹⁴⁰ Quantitative Report page 27, 29, 32, 75.

- Qualitative focus groups suggest that there may be demand (and willingness-to-pay) by some parents for lower-student-to-teacher ratio instruction, or for lessons that are more than 30 minutes in length.

8.2.3. Detailed Recommendations: Court Programming

Key Recommendations

- Expand available court times and offer introductory lessons in pickleball to meet growing demand.
 - The quantitative survey identified pickleball as growing in interest among adults and, to a lesser extent, youth. This trend is also observed in other jurisdictions.¹⁴¹
 - In qualitative focus groups, we learned that potential participants are somewhat intimidated to join the sport, and value a beginner-segregated lesson or court time.¹⁴² Similarly, advanced players prefer level-segregated playing opportunities.
- Monitor population growth and enrollment for expansion of structured programming in basketball and volleyball.
 - Structured opportunities for basketball and volleyball are sufficiently covered by existing city programs and community based sports programs. According to the quantitative survey, interest in volleyball is highest in the Northeast / Horse Hills district, as well as West Henday, Central, and Southeast. Interest in basketball is highest in the Northeast / Horse Hills district, as well as Mill Woods and Meadows.¹⁴³
- Expand drop-in court times to meet the interest in basketball (youth and adults) and volleyball (primarily adults).
 - Several court based activities (basketball, volleyball, pickleball) are identified as growing in interest among both youth and adults from the quantitative survey.¹⁴⁴
 - Offering drop-in / unstructured time for these sports aligns with the research results showing a desire for unstructured play.

Other Recommendations

- Consider ways to support pre-teens in engaging in drop-in play
 - Qualitative focus groups showed that younger youth¹⁴⁵ are sometimes intimidated by large unstructured basketball drop-ins, and would benefit from having a mentor present, or from the age limits being tightened so they can be with a more comfortable peer group. These initiatives encourage beginners to gain skills and maintain interest in the sport.

¹⁴¹ Quantitative Report page 75, Jurisdictional Scan page 82

¹⁴² Qualitative Report page 26

¹⁴³ Quantitative Report page 76

¹⁴⁴ Quantitative Report page 27, 29, 32, 75

¹⁴⁵ Qualitative Report page 37

8.2.4. Detailed Recommendations: Field and Turf Programming

Key Recommendations

- Additional indoor opportunities for year-round soccer are desired. As long as facility space is available, community organizations will offer programming that meets the needs of soccer players. We recommend no substantial changes to City offered programming for soccer.
 - The quantitative survey indicates that soccer is growing in popularity, and is one of the top sports among children and youth. (32%)¹⁴⁶ as well as adults (11%).
 - The bulk of programming in field and turf activities is offered by community organizations using a combination of city and private facilities.

Other Recommendations

- Support year-round walking by offering winter walking clubs or meet-ups.
 - These clubs would offer a group based walking activity which supports the desire for social connectivity expressed by people who enjoy this activity.
 - According to the quantitative survey, social connection is a motivator for 29% of adults.¹⁴⁷ Social connection is particularly important for women, new parents, and new migrants.

8.2.5. Detailed Recommendations: Arena Programming

Key Recommendations

- Offer additional “stick-and-puck” times, especially times that allow mixed ages (e.g., parent and child).
 - The majority of programming time in arenas is dedicated to structured programming (ice hockey, ringette, figure skating) offered by community user groups and partner organizations.
 - Youth as well as parents, according to the qualitative focus groups, want more informal opportunities to play hockey, which can be expensive and time consuming to join for a full season. They would appreciate opportunities to try the sport with no commitment.

Other Recommendations

- Offer a pilot skate-rental program at an indoor arena during open skate time.
 - Skate rentals (e.g. <https://www.wintercityedmonton.ca/be-active/equipment-rentals/>) may support interest among new migrants to try ice skating. Currently these are only offered at outdoor rinks.

¹⁴⁶ Quantitative Report page 29

¹⁴⁷ Quantitative Report page 64

8.2.6. Detailed Recommendations: Other Programming

Key Recommendations

- Evaluate age appropriate fitness programming (not just for seniors!)
 - Qualitative focus groups showed that adults modify their activity choices, levels and structure well before reaching 'senior' age.
 - Resources (staff or materials) to support activity modifications related to physical limitations, which can occur at any age. Programming of existing classes with a focus on rehabilitation (e.g., yoga for strength building).
 - Offering slower paced classes or drop-in sports that are geared towards those with limitations. This includes offering strength training machines that can 'assist'; making them supportive for people with joint pain or injury in particular.

