



Open Space, Recreation & Culture

Master Plan



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Open Space, Recreation and Culture Master Plan

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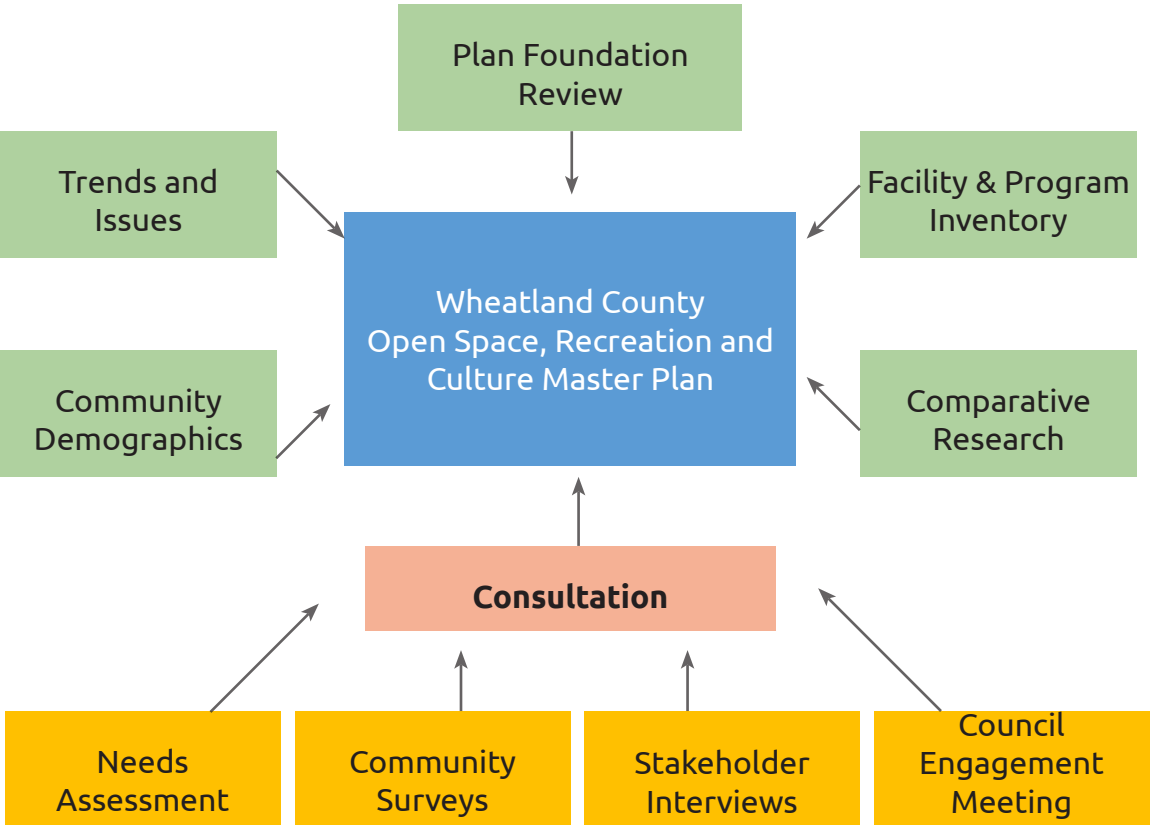
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wheatland County is committed to building strong and resilient communities and understands the importance of recreation and cultural activities to achieve this goal. Individual wellbeing can be improved through connecting with nature, other participants, being active and engaged in volunteering. Building strong social networks and relationships assists in the ability of individuals and communities to support one another and work positively in meeting community needs. Quality of life is enhanced through the provision of open space and recreation, it nurtures the health and well-being of our communities, environment and tourism economy.

The Open Space, Recreation and Culture Master Plan has been developed to strategically guide and manage the direction of recreation facilities and open spaces until 2030.

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND STUDY OVERVIEW

Wheatland County identified the need for an Open Space, Recreation and Culture Master Plan to support a guiding direction and information for future decision making. The section below outlines the steps and process for the study, and the following graphic illustrates the different inputs.



The following outlines the study process and the different phasing components along with a breakdown of how the information was gathered.

1.1 STUDY PROCESS

The project was undertaken in four phases. The first phase was the development of a terms of reference for the study which was approved by Council.

Phase two reviewed the planning context in the Municipal Development Plan, gathering of information and an inventory of open space, recreation and culture assets in the region.

Phase three involved the development of the community engagement strategy to better understand community needs, desires and to collect information that would augment the 2015 Wheatland County Needs Assessment Document.

Phase four included analyzing and evaluating information gathered in the first three phases, and comparing direction and trends with the following documents:

- Wheatland County 2021 Strategic Plan
- National “Framework for Recreation in Canada”
- Provincial “Active Alberta Policy”

Local Planning

- Wheatland County Municipal Development Plan
- Wheatland County Recreation Needs Assessment July 2015
- Strathmore Recreation and Culture Master Plan December 2019
- Rocky View County Recreation and Culture Master Plan January 2021
- Kneehill County Tourism and Recreation Master Plan April 2017

1.2 STUDY TERMS OF REFERENCE

A terms of reference was developed for the Master Plan and has been approved by Wheatland County Council.

Guiding Principles and Purpose

- Serves as a foundation for responding to parks, recreation, and leisure issues.
- Provides opportunities for assessment of the impact of demographic, social, and economic changes on residents and ties to economic development strategies.
- Provides for the assessment of the open space, recreation, leisure and culture impact of municipal decisions on the quality of life of residents.
- Facilitates the prioritization and planning for current and future open space, recreation, leisure and culture needs.
- Aids in monitoring key socio-demographic indicators to address issues as they emerge.

- Clarifies the respective roles and responsibilities of the County and other sectors.
- Guides the development of policies to address open space, recreation, culture, and leisure services issues.
- Strengthens the County's commitment to integrated planning for all open space, recreation, culture and leisure services.
- Highlights community assets, recognizes and values community expertise and processes and generates local solutions to local problems.
- Supports and reinforces concepts such as inclusion, diversity, community stewardship and community cohesion.
- Seeks to build local capital and capacity.

The Master Plan should consider each Hamlet and the community's different priorities and cultures. The outcome must be a clear action plan to lead the County in the development of future open spaces and recreational infrastructure for the whole County.

The Master Plan will provide the County with the necessary public policy framework to manage its open spaces, programs, events, facilities and amenities in a cost effective manner consistent with leading industry practices.

The Plan will provide guidance for open space planning, facility development, facility re-development and expansion, program and service delivery as well as associated recommended resources.

Overall Objectives

- Create an inspirational vision for the delivery of open spaces and recreation services, which align with Council's priorities and reflects the varied needs, desires and culture of the Hamlets, communities and County residents.
- Review and build on the Recreation Needs Assessment for future community needs and identify gaps and priorities with respect to parks, trails, open spaces, recreation facilities, community programs, services and events.
- Create a comprehensive inventory of open space and recreation services, programs, facilities and events.
- Ensure relevant County planning and development policy ties into and supports the Open Space, Recreation and Culture master plan in intent and vision.
- Undertake a comprehensive and innovative public consultation process that is targeted and focused in its approach.
- Identify the diverse needs and wishes of the general public, industry/commerce, community partner organizations and visitors and assess them against emerging social trends.
- Ensure the principles of sustainability, accessibility and integration into development are included in the delivery of parks and recreation facilities and programs, and recognize the different communities' recreation priorities when considering a regional approach.

- Enhance community cooperation and partnership in the planning and delivery of services and programs.
- Identify key grant programs or funding strategies that could maximize potential opportunities/partnerships in the community and regionally.
- Promote healthy living and increased physical activity among all age groups and segments of the community.
- Create a sense of attachment to and engagement within a larger unique and healthy community.
- Enhance volunteer opportunities and participation broadly.
- Enhance the overall community quality of life and place.

Recreation Facilities Objectives

To develop and prioritize short and long-term capital improvement plans for upgrades to existing facilities (including community halls) and new construction (including outdoor sports facilities). Long term projects including major construction or acquisitions should consider needs, locations, schedules and financial strategies. All potential projects/upgrades should be accompanied by general cost estimates.

The community feedback from the engagement and needs assessment will be instrumental in the development of goals and objectives for the provision of facilities, as it reflects programs and services for the short, medium, and long term.

A review of the demographic requirements and evaluating facility locations including the design will be required as part of the Plan. Once the community need is established for a recreation facility it should be assessed for the merits of partnership opportunities with community groups and organizations. The organizations may include:

- other municipalities
- school boards
- institutions, public and private facilities

Study Considerations and Phasing

The following study considerations must be made:

- The County's role in providing open space, recreation, and cultural opportunities from a community wide perspective.
- Assessment of the array of programs and services currently provided in relation to community needs and desires over the life of the plan.
- The role of existing partnerships in guiding the development of community partnerships in the future.
- Location options for future opportunities to provide additional facilities and amenities including but not limited to single purpose and multi-purpose facilities, trails, parks, natural and open spaces, outdoor/indoor sport facilities, active and passive space for spontaneous use.
- A contemporary and future look at the role that volunteers play in the provision of parks and recreation services.

The planning process will capture what the communities' priorities are with respect to parks and recreation facilities through community consultation. These priorities will provide critical information that will help guide Council and investments over the life of the Plan. The Master Plan includes recommendations to maximize facility use, lifespan and should also include recommendations with respect to required investments, partnerships and funding strategies.

1.3 STUDY OVERVIEW

The study begins with a review of the elements of community context which provides information around population, demographics and inventory of facilities. The building blocks of the engagement documents and what the communities are saying in relation to the priorities and desires for recreation, culture and facilities are reviewed. The foundations section provides an anchor of relevant information on vision, mission, and goals from the municipal, provincial and national levels.

The three sections of Community Context, Building Blocks-Supporting Engagement, and Plan Foundations support the opportunities and recommendations of the study. These sections act as a resource for recreation, facility and culture decisions in the future.

2.0 COMMUNITY CONTEXT

The Community Context section of the study examines the population, demographics and an inventory of recreation and culture assets the region. The inventory provides a snapshot of the facilities/resources and the mapping layers in the locations of the resources in the region.

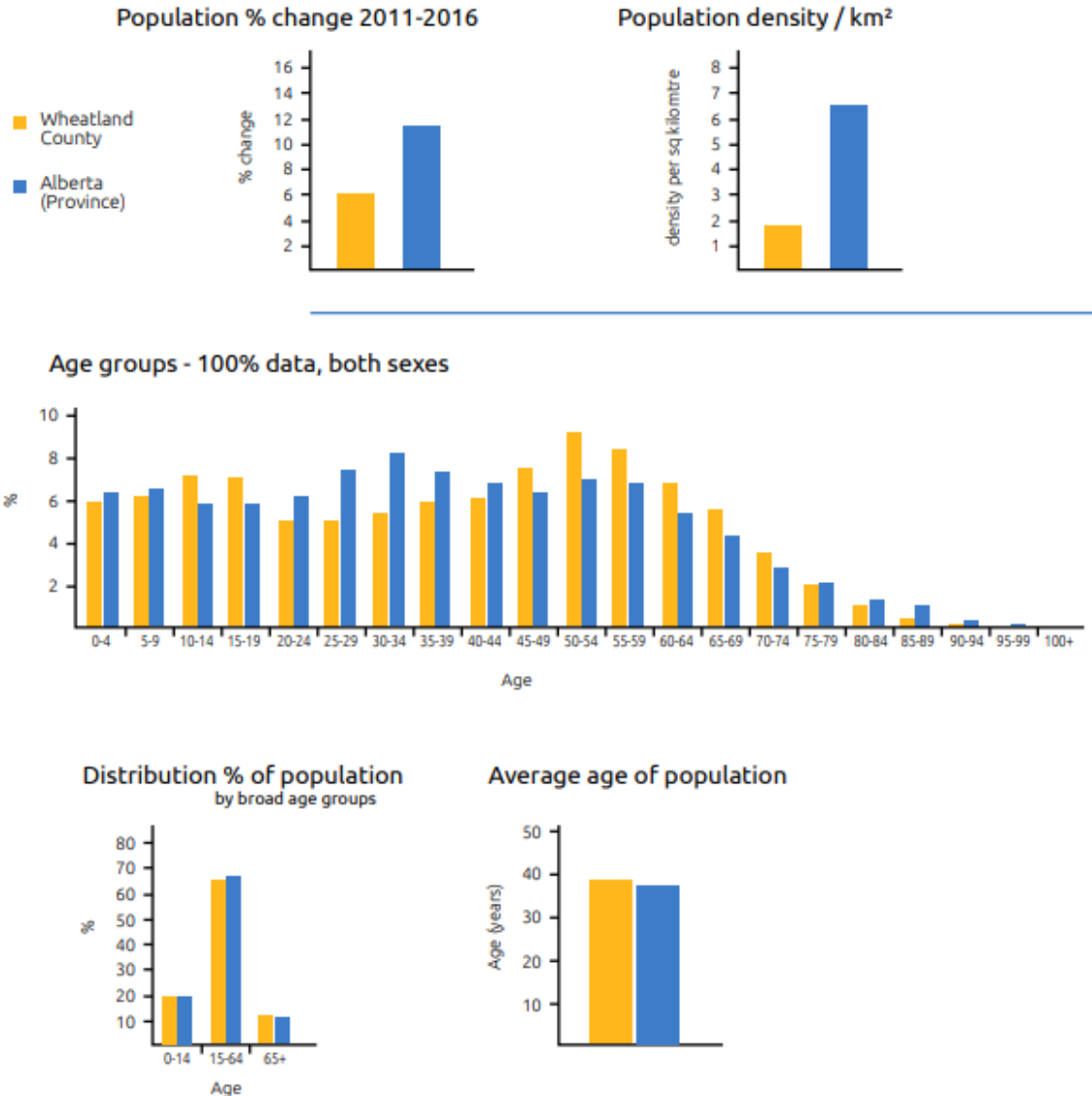
2.1 POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Wheatland County is primarily a rural region with an agricultural heritage based on European descendants, and multi-generational families who migrated to the area as the Province of Alberta came into Canadian Federation at the turn of the 20th century. With proximity to the City of Calgary, businesses and families are looking for the quality of life and affordability that Wheatland County provides. Many of the homes in Wheatland County, as well as the hamlets, are single-family dwellings. The hamlets tend to have large lots and housing types ranging from manufactured homes, bungalows to large multi-story dwellings.

The population on the western side of the County and around the Town of Strathmore are experiencing more country-residential development with a commuting workforce, small business, and industrial development.

The eastern side of the County has many large farms. The east side is also seeing an emergence of diversity with green energy development and technology strides around agriculture production.

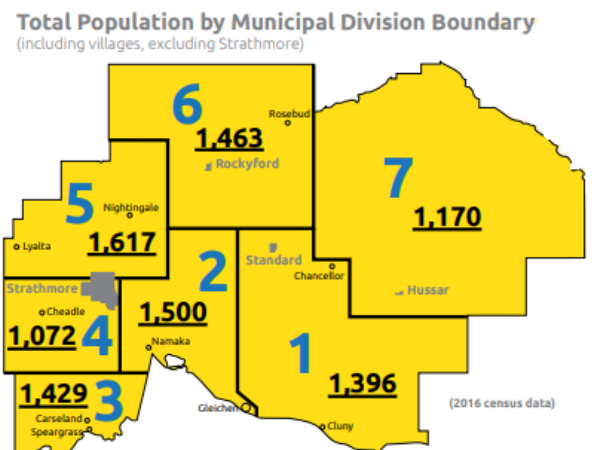
Siksika Nation shares much of Wheatland County's southern border. Many Indigenous people from the Nation also live and work in Wheatland County and the towns within the region.



Source: Statistics Canada (2016)

Population distribution

Population density is more prevalent in the western area of the County. Proximity to Calgary and Strathmore and more intense subdivision of land account for this. Sizes of local electoral divisions also highlight this since Wheatland County Council divisions are divided by population. The town and villages do not account for electoral divisions, but more County residents may be clustered around those communities.



Hamlet Populations

Carseland 525
Gleichen 324
Cheadle 91
Rosebud 87
Cluny 70
Lyalta 460 estimate
Speargrass 309 estimate

Town and Villages

Strathmore 13,756
Drumheller 6,439
Langdon 5,060
Rockyford 316
Standard 353
Hussar 190

* 2016 Statistic Canada Census above except estimates. Lyalta census data plus average of 2.6 residents / dwelling in Lakes of Muirfield. Speargrass dwellings x 2.6 average residents

Interesting data on age groups, Wheatland County have more that the provincial average in age groups 10-19 and 45-74.



2.2 REGIONAL COMMUNITY RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

The County's recreational infrastructure is comprised of recreation centres, arenas, outdoor rinks, and other specialized facilities, playgrounds, parks and campgrounds. The majority of the facilities are located in the larger urban centres of Towns and Villages. The region's inventory of outdoor and indoor facilities are captured in the two tables below. The following areas are included:

- Wheatland County, hamlets within the County,
- Towns: Strathmore and Drumheller,
- Villages: Standard, Rockyford and Hussar,
- Hamlet of Langdon, Rocky View County

The regions outdoor and indoor recreation amenities resources are detailed in the two tables below. Table 1.1 and Table 1.2 illustrates the outdoor and indoor recreation amenities inventory.

Table 1.1 Wheatland Region Outdoor Amenities

Amenity Type	County Operated	Town/Village Operated	Association/ Partnership/Leased	Total
Ball Diamonds	3	20	12	35
Off Leash Dog Parks	1	1		2
Outdoor Rinks		4	4	8
Outdoor Tracks		4		4
Playgrounds	6	29	5	40
Community Parks	7	27	3	37
Rectangular Fields		10		10
Skateboard Parks		2		2
Tennis Courts		6		6
Basketball Courts		6	1	7
Water Spray Parks		2		2
Campgrounds	1	3	3	7
Beach Volleyball		1		1
Disc Golf		1		1
Boat Launch	1		1	2

Community Park – have children playground or fitness equipment or other amenities.



Table 1.2 Wheatland Region Indoor Amenities

Amenity Type	County Operated	Town/Village Operated	Association/ Partnership/Leased	Total
Aquatics Facilities		2		2
Curling Rinks (Facilities)		5	3	8
Curling (Sheets)		14	10	24
Fitness Centres		2		2
Gymnasiums		2	1	3
Ice Arenas (Facilities)		5	1	6
Ice Arenas (Sheets)		6	1	7
Indoor Turf Fields		2		2
Walking/Running Tracks		2		2
Community Halls		5	15	20
Youth Centres		1		1
Senior Centres			4	4
Indoor Courts		6		6

*Village amenity may be operated by Community Association

Table 1.3 Wheatland County Larger Hamlet Recreational Facilities Breakdown

	Carseland	Cheadle	Cluny	Gleichen	Lyalta	Rosebud	Speargrass
Ball Diamonds	4	1		3	2	1	
Off Leash Dog Park							1
Outdoor Rink	1	1		1	1		
Playgrounds	3	1	1	2	1	1	1
Curling Sheets	3			3			
Ice Arena				1			
Community Hall	1	1	1	1	1	1	





Rosebud Memorial Hall Photo Munisight

County Community Hall Resources

Wheatland County's fifteen Community halls are a key support for cultural events/activities. Three are owned by the County and leased to community groups to operate. Five of these halls have playground equipment and seven have ball diamonds. Each hall's size varies between Crowfoot hall (being the smallest) at 1551 square feet to the largest, Cluny hall, at 16,783 square feet. The average hall size is 5,373 square feet. Most of the community halls rely on the Community Enhancement Regional Board (CERB) Grant Funding programs. The CERB grant consists of two funding streams operating based and project based. Each grant stream criteria as follows:

- Operating based to fund utility, insurance costs.
- Project based includes lifecycle updates, maintenance and renovations.

The CERB grant support is critical for the operations of these community assets which leverages the numerous volunteer hours to operate and maintain the facilities. The volunteers also provide programming for various community events and fund raising efforts to support the facilities operating costs and programs offered.

Private Recreation Facilities

A variety of private commercial recreation facilities provide recreation services within the County. Private facilities include numerous golf courses, riding arenas, and camping areas.

