



Open Space, Recreation & Culture Master Plan

What We Heard Report

February 2021



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Contents

Project overview	3
How we engaged	3
Online Survey	3
Stakeholder Interviews.....	3
Who was engaged.....	3
Community of residence.....	3
Age	4
Household composition.....	4
What We Heard	4
How stakeholders use existing facilities and open spaces	4
Planning for the next ten years	8
Important trends and patterns	8
Improvements or enhancements.....	9
Additional open spaces and facilities	11
Prioritizing what matters.....	13
What's next?.....	13



Project overview

Wheatland County is an ideal blend of rural and urban lifestyles, neighboring the vibrant city of Calgary. Since April 2019, the County has been working to develop and grow a progressive new Open Space, Recreation and Culture Master Plan, which will allow the County's leadership and staff to strategically guide and manage the direction of recreation facilities and open space until 2030.

The Master Plan will provide the County with a framework to manage its open spaces, programs, events, facilities and amenities cost-effectively, while guiding future open space planning, facility development and expansion, program and service delivery opportunities.

Wheatland County is dedicated to the inclusion of all stakeholders (including the public at large) in the development of the Master Plan. The County desires meaningful and purposeful engagement with internal and external stakeholders to better understand community needs and desires regarding open spaces, recreation, and culture so that the future planning and implementation activities are informed and "owned" by the community as a whole.

How we engaged

Wheatland County engaged local stakeholders through interviews and an online engagement survey.

Online Survey

Stakeholders were given the opportunity to submit their input and thoughts through an online engagement survey, which focused on identifying the current and future open spaces, recreational and cultural needs of residents. This online survey was available to residents and stakeholders from March 10, 2020 – April 5, 2020 and November 10–29 2020. The survey link was sent out via email, hosted on the County website and socialized through social media platforms (i.e., Facebook and Twitter).

Stakeholder Interviews

A small number of County stakeholders were engaged through interviews that were conducted by Wheatland County's contract public engagement consultants. Thirteen stakeholders were invited to participate in the interview engagement process.

Council Workshop

A Council workshop was hosted by the public engagement consultants on September 8, 2020. All Council members were present to provide their input and feedback.

Who was engaged

A total of 80 individuals participated in Wheatland County's online survey. Additionally, a total of seven individuals participated in one-on-one interviews.

Community of residence

Of stakeholders surveyed and interviewed, the majority lived in or closest to the communities of:

- Carseland – 18%
 - Rosebud – 18%
 - Lyalta – 15%
 - Other (primarily comprised of individuals living in or close to Strathmore) – 14%
- Other communities' respondents indicated they lived in or close to included: Speargrass (11%), Gleichen (10%), Cheadle (6%), Nightingale (5%), and Namaka (4%).

Age

The majority of respondents who reported their age was 31-45 (44%), while 39% of respondents indicated being 46-65 years. A total of 16% of survey respondents were older than 66 years.

Household composition

When asked how many people were residing in the survey participant's household, the majority of stakeholders indicated that their household had approximately two people (41%), while 38% of stakeholders indicated that they had 3-4 people living in their home.