Other Recommendations

- As strength training grows in popularity among many age groups, we recommend promotion of the existing orientation and learning programs offered by the city.¹⁴⁸
 - These programs align with qualitative focus group findings that people at many life stages have a desire to learn or relearn use of fitness equipment and weight training.
 - Interest in starting strength training is highest in Southwest / Rabbit Hill, and Southeast¹⁴⁹ and among new migrants, Indigenous people and parents of young children, according to the quantitative survey.
- Offer evening childminding and programming that runs concurrently with children's programming to support parents, especially mothers.
 - The quantitative survey indicates that women currently have higher rates of inactivity and higher desires to start new activities. Support women by offering additional child minding programming, particularly on weekday evenings (or making more women aware of existing offerings). Women also expressed interest in shorter duration programming that aligns with the structured programming that their children are attending.

¹⁴⁸ <https://movelearnplay.edmonton.ca/COE/public/category/browse/PROGPTX903>

¹⁴⁹ Quantitative Report page 75

8.3. Policy and Administration

8.3.1. Highlights of Key Recommendations: Policy And Administration

- Edmonton Residents
 - Improve the Move.Learn.Play website and other online information available about programming to support awareness and ease of search.
 - Continue to conduct safety audits (i.e. staff “walk throughs”, review security incidents) to ensure a feeling of safety in-facility, parking lots, and when walking or using transit to attend facilities.
 - Support equitable program registration by supporting the efforts of community groups and partner organizations (e.g., by supporting grant applications to offset registration costs or school-day visits to facilities operated by partner organizations).
 - Prioritize local (community) access to programming.
 - Enhance and support Community League capabilities.
 - Evaluate changes to pricing of memberships and the offering of daytime passes, looking for opportunities to ‘time-shift’ usage outside of the busiest weekday evening hours.
 - Enhance partnership and Co-located programming, particularly for niche programming.
- Community User Groups
 - Redevelop the booking system to meet the needs of users.
 - Review the allocation of sports fields that support football to ensure they aren’t unduly competing for limited fields with sports that can be fielded at a higher number of locations.
 - Explore partnership opportunities for additional minor hockey allocation (e.g., Edmonton Garrison Twin Rinks Arena, Canadian Athletic Club Arena) .
 - Adhere to maintenance standards for city owned arenas.
 - Continue to allocate amenities based on Recommendations 6 and 7¹⁵⁰ of the Approach to Community Recreation Facility Planning.
- Partner Organizations
 - Streamline approval processes for repairs and enhancements to be completed by partner organizations on City owned facilities or City lands.
 - Set (or communicate) a clear standard for approvals of different scope (and provide examples of what falls into each scope.
 - Empower Sport Partner Liaisons with decision-making authority when possible.
 - Enable Sport Partner Liaisons and other City staff who work intensively with partner organizations to further immerse themselves in the sports and recreations industries that they support.

¹⁵⁰ Approach to Community Recreation Facility Planning page 78.

- Support year round, family focused recreational opportunities offered by partner organizations, by approving land use and supporting grant applications.

8.3.2. Detailed Recommendations: Supporting Edmontonians

Key Recommendations

- Improve online information available about programming.¹⁵¹
 - While lack of awareness was not among the top barriers to being active according to the quantitative survey, participants in the qualitative focus groups expressed desires for improvements to the information available on the City of Edmonton website and on the Move.Learn.Play website. For example, when searching for a specific activity, it is possible to filter by time, but not by venue, by level (e.g., LIFT vs. HIIT), or by age of participant. A more robust filter and search feature is desired for drop in programs, similar to the search capabilities of registered programs.
 - Because drop in programming has capacity limits, having the ability to access live registrations (e.g., 20% full) allows potential participants to attend a facility confident that they will be allowed entry. Consider offering live counters for popular programming (e.g., recreational or lane swimming, ice skating).
- Continue to conduct safety audits (i.e. staff “walk throughs”, review security incidents) to ensure a feeling of safety in-facility, parking lots, and when walking or using transit to attend facilities.
 - Safety concerns with break-ins, finding people hiding in dressing rooms (at an arena for example), or a feeling of discomfort in the areas surrounding facilities, including transit stops, were all cited as causes for concern in qualitative focus groups. Some suggest the presence of more visible security to increase the feeling of safety within and around City facilities. However, for other visitors, the presence of existing security evokes negative feelings due to their past experiences.
- Support equitable program registration by supporting the efforts of community groups and partner organizations.
 - According to the qualitative focus groups and interviews, community user groups and partner organizations want to provide subsidized or free services to residents in financial need. Offering residents who qualify for the LAP a proof of enrollment card/form would allow these organizations to extend support without duplicating efforts of applications / needs evaluations.¹⁵²
 - The City has been a valuable supporter of granting and funding applications for partner organizations to offer programming to those who cannot afford it or may have never been exposed to an activity (e.g., school visits to ski hills, memberships at the YMCA-NA). Continue to support partner organizations and community user groups to

¹⁵¹ Qualitative Report pages 44-45.