Golf Courses

1. Muirfield Lakes Golf Club
2. Oasis Grove Golf
3. Oxbow Country Golf Course
4. Speargrass Golf Course
5. Strathmore Golf Club

Riding Arenas

1. Cody McAurther Performance Horses
2. David's Arena & Horse Boarding
3. Equestrian Centre & Boarding Facility G&R Equine Centre & Horse Boarding
4. Jasz Equestrian Boarding & Training
5. G&R Equine Centre & Horse Boarding
6. Lausen Horse Riding Arena
7. Sierra Stables & Boarding Facility
8. Wheatland Equestrian & Riding Arena
9. Whispering Sands Training / Whitehawk
10. Whispering Spirits Horse Boarding

Campgrounds

1. Eagle Lake RV Resort*
2. High Eagle RV Resort*
3. Oasis Grove Golf and RV Park (Private)
4. Rockyford Campground
5. Standard Campground
6. Hussar Campground
7. Strathmore Hi-way Camping
8. Strathmore Ag Campground

* Owned by the County leased to operator

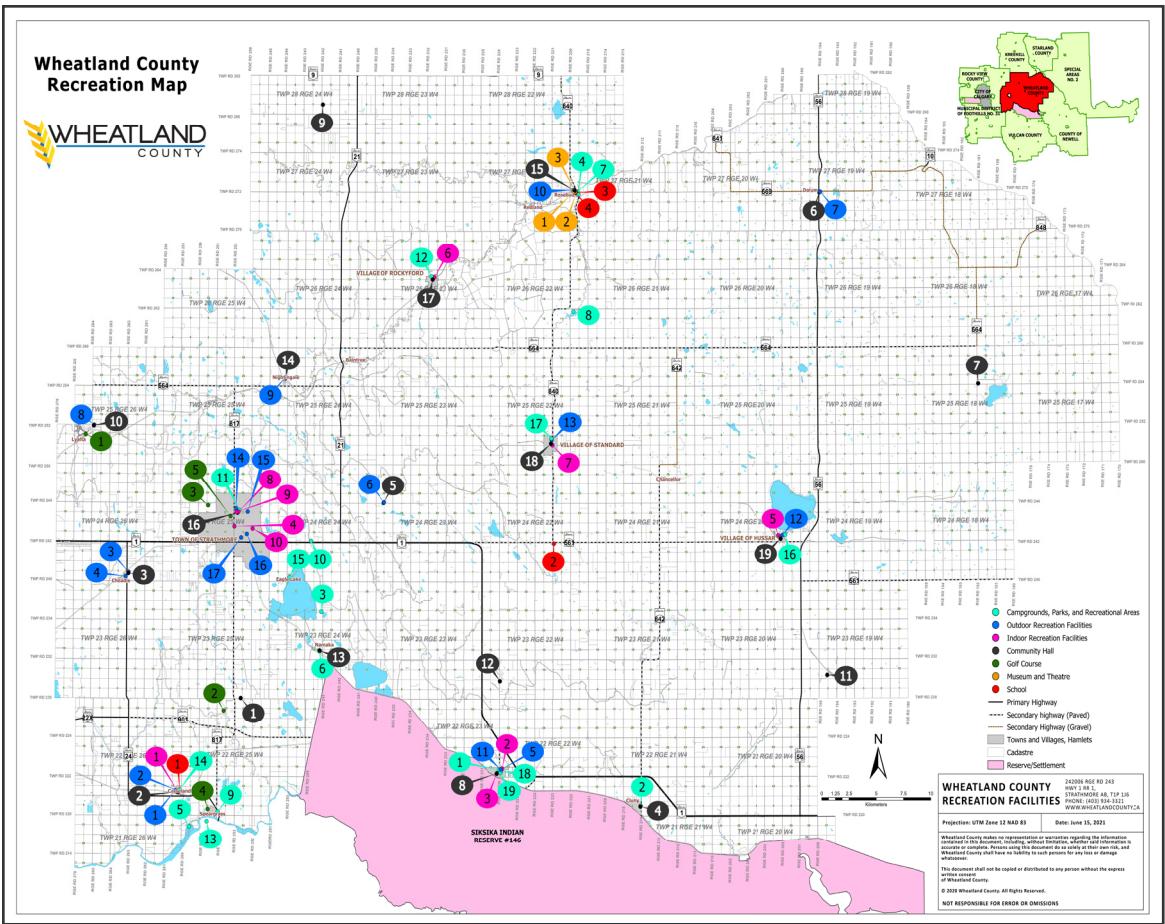
Provincial Public Lands

The province has a few locations for recreation in the County such as Severn Creek Dam, and the Johnson Island boat launch and day use area. Adjacent to the County is a large 178 site campground Wyndham-Carseland Provincial Park.



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*Legend can be found on Page 17

● Campgrounds, Parks & Rec

1. Beaupre Memorial Campground
2. Cluny Hall
3. Eagle Lake RV Resort
4. High Eagle RV Resort
5. Johnson Island
6. Namaka Park
7. Rosebud Park and Picnic Shelter
8. Severn Dam Day Use/Fishing
9. Speargrass Playground and Off Leash Dog Park
10. Strathmore Highway Camping Private
11. Strathmore Ag Society Campground
12. Rockyford Campground
13. Wyndham Provincial Campground/Playground
14. Carseland Nelson Road Park
15. Eagle Lake Access
16. Village of Hussar Campground
17. Village of Standard Campground
18. Gleichen Park
19. Gleichen Central Park

● Schools

1. Carseland School
2. Wheatland Crossing School K-12
3. Rosebud Mercantile Building
4. Rosebud School of Arts

● Community Halls

1. Cairnhill Community Centre Hall
2. Carseland Community Hall
3. Cheadle Community Hall
4. Cluny Community Hall
5. Crowfoot Community Hall
6. Dalum Community Hall
7. Duck Lake Community Hall
8. Gleichen & District Community Centre
9. Level Land Community Hall
10. Lyalta Community Hall
11. Makepeace Community Hall
12. Meadowbrook Community Hall
13. Namaka Community Hall
14. Nightingale Community Hall
15. Rosebud Community Hall
16. Strathmore Civic Centre
17. Rockyford Community Hall
18. Standard Community Hall
19. Hussar Community Hall

● Outdoor Recreation Facilities

1. Carseland Ball Diamond x4
2. Carseland Outdoor Rink
3. Cheadle Ball Diamond x1
4. Cheadle Outdoor Rink
5. Gleichen Outdoor Rink
6. Crowfoot Ball Diamond x1
7. Dalum Ball Diamond x1, Camp Kitchen
8. Lyalta Ball Diamonds x2
9. Nightingale Ball Diamonds x1, Basketball Court
10. Rosebud Ball Diamonds x1
11. Gleichen Ball Diamonds x3
12. Village of Hussar Ball Diamonds x2
13. Village of Standard Ball Diamonds x3
14. Town of Strathmore Ball Diamonds x10
15. Town of Strathmore Outdoor Rink
16. Town of Strathmore Disc Golf
17. Town of Strathmore Water Park

● Indoor Recreation Facilities

1. Carseland Curling Rink
2. Gleichen Arena and Curling
3. Gleichen Library
4. Town of Strathmore Arena x2
5. Village of Hussar Arena
6. Village of Rockyford Arena
7. Village of Standard Arena
8. Town of Strathmore Curling Club
9. Town of Strathmore Pool
10. Strathmore Motor Products Centre

● Theatres and Museums

1. Akokiniskway Gallery
2. Rosebud District Centennial Museum
3. Rosebud Opera House

● Golf Courses

1. Muirfield Lakes Golf Course
2. Oasis Grove Golf Course
3. Oxbow Golf Course
4. Speargrass Golf Course
5. Strathmore Golf Course

2.3 COMMUNITY PLANNING RESOURCES

The Municipal Development Plan (MDP) serves as the County's principal statutory plan, and is adopted under the provisions of the Municipal Government Act. Adopted in 2013, the MDP provides general direction for growth and development over the next 30 years. While this Plan provides County-wide community planning and development policy, it is not a detailed plan. Detailed planning will occur through Area Structure Plans (ASPs), Area Concept Plans (ACPs), or individual planning applications – all of which must conform to the MDP. The MDP provides high level objectives and policies for Parks and Recreation. The MDP refers to this document for more specific information around open space, recreation and culture.



3.0 BUILDING BLOCKS - SUPPORTING ENGAGEMENT

The Building Blocks – Supporting Engagement section includes the Needs Assessment (2015) and the Open Spaces, Recreation and Culture Master Plan Community Engagement 'What We Heard Report' (2020). The goal in the development of the 2020 community engagement strategy was to better understand community needs, desires regarding open spaces, recreation and culture so that future planning and implementation activities are informed and supported by the community as a whole. The 2020 engagement information collected would augment and build on the 2015 Wheatland County Needs Assessment Document.

3.1 NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Needs Assessment discovered the following relevant points:

- Trends suggest the importance of providing opportunities to walk, cycle, and engage in fitness programs and activities.
- Consultation activities also identified priorities for outdoor recreation facilities: trails, campgrounds, picnic areas, skating rinks, and paved courts.

- The provision of multi-use spaces and places that accommodates spontaneous and drop –in activities is important.
- Partnerships are important. Resources are limited and there are many other entities that provide services. Working together and offering support to these entities is paramount.
- Community organizations and stakeholders feel that, aside from additional funding, they would benefit from additional in-kind support. Assistance with facility development processes, fundraising tactics and approaches, grant applications, and not – for – profit management, volunteer recruitment and retention and recognition.

County recreation services rely heavily on volunteer organizations. They are responsible for development, programming and maintenance of recreation facilities. Volunteer organizations are also tasked with monitoring regulations, and standards, maintenance/ inspections of the facilities.

3.2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT “WHAT WE HEARD REPORT”

The “What We Heard Report” was presented to Wheatland County Council and shared with the public on February 16, 2021.



Project overview

Wheatland County is an ideal blend of rural and urban lifestyles. 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 "supported" 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.



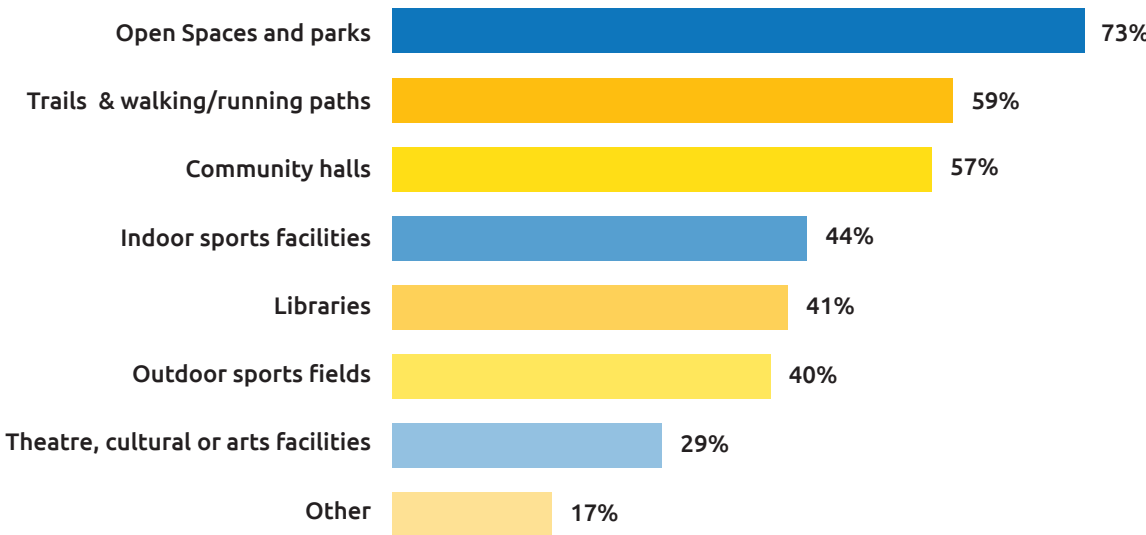
What We Heard

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%).

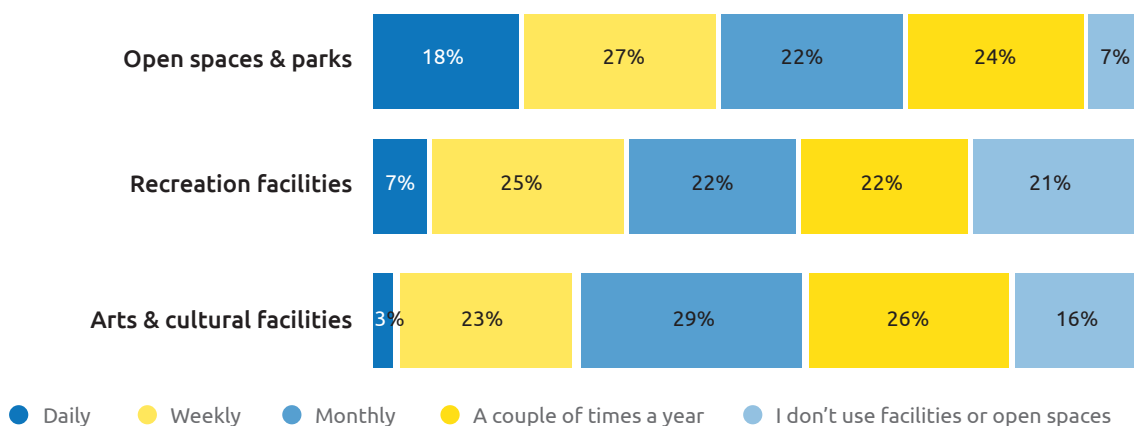


Other spaces and facilities that respondents visited included the off-leash dog park, horse riding arenas and rodeo grounds, bowling facilities and golf courses.

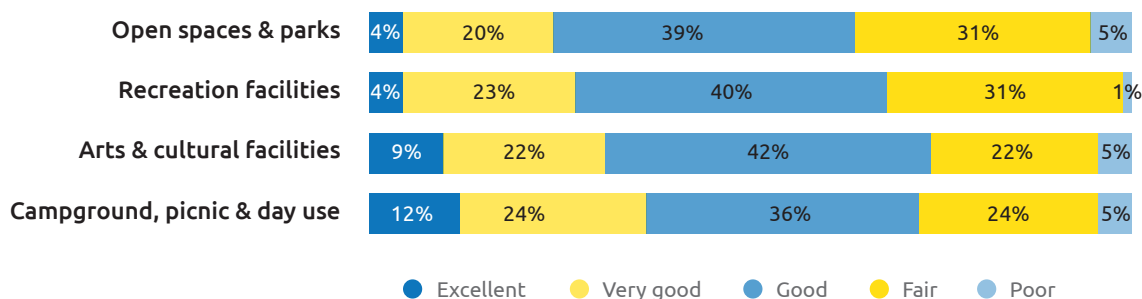
When stakeholders were asked how often they use open spaces and facilities available in Wheatland County, the majority of responses collected indicated:

- 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 to 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:

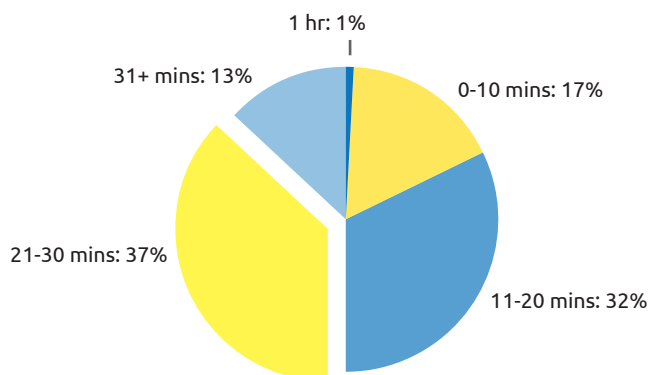


The category that received that highest "poor" rating by stakeholders was campgrounds, picnic and day-use spaces (12%).

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.

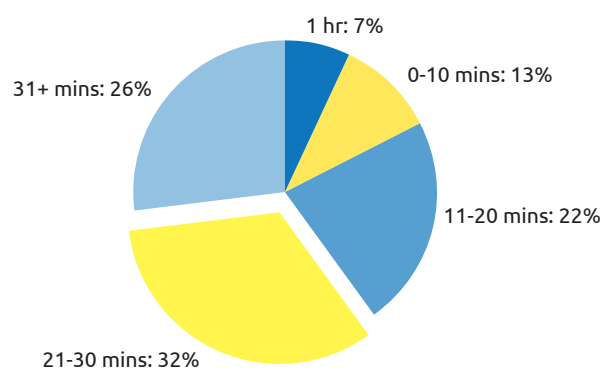
Recreation facilities



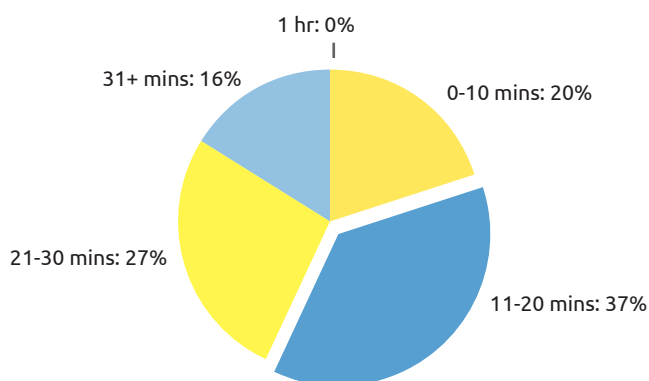
37% of stakeholders were willing to drive for 21-30 minutes to visit a recreational facility, while 32% of respondents would be willing to drive 11-20 minutes.

Arts & cultural facilities

32% of survey stakeholders indicated they would be willing to drive 21-30 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.

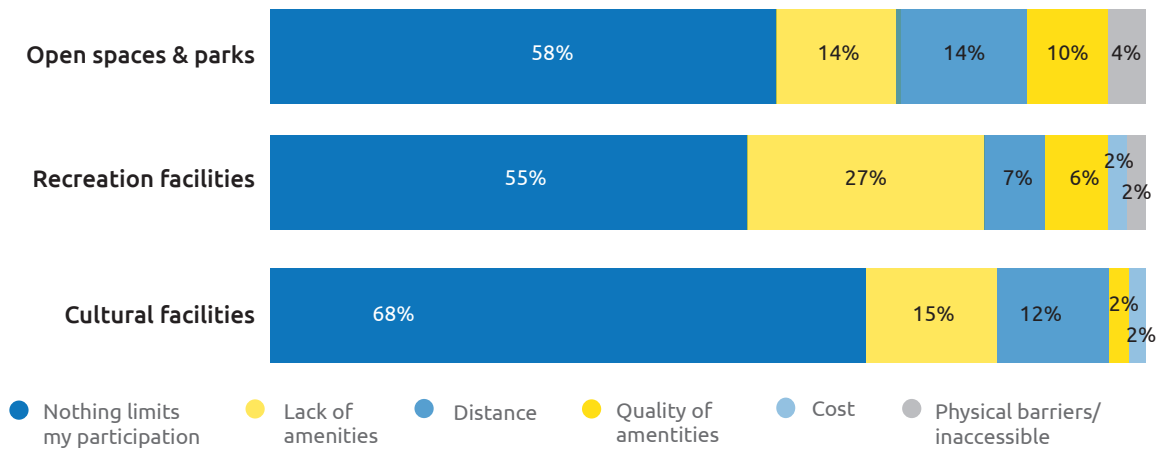


Open spaces & parks



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 see 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.



4.0 PLAN FOUNDATIONS

The Plan Foundations section brings together higher level visions, concepts and goals from the municipal, provincial and national levels. The overview of these documents provide information on trends and why recreation is important to the residents and communities. Where possible the Plan should consider and support the visions for each level of government. The recommendations of the study are anchored in these Plan foundations and goals. These foundation pillars are important to identify and understand over the life of the Plan, as a shift in any of the foundation components may alter the lens or construct around future decisions of the study recommendations. The section begins with Wheatland County Vision, Mission and 2021 Strategic Plan overview. The “Active Alberta Policy” provides the provincial outcomes desired for recreation. Finally, the “A Framework Recreation in Canada 2015 Pathway to Wellbeing” provides vision and five goals and priorities from a national level.

The Open Space, Recreation and Culture Master Plan will support and align with the overall vision of the 2021 Wheatland County strategic plan.

4.1 WHEATLAND COUNTY VISION

Wheatland County’s Vision

Wheatland County is committed to preserving the traditions of our rural heritage, while bringing innovation to governance, business, and our communities.