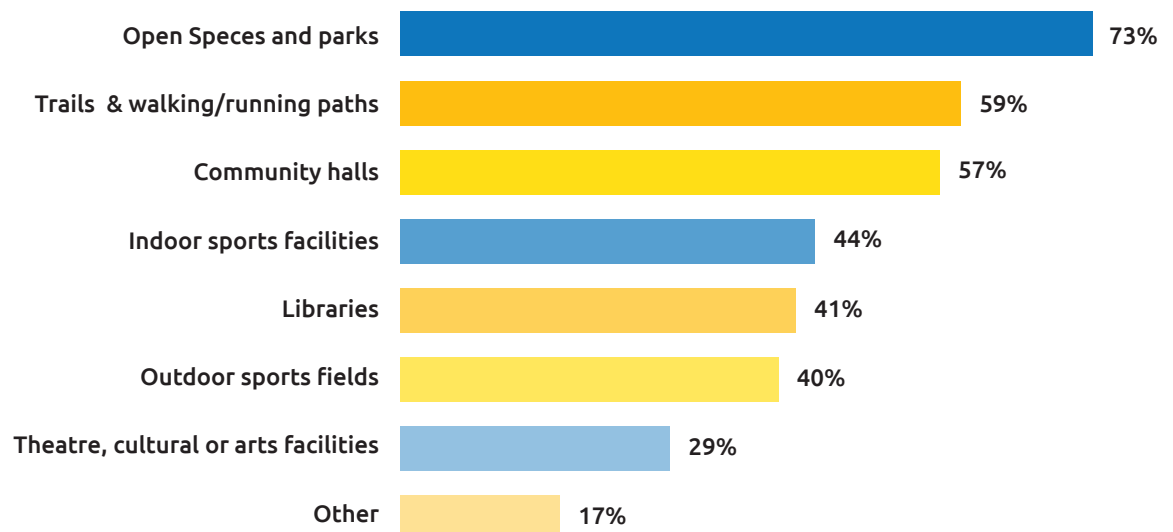
What We Heard

How stakeholders use existing facilities and open spaces

Stakeholders were asked to identify the open spaces and facilities they currently use; the following were the top three choices were selected:

- Open spaces and parks – 73%
- Trails and walking/running paths – 59%
- Community Halls – 57%

Other popular spaces and facilities being used by stakeholders included: indoor sports facilities (44%), outdoor sports fields (40%) and libraries (42%).

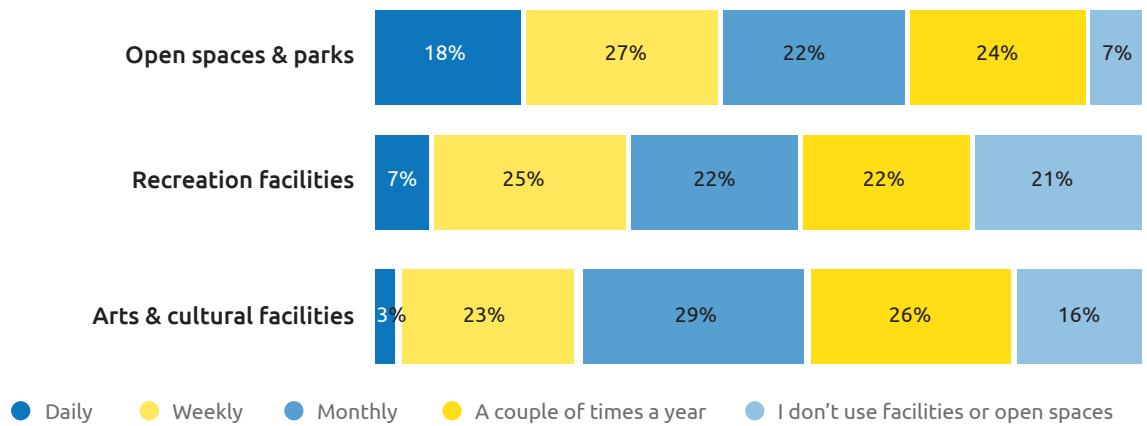


Other spaces and facilities that respondents visited included the off-leash dog park, horse riding arenas and rodeo grounds, bowling facilities and golf courses.

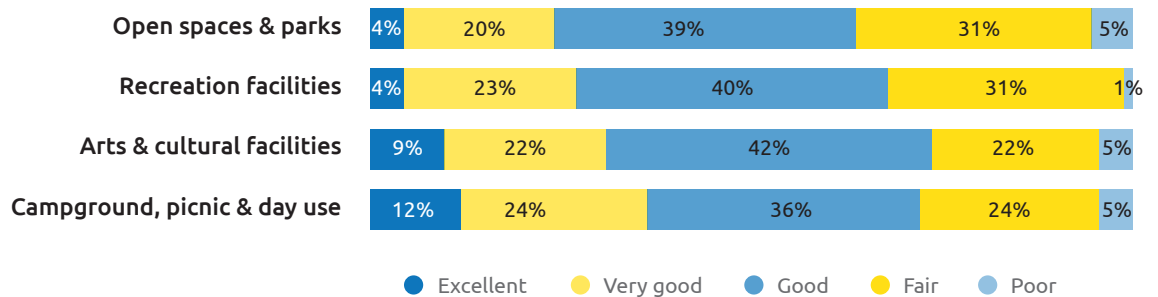
When stakeholders were asked how often they use open spaces and facilities available in Wheatland County, the majority of responses collected indicated:

- 27% of stakeholders use open spaces and parks on a weekly basis
- 25% of stakeholders use recreational facilities (i.e., outdoor rinks, sports fields and playground equipment) on a weekly basis
- 29% of stakeholders use arts and cultural facilities (i.e., libraries, theatre, community halls) on a monthly basis

Below is a representation of how often survey respondents indicated they used open spaces, parks and recreational facilities in the County.