¹⁵² Qualitative Report page 16.

find and apply for available funds, including supporting applications to other levels of government and to private funding organizations.¹⁵³

- Prioritize local (community) access to programming.
 - The quantitative survey and the qualitative focus groups both suggest that recreation needs vary across the city and location is an important factor for participation . Consider ways to ensure that local residents have priority access to registrations for programming in their local communities. This aligns with the basic commitment made by the City that “every resident will have a place to connect, be active and participate in recreation outdoors within 400 metres of their residence.”
 - According to a recent article, the City of Toronto has recently announced a pilot program where residents within the surrounding community of six recreational centres will have one week advanced registration prior to it being available to the general public. A similar program could be offered in Edmonton, targeting in-demand programs that are offered citywide.¹⁵⁴
- Evaluate pricing of memberships and day passes
 - When evaluating the cost of memberships and day passes, it is important to benchmark against directly comparable opportunities (e.g., outlying communities, private facilities) as well as less obvious comparisons (e.g., a day pass at West Edmonton Mall) to ensure that perceived value is strong.
- Look for opportunities to shift usage away from the busiest periods (e.g., weekday evenings).¹⁵⁵
 - The City could attempt to alleviate overcrowding as well as underutilization during working hours by offering mid-day incentives (discounts or free visits) or by using modernized attendance monitoring to develop location specific incentives for off-peak usage.
- Enhance partnership and co-located programming, particularly for niche programming.
 - Working with community partners to have them offer niche programming, or working with facility owners to provide City-staffed programming can enhance offerings without increasing capital expenditure. Develop a framework for these initiatives so that as communities grow, they can be put in place to provide equitable access to recreational activities when no permanent facilities yet exist.

Other Recommendations

- Continue to enhance and support Community League capabilities.
 - According to the qualitative focus groups, awareness and activity levels of community leagues vary throughout the city. Ongoing and increased support of community leagues (having training and toolkits for volunteers, or mentorship with more established community leagues) are examples of ways to continue to build this capacity, particularly in newer neighbourhoods that lack an established tradition. Qualitative feedback

¹⁵³ Qualitative Report pages 52-53.

¹⁵⁴ <https://www.ctvnews.ca/toronto/politics/toronto-city-hall/article/it-will-soon-be-easier-for-residents-in-some-toronto-neighbourhoods-to-sign-up-for-recreation-programs/>

¹⁵⁵ Qualitative Report pages 27-28.

showed that residents have vastly different access to community league programming and facilities, based on the neighbourhood they live in and the strength of their community league.¹⁵⁶

- Consider a program similar to the The Sweat Equity Maintenance Program offered by the City of Winnipeg, where the City pays community centres to do maintenance work (e.g., mowing, line painting). This would be similar to the current Home Base agreements with community sports teams, but focused on Community Leagues.¹⁵⁷
- Continue to benchmark pricing for recreational programming against private facilities and against outlying communities.
 - The qualitative focus groups suggest that Edmontonians compare the value of the programming and memberships that the City offers with other public and private facilities. They are willing to travel to find good value, and have noted that outlying communities are currently providing better value for whole-family activities.¹⁵⁸
- Evaluate new communications to increase general awareness of programming and membership options. Continue to evaluate choice of social media channels as well as offline communications.
- Develop a Quality Assurance framework¹⁵⁹
 - While CRC currently tracks program fill rates and cost recovery, it does not appear to have a structured quality assurance framework that evaluates program effectiveness, participant experience, or developmental impact, based upon standards. Edmonton could consider developing an overarching performance measurement framework such as the [HIGH FIVE® accreditation process](#) currently used by several other municipalities for both children's and adult programming, according to the jurisdiction scan.

8.3.3. Detailed Recommendations: Supporting Community User Groups

Recommendations in this section arise from the four focus groups conducted with community user groups, evaluated against the State of Sport Report.

Key Recommendations

- Review the allocation of sports fields that support football to ensure they aren't unduly competing for limited fields with sports that can be fielded at a higher number of locations.¹⁶⁰
 - Specialized facilities, such as Commonwealth Field House, are in high demand. Groups (e.g. Football) that require the dimensions of this field compete for allocation with groups that could be served in other facilities.

¹⁵⁶ Qualitative Report pages 31-32.

¹⁵⁷ Jurisdictional Scan page 14.

¹⁵⁸ Qualitative Report page 27.

¹⁵⁹ Jurisdictional Scan page 57-58.

¹⁶⁰ Qualitative Report pages 33-34.