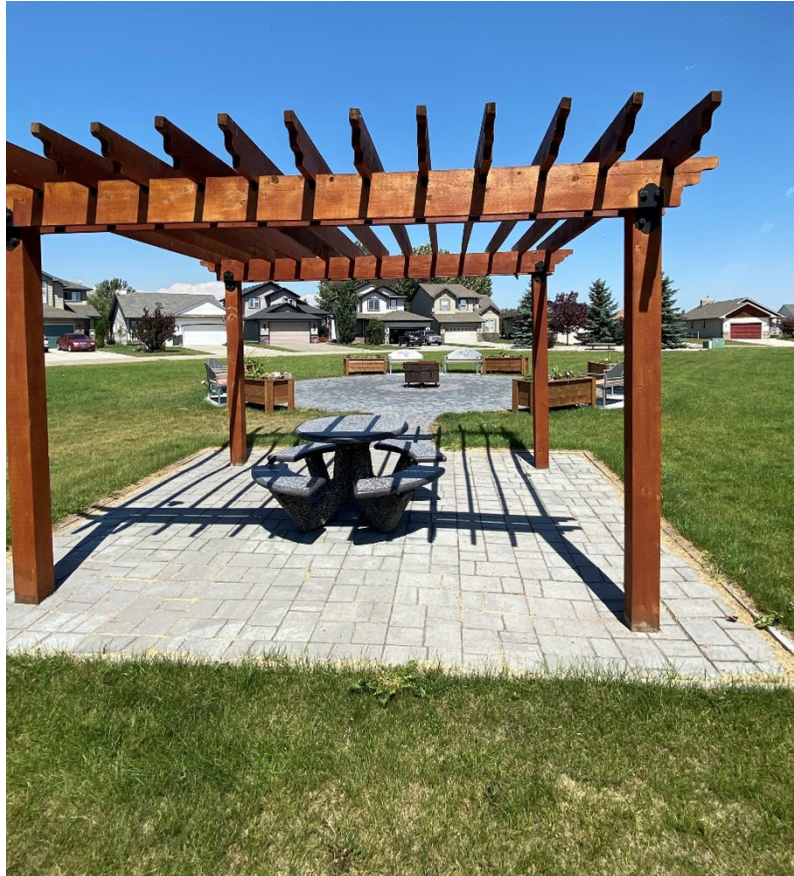
Wheatland County’s Mission

Where innovation meets tradition.

2021 Wheatland County Strategic Plan

The 2021 Wheatland County Strategic Plan focuses on the vision of innovation while maintaining cultural heritage, making Wheatland County a sustainable region that our residents are proud to call home. The Plan includes four key strategic priorities to achieve this goal:

- Strong economy
- Sustainable Organization
- Long Term Plans
- Collaborative Relationships with Neighbours



4.2 PROVINCIAL VISION

Active Alberta Policy

The Province of Alberta's Active Alberta Policy (2011-2021) is the overarching policy document that is meant to guide the delivery of recreation, active living and sport opportunities in the province. The Active Alberta Policy recognizes that: "Recreation, active living and sport are vitally important to Albertans. The activities they choose for enjoyment, where they live and take vacations, what they teach their children, and who they select as their heroes all demonstrate how important the sector is to the lives of Albertans."

Identification of six core outcomes outlined in the document which reflect intended objectives of the Active Alberta Policy

1. Active Albertans: More Albertans are more active, more often.

2. Active Communities: Alberta communities are more active, creative, safe and inclusive.
3. Active Outdoors: Albertans are connected to nature and able to explore the outdoors.
4. Active Engagement: Albertans are engaged in activity and in their communities.
5. Active Coordinated System: All partners involved in providing recreation, active living and sport opportunities to Albertans work together in a coordinated system.
6. Active Pursuit of Excellence: Albertans have opportunities to achieve athletic excellence.

4.3 NATIONAL VISION

A Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015 Pathways to Wellbeing

This framework is a joint initiative of the Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council and the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association.

A Renewed Definition of Recreation

Recreation is the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing.

A Vision for recreation in Canada

We envision a Canada in which everyone is engaged in meaningful, assessable recreation experiences that foster:

- Individual wellbeing
- Community wellbeing
- The wellbeing of our natural and built environments

The Framework describes five goals and priorities for action under each goal. The goals are:



Goal 1: Active Living
Foster active living through physical recreation.



Goal 2: Inclusion and Access
Increase inclusion and access to recreation for populations that face constraints to participation.



Goal 3: Connecting People and Nature
Help people connect to nature through recreation.



Goal 4: Supportive Environments
Ensure the provision of supportive physical and social environments that encourage participation in recreation and build strong, caring communities.



Goal 5: Recreation Capacity
Ensure the continued growth and sustainability of the recreation field.

5.0 FACILITY PROVISION STRATEGY

The facility provision strategy will examine both indoor and outdoor facilities in depth and will identify and prioritize needs. Section 5.0 contributes information on challenges and opportunities for general facility provisions along with some specific facilities. This final section reviews ageing facilities and options moving forward, other possible partnership opportunities.

5.1 IDENTIFYING AND PRIORITIZING NEEDS

Indoor Facilities

Gleichen has an indoor ice skating arena and curling rink. Declining number of curlers has resulted in the rink not having been used for curling for a number of years. The curling rink area has been repurposed as a second ice skating sheet and met a need for additional public skating for the Community. Carseland curling rink is another example of hamlet’s indoor recreation.



Gleichen Curling Rink Photo Munisight

Indoor recreational amenities such as curling rinks and ice skating arenas are examples of facilities that provide for a higher level of service than would typically be supported by smaller hamlet populations.

Wheatland County’s hamlet populations are projected to have limited/minimal growth in the next ten years. Offering recreation services that require large indoor facilities such as arena, pools, field house and gymnasias, for example, is more efficient if the County considers moving to a regional model. Providing these services in partnership with neighbouring municipalities could attain financial sustainability and a higher utilization rate of indoor facilities.

An example of a regional partnership model is the Strathmore Motor Products Centre/ George Freeman School. Wheatland County, the Town of Strathmore and Golden Hills School Division #75 partnering on this project. The County agreed to be a 1/3 partner of the Recreation Centre portion of the Facility. Subsequently contributed \$3 million, which was 30% of the original building capital costs, yearly operations deficits/profits and a capital maintenance reserve. The Strathmore Motor Products Centre contains a walking track, indoor courts, and a field house.

	Recommendation Supports
✓	Wheatland County Vision
✓	Strategic Plan
✓	Provincial Vision
✓	National Vision
✓	Resident Survey
✓	Needs Assessment



Outdoor Facilities

Results of the community engagement, stakeholders identified open spaces/parks and trails/walking paths as the top two facilities they currently use. The category that received the highest “poor” rating was campgrounds, picnic, and day use areas. 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 space. More specifically, 27% of stakeholders felt that recreational facilities were lacking amenities. The outdoor amenities below provides more information on challenges and opportunities for the County outdoor facility inventory. Considerations for improvements should be given to both the top and poorly ranked facilities.

General considerations based on the engagement feedback should be to improve open space and park areas with trees, shade, pathway/walking pathways and other ancillary items to support park users and enhance the experience of patrons.



Park Amenities in Hamlet Communities

Gleichen Former School Site

The former school site was turned over to the County in 2020 from Golden Hill School Division. The site is 10.95 acres with two ball diamonds and playground structure. The playground equipment is scheduled for replacement in 2028. There is a redevelopment opportunity of the site to meet community needs in the area. Recommend that community engagement be conducted to determine priorities and desired amenities. Then a concept plan could be developed with a budget to meet community needs.

	Recommendation Supports
✓	Wheatland County Vision
✓	Strategic Plan
✓	Provincial Vision
✓	National Vision
✓	Resident Survey
✓	Needs Assessment

Lyalta/Lakes of Muirfield Recreation Facility Plan

The current playground equipment for the community is not on public land, and instead is on privately owned golf course land. Not all the playground equipment meets Canadian Safety Association safety standards. Which means it cannot simply be moved to public land for safety and liability reasons. The outdoor rink site is a temporary site until a new site can be determined.

The Lakes of Muirfield Home Owners Association (HOA) conducted a community survey to gather input from Lakes of Muirfield residents and identified the following desired amenities:

- Permanent site for the outdoor rink, complete with concrete pad
- Playground equipment area
- Tennis and pickle ball courts
- Gazebo, tree and flower gardens
- Paved pathways

	Recommendation Supports
✓	Wheatland County Vision
✓	Strategic Plan
✓	Provincial Vision
✓	National Vision
✓	Resident Survey
✓	Needs Assessment

Administration is working on a Master Community Development Plan for the LoM that will provide more information on the plans and priorities for the Community.



Rosebud

The Rosebud septic field will be decommissioned and upon its completion there will be a review to determine site limitations and review any future plans for the site.

Pathway/Sidewalk Hamlets

New development in hamlets should consider opportunities to improve pedestrian movement. There is an identified need to review any potential pathway linking of higher use areas, such as schools, community halls, recreation facilities and commercial sites.

Potential pathway linkages:

- Lakes of Muirfield (LoM) to Lyalta hall 400 meters Figure #1 estimated cost \$65,000 (This option may not be required if below internal option is preferred)
- Internal LoM pathway linkages with permission from WID 2.25 Km Figure #2, Estimated Cost \$355,000
- Carseland/Speargrass/Johnson Island pathway loop approx. 13 km loop, Figure #3 Estimated cost: \$2 million
- Rosebud campground to downtown estimated cost \$400,000 and decommissioned septic field estimated cost \$85,000. Figure #4

	Recommendation Supports
✓	Wheatland County Vision
✓	Strategic Plan
✓	Provincial Vision
✓	National Vision
✓	Resident Survey
✓	Needs Assessment



Figure #1 LoM to Lyalta Hall Pathway Concept



Figure #2 LoM Internal Pathway Concept



Figure #3 Carseland/Speargrass Pathway Concept



Figure #4 Rosebud Pathway Concept



Eagle Lake Photo by Alyssa Robb

Recreation Areas in Remainder of the County

Eagle Lake

1. Day Use Area/Access Point Westside Eagle Lake

The area Figure #5 below (urban legal 2487JK1 87, Roll # 6412000) is used now as an access point to the lake, for both winter ice fishing and summer launching boats. There is no formalized boat launch at this location. The area has experienced increased usage in recent years. Trash/Recycle receptacles, portable toilet and gravel parking area have been added to address some of the issues with the increased use of the site. Areas that experience this increase in use should incorporate all necessary infrastructure. Limited general public Eagle Lake access has exacerbated the issues at this site.

Recommendations for the day use area:

- Formalize boat launch,
- Day use area with picnic tables,
- Floating dock,
- Washrooms.

	Recommendation Supports
✓	Wheatland County Vision
✓	Strategic Plan
✓	Provincial Vision
✓	National Vision
✓	Resident Survey
✓	Needs Assessment



Figure #5 West Eagle Lake Access Point



Eagle Lake Photo by Alyssa Robb

2. Eagle Lake Water Quality

The Opportunities for Eagle Lake Water Quality Improvement technical review and recommendation could include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Technical review of Eagle Lake and influencing factors
- Report describing Eagle Lake's current condition and limitations to typical lake recreational opportunities
- Recommendations and cost estimates for feasible projects that could be undertaken to improve recreational and aesthetic value of Eagle Lake while conserving ecological benefits.
- Working with the Western Irrigation District on recommendations and a plan.

Severn Creek Dam Reservoir

The Severn Dam Reservoir is a fish stocked water body that is jointly owned by the Province of Alberta and Wheatland County. The province owns a 24 acre portion, while Wheatland County owns two parcels of land located on the north side, which total 17.48 acres. The north east 7.2 acre parcel is located below the dam and may be suitable for camping. The site has two pit style toilets on the east and west side of the reservoir, small floating dock, 7 fire pits and 4 picnic tables.

The area has been utilized for day use and camping. Long term campers frequent the site which has led to some units arriving in April and not leaving until September-October. With the increased use at this location the following issues have been identified:

- Ad hoc fire rings scattered all over the site as campers made their own as only seven are provided.
- Access to the reservoir by day use patrons restricted as campers line the shore line.
- Long term campers damage vegetation as it is killed by the shade of camper unit, RV matts, decks, vehicles, etc. which could lead to upslope degradation, erosion, and weed growth.

- Damage to the site if it rains or site is wet. (Figure #6)
- Increased maintenance costs as frequency of damage increases with the usage of the site.



Figure #6 Severn Creek Dam photo by Dave Rimes

Recommendations

There is an opportunity to utilize the lands in the area better and increase the tourism potential for the site. Formalizing camping sites will reduce damage to the site and help address longer term maintenance concerns.

Possible areas for improvement:

1. Have a separation for day use area and camping area, for example post cable fence, landscape rocks
2. To formalize sites and limit number of campers to the number of sites,
3. Charge for sites self-registration system, revenue to assist with operating and maintenance costs
4. Day use parking area
5. Trails
6. Tree planting

	Recommendation Supports
✓	Wheatland County Vision
✓	Strategic Plan
✓	Provincial Vision
✓	National Vision
✓	Resident Survey
✓	Needs Assessment

Future Recreation Opportunities Long Term

Camping/Park Development

The Plan identifies a 60 acre site overlooking the Red Deer River that could be developed into a recreation/day use area, camping, hiking trails, fishing. These parcels have access issues which would have to be addressed and possible add to the cost of development of the site. Figure #7 and #8 show site.

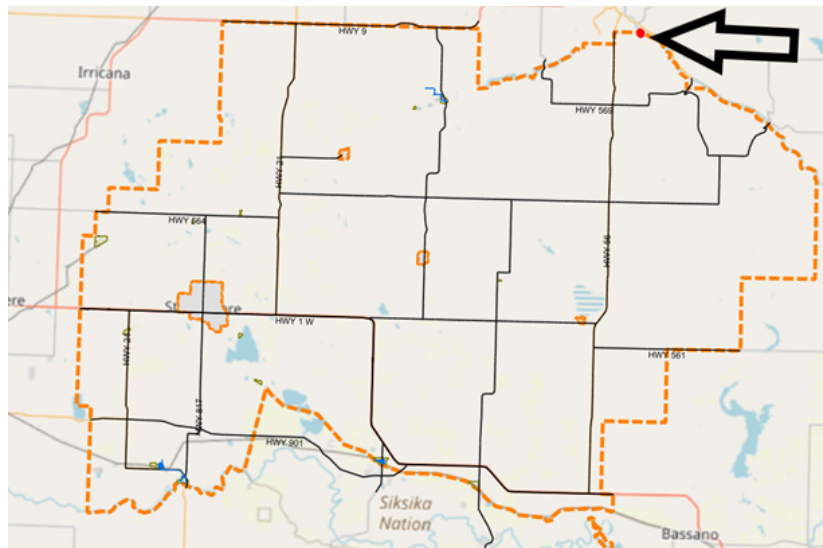


Figure #7

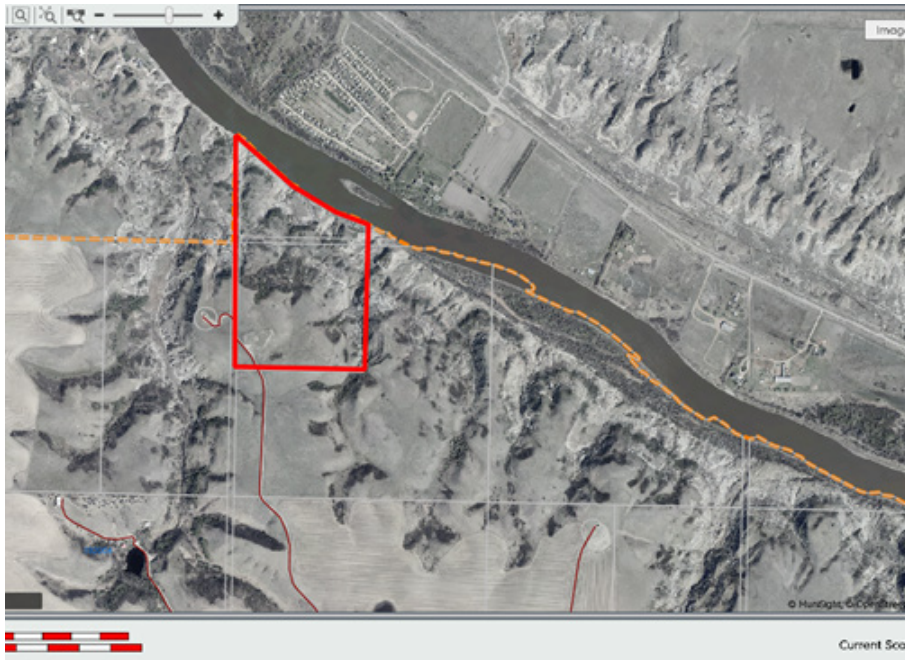


Figure #8

	Recommendation Supports
✓	Wheatland County Vision
✓	Strategic Plan
✓	Provincial Vision
✓	National Vision
✓	Resident Survey
✓	Needs Assessment

Pathway/ Trail Development

The decommissioned CN rail line that runs from Rosebud to Wayne-Drumheller area has the potential to draw tourists to the region. The rails and timbers have been removed from this old rail line that runs along the scenic Rosebud River valley. There are 35 bridges along the rail bed between the hamlets of Rosebud and Wayne. The location has the potential for a joint funding partnership with Kneehill County and the Town of Drumheller. This rail line does continue from Rosebud to Rockyford then all the way to Lyalta.

	Recommendation Supports
✓	Wheatland County Vision
✓	Strategic Plan
✓	Provincial Vision
✓	National Vision
✓	Resident Survey
✓	Needs Assessment

5.2 AGEING FACILITIES

The ageing facilities provided an inventory of recreation assets that will require ongoing maintenance to have the facility function or an overhaul/redevelopment to repurpose or renew a facility or area.

Gleichen Arena and Curling Rink

The hockey rink portion of the building was constructed in the 1950's with the addition of the curling rink, lobby, washrooms, and kitchen added in 1980. Numerous upgrades have taken place since 2019, including but not limited to, the ice plant replacement, electrical upgrades, fire safety improvements, roof repair and renovations to the lobby washroom facilities. To keep this facility functional and operational it will require upgrades over the next 10 years, which may include the kitchen and dressing rooms.

	Recommendation Supports
✓	Wheatland County Vision
✓	Strategic Plan
✓	Provincial Vision
✓	National Vision
✓	Resident Survey
✓	Needs Assessment

Eagle Lake Campground

The Eagle Lake RV resort site is 24.66 acres and currently has 65 serviced sites (power and water) and 74 sites without servicing. The campground is under a lease agreement to a private operator until 2034. The mobile home, located within the campground, is the property of the Lessee and may be removed at the end of the lease agreement. The campground currently offers weekly, monthly or seasonal site bookings. The buildings on site will be nearing end of life by the end of the lease. There are a few options that could

be explored for the site:

- This site could continue as a campground either leased to private operator, county operated, sale of land.
- Site could be redeveloped as a day use area, development of concept plan, boat launch, parking, playground, sports courts, beach volleyball courts, expand beach area
- Addition of trails
- Or sold to a private operator

High Eagle Campground

This site is 4.36 acres in size and zoned Parks and Recreation. High Eagle RV resort has 64 sites serviced with water and power. The lands are subject to a “buy back” agreement with the province if the lands are not used for recreation purposes. The current lease term is until 2033 and parties involved include the County, Rosebud Lions, and a private operator.

Hamlet Playgrounds

Carseland and Gleichen have playgrounds that are projected to require replacement in 2028 at an estimated cost of \$150,000. Current Policy states that the community shall raise half the funds and therefore resulting in the County contributing approximately \$75,000.



5.3 PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Wheatland County has a variety of different partnerships that are beneficial in the delivery of open space, recreation, culture, programs and services. Various community associations, agricultural societies, and service clubs complete a wide range of programming, operation and maintenance of facilities. Some of these groups lease County property to operate the facility and others own and operate. The two grant programs that support the community groups in this segment are the CERB Grant and Hamlet Community Facilities Grant Program.

Future Planned Region Recreation Developments

Rocky View County

Langdon Recreation Centre estimate \$23-25 million

- Multi-purpose- gymnasium/indoor partial field
- Multi –space – activity space (event, general, seniors/youth areas, temporary/permanent playground)
- Meeting Rooms
- Fitness centre
- Child minding
- Satellite library space
- Support spaces - lease spaces/concession/ administration space

6.0 CONCLUSION

The Open Space, Recreation and Culture Master Plan will guide the County in managing it's open spaces, programs, events, facilities and amenities in a cost effective manner consistent with leading industry practices. The extensive community engagement conducted ensured that we had comprehensive stakeholder input and that these perspectives were integrated and reflected in the final Plan. The Plan recognizes that each residential community or hamlet will have different recreational needs and priorities that should be considered when reviewing capital improvements, expanding existing programs, or initiating new programs. The community will continue to play an important role in fund raising and accessing grants for projects which are important to them and their community.

The Plan provides recommendations for the County to develop short, mid, and long term capital improvement plans to address needed upgrades to existing facilities and for planning new facilities. The Plan will assist in the further development of implementation plans and department work plans.

The Open Space, Recreation and Culture Master Plan is founded in vision, goals and intended outcomes that County decision makers strive to see with investment in these valued public services, making Wheatland County a sustainable region that our residents are proud to call home.



APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:

Wheatland County Recreation Needs Assessment





WHEATLAND *County*

Recreation Needs Assessment

August 2015



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WHEATLAND *County*

Recreation Needs Assessment

SECTION *One*

Introduction

Residents of Wheatland County enjoy a variety of recreation amenities and services. These include indoor and outdoor opportunities that are provided by a variety of organizations including municipalities, not for profit organizations, and for profit ventures. The County provides support to many volunteer community organizations in their provision of recreation facilities and programs.

There is a fundamental belief within the County about the importance of recreation to residents and its value in enhancing quality of life and community cohesiveness. While, through its community enhancement funding program, the County is able to discern some of the community desires for recreation services, a more focused approach to needs identification was needed. Wheatland County decided to commission this Recreation Needs Assessment in order to more fully understand the recreation needs of Wheatland County and area.

Community engagement was a significant component of the Needs Assessment. Residents and community organizations were surveyed and community stakeholders were interviewed. An examination of broader trends in the provision of recreation services was undertaken as was research with several “comparable” municipalities. Ultimately the research was completed and presented herein. Conclusions drawn from the research are also presented in this report.



SECTION *Two*

Community Description

Situated approximately 40 kilometres east of Calgary, Wheatland County has a population of 8,285 (Statistics Canada 2011). The County is bordered on the west by Rocky View County, the south by Vulcan County and Siksika Nation, the east by the County of Newell, the M.D. of Foothills, and Special Area 2, and on the north by Kneehill County and the Town of Drumheller.

The County is bisected by three major highways including the Trans-Canada Highway (#1) as well as Highways 21 and 24. In addition to vehicle infrastructure, Wheatland County is serviced by both Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Railways. The Calgary International Airport provides air service to County residents; it is approximately 60 kilometers from the County offices to the Calgary International Airport.

Twelve of the twenty-four distinct communities in the County are officially recognized as hamlets. The hamlets are overseen by the County while the Villages of Hussar, Standard and Rockyford and the Town of Strathmore are self-governed. In terms of population, Carseland is the County's largest hamlet with 568 residents (2011).

County residents take pride in their rural history. As the name suggests, Wheatland County's largest industry is agriculture. Beef and grain production make up the largest agricultural activity with many other agri-businesses emerging, such as agri-tourism and seed cleaning. According to the Municipal Development Plan (2013), there are over eight-hundred farms in operation and farmland makes up approximately 97% of the County's land area.

Residents and visitors are able to access and partake in a wide variety of recreation opportunities. There are a number of outdoor pursuits that can be enjoyed in the natural landscape including boating, camping, hiking, and so on. The County is also home to several community halls, golf courses, museums and parks.

Population

The County's population has been gradually increasing. From 2006 to 2011 an increase of 2.2% was experienced and planners have been preparing for the growth to continue. The Wheatland County Regional Growth Management Strategy (2011) projects the population reaching as high as 25,000 by the year 2051.

In addition to agriculture, construction and mineral extraction also contribute largely to the local economy. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of County workers are in agriculture¹, eight percent (8%) are in construction, and seven percent (7%) are in the mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction industry.

Due to the large number of farming operations in Wheatland County, thirty-six percent (36%) of the labour force is self-employed (triple the provincial rate). Before taxes, the average individual income is \$48,493 and the average family income is \$96,944. In comparison, the provincial average individual income is \$50,956 with the average family income being \$116,232.

While some communities are growing, Wheatland County is still very much a rural municipality. A land area of 4,539 km² places the County's population density at just under 2 people per km². With no apartment buildings, eighty-eight percent (88%) of private dwellings are single detached homes, which is significantly higher than the provincial average of sixty-four percent (64%). In terms of demographics, the median age of residents is 39.7 years, which is slightly higher than the provincial median (36.5 years). One of the most notable demographic differences between the County and the Province is the percentage of German speaking residents. Fifteen percent (15%) of County residents speak German as their mother tongue compared to two percent (2%) in Alberta.

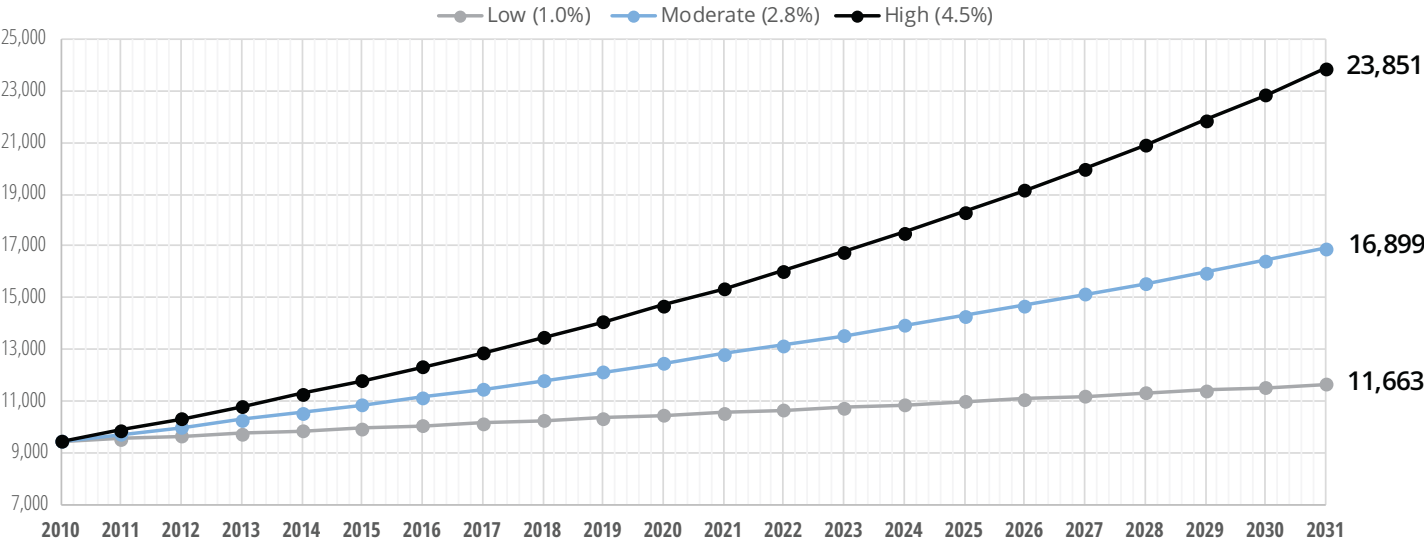
1 Statistics Canada groups agriculture, forestry, and fishing and hunting into this category.

Growth

The Regional Growth Management Strategy (2011) developed three population projections for Wheatland County. The **low growth scenario** assumes a minimal growth rate of 1%, which is well below the provincial average growth rate of 2.5%. Wheatland County's 2031 population would be 11,663 residents with a 1% growth rate. The **moderate growth scenario** (2.8% annual growth) reflects the rate in which the County has experienced over the last 20 years. This scenario projects the population to increase to 16,899 residents by 2031. Lastly, the **high growth scenario** (4.5% annual growth) is based on the Regional Growth Management Strategy's assumption that a full build-out of proposed development plans occur. The high growth scenario forecasts Wheatland County's population in 2031 to be 23,851 residents. The three growth scenarios are illustrated in the following graph.



Growth Projections
Wheatland County (2010 – 2031)



Note: The above graph is from the 2011 Regional Growth Management Strategy.

SECTION *Three*

Strategic and Foundation Review

Planning Wheatland County: Pathway to a Sustainable Future Municipal Development Plan 2013

A municipality's Municipal Development Plan (MDP) serves as its principal statutory plan, and is adopted under the provisions of the MGA. The MDP is the overarching statutory policy document (Bylaw) approved by the County – all other plans must conform to this plan.

The purpose of the Wheatland County MDP is to provide a general picture of what the County is to look like in the future and overall direction on how this can be achieved. It is a policy document adopted by Council that provides general direction for growth over the next 30 years.

County Mission:

Wheatland County is committed to provide services that recognize and encourage balanced, sustainable, long term growth and opportunities. We advocate prudent use of our resources and promote a quality of life for our citizens that reflect our agricultural heritage.

MDP Vision:

Wheatland County seeks a balanced approach to sustainable, well-planned development which enhances and protects our agricultural and natural areas and resources over the long-term. We will promote a quality of life that reflects our rural heritage, and ensures a County that we can all be proud of. Sustainable levels of services and infrastructure will help our communities to grow for the benefit of all, promoting our community spirit.

2.1.3.1. Social Vision:

Through the support of urban communities in the provision of recreational services, infrastructure and opportunities, Wheatland County aims to enhance the quality of life of

County residents. By improvement of community and emergency services and enhancement of recreation and tourism, Wheatland County intends to encourage residents to interact, live and retire in the community.

The MDP's Guiding Principles

There are ten guiding principles. The following six are noted because they are particularly relevant to this Recreation Needs Assessment.

3. **Encourage growth in existing communities.** County residents should be able to easily access daily activities and support local businesses. Infrastructure should be used efficiently, and **developments** should not unnecessarily take up new land.
4. **Mix land uses.** The County's larger communities should have a mixture of different types of homes, retail, business, and recreational opportunities. Residents should be able to choose to live, work, shop and play in close proximity.
5. **Foster a unique community identity.** Each community in the County should be unique, vibrant, diverse, and inclusive.
6. **Nurture engaged citizens.** Communities should belong to those who live, work and play there; citizens should be encouraged to participate in community life and decision-making.
7. **Provide a variety of transportation choices.** Communities should be attractive and have safe infrastructure for walking, cycling and transit (if possible), in addition to driving.
9. **Use smarter and cost-effective infrastructure and green buildings.** Green buildings and other systems can save both money and the environment in the long run. Smaller, sensitively-placed lots require less total land coverage, thereby requiring shorter lengths of utilities and streets to access all lots.

Parks and Recreation is a key policy area in the MDP

Over the past century, parks and green spaces have become an important part of urban communities. Residents and community leaders understand the value of mixing parks and green spaces within communities, especially the County's **Hamlets**. These areas provide health, social, and environmental benefits for residents of the County.

3.10.1. Parks and Recreation Objectives

1. Recognize the **importance of recreational** opportunities in the County, and value the positive role of parks and other gathering places in the everyday lives of residents.
2. Encourage high-quality **recreational facilities** that meet the needs of all residents, across all ages, economic, and cultural backgrounds.
3. Protect and expand **natural areas** that are used for outdoor recreation activities, and preserve them for traditional uses such as hunting, fishing, and hiking.
4. Promote the **development** of a range of sites for different parks and recreational activities.

3.10.2. Parks and Recreation Policies

1. The County shall support the Community Enhancement Regional Board and its efforts to improve recreational services.
2. The County encourages recreational opportunities of all types, accessible to both urban and rural residents.
3. The County shall continually explore the acquisition and re-use of land for new parks and recreation facilities.
4. The County shall ensure that new capital expenditures on recreation facilities avoid duplicating existing area facilities.
5. The County may consider the development of recreational uses that are low-impact, passive, and do not require permanent structures.



SECTION *Four*

Inventory and Service Provision

Wheatland County

The majority of recreation facilities (indoor and outdoor) are operated by volunteers, non-profit organizations, and community associations. It is these entities that are primarily responsible for direct delivery to County and area residents. The County does, however own a number of facilities and parcels of land. In some instances a community organization leases the asset from the County (i.e. High Eagle RV Resort in Rosebud), while in other instances the County itself maintains/operates it (i.e. Beaupre Park and campground in Gleichen). The Severn Dam is an example whereby the County leases the day use area from the Province and maintains/operates it.

In recognition of the significant role community organizations play in recreation delivery, Wheatland County established the “Community Enhancement Grant Fund” in 2012 to provide support to these organizations. The fund was established to assist organizations with capital projects or with operating expenditures. Grant applications are submitted to the Community Enhancement Regional Board to be reviewed and prioritized. The Board is comprised of two representatives from each of the seven electoral divisions—as such decisions are made on a County wide basis.

The Regional Board allocates approximately \$400,000 in grants annually. Formally the Board recommends the awarding of grant funds; these recommendations are reviewed by Council for formal approval. Although this grant program can be used for recreation related projects, it is intended to support a wide range of projects for the enjoyment and benefit of County residents.

Several of the community organizations in the County operate facilities. It is important to note that the funds allocated by the Board are awarded to community organizations; they are not intended solely to support the facilities throughout the County. This past year the applications received totaled \$1.2M.

In 2013, Wheatland County created a Grants Coordinator position. This position provides administrative support for the Community Enhancement Regional Board, scans and researches for grants that the County and community organizations can access. The Grants Coordinator does provide some support to community organizations, sharing possible grant opportunities and providing some direction with completing grant applications.

Recreation Infrastructure in the ARea

County residents are able to access a wide variety of recreation infrastructure throughout the County and its hamlets. This includes numerous community halls, curling rinks, ice arenas, library facilities, as well as a variety of outdoor amenities such as ball diamonds, trails, park space, playgrounds and so on.

The neighbouring Villages and the Town of Strathmore also offer a multitude of opportunities to County residents. There are numerous indoor recreation amenities available in these communities including halls, curling rinks, arenas, library facilities, and aquatic facilities (amongst others). Outdoor amenities are available as well. Areas such as campgrounds, ball diamonds, rectangular fields, playgrounds, skateboard parks, agricultural facilities and others are accessible to area residents.

Whether in the County, its hamlets, or the urban municipalities within its borders, Wheatland County residents have access to many different indoor and outdoor recreation facilities and amenities.

Comparative Recreation Delivery

An examination of recreation service delivery in other “comparable” municipalities was conducted. This examination encompassed infrastructure provision as well as policies and procedures related to community group support, direct service provision, and funding.

The spectrum of service delivery typically ranges from direct delivery through to indirect delivery. With direct delivery the municipality may own and operate recreation facilities often with the use of municipal staff. Indirect delivery involves the provision of recreation services by community organizations with some support from the municipality. This could involve a curling club operating a facility and offering programs in a municipally owned facility. An organization such as minor hockey is volunteer run in a municipal facility.

Wheatland County identified five municipalities to include in this analysis: M.D. of Foothills No. 31; Kneehill County; Vulcan County; Mountain View County; and the County of Newell. The findings from the research is presented below by municipality.

Municipal District of Foothills No. 31

Southwest of Wheatland County, the MD of Foothills exhibits both direct and indirect delivery approaches. Since the MD borders the City of Calgary and has four towns within its boundary (including Okotoks and High River), MD residents have the ability to access a variety of major recreation facilities and amenities within a close proximity. An increase of surrounding service quality and availability often raises residents' expectations of their own municipality's services.

In terms of direct delivery, the MD of Foothills owns and operates an ice arena and a few outdoor sports fields/parks. Of the five comparable municipalities, the MD of Foothills is the only one to operate a facility such as an ice arena, however it is also the most populated as the MD has over 21,000 residents. The MD also owns and operates a campground.

The MD of Foothills has a 50/50 partnership with the Town of Okotoks in the Legacy Regional Field House. This major recreation facility is operated by a private company under the direction of a board comprised of the Town, the MD, and three area citizens. These two municipalities have partnered in the past with library and fire services, but this was the first encounter involving recreation.

A common indirect approach that the MD utilizes is the provision of recreation boards. The municipality provides funding to six recreation boards who receive grant applications from volunteer groups. The recreation boards allocate the municipal funds as they see fit with Council's approval. The amount of funding varies year to year depending on demand and there are no official policies in place regarding the grant allocations.

Over the next ten years the MD of Foothills foresees recreation delivery maintaining the status quo as programming remains the role of the community organizations with municipal support via the recreation boards. Some movement towards a more direct approach may occur however as the MD is open to the idea of operating an additional ice arena.

Notable Recreation Infrastructure (in the MD and its hamlets)

- 14 Community halls: owned and operated by community associations.
- 1 Major multi-use recreation centre (in Okotoks, privately operated).
- 1 Ice arena (operated by MD).
- 1 Campground (operated by MD; currently closed due to flooding).

Kneehill County

Bordering Wheatland County to the north, Kneehill County has a population of nearly 5,000 residents and contains five urban municipalities including the Town of Three Hills. Kneehill County takes an indirect approach with recreation programming as non-profit organizations deliver the front line service. The County does not operate any recreation facilities, with the exception of four campgrounds; however, it does provide funding to the community halls and an ice arena (operated by an agricultural society). Even though the County does not offer programs or operate facilities, staff and Council communicate directly with community groups as there is no recreation board.

A rural community hall policy ensures assistance to the ten halls that are on County land, but are owned and operated by community associations. The County budgets \$25,000 annually for the halls' operating costs and each hall will receive different amounts based on the number of events hosted and whether it is used year-round or seasonal.

The Community Grants Committee is responsible for receiving applications, prioritizing submissions, and allocating resources for the “Community Grants to Non-Profit Organizations.” In essence, this is the role of a many recreation boards, however this committee is comprised of Council members. The application process is very detailed but straightforward. If the community group meets the requirements, it receives the funds. This grant is dedicated to short-term minor projects, not for major capital investments or operating costs, and the groups must have society status. Any community group asking for over \$5,000 must present its request to Council. The grant is accessible to any community group within the County’s boundaries, including groups within the five urban municipalities. With two yearly submission dates (Fall and Spring), the County budgets \$50,000 per year for the grant which has continued to meet the demand to date.

Another funding program titled the “Regional Resource Urban Sustainability Grant” recently was implemented to replace the previously known “Recreation and Leisure Grant.” The funding used to be more focused on recreation but now it is broader to provide assistance to a greater variety of community initiatives, including recreation. Essentially the County provides funding to the five urban municipalities with the contingency that the urban municipalities cannot use over 50% of the funds on its operating budget. The County identifies the amount based on the net tax revenue generated by one mill of the linear tax rate (\$1.25M in 2015). The amount is split in half (\$600,000) and distributed evenly to each of the municipalities (\$120,000 each). The other half is divvied up on a per capita basis.

Kneehill County strongly believes in regional partnerships as proven through a number of successful initiatives (beyond recreation) such as a doctor recruitment program, sharing of peace officers and fire services, financial assistance for operations, and the undertaking of recreation and fire studies. Council will even consider these types of projects for county residents even if the initiative is not within county boundaries as evidenced by Kneehill’s financial contribution to Drumheller’s Badlands Community Facility.

Notable Recreation Infrastructure (in the County and its hamlets)

- 10 Community halls: owned and operated by community associations.
- 4 Campgrounds: owned and operated by the County.
- 2 Curling rinks (5 sheets): owned and operated by non-profit associations.
- 1 Ice arena: owned and operated by an agricultural society.
- 1 Seniors centre: owned and operated by a non-profit association.

Vulcan County

Vulcan County has the smallest population of the municipalities included in this analysis with 3,875 residents. Located just south of Wheatland County, Vulcan County uses recreation committees. Currently there are six recreation areas coinciding to the area surrounding, and including, each of the six urban municipalities. The County does own and operate one campground.

Each of the recreation districts has specific recreation committees that receive recreation and cultural applications from the community groups within its district. The committees review the applications and provide their recommendations to Council. Council receives the recommended applications during the budget deliberations.

The County had developed specific forms for the community groups to fill in for their funding requests, indicating purpose, type, estimated usage, expenditure, and other sources of funding. Approved culture requests are funded by the general mill rate for taxation while approved recreation requests are funded by special tax rates for each of the specific districts. If a recreation request is County-wide, the project may be considered for a combination of special tax and general mill rate.

The urban municipalities within these districts administer the committees, therefore the funding from the County is disbursed to the municipality, which then distributes the funds to the external community groups. The Town and Villages submit the funding requests to their respective Councils through the recommendations of the committees. The community groups have access to the County’s Grants Coordinator. This resource provides assistance to the groups as they search and apply for grants.

Notable Recreation Infrastructure (in the County and its hamlets)

- 2 Campgrounds: 1 owned and operating by the County; 1 owned and operated by a Lions Club.

Mountain View County

Mountain View County lies northwest of Wheatland County and has a population of 12,359. Four towns (Olds, Sundre, Didsbury, Carstairs) and one village (Cremona) are located within the County's boundaries. Mountain View County does not offer direct programming or operate recreation facilities, except for one campground.

The County budgets \$70,000 annually for a community hall grant program which the community associations can access to help cover their halls' operating costs. Major capital projects do not fall within the scope of the grant program. Twenty-eight community halls are currently operating within Mountain View County.

The "Royal Community Grant" exists for community groups to access resources. Without recreation boards, the applications are submitted from the groups to the County for review and allocation—\$45,000 per year is budgeted for the grant.

Each district within the County pays an annual recreation fee to their closest urban municipality. Currently, if the urban municipality has a pool the district pays \$113 per capita, whereas if the municipality does not have a pool the district pays \$73 per capita. The funds go straight to the urban municipality to be used at their discretion. An identical structure has been established for libraries too at \$11 per capita.