Online survey stakeholders were asked the rate the quality of Wheatland County's open spaces and parks, recreational facilities, arts and cultural facilities and campground, picnic and day use spaces. Overall, the majority of respondents rated the quality of these spaces and facilities as "good". Below is a depiction of survey results:

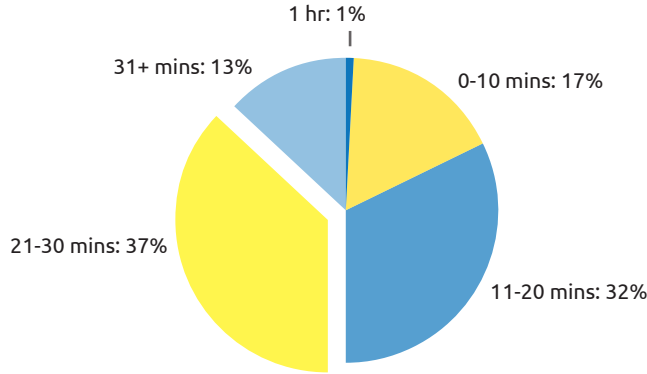


The category that received that highest "poor" rating by stakeholders was campgrounds, picnic and day-use spaces (12%).

Stakeholders who were interviewed were asked to indicate how satisfied with the open spaces, recreational facilities and cultural facilities available. A total of two people indicated they were "satisfied", two were "somewhat satisfied" and two were "quite satisfied". One individual indicated they were "not satisfied".

Online survey stakeholders were asked **how far they were willing to travel to access open spaces and parks, recreational facilities and art and cultural facilities**. On average, the majority of stakeholders indicated they were willing to drive up to 21-30 minutes to visit these spaces and facilities (32%), while an average of 30% of stakeholders would be willing to drive approximately 11-20 minutes to visit these spaces and facilities.

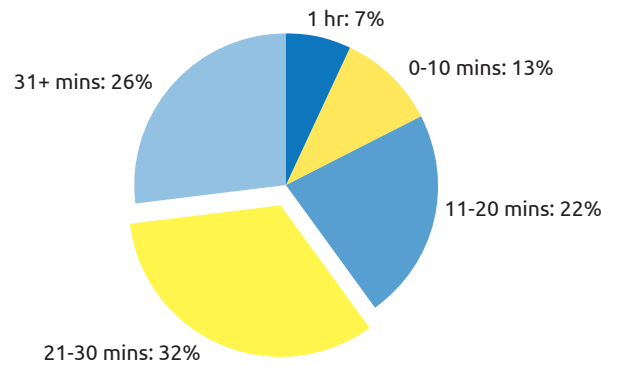
Recreation facilities



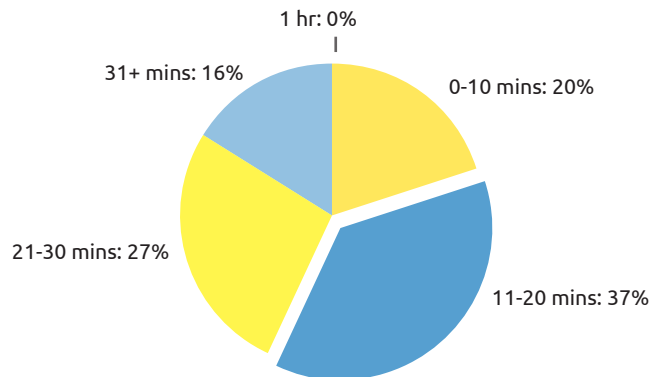
37% of stakeholders were willing to drive for 21-30 minutes to visit a recreational facility, while 32% of respondents would be willing to drive 11-20 minutes.

Arts & cultural facilities

32% of survey stakeholders indicated they would be willing to drive 31-30 minutes to visit arts and cultural facilities in Wheatland County, while 26% of respondents indicate they would drive 31+ minutes. Overall, those who enjoy these facilities are willing to drive further distances to visit them.