- Explore partnership opportunities for additional minor hockey allocation (e.g., Edmonton Garrison Twin Rinks Arena, Canadian Athletic Club Arena, as indicated in the Approach to Community Recreation Facility Planning, page 78).¹⁴⁶
 - This can preserve ice time for other (adult and youth) community user groups who are currently unable to secure bookings (especially in prime time), because of the preferential allocation given to minor hockey.
- Continue to allocate amenities based on Recommendations 6 and 7 of the Approach to Community Recreation Facility Planning.¹⁶¹
 - There is an inherent tension between community user groups and the general public for limited resources (e.g., can a court be booked for private use?, can a full pool be booked without the need to reserve a lane for recreational users?). Despite the tension experienced by community user groups who would like additional or “full amenity” bookings, continue to allocate amenities based on Recommendations 6 and 7:
 - That sufficient time is made available within all amenities for programming, spontaneous drop in, and user groups for balanced service delivery.
 - That for each amenity, allocation of time is based on standards of play reflecting current governing bodies’ mandates, physical literacy recommendations, and Canadian Sport for Life/ Long-Term Athlete Development guidelines.
- Redevelop the booking system to meet the needs of users which are suggested by the qualitative focus groups.¹⁶²
 - Develop a booking system that focuses on needs based search, rather than by facility. Ensure that one system can be used to search city and school facilities. This would include the development of a live availability calendar for amenities.
 - Allow online payment (including Interac, e-transfer or paypal, not just credit card) for all types of facility rentals.
 - Clearly note the minimum booking time and work to allow shorter-notice rentals when possible (e.g., when maintenance staff are already in the building).
 - Create informal or formal ways for users to offer unneeded but already allocated time back to other groups, or for groups to split a 3 hour minimum booking.
- Adhere to maintenance standards for City-owned arenas.
 - The qualitative focus groups suggest that community user groups in arenas are dissatisfied¹⁶³ with inconsistent maintenance across arenas, including issues with ice quality, shower conditions, and lighting failures. Shower facilities are a basic amenity that is often not maintained in older arenas.

Other Recommendations

- Investigate ways to support community user groups to access liability insurance.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Approach to Community Recreation Facility Planning page 78.

¹⁶² Qualitative Report pages 44-45.

¹⁶³ Qualitative Report page 47.

¹⁶⁴ Qualitative Report page 53-54.

- Community user groups suggested that they have increasingly struggled to afford liability insurance that is required to protect their volunteers and participants. They would like the City to investigate offering pooled insurance, as is done in other jurisdictions (e.g., in Kitchener Ontario, community users can add the cost of \$2million liability to the cost of each rental booking, rather than carrying separate insurance).

8.3.4. Detailed Recommendations: Supporting Partner Organizations

Recommendations in this section arise from the seven interviews conducted with representatives from partner organizations.

Key Recommendations

- Streamline approval processes for repairs and enhancements to be completed by partner organizations on City owned facilities or City lands.¹⁶⁵
- Set (or communicate) a clear standard for approvals of different scope (and provide examples of what falls into each scope.
 - Consider developing a streamlined or templated approach for City approvals of a less complex/sensitive nature (e.g., painting), reducing the challenges faced by volunteers when seeking approvals.
 - For more complex approvals (e.g., new builds) appointing a key point of contact to work with partner organizations throughout the process.
 - Recognize that even for more complex renovation projects, partner organizations are reliant on granting application deadlines to secure funding, and need a reasonable and transparent process to gain City approvals and sponsorship.
- Empower Sport Partner Liaisons with decision-making authority when possible.
 - Sport Partner Liaisons are a valued and essential staff member for partner organizations - consistency in the position is valued. Empowering them to further support and strengthen relationships between City staff and partner organizations is warranted.
- Enable Sport Partner Liaisons and other City staff who work intensively with partner organizations to further immerse themselves in the sports and recreations industries that they support.
 - For example, if working with partners in a specific sports field such as skiing or golfing, attend industry trade shows, conferences and learning opportunities that attract both private and public operators, in order to learn best practices and future trends within the industry. Partners with professional operations encourage the City to think of themselves as members not only of a municipal government, but also of the *recreational industries* that they support.
 - Partner organizations in this field note the absence of City staff at these events, and tie this to the challenges that they face when proposing improvements and upgrades to their facilities and amenities.¹⁶⁶
- Support year-round, family-focused recreational opportunities offered by partner organizations, by approving land use and supporting grant applications.
 - Support the development of year-round activities, through approvals for new uses of lands, or the provision of community facilities for off-season activities.
 - Focus on families when developing accessibility programs, to counteract the affordability challenges they face.

¹⁶⁵ Qualitative Report pages 9-10.

¹⁶⁶ Qualitative Report page 53.

- Continue to sponsor and support granting applications that provide crucial funding for partner organizations, allowing them to support EDI and accessible recreation.

8.4. Recommendations for Addressing Equity¹⁶⁷

8.4.1. Highlights of Key Recommendations: Addressing Equity

- Develop EDI performance indicators, as recommended in the Equitable Recreation Programming Audit - Spring 2024.
- Address social accessibility through facility design.
 - Include multi-purpose community hubs that combine active recreation with opportunities for social connection and whole-family activities.
 - Design culturally responsive change rooms, washrooms.
- Address physical accessibility.
 - Support community partners in grant applications and staff training (for coaching adaptive sports).
 - Design lifelong recreational learning experiences.
 - Recognize barriers based on sensory-sensitivities, neurodiversity, or immuno-compromized status.
- Address financial accessibility by offering free or sliding scale programming, and enhancing opportunities for free and unstructured play within the community.
 - Build awareness and tracking of fee assistance usage, to ensure high utilization. Edmontonians are not aware that if their income is close to the published thresholds, they may be eligible for discounts, if not fully subsidized recreation.
 - This statement appears on the application, but not on the qualification section of the City website¹⁶⁸: Households applying with a Notice of assessment can receive benefits for 1 year, 2 years or discounted memberships depending on their income compared to percentage of LICO.
 - Enhance City parks with informal programming, shelter and amenities that support unstructured activity.