Notable Recreation Infrastructure (in the County and its rural neighbourhoods)

- 28 Community halls: owned and operated by community associations.
- 2 Campgrounds: 1 owned and operated by the County; 1 owned by the County and operated by a non-profit association.
- 1 Curling rink (2 sheets): owned and operated by a non-profit association.
- 1 Library: operated by Parkland Regional Library.

County of Newell

The County of Newell is situated southeast of Wheatland County and has a population of 6,786. The City of Brooks, the Town of Bassano, and the Villages of Duchess and Rosemary lie within the County's boundaries. It should be noted that the County owns and operates one campground.

A separate mill rate is applied to property within each of the ten electoral divisions to generate funds for recreation purposes. While the mill rate bylaw identifies a specific amount raised within each electoral division, the County also raises the same amount for recreation purposes through the general municipal mill rate. The amount raised for recreation by electoral division is determined by the division's local recreation board. Some of these boards are quite informal, whereas others hold regular meetings for the purpose of reviewing and approving applications submitted.

Two formal joint committees for recreation, parks, and culture are established between the County and each of the Villages. These committees review funding request and administer funds allocated from grants and taxes according to need. For the two larger urban municipalities a formal joint committee agreement is not in place. The recreation boards that oversee the allocation of funds in those areas contribute money directly to Brooks and Bassano for their Councils to offset costs of their recreation programs and facilities. The Town of Bassano has been receiving \$50,000 per year and the City of Brooks has been receiving \$75,000.

The municipalities within the County of Newell also have a "Regional Enhancement and Co-operation Agreement" in which the County provides each urban community with a source of unconditional funding to be allocated towards any service they feel the funds would best be utilized for. The funds come from the County's municipal tax levy primarily associated with oil and gas activity.

Notable Recreation Infrastructure (in the County and its hamlets)

- 6 Campgrounds: 3 Provincial Park campgrounds; 1 owned and operated by the County; 2 privately owned.
- 3 Community halls: owned and operated by community associations.
- Ice arena: owned and operated by a non-profit association.
- 1 Curling rink (2 sheets): owned and operated by a non-profit association.

Summary

The following table summarizes each municipality's recreation service delivery in terms of facilities owned and operated, agreements with urban municipalities, and grant funding programs.

Municipality	Agreements with Urban Municipalities within its Boundaries	Community Group Grant Programs
Wheatland County	None	1 program (CERB): ~\$400,000
MD of Foothills No. 31	50/50 partnership with the Town of Okotoks in a major multi-use recreation centre	Annual funding to 6 recreation boards
Kneehill County	Regional Resource Urban Sustainability Grant: \$1,250,000 (unconditional funding, not limited to recreation)	Community hall funding: \$25,000 Community group grant: \$50,000
Vulcan County	Each recreation committee is struck by the urban municipality; therefore the County's funds are essentially distributed via the urban municipality.	Funding to 6 recreation committees
Mountain View County	Agreements with all 5 municipalities: ~\$1,000,000	Community hall funding: \$70,000 Community group grant: \$45,000
County of Newell	Agreements with all 4 urban municipalities: \$125,000 (Brooks; Bassano)	2 joint committees with each village

Common characteristics of the comparable municipalities:

- Recreation is primarily delivered by community groups.
- The municipalities aid community groups through grant funding.
- 4 of the 5 municipalities use recreation boards to facilitate grant programs.
- In many cases, facilities operated by community groups (i.e. community halls, curling rinks, ice arenas) are facing increased maintenance costs due to age.
- Rural residents utilize recreation facilities in their nearby urban municipalities.
- Each comparable municipality has continued recreation specific partnerships with its urban municipalities.

Alberta Municipal Affairs collects from the province's municipalities expenditures on a variety of services including recreation. The following table presents the recreation and culture spending of the comparable municipalities, its proportion of total municipal expenditures, and the per capita recreation spending.¹ As illustrated below, Wheatland County's proportion of its budget allocated to recreation and culture is the lowest amongst those included, as is its per capita expenditure. Compared to the average of the comparable municipalities, Wheatland County's expenditure on recreation is sizeably lower.

Area	Population (2011)	Spending on Recreation and Culture	Total Expenditures	% on Recreation and Culture	Per Capita on Recreation and Culture
Wheatland County	8,285	\$567,086	\$32,122,493	1.8%	\$68.45
M.D. of Foothills No. 31	21,258	\$2,023,914	\$42,040,012	4.8%	\$95.21
Kneehill County	4,921	\$607,803	\$20,152,168	3.0%	\$123.51
Vulcan County	3,875	\$405,422	\$17,415,314	2.3%	\$104.63
Mountain View County	12,359	\$1,643,001	\$31,679,347	3.0%	\$97.95
County of Newell	6,786	\$965,335	\$25,137,808	3.8%	\$142.25
AVERAGE ^A	9,840	\$1,129,095	\$27,284,930	3.4%	\$112.71

A Average of the five (5) comparable municipalities.

The spending of the three Villages within the County is present in the following table along with the comparable figures for the Town of Strathmore. Considering the three villages within the County's borders and the Town of Strathmore, Wheatland County spends a lower proportion of its budget on recreation. Its per capital expenditure is lower as well.

Area	Population (2011)	Spending on Recreation and Culture	Total Expenditures	% on Recreation and Culture	Per Capita on Recreation and Culture
Wheatland County	8,285	\$567,086	\$32,122,493	1.8%	\$68.45
Village of Hussar	176	\$21,741	\$444,646	4.9%	\$123.53
Village of Rockyford	325	\$27,910	\$1,174,874	2.4%	\$85.88
Village of Standard	379	\$72,206	\$884,733	8.2%	\$190.52
Town of Strathmore	12,352 ^B	\$4,647,049	\$22,718,488	20.5%	\$376.22
AVERAGE ^C	293	\$40,619	\$834,757	5.2%	\$133.31

B 2012 population.

C The average does not include the Town of Strathmore.

¹ Expenditure figures are those reported in 2013, the population figures are for 2011. The categories that are combined include Recreation Boards, Parks and Recreation, Culture: Libraries, Museums, Halls, and Other Recreation and Culture.

SECTION *Five*

Trends and Issues

A review of trends can help identify best practices in the delivery of recreation services as well as emerging or evolving interests that may be important to consider when developing programming and infrastructure. Summarized in the following section are key trends in pursuits and activities, service delivery and infrastructure.

Pursuit and Activity Trends

Physical Activity and Wellness Levels

The Canadian Health Measures Survey (Statistics Canada) concludes that the fitness levels of Canadian children and youth, as well as adults, have declined significantly between 1981 and 2009. Among youth aged 15 to 19, the percentage who were at an increased or high risk of health problems more than tripled; for adults aged 20 to 39 this percentage quadrupled.

In Alberta it appears that a number of demographic and socioeconomic factors contribute significantly to overall physical activity and wellness levels. Listed below are relevant findings from the 2013 Alberta Survey on Physical Activity:

- Although 94% of Albertans agree that physical activity will keep them healthy, only 59% are considered active enough to gain health benefits.
- Age appears significantly impact activity levels:
 - » 87% of young adults aged 18 to 24 are considered physically active
 - » Only 37% of seniors aged 65 and older meet sufficient physical activity levels
- Household income has a direct impact on physical activity levels, with physical activity generally decreasing in relation to overall household income levels.
- 75% of Albertans believe that they have sufficient access to places where they can be physically active.

- Educational attainment relates to physical activity; 60.9% of Albertans that completed High School are considered physically active as compared to only 46.1% among Albertans that did not complete High School.

» Marital status appears to factor into activity levels:

- 66.8% of 'single' Albertans are active
- 64.1% of 'common-law/live-in partner' Albertans are active
- 63.2% of 'separated' Albertans are active
- 57.9% of 'married' Albertans are active
- 56.9% of 'divorced' Albertans are active
- 34.8% of 'widowed' Albertans are active

The Active Healthy Kids Canada Annual Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth (2014) also reports some concerning trends related to children's participation in physical activity:

- Only 24% of 5 to 17 year olds use only active modes of transportation to get to school (62% use only inactive modes, 14% use a combination of active and inactive modes)
- Only 7% of 5 to 11 year-olds and 4% of 12 to 17 year-olds year meet the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for Children and Youth.

However poor physical activity levels nationally do not appear to result from a lack of interest or awareness of the issues surrounds child and youth physical inactivity. The Report Card found that 82% of parents agree that the education system should place more importance on providing quality physical education and 79% of parents contribute financially to their kids' physical activities. However only 37% of parents actively play with their children.

Physical Activity Preferences

The 2013 Canadian Community Health Survey reveals data that provides some insight into the recreation and leisure preferences of Canadians. The **top 5 most popular adult** activities identified were walking, gardening, home exercise, swimming and bicycling. The **top 5 most popular youth** activities were walking, bicycling, swimming, running/jogging and basketball.¹

Participation levels and preferences for sporting activities continue to garner much attention given the impact on infrastructure development and overall service delivery in most municipalities. The Canadian Fitness & Lifestyle Research Institutes 2011 – 2012 Sport Monitor report identified a number of updated statistics and trends pertaining to sport participation in Canada.²



- **The highest proportion of Canadians prefers non-competitive sports or activities.** Nearly half (44%) of Canadians preferred non-competitive sports while 40% like both non-competitive and competitive sports. Only 8% of Canadians prefer competitive sports or activities and 8% prefer neither competitive nor non-competitive sports.
- **Sport participation is directly related to age.** Over three-quarters (70%) of Canadians aged 15 – 17 participate in sports, with participation rates decreasing in each subsequent age group. The largest fall-off in sport participation occurs between the age categories of 15 – 17 and 18 – 24 (~20%).
- **Participation in sport is gender-based.** Substantially more men (45%) than women (24%) participate in sport.
- **Participation in sport is directly related to household income levels.** Households with an annual income of >\$100,000 have the highest participation levels, nearly twice as high as households earning between \$20,000 – \$39,999 annually and over three times as high as households earning less than \$20,000 annually.
- **The highest proportion of sport participants continue to do so in “structured environments”.** Just under half (48%) of sport participants indicated that their participation occurs primarily in organized environments, while 20% participate in unstructured or casual environments and 32% do so in both structured and unstructured environments.
- **Community sport programs and venues remain important.** The vast majority (82%) of Canadians that participate in sport do so in the community. Approximately one-fifth (21%) participate at school while 17% participate in sports at work. A significant proportion (43%) also indicated that they participate in sporting activities at home.

1 Statistics Canada, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/140612/dq140612b-eng.htm>

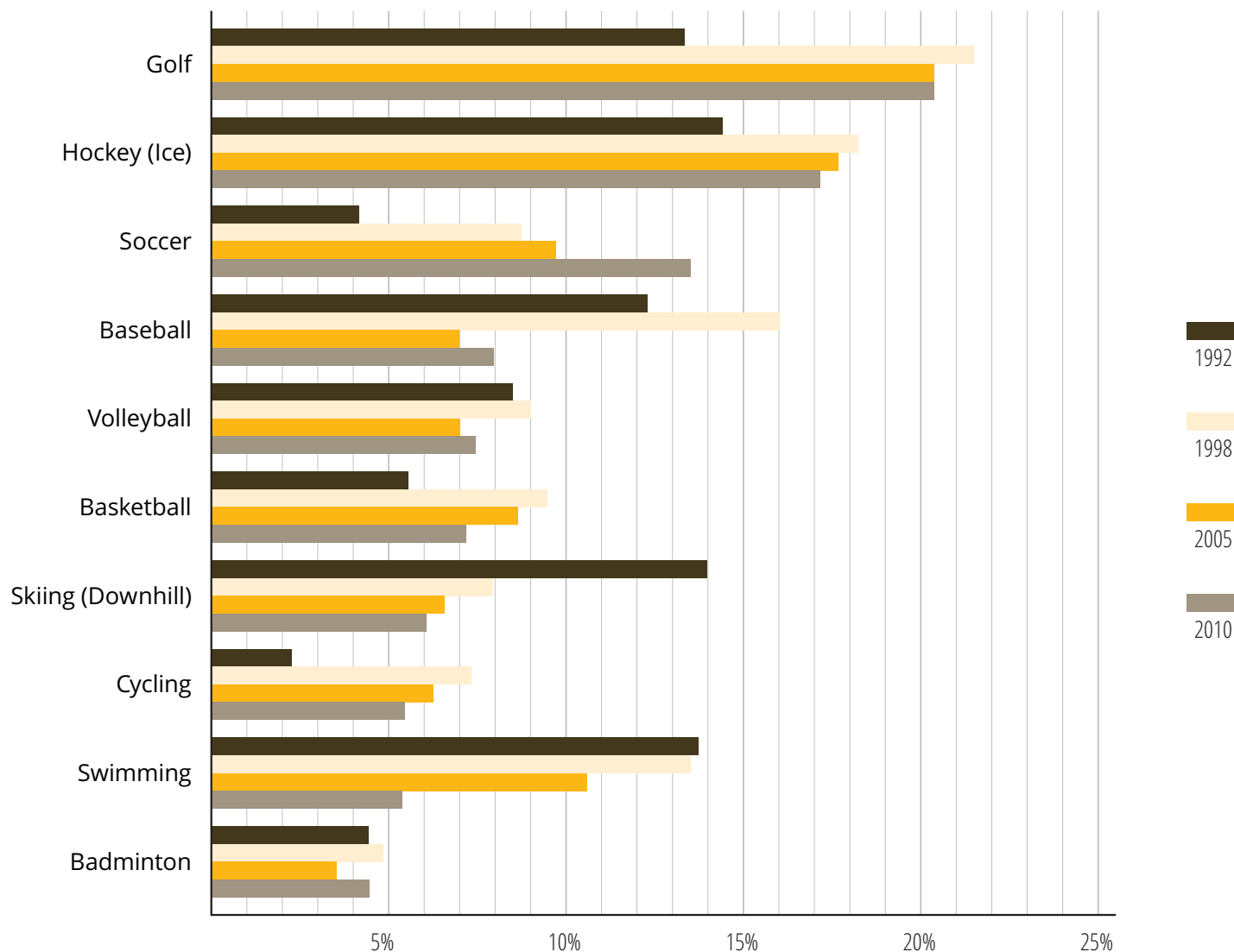
2 Canadian Fitness & Lifestyle Research Institutes 2011-2012 Sport Monitor, <http://www.cflri.ca/node/78>

A research paper entitled “Sport Participation 2010” published by Canadian Heritage also identified a number of trends pertaining to participation in specific sports. The following graph illustrates national trends in active sport participation from 1992 – 2010. As reflected in the graph, swimming (as a sport) has experienced the most significant decrease while soccer has had the highest rate of growth while golf and hockey remain the two most played sports in Canada.

Note: Data includes both youth, amateur and adult sport participants.¹

Active Participation Rate

1992 – 2010



¹ Government of Canada, http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2013/pc-ch/CH24-1-2012-eng.pdf

The Alberta Recreation Survey, commissioned every 4 – 5 years by Alberta Tourism, Parks, and Recreation, additionally provides data into the activity preferences of Albertans. The recent (2013) Survey found that Albertans continue to enjoy an array of physical activity, recreation and leisure pursuits. The following graphic depicts the top 5 activities for a variety of activity types.

Participation in Activities by Repondents (Past Twelve Months)

2013 Alberta
Recreation Survey

97.6% of respondents have participated in a leisure or recreation activity (past twelve months)

Highest Participation ← ----- → Lowest Participation

Top Five Activities By % of Respondents Participating											
Physical Activities		Outdoor Activities		Creative/Cultural Activities		Snow Activities		Water Activities		Group Activities	
Walking for Pleasure	80.5%	Gardening	61.0%	Attending a Fair/Festival/Cultural Event	65.1%	Downhill Skiing	17.5%	Motor Boating	18.2%	Bowling/Lawn Bowling	12.1%
Bicycling	42.3%	Day Hiking	37.8%	Visiting a Museum/Art Gallery	48.2%	Tobogganing/Sledding	16.0%	Canoeing	10.9%	Curling	7.7%
Aerobics/Fitness	38.1%	Golf (other than driving range or mini golf)	32.8%	Doing a Craft/Creative Hobby	47.3%	Cross-country Skiing	12.4%	Kayaking	8.1%	Ice Hockey	5.9%
Swimming/Aquafitness (in pools)	31.9%	Overnight Camping	30.8%	Attending Live Theatre (not movies)	46.5%	Snowshoeing	8.8%	Water Skiing	5.4%	Soccer	5.1%
Swimming (in lakes, rivers, ponds)	31.3%	Fishing	20.0%	Taking Part in the Arts	21.0%	Snowmobiling	3.9%	River Rafting	4.7%	Softball/Baseball	4.4%



Balancing Structured and Spontaneous Uses

While many structured or organized activities remain important, there is an increasing demand for more flexibility in timing and activity choice. People are seeking individualized, informal pursuits that can be done alone or in small groups, at flexible times, often near or at home. This does not however eliminate the need for structured activities and the stakeholder groups that provide them. Instead, this trend suggests that planning for the general population is as important as planning for traditional structured use environments. Analyzing the issue further, if recreation and culture budgets do not increase to accommodate this expanded scope of spontaneous use planning, it may be necessary for municipalities to further partner with dedicated use organizations (e.g. sport teams) in the provision of programs and facilities to ensure the optimal use of public funds.

Flexibility and Adaptability

Recreation and cultural consumers have a greater choice of activity options than at any time in history. As a result, service providers are increasingly being required to ensure that their approach to delivery is fluid and able to quickly adapt to meet community demand. Many municipalities have also had to make hard decisions on which activities they are able to directly offer or support, and those which are more appropriate to leave to the private sector to provide.

Ensuring that programming staff and management are current on trends is important in the identification and planning of programming. Regular interaction and data collection (e.g. customer surveys) from members are other methods which many service providers use to help identify programs that are popular and in-demand. The development of multi-use spaces can also help ensure that municipalities have the flexibility to adapt to changing interests and activity preferences.

Service Delivery Trends

Partnerships

Partnerships in the provision of recreation, leisure and cultural opportunities are becoming more prevalent. These partnerships can take a number of forms, and include government, not for profit organizations, schools and the private sector. While the provision of recreation and cultural services has historically relied on municipal levels of the government, many municipalities are increasingly looking to form partnerships that can enhance service levels and more efficiently lever public funds.

Partnerships can be as simple as facility naming and sponsorship arrangements and as complex as lease and contract agreements to operate spaces, entire facilities or deliver programs. According to one study¹ over three-quarters (76%) of Canadian municipalities work with schools in their communities to encourage the participation of municipal residents in physical activities. Just under half of municipalities work with local not-for profits (46%), health settings (40%), or workplaces (25%) to encourage participation in physical activities amongst their residents. Seventy-six percent (76%) of municipalities with a population of 1,000 to 9,999 to 80% of municipalities over 100,000 in population have formed agreements with school boards for shared use of facilities. In fact since 2000, the proportion of municipalities that have reported working with schools, health settings, and local-not-for profit organizations has increased by 10% to 20%.



1 "Municipal Opportunities for Physical Activity" Bulletin 6: Strategic partnerships. 2010, Canadian Fitness & Lifestyle Research Institute.

Volunteerism

Volunteers continue to be vitally important to the planning and delivery of numerous events and programs. Presented below are a number of pertinent trends in volunteerism that may impact or have relevancy to the delivery of programming or facility operations.

Findings from the 2010 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating—Alberta data tables:¹

- Albertans volunteer at a higher rate (54.7%) than the national average (47.0%)
- The highest volunteer rate in Alberta is among adults aged 35 to 44 (63.4%) followed by youth and young adults aged 15 to 24 (56.7%) and adults aged 55 to 64 (51.3%).
- Although seniors had the lowest volunteer rate (49.6%), they had the highest average of annual volunteer hours (206 hours on average per year).



Current trends in volunteerism as identified by Volunteer Canada:²

- **Much comes from the few.** 47% of Canadians volunteer. Over one-third (34%) of all volunteer hours were contributed by 5% of total volunteers.
- **The new volunteer.** Young people volunteer to gain work related skills (Canadians aged 15 – 24 volunteer more than any other age group). New Canadians also volunteer to develop work experience and to practice language skills. Persons with disabilities may volunteer as a way to more fully participate in community life.
- **Volunteer job design.** Volunteer job design can be the best defense for changing demographics and fluctuations in funding.
- **Mandatory volunteering.** There are mandatory volunteer programs through Workfare, Community Service Order and school mandated community work.
- **Volunteering by contract.** The changing volunteer environment is redefining volunteer commitment as a negotiated and mutually beneficial arrangement rather than a one-way sacrifice of time by the volunteer.
- **Risk management.** Considered part of the process of job design for volunteers, risk management ensures the organization can place the right volunteer in the appropriate activity.
- **Borrowing best practices.** The voluntary sector has responded to the changing environment by adopting corporate and public sector management practices including: standards; codes of conduct; accountability and transparency measures around program administration; demand for evaluation; and outcome and import measurement.
- **Professional volunteer management.** Managers of volunteer resources are working toward establishing an equal footing with other professionals in the voluntary sector.
- **Board governance.** Volunteer boards must respond to the challenge of acting as both supervisors and strategic planners.