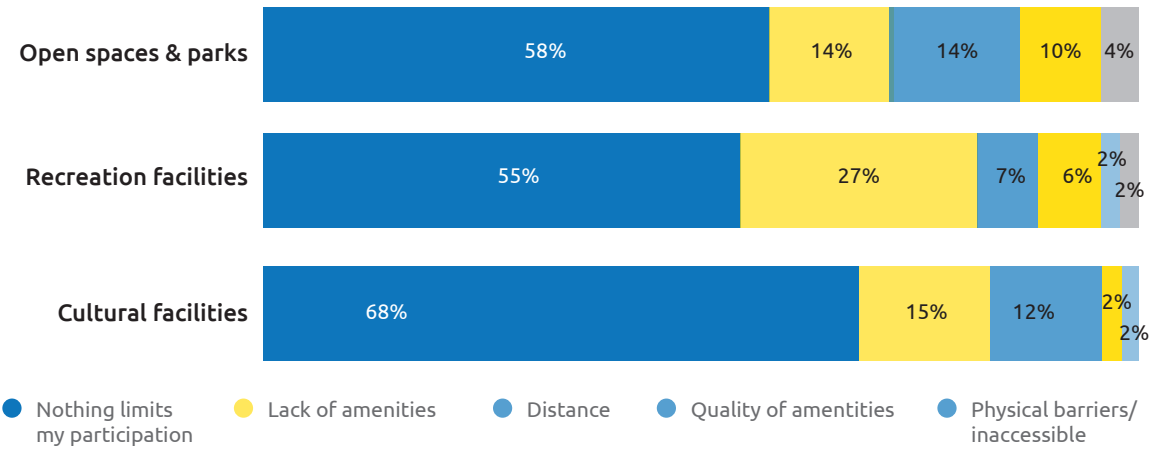


Open spaces & parks



Of those stakeholders who completed the online survey, a total of 37% of them indicated they would be willing to drive 11-20 minutes to visit open spaces and parks, while 27% of respondents indicated they would be willing to drive 21-30 minutes.

When stakeholders were asked **what limits their participation or use of Wheatland County open spaces or facilities**, the majority of stakeholders indicated that **nothing limited their participation**.



However, "lack of amenities" was indicated to be the second most common reason provided by stakeholders for why they may not participate or use facilities or open spaces. More specifically, 27% of stakeholders felt that recreational facilities were lacking amenities, while 14% of respondents noted that distance was an issue when participating or using open spaces and parks.



Planning for the next ten years

Important trends and patterns

Interview and survey stakeholders were asked to identify what trends or patterns the county needs to pay attention to in order to make informed decisions about recreation, parks and culture planning.

The top themes that emerged included family and age friendly community; outdoor recreation and facilities; cost, and; community, arts and culture. Below is a summary of major themes referenced in participant feedback.

Theme	References	Theme Summary
Family and age-friendly community	15	<p>The majority of comments indicated a need to plan for an age-friendly future.</p> <p>Most comments referenced a need to ensure that Wheatland County is family, youth and senior-friendly. Some comments indicated a need to ensure youth and children have access to recreational opportunities and activities.</p> <p>Additionally, there was a strong desire to ensure open spaces and recreational facilities and cultural facilities are accessible and available to seniors.</p>
Outdoor recreation & facilities	15	<p>Several comments indicated a need to ensure outdoor recreational facilities and amenities are prioritized. Comments indicated a desire to see shade structures in open spaces, improvements to playgrounds, and additional outdoor recreational opportunities for residents. Ball diamonds and hiking/walking paths and trails were seen as important to include in future planning efforts.</p>
Cost	8	<p>Survey respondents indicated a need for Wheatland County to plan for programs, services and current infrastructure that are cost-effective. Other respondents indicated a need to avoid or reduce further spending of County resources on open spaces and parks, recreational and cultural facilities.</p>
Community, arts & culture	7	<p>Availability of libraries, arts and crafts studios, live theatre, Farmers Markets were seen to be desirable.</p>

“ Young families need to be at the centre of decisions. We need more spaces for kids to explore and play. ”

Additional themes were identified in participant comments to a smaller degree. Themes included:

- Indoor facilities - was referenced four times in participant comments. Comments indicated a need to see an increased number of indoor facilities such as skating rinks and indoor agricultural facilities (i.e., horse riding).
- Community Development & Land use – was referenced four times in participant comments. Comments indicated a need to invest in rural communities. Others noted that development and land use policies should be considered and improved where possible.
- Population Growth – some participant comments indicated a need to be aware of population size and growth rates in the future when planning.
- Maintenance - maintenance and upkeep of facilities was mentioned as an important consideration.
- Accessibility - was referenced in some comments. Stakeholders indicated a need for County facilities and activities to be accessible to residents (e.g., affordable, physically accessible, etc.)

Improvements or enhancements

Engagement stakeholders were asked to identify what improvements or enhancements would you like to see in existing open spaces and parks, recreational and cultural facilities over the next ten years.

The top themes that emerged included recreational facilities; open spaces and parks, and; trails and paths. Below is a summary of major themes referenced in participant feedback.