¹⁶⁷ Qualitative Report pages 47-48.

¹⁶⁸ https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/leisure-access-program

8.4.2. Detailed Recommendations: Addressing Equity Overall

Many of the recommendations in this section are developed based on best practices in other jurisdictions, as well as findings from the qualitative research component.

Key Recommendations

- Develop EDI performance indicators, as recommended in the 2024 Equitable Recreation Programming Audit.¹⁶⁹
 - Develop a structured EDI framework, similar to Mississauga's Diversity Program and Service Framework, which provides clear guidance on identifying and addressing gaps in service equity. Incorporating EDI tracking as a formal performance indicator with measures of participation across socio-economic and demographic categories, would help Edmonton assess who is engaging with recreation programs with an EDI perspective.
 - This framework outlines target populations, specific steps for inclusion, and measurable performance indicators, helping ensure accountability and continuous improvement.¹⁷⁰

Other Recommendations

- Consider adopting a structured primary program model, similar to Toronto's approach, to ensure equitable access to core recreational activities.¹⁷¹
 - This model is based upon the categorization of introductory-level programs into key areas such as swimming, fitness, camps, skating, and senior programming, providing a clear framework for both planning and evaluation.
 - Edmonton already delivers entry-level recreation programs, but a structured citywide model could help streamline offerings, reduce duplication, and ensure that core programs remain accessible to all residents. Edmonton could consider expanding its seasonal and pilot program model by setting clear review periods to evaluate success and scalability.

¹⁶⁹ 2024 Equitable Recreation Programming Audit Recommendations.

¹⁷⁰ Jurisdictional Scan pages 40-41.

¹⁷¹ Jurisdictional Scan pages 35-36.

8.4.3. Detailed Recommendations: Addressing Social Accessibility

Key Recommendations

- Include multi-purpose community hubs that combine active recreation with opportunities for social connection and whole-family activities.¹⁷²
 - When designing facilities, the inclusion of a community hub model (e.g., a library branch, community league, senior supports, or other social activities) is warranted.
 - According to the qualitative focus groups, families express a clear desire to access programming for children/youth of all ages at the same time (recognizing that this programming may include art, dance, or cultural programming), and young families in particular seek ways to ‘stack’ activities on the weekend to create half or full-day outings.
 - The qualitative focus groups also suggested that providing multi-purpose rooms and either city or partner led programming that includes active recreation and other forms of activity would be particularly impactful on the senior community (who desire social connections), families (who seek neighborhood activities for the entire family) and migrants (who seek ways to offer culturally specific programming).
- Design culturally responsive change rooms, washrooms.¹⁷³
 - Newer facilities provide additional family changing areas, single unit enclosed changing areas and washrooms. Welcomed by families for many reasons discovered from the qualitative focus groups, these building features are of particular importance to cultural communities and to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.
 - While it may be difficult to retrofit all of these features into older communities, even the offer of single stall washrooms and changerooms where possible can provide an alternative.

¹⁷² Qualitative Report page 7.

¹⁷³ Qualitative Report pages 23-24.

8.4.4. Detailed Recommendations: Addressing Physical Accessibility

Key Recommendations

- Support community partners in grant applications and staffing.
 - According to the qualitative focus groups, community partners have many successful examples of working with Edmontonians to offer adapted sports and active recreation opportunities, and have a strong desire to continue to do so.
 - They need support from the City in finding funding streams (e.g., proving information on grants available from the City, other governments and not-for-profit organizations), as well as grant writing expertise
 - If the City can offer training on adaptation of sports coaching, this would add capacity for community users and partner organizations to offer these programs. Currently, volunteer and paid staff feel inadequately prepared to do so.
 - Creating a centralized resource, like Calgary's Adapted Hub, which provides adaptive equipment, trained staff, and accessibility advocacy could provide the support needed.
 - While open to the idea of offering para-sport and accessible facilities, partner organizations note that the realities of limited volunteer capacity, older facilities, and lack of demand limit the offerings in this area.
- Design lifelong recreational learning experiences.
 - According to results from both the quantitative survey and the qualitative focus groups with Edmontonians from different age groups, as active Edmontonians move through lifestages, they need access to activities that are accessible to them - Not just seniors programming (although this is important) - but mid-aged and older adults need support to adapt to their aging bodies, and seek out opportunities to participate in programming that is low-impact, and also perhaps less competitive or fast-paced.
 - In addition, mid-aged and older adults may switch activities from the sports they played as youth and younger adults, and indicate a desire for entry-level support (orientation, beginner lessons, or coaching) as they transition to a new activity.