1 Data compiled by Statistics Canada. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-649-x/2011001/tbl/tbl210-eng.htm>

2 Alberta Heritage Community Foundation. <http://www.abheritage.ca/volunteer/index.html>

Community Development

The combined factors of decreasing support from other levels of government, increasing demand for new and exciting recreation infrastructure and programs, and the changing nature of the volunteer has led many municipalities to adopt a community development role in service delivery. This, in addition to the direct delivery of recreation and culture facilities and programs, includes the facilitation of empowering local non-profit groups to operate facilities and/or offer programs to residents thereby leveraging public resources and providing more value for public investment.

Community development is the process of creating change through a model of greater public participation—the engagement of the entire community from the individual up. The concept of community development has a broader reach than just the delivery of recreation and cultural programs and facilities; it is commonly understood to be the broader involvement of the general public in decision making and delivery. Community development in recreation delivery encompasses supporting and guiding volunteer groups to ultimately become self-sufficient while providing facilities and programs that further the recreation and cultural agenda in a community.

Economic Benefits of Recreation, Sport and Cultural Tourism

Sport, recreation, and cultural tourism are major contributors to local economies throughout the province. This is especially true in the case of communities that have the infrastructure necessary to host major sporting events with non-local teams and competitors or performers that draw spectators from outside the community.

“**Sport tourists**” have been defined as participants and their families who travel more than 80km to attend, participate in, or are somehow involved in a sporting event. According to the Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance, spending associated with the Canadian sport tourism industry reached \$3.6 billion in 2010, an increase of 8.8% from 2008.¹ Sport tourism related to major provincial, national or international events can have longer lasting impacts in communities than just local spending during an event. In some cases, legacies are left including infrastructure, endowments and community brand recognition.

Cultural tourism is another important and growing segment of the tourism industry. Its participants are young, well-educated, spend more money on their trips, and seek unique personal experiences. Although not a new phenomenon, cultural tourism has consistently been characterized by the following points:

1. **Frequent short trips.** The cultural tourist, while small as a percentage of all tourists, makes numerous short trips to participate in cultural activities year-round.
2. **A Personal Experience.** Cultural tourists seek experiences that are meaningful to them and that will result in individual reminiscences and memories which refer more to the tourist’s personal history than to that of the site.

Many Alberta municipalities are concentrating more on event hosting to generate broader economic impact, build community image and create sustainability in volunteer groups. In some cases municipalities are spearheaded these efforts by taking on a direct role in the recruitment and planning of events. In other cases municipalities are supporting community groups by providing facilities, staff resources and/or financial support.

Providing Quality Parks and Outdoor Spaces

Research supports that individuals continue to place a high value on the availability and quality of parks, trails and outdoor spaces. A 2013 Canadian study commissioned by the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation found that nearly two-thirds of respondents (64%) indicated that local parks were “very important” to them and their family. Additionally, 68% of Canadians are concerned about the loss of green space in their community.² Another 2011 study of over 1,100 parents of 2 to 12 year olds in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom found that the more time a family spends together at a playground, the greater their overall sense of family well-being. Three-quarters also wished that their family had time to visit a playground more often.³

Parks and outdoor spaces also play a key role in helping to combat “nature deficit disorder” amongst children and youth. This phrase, first coined by Richard Louv in his bestselling book “Last Child in the Woods”, suggests that children are becoming estranged from

1 <http://canadiansporttourism.com/value-sport-tourism.html>

2 TD Friends of the Environment Foundation survey, conducted by Ipsos Reid (2013)

3 Harris Interactive (2011). Playgrounds Increase Sense Of Family Well-Being. Washington, District of Columbia. Foresters.

nature and natural play resulting in a number of cognitive, physical, and developmental issues.

While all residents benefit from the availability of quality park spaces, a significant amount of research and attention has been given to the myriad of benefits that result from children and youth being able to play and interact in outdoor settings. Findings include:

- Children who play regularly in natural environments show more advanced motor fitness, including coordination, balance and agility, and they are sick less often.¹
- Exposure to natural environments improves children's cognitive development by improving their awareness, reasoning and observational skills.²
- Children who play in nature have more positive feelings about each other.³
- Outdoor environments are important to children's development of independence and autonomy.⁴
- Children with views of and contact with nature score higher on tests of concentration and self-discipline. The greener, the better the scores (Wells 2000, Taylor et al. 2002).⁵

Social Inclusion

The concept of social inclusion is increasingly becoming an issue communities are addressing. While always an important issue, its significance has risen as communities have become more diversified through immigration.

Social inclusion is about making sure that all children and adults are able to participate as valued, respected and contributing members of society. It involves the basic notions of belonging, acceptance and recognition. For immigrants, social inclusion would be manifested in full and equal participation in all facets of a community including economic, social, cultural,

and political realms. It goes beyond including "outsiders" or "newcomers". In fact social inclusion is about the elimination of the boundaries or barriers between "us" and "them".⁶ There is a recognition that diversity has worth unto itself and is not something that must be overcome.⁷

While issues of social inclusion are pertinent for all members of a community, they can be particularly relevant for adolescents of immigrant families. Immigrant youth can feel pulled in opposite directions between their own cultural values and a desire to "fit in" to their new home. This tension can be exacerbated in those situations in which parents are experiencing stress due to settlement. Children living in families which are struggling are more likely to be excluded from some of the aspects of life essential to their healthy development. Children are less likely to have positive experiences at school, less likely to participate in recreation, and less likely to get along well with friends, if they live in families struggling with parental depression, family dysfunction or violence.⁸

Financial barriers to participation in recreation, sport, and cultural activities continue to exist for many Albertans. Understanding the potential benefits that can result from engaging citizens in a broad range of activities and programs, municipalities have undertaken a number of initiatives aimed at removing financial barriers. Current initiatives being led or supported by many municipalities include the Canadian Parks and Recreation Associations 'Everybody Gets to Play' program, KidSport, and JumpStart.

1 Grahn, P., Martensson, F., Lindblad, B., Nilsson, P., & Ekman, A., (1997). UTE pa DAGIS, Stad & Land nr. 93/1991 Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet, Alnarp.

2 Pyle, Robert (1993). The thunder trees: Lessons from an urban wildland. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

3 Moore, Robin (1996). Compact Nature: The Role of Playing and Learning Gardens on Children's Lives, *Journal of Therapeutic Horticulture*, 8, 72-82.

4 Bartlett, Sheridan (1996). Access to Outdoor Play and Its Implications for Healthy Attachments. Unpublished article, Putney, VT.

5 Taylor, A.F., Kuo, F.E. & Sullivan, W.C. (2002). Views of Nature and Self-Discipline: Evidence from Inner City Children, *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 22, 49-63.

6 Omidvar, Ratna, Ted Richmond (2003). Immigrant Settlement and Social Inclusion in Canada. The Laidlaw Foundation.

7 Harvey, Louise (2002). Social Inclusion Research in Canada: Children and Youth. The Canadian Council on Social Development's "Progress of Canada's Children".

8 Harvey, Louise (2002). Social Inclusion Research in Canada: Children and Youth. The Canadian Council on Social Development's "Progress of Canada's Children".

Infrastructure Trends

Multi-Use Spaces

Increasingly, recreation and cultural facilities are being designed to accommodate multiple activities and to encompass a host of different components. The benefits of designing multi-use spaces include the opportunity to create operational efficiencies, attract a wide spectrum of users, and procure multiple sources of revenue. Providing the opportunity for all family members to take part in different opportunities simultaneously at the same location additionally increases convenience and satisfaction for residences.

Creating spaces within a facility that are easily adaptable and re-configured is another growing trend observed in many newer and retrofitted facilities. Many performing arts venues are being designed in such a manner that staging, seating, and wall configurations can be easily changed and configured as required. Similarly, gymnasium spaces and field house facilities are being designed with temporary barriers, walls, bleachers and other amenities that can be easily adjusted or removed depending on the type of activity or event.

Integrating Indoor and Outdoor Environments

A new concept in recreation infrastructure planning is to ensure that the indoor environment interacts seamlessly with the outdoor recreation environment. This can include such ideas as indoor/outdoor walking trails, indoor/outdoor child play areas and indoor/outdoor aquatics facilities. Although there are a number of operational issues that need to be considered when planning indoor/outdoor environments (e.g. cleaning, controlled access, etc.) the concept of planning an indoor facility to complement the site it is located on (and associated outdoor amenities included) as well as the broader community parks and trail system is prudent and will ensure the optimization of public spending on both indoor and outdoor recreation infrastructure. Integrating indoor and outdoor environments can be as “simple” as ensuring interiors have good opportunities to view the outdoors. As such, some of the public art installations in the city have already bridged the gap between indoor and outdoor environment.

Ensuring Accessibility

Many current recreation facilities are putting a significant focus on ensuring that user experiences are comfortable; including meeting accessibility requirements and incorporating designs that can accommodate various body types. Programming is made as accessible as possible via “layering” to provide the broadest appeal possible to intellectual preferences.

Meeting the needs of various user groups is also an important aspect of accessibility. Incorporating mobile technologies, rest spaces, child-friendly spaces, crafts areas, and educational multi-purpose rooms for classes and performances is an emerging trend. Accessibility guidelines set by governments, as well as an increased understanding of the needs of different types of visitors is fueling this trend. Technology is also being embraced as a modern communication tool useful for effectively sharing messages with younger, more technologically savvy audiences.



Revenue Generating Spaces

Increasingly, facility operators of community facilities are being required to find creative and innovative ways to generate the revenues needed to both sustain current operations and fund future expansion or renovation projects. By generating sustainable revenues outside of regular government contributions, many facilities are able to demonstrate increased financial sustainability and expand service levels.

Lease spaces provide one such opportunity. Many facilities are creating new spaces or redeveloping existing areas of their facility that can be leased to food and beverage providers and other retail businesses. Short term rental spaces are another major source of revenue for many facilities. Lobby areas, programs rooms, and event hosting spaces have the potential to be rented to the corporate sector for meetings, team building activities, Christmas parties and a host of other functions.

Social Amenities

The inclusion of social amenities provides the opportunity for multi-purpose community recreation facilities to maximize the overall experience for users as well as to potentially attract non-traditional patrons to their facility. Examples of social amenities include attractive lobby areas, common spaces, restaurants and cafeterias, spectator viewing areas, meeting facilities and adjacent outdoor parks or green space. It is also becoming increasingly common for new public facilities, especially in urban areas, to be equipped with public wireless Internet.

Another significant benefit of equipping facilities with social amenities is the opportunity to increase usage and visitation to the facility during non-peak hours. Including spaces such as public cafeterias and open lobby spaces can result in local residents visiting the facility during non-event or non-program hours to meet friends or simply as part of their daily routine. Many municipalities and not for profit organizations have encouraged this non-peak hours use in order to ensure that the broader populace perceives that the facility is accessible and available to all members of the community.



SECTION *Six*

Engagement

A program of engagement was undertaken to gather the perspectives of the County's residents, community organizations, and stakeholders in the area. A mailout survey was fielded with residents of the County and with residents living in Hussar, Rockyford, and Standard. Community organizations were surveyed electronically, and finally in-person and telephone interviews were conducted.

Consultation Mechanism	Number Sent/Scheduled	Number Returned/Completed
Household Survey		
Wheatland County	4,075	382
Village of Hussar	89	17
Village of Standard	162	29
Village of Rockyford	165	21
Total	4,491 ^A	479 ^B
Community Group Survey	100	16
Stakeholder Interviews	29	29

A This figure refers to total household respondents, not to total population.

B Note: 30 respondents did not identify a residence or identified one different than the ones in the list.

Resident Survey

In conjunction with Wheatland County, RC Strategies developed a questionnaire to be mailed to households in the County. Using a list of addresses provided by the County, questionnaires were mailed directly to residents. Each questionnaire included an addressed postage paid envelope so completed questionnaires could be mailed back to RC Strategies for data entry and analysis. Additionally questionnaires were sent to residents of the Villages of Hussar, Rockyford, and Standard using non-addressed flyer mail.

Questionnaires, along with an addressed postage paid return envelope, were sent to each Village office; these were then delivered to the post office for distribution

to Village residents. They were put into each mailbox directly—addresses were not used. In total 4,491 questionnaires were sent out with 479 returned. This provides a margin of error of + 4.2%, 19 times out of 20.¹

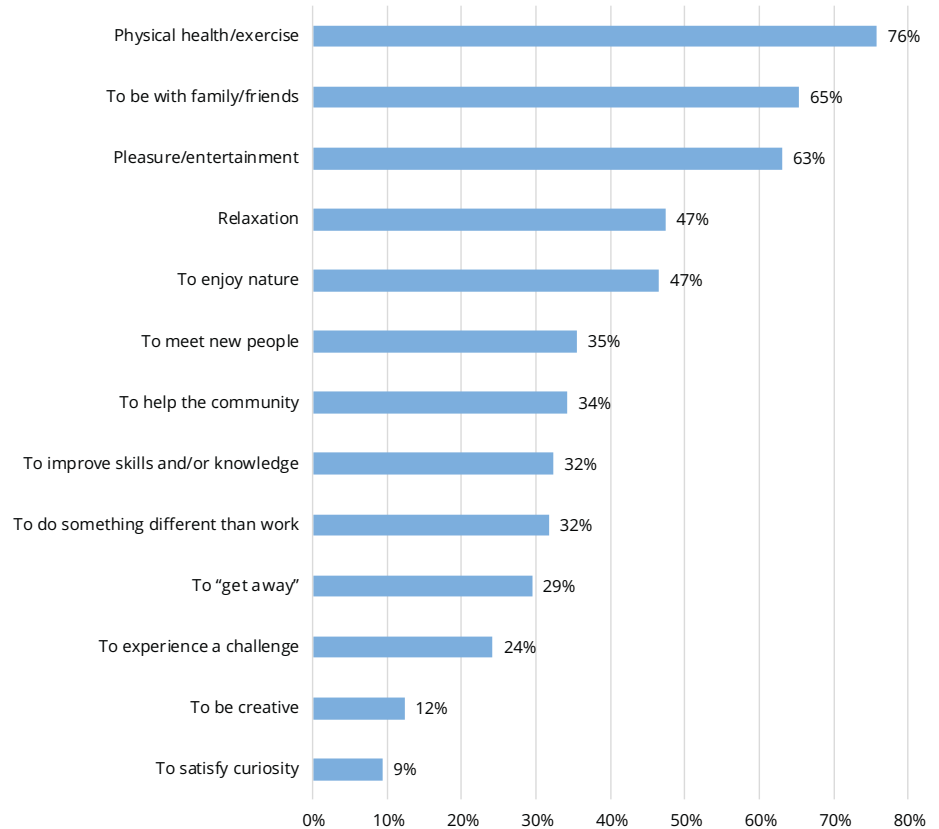
Respondents were asked to respond to the questions on behalf of all members of their households (unless otherwise instructed). The findings are presented below in the same order as the questions were asked on the questionnaire.

¹ If the survey was fielded 20 times the findings would be within 4.2% on 19 occasions.

Reasons to Participate in Recreational Activities

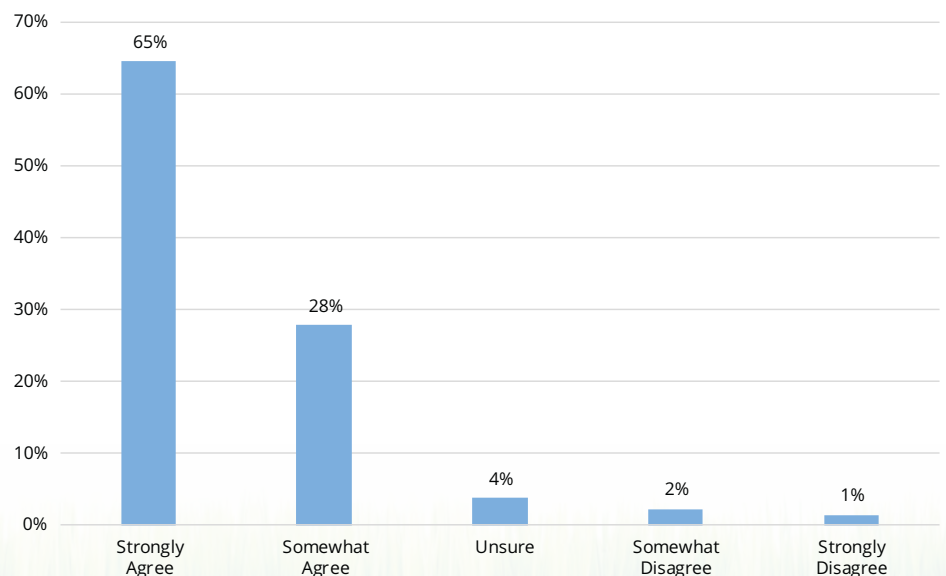
Top of Mind Thoughts

To begin, respondents were asked to identify the reasons members of their households participated in recreational activities. As illustrated in the following graph, approximately three-quarters of respondents (76%) participate for health/exercise reasons. Approximately two-thirds participate to be with family and friends (65%) and for pleasure/entertainment (63%).



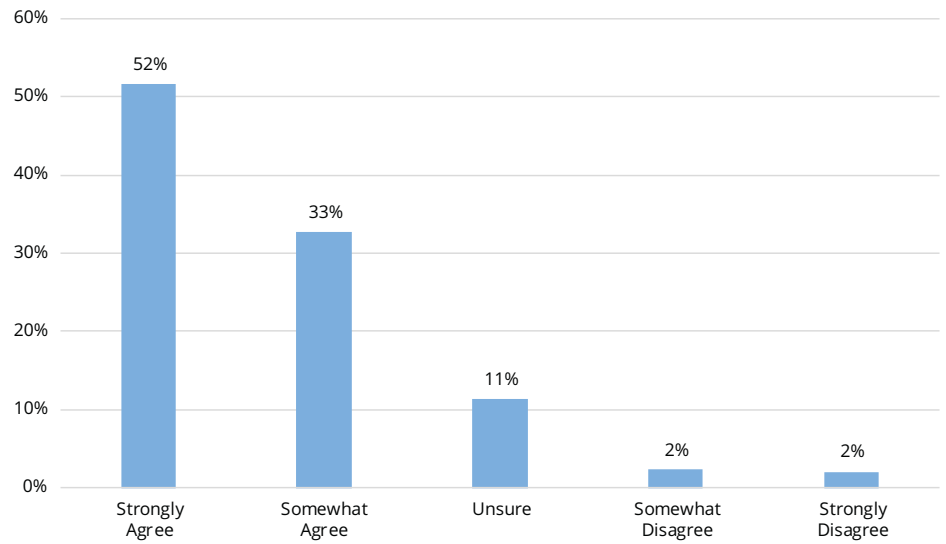
Recreation is important to my quality of life.

Several statements were presented and respondents were asked to indicate their levels of agreement with each. Approximately two-thirds (65%) of respondents strongly agreed that recreation is important to their quality of life.



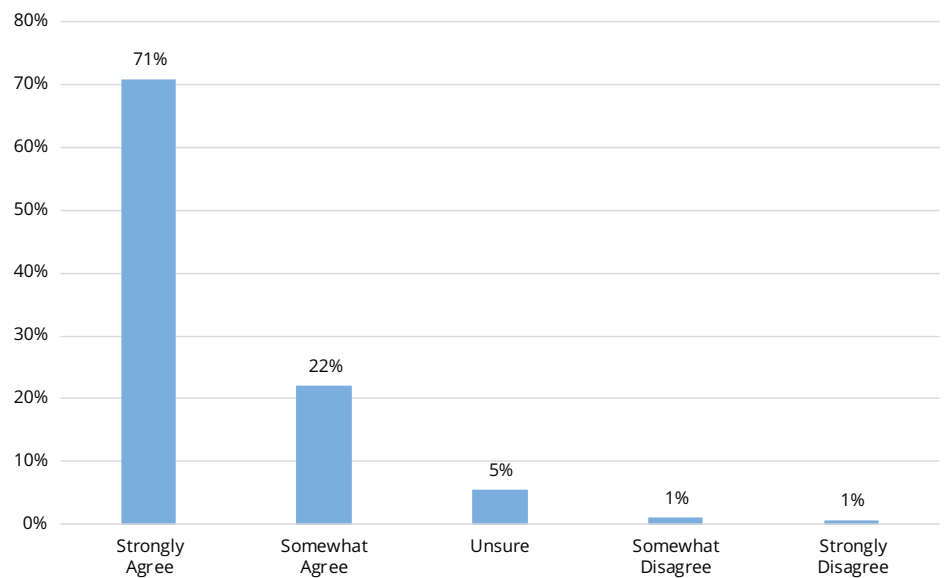
Residents can benefit from recreation services even if they do not use them directly.