Theme	References	Theme Summary
Recreational facilities	19	General comments from respondents indicated a desire to renovations of current facilities as well as improved maintenance. Some comments from stakeholders included a desire to see joint indoor facilities with increased options for families as well as more indoor rinks (3) available with ice time. Further, stakeholders noted they would like to see more ball diamonds and outdoor rinks.
Open spaces & parks	15	Stakeholders asked for additional open space and park amenities such as picnic tables, benches, overhead covers and shade (3). Additionally, comments indicated a wish to see more trees and green space in the County (3) and off-leash dog parks (2).
Trails and paths	15	Several respondents indicated a desire to see improvements or enhancements in available walking, running and hiking trails. There was a desire to see these paths and trails become interpretive paths, cross country skiing trails, and skating paths.
Community, cultural & event spaces	13	Several stakeholders indicated a desire to see improved or enhanced access to community, cultural and event spaces. Some indicated a desire to see opportunities for live concerts or an outdoor amphitheater. Additionally, a number of comments from stakeholders indicated a desire to see improvements in local libraries (4), while others would like to see improved signage and promotion of cultural events in the community.
Campgrounds	2	Some respondents indicated a desire to see improved campgrounds and supporting amenities

Other comments left by stakeholders referenced a need to improve how people are informed of opportunities in their community. Additionally, other comments mentioned the need to ensure facilities are affordable as well as age friendly.

“

I would like to see a well developed campground with lots of trails and amenities to attract families from all over.

”

Additional open spaces and facilities

Interview and survey stakeholders were asked to identify **what additional open spaces, recreational or cultural facilities would they would like to see in Wheatland County that do not currently exist.**

The top themes that emerged included trails and paths; outdoor recreational facilities and activities; open spaces and parks, art and cultural facilities, campgrounds, indoor sports facilities, and; dog parks. Below is a summary of major themes referenced in participant feedback.

Theme	References	Theme Summary
Trails & Paths	26	<p>Again, stakeholders indicated a strong desire to see more trails and paths available in Wheatland County. Comments referenced more hiking paths, biking trails (4), ATV and dirt biking trails (2), running paths and skating paths.</p> <p>Some stakeholders suggested utilizing the abandoned CN railway to create walking trails, while others indicated they would like to see trails around local points of interest such as Muirfield Lake and Johnson's Island.</p>
Outdoor recreational facilities and activities	14	<p>Several participant comments noted that local residents would like to see more multi-purpose hard surface courts in their communities, such as basketball courts (5), badminton courts (2) and tennis courts (2). Other recreational facilities and activities that were noted included additional playgrounds (4), golf courses, water parks (4), soccer fields and baseball diamonds (2),</p>
Open spaces & parks	7	<p>Several participant comments indicated they would like to see more open spaces and parks, including an increased number of day-use spaces (3).</p>
Art & cultural facilities	7	<p>Stakeholders indicated a wish to see an arts centre (2), local museums, historical centres, and libraries in their communities.</p>
Campgrounds	5	<p>Comments indicated that stakeholders would like to see more campgrounds available in Wheatland County.</p>
Indoor sports facilities	5	<p>Indoor sports facilities that include basketball courts, badminton courts. Additionally, some comments indicated that large joint-use recreational centres, additional arenas, climbing walls and gyms would be great future additions.</p>
Dog parks	5	<p>Some stakeholders indicated they would like to see more dog parks in their communities.</p>

Other comments shared by stakeholders noted that lakes, additional community gathering spaces and agricultural facilities would be welcomed additions in Wheatland County.

“

Campgrounds with biking trails, that are close to home.

”



Prioritizing what matters

Survey and interview stakeholders were asked to identify **what facilities they would like to see the County prioritize while planning for the next ten years**. Stakeholders were asked to rank, in order of priority, the facilities they would like to see prioritized. The top priorities for Wheatland County stakeholders included:

1. **Trails and walking/running paths**
2. **Open spaces and parks**
3. **Playgrounds**
4. Outdoor sports fields
5. Indoor multi-use spaces
6. Indoor sports facilities
7. Theatre or cultural facilities
8. Libraries

Overall, throughout the online survey and interviews, stakeholders clearly and repeatedly indicated a preference to see open spaces and outdoor recreational opportunities, such as trails and walking/running paths, to be a priority when planning for the next ten years.

What's next?

Wheatland County Council and staff will consider the information and feedback collected through the engagement process in the development of an Open Space, Recreation and Culture Master Plan that will support the needs of the community through to 2030.

The Open Space, Recreation and Culture Master Plan draft document is proposed to be presented to Council in the summer of 2021.