Other Recommendations based primarily on qualitative focus groups

- Recognize barriers based on sensory-sensitivities, neurodiversity, or immuno-compromized status. Although overall demand for programming noted below is low, having at least some programming that meets these needs supports people with these lived experiences.
 - Build upon the successful ACT programming offered, and ensure that opportunities to participate in safe and appropriate programming exist for both youth and adults with sensory, neurodiversity or immuno-compromized status.
 - Persons with neurodiversity or sensory sensitivities explained in focus groups the importance of having "quiet and dim" times
 - Some residents are immuno-compromised and would appreciate a time when

they could attend a “masks mandatory” facility or activity.

- One participant with a teenager with complex disability noted that much of the programming that is physically suitable is also geared towards young children, and the negative impact that this has on her son.

8.4.5. Detailed Recommendations: Addressing Financial Accessibility

Key Recommendations

- Ensure broad awareness of the sliding scale of benefits that are available to Edmonton residents via the Leisure Access Program.
 - In qualitative focus groups, there is a clear and strong perception that the LAP doesn’t support people with modest but not the lowest incomes.
 - This statement appears on the application, but not on the qualification section of the City website¹⁷⁴: Households applying with a Notice of assessment can receive benefits for 1 year, 2 years or discounted memberships depending on their income compared to percentage of LICO.
- Expand targeted or universal free access programs.
 - Other municipalities have designed policies and programs to provide access in high need areas while limiting stigma. Toronto offers free programming in 39 community centres in high-need areas, and Mississauga provides universal free swimming and after-school recreation for children and youth at select moments during the year, as well as a discounted learn to swim program.¹⁷⁵
 - Universal access (such as community league free swims) offer access without requiring applications or eligibility, reducing stigma.
 - Additionally, Edmonton could expand sponsorships with businesses and non-profits to support no-cost programming without increasing pressure on municipal budgets, as being conducted in other jurisdictions.
 - Build awareness of the LAP program among community user groups and partner organizations. Many offer their own subsidized or free memberships programs, and in qualitative focus groups, noted that being able to verify LAP enrollment would eliminate the need to host their own subsidy application process. This is currently done by larger organizations (e.g. SportsCentral and Kidsport) but awareness may not be strong among all community user groups.¹⁷⁶
- Build awareness and tracking of fee assistance usage, to ensure high utilization.
 - To maximize the reach of fee assistance programs, Edmonton could adopt utilization tracking mechanisms like Mississauga’s ActiveAssist program, which resets unused

¹⁷⁴ https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/leisure-access-program

¹⁷⁵ Jurisdictional Scan page 7.

¹⁷⁶ Qualitative Report page 16.

- subsidies after six months to allow more residents to benefit.
 - Edmonton could consider strengthening program awareness and facility access among underserved communities by working with both community services partners as well as external community organizations working with these equity deserving communities. This aligns with recommendations found in the CRC Equity Audit, suggesting the importance of building awareness of these programs and supports.
 - Increase awareness of the Value membership programs to increase uptake.
- Enhance City parks with informal programming, shelter and amenities that support unstructured activity.
 - The qualitative focus groups suggested ways to improve usage of City parks in all weather - with shelter (natural or man made) for shade and rain protection offered as a key suggestion.
 - In addition, it suggested that parks can become inaccessible in the winter unless an entrance or pathway from sidewalks to fields are created. We recommend an approach similar to the City of Toronto, which prioritizes snow clearing in high-use park areas and maintains walking access through winter trails.
 - The qualitative focus groups that the City's Green Shack program is popular and might need additional programming. Green Shacks could also offer 'family sign out' of games and sporting equipment to be used within the park.¹⁷⁷

End of Recommendations

¹⁷⁷ Qualitative Report page 38.

9. Appendices

9.1. Supporting Documentation

The following documents have been used to inform the design of this research, as well as the recommendations resulting from the research:

Included in the statement of work:

- The Approach to Community Recreation and Facility Planning in Edmonton: [Approach to Community Recreation Facility Planning in Edmonton](#)
 - The Approach is a transparent and objective method for the City to plan, prioritize, and strategically manage public recreation amenities, balancing competing demands with infrastructure renewal and growth. Recommendations for facility and amenity development are evaluated against the priorities and principals in the approach.
- State of Sport: [Edmonton Sport Reports - Research Support 2025 Volume 1 .pdf](#)
 - This focuses on participation in structured sports as well as the facilities that support participation. Authored by the Community Recreation and Culture Branch (CRC), it provides key information on the current state of recreation facilities and amenities, as well as observed participation trends.