Half (52%) of respondents strongly agreed and one-third (33%) somewhat agreed that residents can benefit from recreation services even if they do not use them directly.



Recreation can help bring the communities together.

Almost three-quarters (71%) of respondents strongly agreed that recreation can help bring communities together.

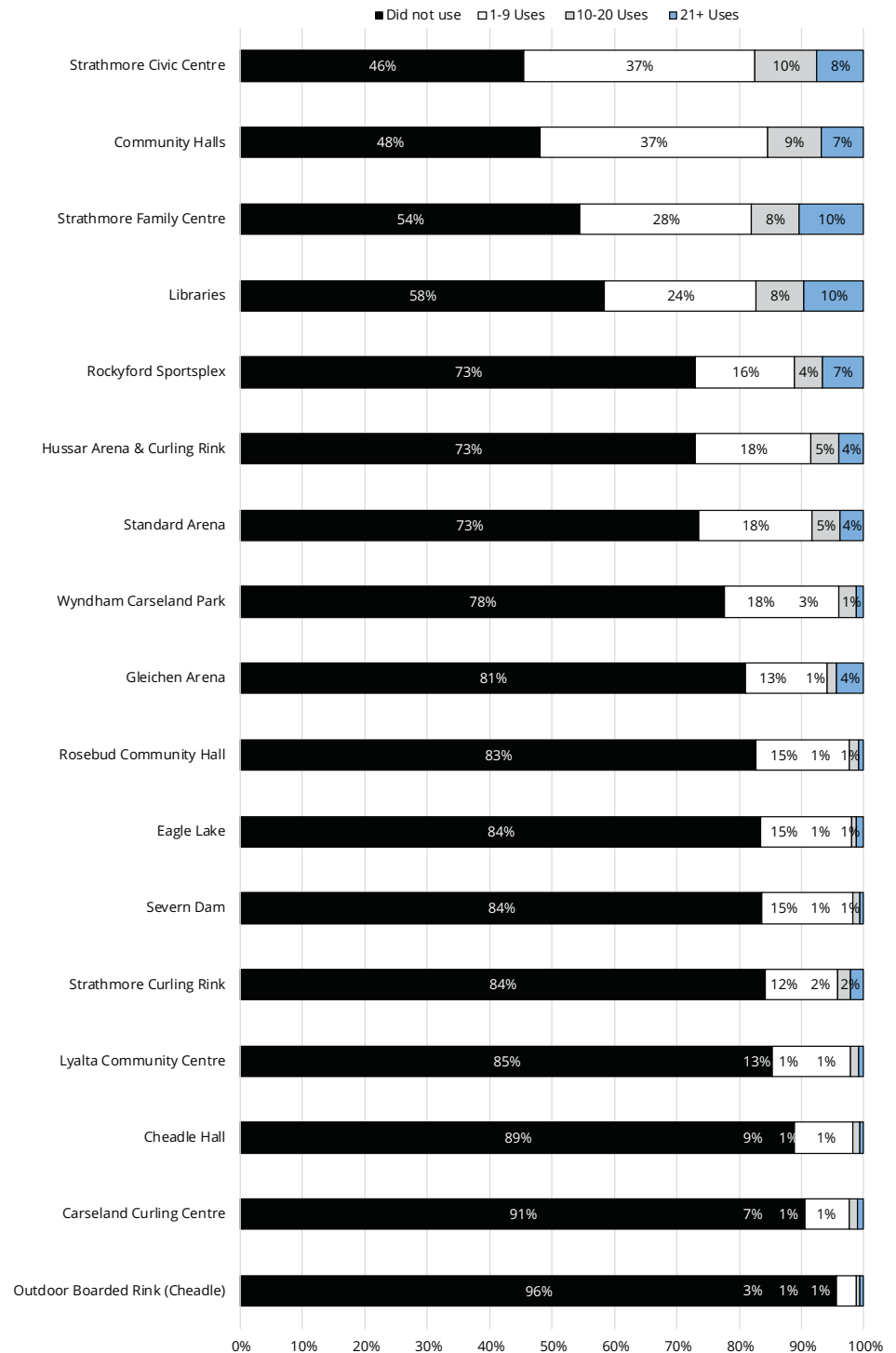


How frequently did a household member use/visit the facility in the previous year?

Current County Facility Usage

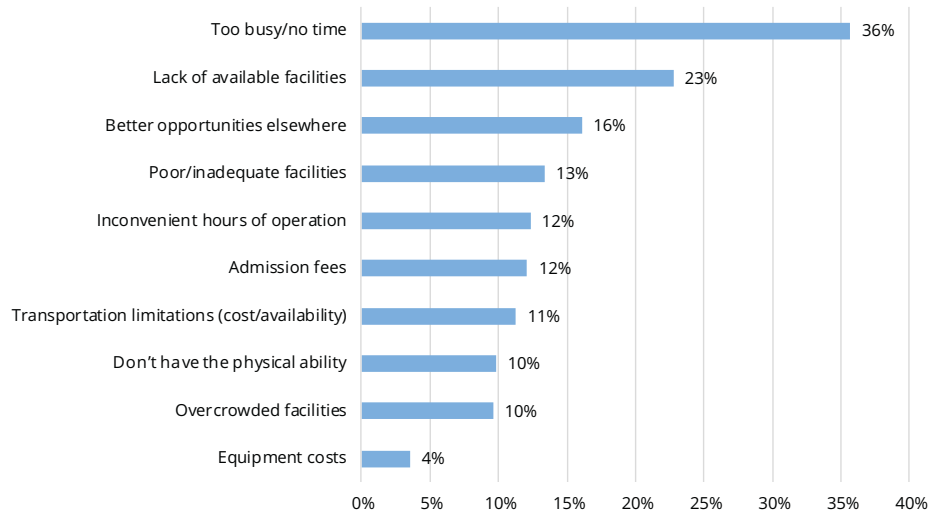
A list of community facilities, parks, and open spaces in the Wheatland County area was presented. For each, respondents were asked to indicate how frequently a household member used/visited it in the previous twelve months. As illustrated in the accompanying chart, the Strathmore Civic Centre and the community halls (Nightingale, Gleichen, Cluny, Carseland, Dalum, Standard) were used by more than half (54% and 52% respectively) of respondents. The Strathmore Family Centre and the area's libraries (Gleichen, Standard, Strathmore) were the beneficiaries of the greatest proportion of high visitation (21 or more visits). Ten percent (10%) of respondents used each more than twenty times in the previous year.

Respondents also had the opportunity to write in a facility should it not be on the list. The Rockyford Community Centre was written in by 34 respondents (7%).



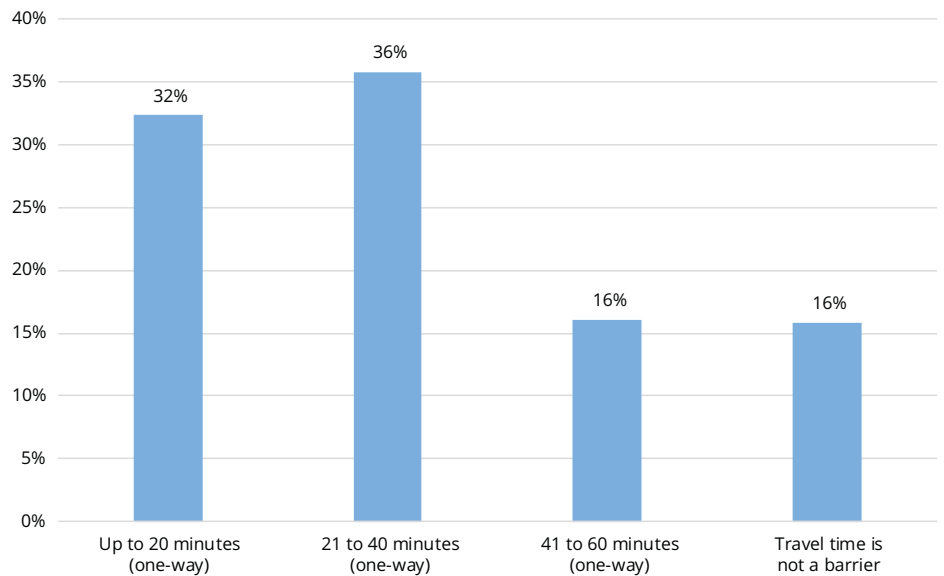
Barriers to Participation in Recreational Opportunities

A lack of time was identified as the most common barrier (36%) preventing someone in the household from participating in recreational opportunities in the Wheatland area. Approximately one-quarter of respondents (23%) said a lack of facilities limited participation. See the accompanying graph for more barriers to participation.



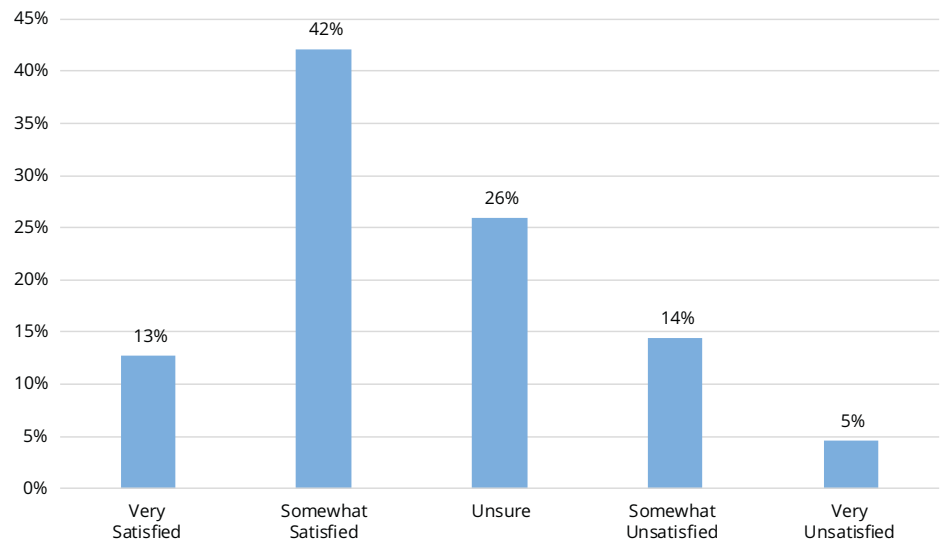
Amount of Travel Time that is Acceptable

Travel time can serve as a barrier to people's participation in recreational activities. Respondents were asked to indicate—from a list—the amount of travel time that would be acceptable before it becomes a barrier. Approximately one-third of respondents (32%) indicated that travel time over twenty minutes (one way) would serve as a barrier. A similar amount (32%) would be willing to travel up to an hour (one way). See the accompanying graph.



Satisfaction Levels with the Current Availability of Recreational Opportunities and Services

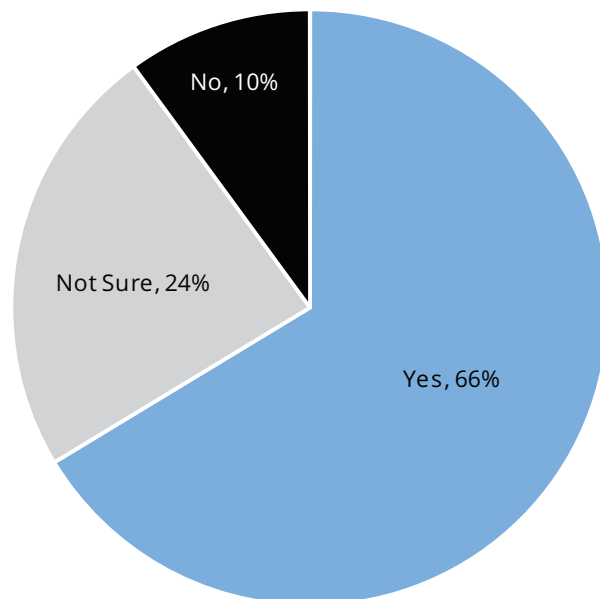
Over half (55%) of respondents are satisfied with the availability of recreational opportunities and services currently offered in the Wheatland County area. Nineteen percent (19%) are dissatisfied. See the figure.



Is there a need for new/upgraded recreation facilities in the area?

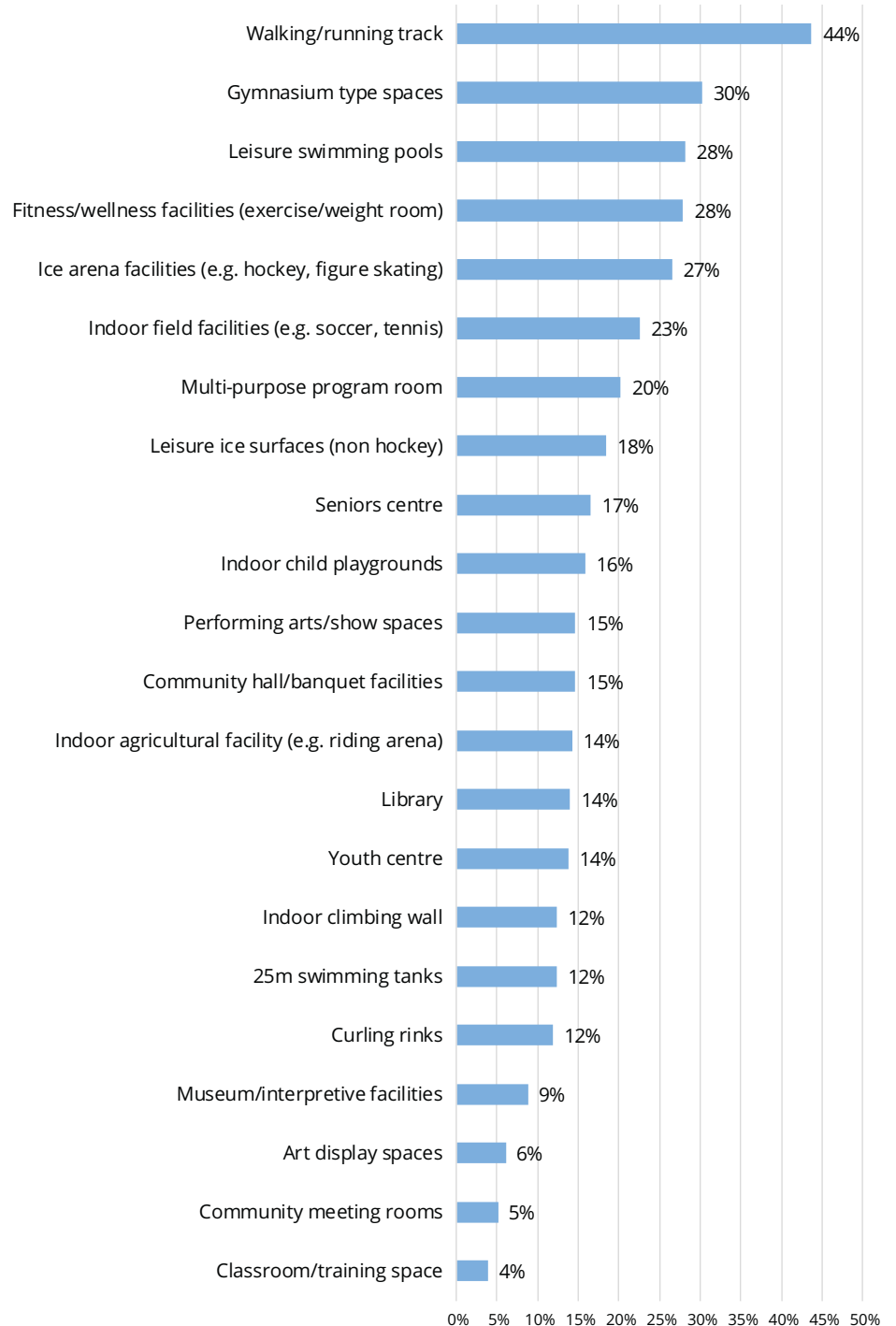
New/Upgraded Recreation Facilities

Two-thirds (66%) of respondents think there is a need for new and/or upgraded recreation facilities to be developed in the area. See the accompanying figure.



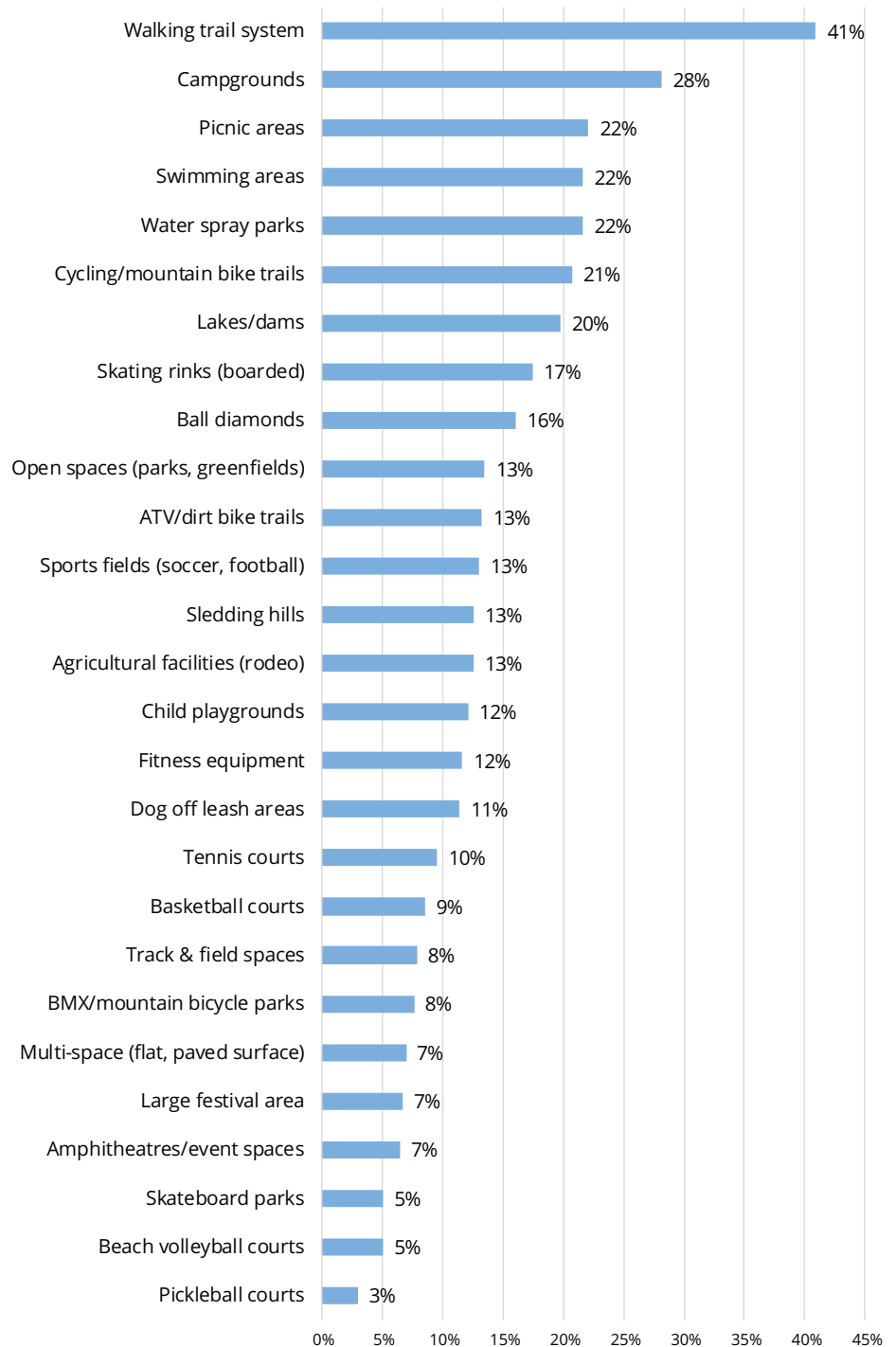
Indoor Recreation Facilities that Should be More Available or Upgraded

Those respondents who said there is a need for new and/or upgraded facilities and those who were unsure (n=430) were then asked to identify up to five (5) **indoor** recreation facilities or spaces that should be more readily available. As illustrated in the accompanying graph, the top five facilities or spaces included: walking/running track (44%); gymnasium type space (30%); leisure swimming pools (28%); fitness/wellness facilities (28%); and ice arena facilities (27%).