Additional Documentation:

- [The City Plan](#)
 - The City Plan Community of Communities Priority signals the importance of community recreation. Growth projections for Edmonton, including growth patterns of communities within the city informed recommendations on future facility and programming needs.
- [Connect Edmonton](#)
 - The Healthy City strategic goal signals the importance of community recreation: Edmonton is a neighbourly city with community and personal wellness that embodies and promotes equity for all Edmontonians
- [Municipal Census \(2019\) Ward Comparisons](#)
 - Ward Comparisons allowed the researchers to identify communities with higher proportions of people who align with equity deserving communities, in order to tailor recommendations that support the needs of these communities.
- [Equitable Recreation Programming Audit - Spring 2024](#)

- Recommendation 1 highlighted the importance of collecting regular feedback to improve how it obtains information on recreation programming needs from the broader community to identify access barriers and inform equitable recreation program planning.
 - Recommendations to enhance and improve equitable recreation access were assessed in light of the recommendations within the audit.
- 2025 CRC State of Sport & Recreation Amenity Inventory
 - The inventory was used to compare perceptions from respondents on the need for amenities with the current inventory available.
- Live Active
 - Provided background information about active living within the City.
- 2005-2015 Recreation Facility Master Plan
 - Provided important background information on the progress that has been made in meeting the community recreation needs throughout the City.

9.2. Definitions/Glossary of Terms

- **Active Recreational Activity:** is any activity that an individual freely chooses to do for fun, social interaction, fitness or relaxation, and requires them to be physically active.
- **Activity Level** (in quantitative survey):
 - Active: at least once a week
 - Occasionally active: less than once a week
 - Inactive: Never
- **Low income:** Household income in 2024 of under \$60,000
- **Migrants:**
 - New migrants: Under 5 years
 - Established migrants: 5+ years
- **Seniors:** People aged 55 or older
- **Strength training:** weightlifting/body building/strength training
- **Jurisdictional scan** research designed to identify best practices and innovative approaches from other municipalities that could be adopted or adapted to address similar issues or challenges in the City of Edmonton. The Jurisdictional scan can inform policy direction, service improvements, operational model adjustments and budget considerations.
- **Facility:** A building or location built with the purpose for participation in the spectrum of recreation and community activities. For the purposes of the Approach, “recreation facilities” include both indoor (arenas, pools, etc.) and outdoor spaces (sports fields, ball diamonds, etc.). A recreation facility or space is a publicly accessible venue for recreation activity to occur; a recreation facility or space can include any combination of recreation amenities. Examples of recreation facilities or spaces are the Terwillegar Community Recreation Centre and the Eastglen Leisure Centre.
- **Amenity:** A specific component within a recreation facility or space. Sports fields, swimming pools, and ice arenas are examples of recreation amenities.
- **Programming:** The facilitation and provision of organized recreation activities and opportunities in community recreation facilities. (e.g., swimming lessons, drop in pickleball courts)
- **Structured Activity:** by joining a program, club, league
- **Unstructured Activity:** as in a drop-in program, open court use, or on their own or with friends
- **Sport:** any competitive active recreational activity, where a contest is held between two or more people to determine a winner, whether for fun or organized by a sport organization or league. It includes observation of formal rules and regulations, participation either individually or as a team, and may or may not include a coaching or officiating or judging component.
- **Community user groups:** A non-profit community group with a mandate to provide a program or service to a specific group, and/or area of the city, and/or the entire city.
- **Partner organization:** An organization that has a formalized relationship with the City of Edmonton to provide recreation opportunities. These organizations can include both the public sector (e.g. community organizations, education sector) or the private sector.

- GBA+, or Gender-based Analysis Plus:** An analytical process used to assess the diverse impacts of policies, programs, and initiatives on different groups of people. The "plus" indicates that it considers factors beyond sex and gender, such as age, race, ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation, recognizing that these factors intersect and create unique experiences.



9.3. Participant Profiles

9.3.1. Jurisdictional Scan

City	Number of KIIs	Number of Participants Per Interview
Toronto	Interview 1	2
Montréal	Interview 1	1
	Interview 2	1
Calgary	Interview 1	4
	Interview 2	1
Edmonton	Interview 1	3
	Interview 2	2
Winnipeg	Interview 1	2
Mississauga	Interview 1	1
	Interview 2	2
	Interview 3	1
Vancouver	Interview 1	5
Hamilton	Interview 1	4
Total	13	

City	Informants	
	Name	Title
Toronto	Kashyap Gosai	Acting Manager of Standards and Innovation Community Recreation branch Parks, Forestry & Recreation Division
	Matt Bently	Senior Project Manager Parks, Forestry & Recreation Division
Montréal	Luc Denis	Directeur Direction des sports Service des grands parcs, du Mont-Royal et des sports
Calgary	Heather Johnson	Director Recreation & Social Programs
	Connor Rodewald	Executive Advisor Recreation and Social Programs
	Florent Le Berre	Manager of Service Strategies Recreation and Social Programs
	Jarret Hoebers	Manager of Regional Operations Recreation and Social Programs
Edmonton	Marissa Brown	Recreation Strategy Liaison Community Recreation And Culture Community Services
	Baljindar Grewal	Supervisor, Business Performance and Membership Subsidies Co-Chair of the Project Delivery Team Engage and Play: Shaping Public Recreation
	Jill Gillis	Supervisor, Sport Partnerships Community Recreation And Culture Community Services
Winnipeg	Dave Domke	Manager Parks and Open Space Public Works Department
	Jennifer Sarna	Manager of Recreation Services Recreation Services Division Community Services Department
	Jennefer Larsen	Administrative Coordinator Business Office Operations Recreation Services Division Community Services Department

Mississauga	Arlene D'Costa	Manager, Business Planning Community Services Department Business Planning
	Kristina Zietsma	Director, Recreation & Culture Community Services Department
Vancouver	Anthony D'Ambrosio	Business Analyst Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
	Jessica Land	Associate Director of Recreation Services Community Centres, Youth Services, Senior Services
	Kate Perkins	Partner Relationship Manager Community Center Associations
	Luke Balson	Associate Director of Recreation Services Vancouver East
	Susan Mele	Associate Director of Recreation Services Vancouver West
Hamilton	Daniel Hoedt	Recreation Projects Specialist Healthy and Safe Communities Recreation
	Steve Sevor	Acting Director of Recreation Recreation Division
	Karly Brush	Acting Manager of Sports Services Healthy and Safe Communities Recreation Division
	Laura Kerr	Manager of Program Development Recreation Division
	Dawn Walton	Manager of Business Support Recreation Division

9.3.2. Quantitative Telephone Survey

Age	Weighted	Unweighted
18 to 34	32%	22%
35 to 54	35%	37%
55 and older	33%	41%

Gender	Weighted	Unweighted
Man	48%	45%
Woman	47%	45%
Other	1%	1%
Prefer not to answer	4%	4%

Household income	Weighted	Unweighted
<\$30,000	7%	8%
\$30,000 to <\$60,000	17%	17%
\$60,000 to <\$90,000	17%	16%
\$90,000 to <\$120,000	15%	15%
\$120,000 to <\$150,000	10%	10%
\$150,000+	18%	18%
Don't know	5%	4%
Prefer not to answer	12%	13%

District	Weighted	Unweighted
Southwest / Rabbit Hill	8%	7%
Ellerslie	5%	5%
Whitemud	10%	9%
Mill Woods and Meadows	12%	11%
Scona	6%	6%
Southeast	5%	6%
West Henday	6%	6%
West Edmonton	6%	6%
Jasper Place	5%	6%
Central	9%	10%
118 Avenue (North Central)	5%	5%
Northwest	12%	12%
Northeast / Horse Hills	12%	11%

9.3.3. Qualitative Focus Groups (Public)

District-Level Focused Discussion Groups	# of Participants
District Level Southwest and Rabbit Hill / West Henday / Ellerslie / Millwoods and Meadows	6
Southwest and Rabbit Hill	7
West Henday	8
Ellerslie	8
Millwoods and Meadows	5

District Level Central / 118 Avenue (North Central)	6
Central	6
118 Avenue (North Central)	6
District Level Northeast and Horsehill / Northwest / Jasper Place / West Edmonton	9
Northeast and Horsehill	5
Northwest	7
Jasper Place	6
West Edmonton	6
District Level Whitemud / Scona / Southeast	6
Whitemud	10
Scona	8
Southeast	7

Equity Deserving Communities Discussion Groups	# of Participants
Indigenous community	4
Racialized Edmontonians	6
English not first language / Newcomers to Canada	8
Persons with a disability	6
2SLGBTQIA+ Edmontonians	6

Age	# of Participants
18 to 24	9
25 to 34	18
35 to 44	59
45 to 54	29
55 to 64	17
65 to 74	11
75 and older	3

Gender	# of Participants
Man	63
Woman	79
Other	4

Income	# of Participants
Less than \$60k	29
\$60k to less than \$120k	47
\$120k or more	70

Indigenous	# of Participants
Indigenous	14

Migrants	# of Participants
Not born in Canada	39

Persons with a Disability	# of Participants
Person with a disability	21

9.3.4. Qualitative Focus Groups (Community User Groups)

The total number of community user group participants is 26.

Community User Groups	# of Participants
Sportsfields / diamonds / pitches	6
Gymnasium / indoor courts / indoor fields	4
Ice Rinks	9
Aquatic facilities	7

9.3.5. Qualitative Partner Organization Interviews

Partner Organization Interviews	# of Participants
Individual interviews Edmonton Dragon Boat Racing Club Mill Woods Golf Course Edmonton Mountain Bike Alliance Snow Valley Ski Club The Argyll Velodrome Association YMCA Edmonton Paddling Centres Association	7

End of Appendices