Outdoor Recreation Facilities that Should be More Available or Upgraded

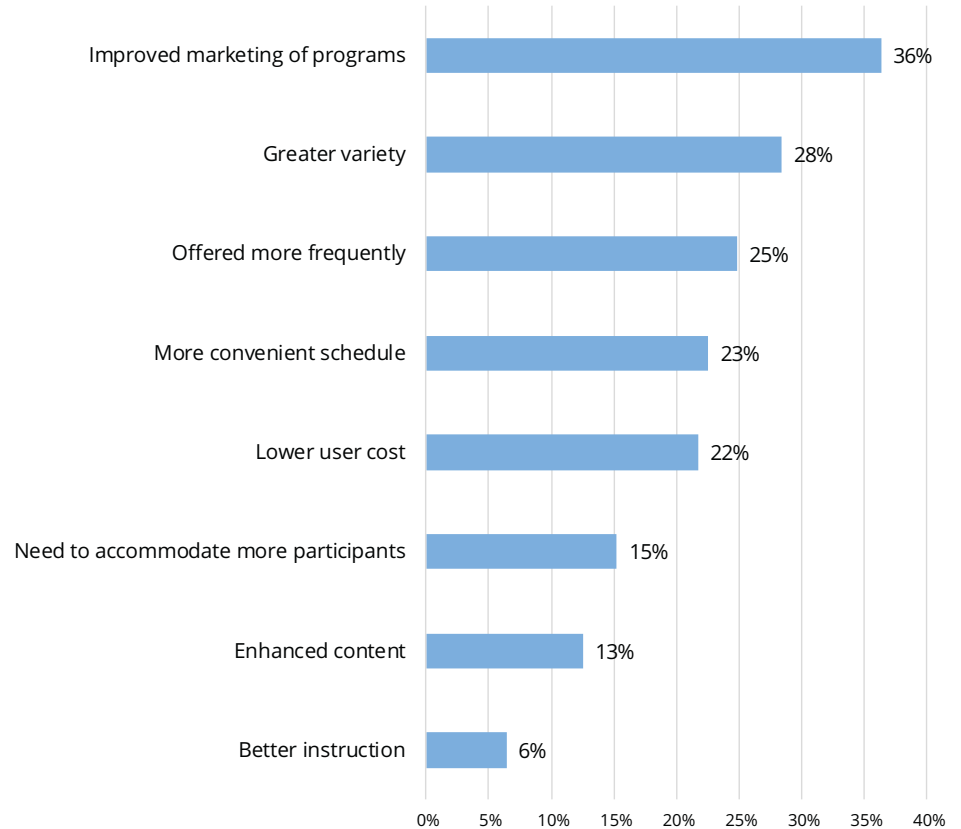
The same group of respondents (n=430) were also asked to identify up to five (5) **outdoor** recreation facilities or spaces that should be more readily available. As illustrated in the accompanying graph, the top five facilities or spaces included: walking trail system (41%); campgrounds (28%); water spray parks (22%); swimming areas (22%); and picnic areas (22%).



Improvements Needed with Recreational Programming

Recreation Programming

Local municipalities, partner organizations, and many other community organizations in the area provide a variety of recreation programs. Thinking about existing and new programs, children's and seniors' programs over one-third (36%) think that the marketing of these programs needs improvement. Over one-quarter (28%) think a greater variety of programming is needed while one-quarter (25%) suggested that programs need to be offered more frequently. A similar proportion (23%) indicated a more convenient schedule is needed. See the accompanying graph for other suggestions.



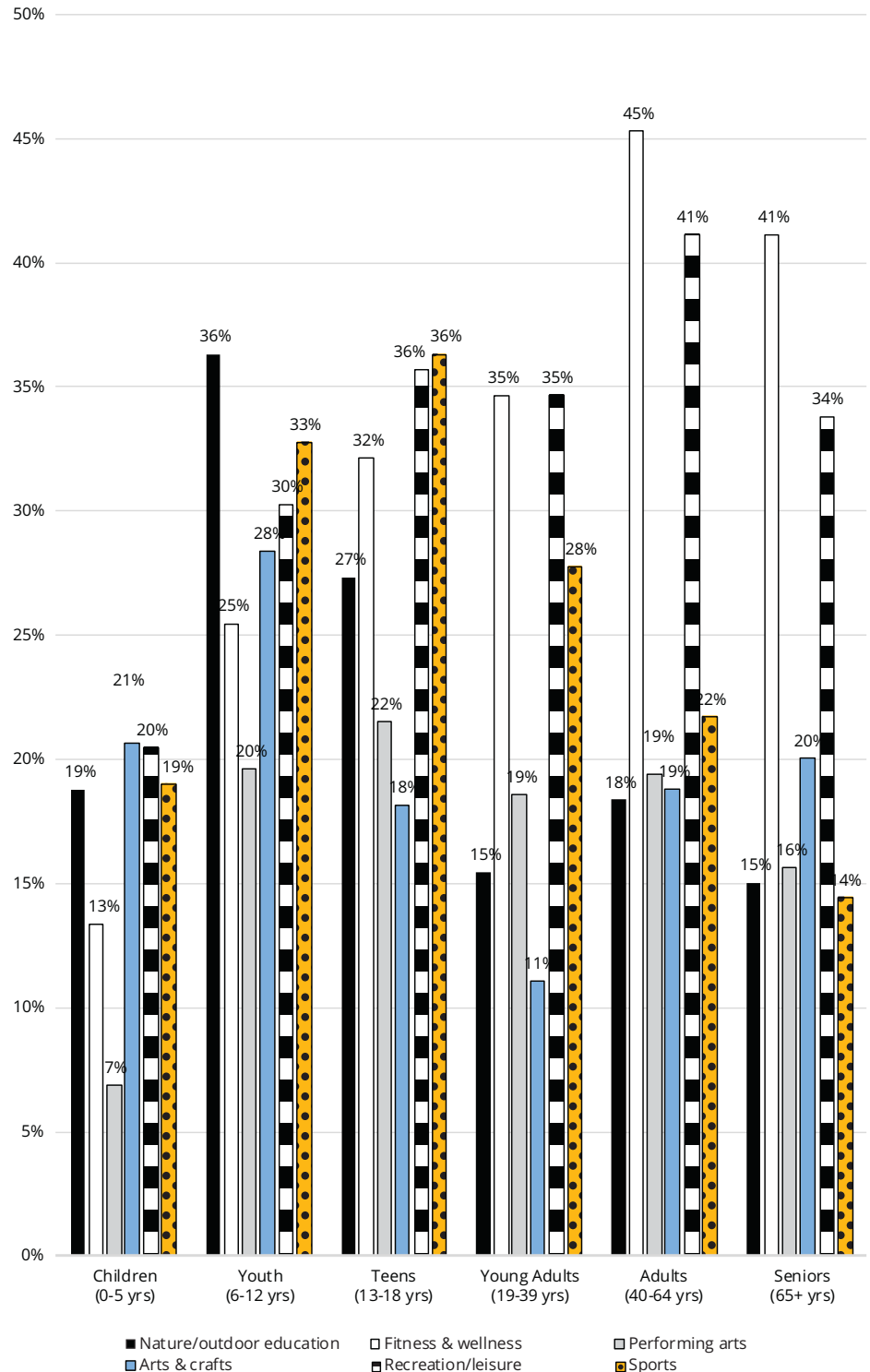
Programming Needs According to Age Group

Given several program types, respondents were asked to identify which type of programming should be more readily available in the area for different age groups.

Considering **children** (0 – 5 years) only seven percent (7%) indicated performing arts programs are needed while 21% suggested more arts and crafts programs are needed. The largest call for **youth** (6 – 12 years) programming is for nature/outdoor education (36%). Recreation/leisure (36%) and sports (36%) programming were the most suggested programming for **teens** (13 – 18 years). For **young adults** (19 – 39 years) fitness and wellness (35%) and recreation/leisure (35%) programs were identified as priorities. Fitness and wellness (45%) and recreation/leisure (41%) programs were the priorities identified for **adults** (40 – 64 years) while for **seniors** fitness and wellness programming (41%) was the priority.

Respondents were able to provide comments about programming. In terms of specific programs desired, thirteen (13) respondents mentioned walking programs, twelve (12) suggested fitness classes, and seven (7) comments were provided for each yoga and aquatics. Other programs with five (5) or more mentions included agricultural related, performing arts, music, and nature focused.

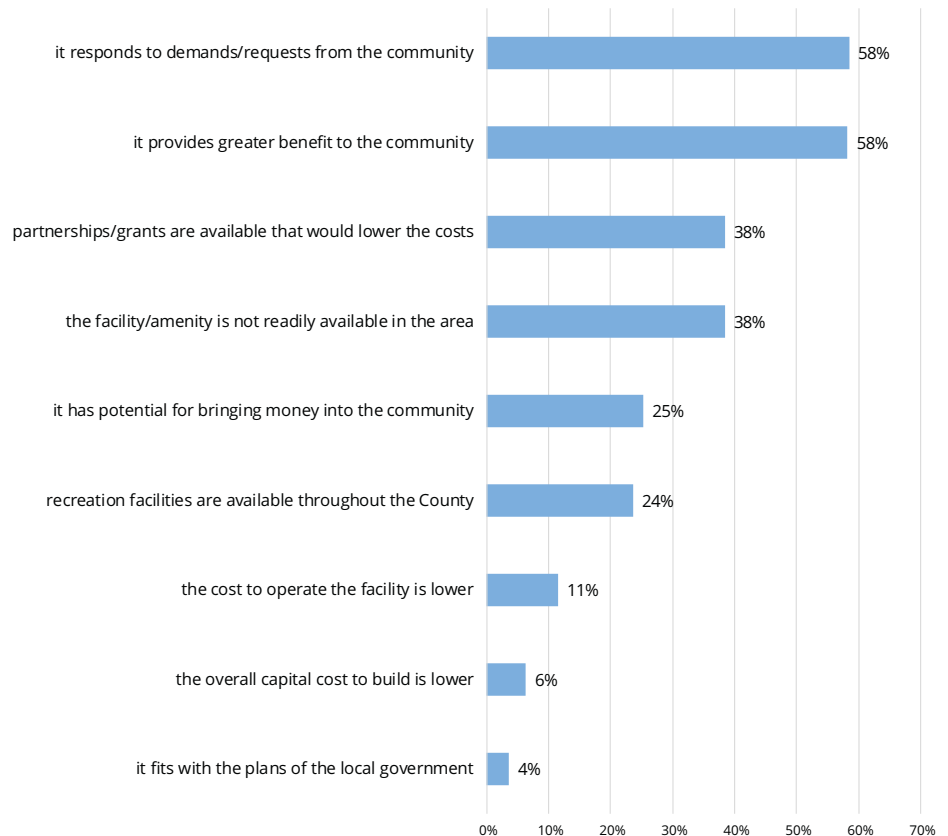
Six (6) respondents mentioned that their preferred programs are situated too far away, while four (4) residents suggested that a centralized location for simultaneous programming would benefit families.



A recreation facility project should be a higher priority if:

Planning Priorities

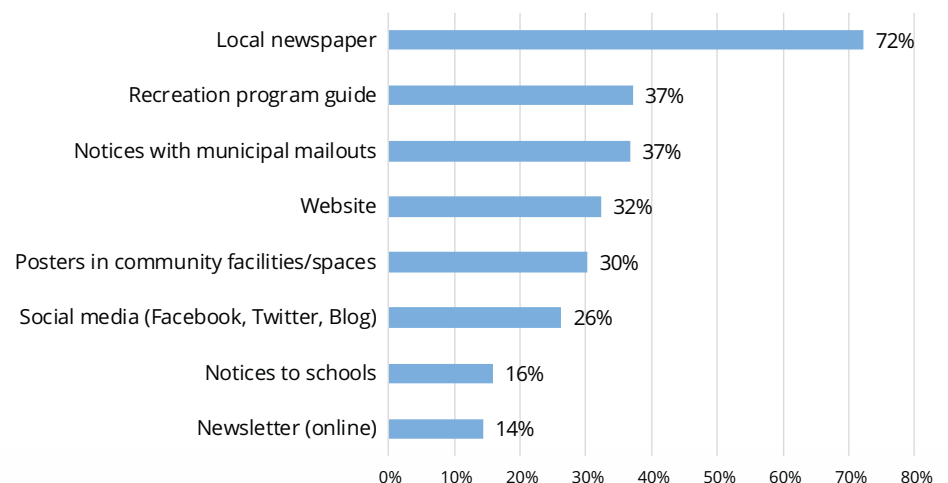
Often priorities need to be set when considering facility projects. With limited resources it is important to determine a hierarchy of projects. There are a number of criteria that could be used when prioritizing multiple projects. Respondents were asked to select from a list the top three criteria that should be used to determine project priorities. As illustrated in the accompanying graph, the criteria considered most important are “benefit to the community” and “responds to community demands/requests”. Capital and operating costs are not considered particularly important criteria by which to prioritize facility projects.



Best Methods to Community Information about Recreation Programs/Events

Promotion

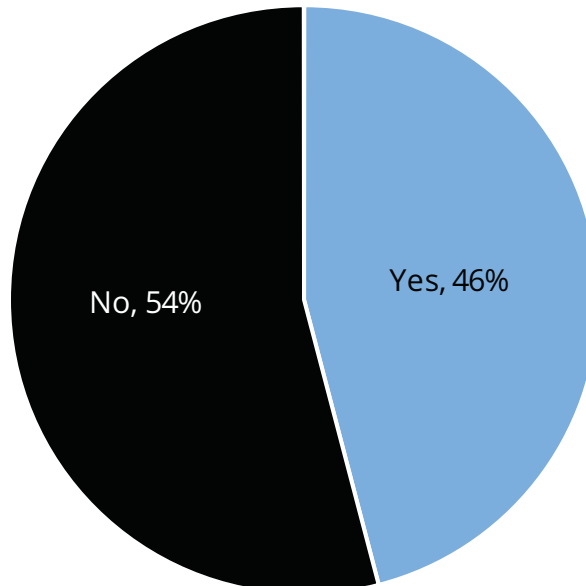
Approximately three-quarters (72%) of respondents identified the local newspaper as one of the best methods to provide information about recreation programs and events. A recreation program guide (37%) and notices with municipal mailouts (37%) were the next most effective communication mechanisms. See the graph.



Would you support an increase in annual property taxes to ensure community needs for recreation facilities are better met?

Willingness to Pay

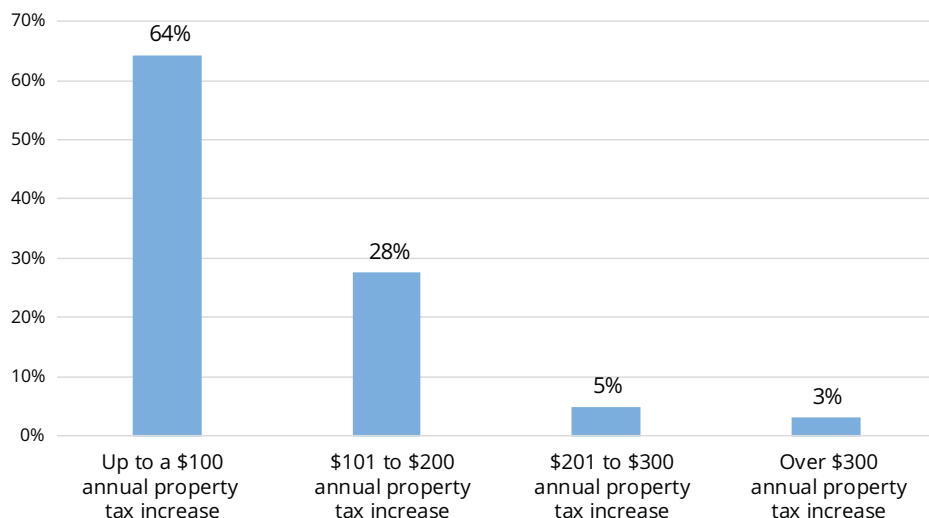
Forty-six percent (46%) of respondents would support an increase in annual property taxes to ensure that community needs for recreation facilities are better met in the area.



How much of an increase in annual property taxes would you support?

Subset: Those who would support an increase in property taxes.

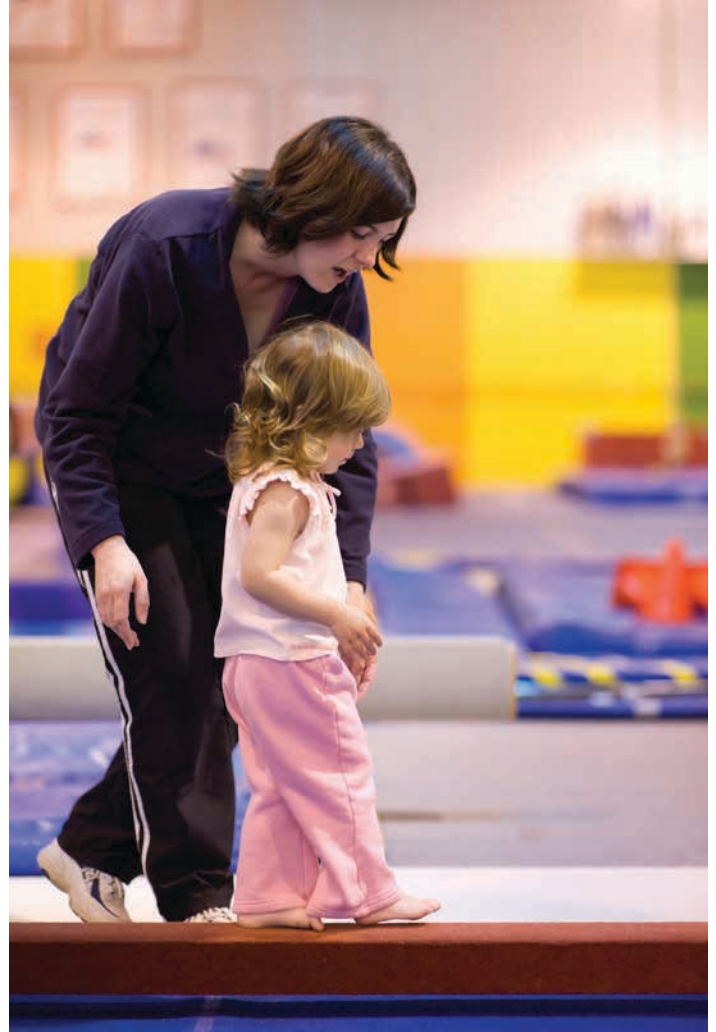
Those who indicated they would support an increase in property taxes were then asked to identify the amount of an increase they would be willing to support. As illustrated in the accompanying graph approximately two-thirds (64%) would support an increase up to \$100 annually.



General Comments

Respondents were able to provide comments about the recreational needs in the area. A wide range of opinions were expressed to justify arguments for both sides of topics relating to taxes and facilities. Ten (10) respondents felt that taxes are already too high and six (6) pleaded for higher user fees to avoid raising taxes. Six people (6) embrace spending towards recreation initiatives, however they would like to know exactly where their money is going. Comments regarding the need for new facilities were countered by suggestions to maximize utilization of current infrastructure. Six (6) comments were in favour of building new facilities as long as they are sustainable and benefit the majority of the population. In relation to existing infrastructure, four (4) respondents would like to see better use of current facilities before building new and an additional four (4) believe that investing in existing buildings is mandatory.

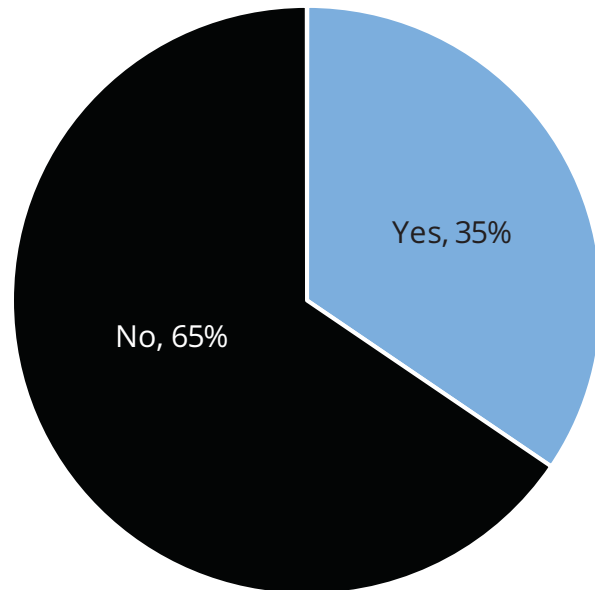
A common theme revolved around outdoor recreation amenities and the need to provide residents of all ages the opportunity to be active outside of organized sports. While some respondents would like more amenities in their own community, respondents suggested that it is more feasible for larger facilities to be based in a centralized location such as Strathmore. Eight (8) comments stressed the need for communication with the Town of Strathmore to help lower user fees and increase scheduling priorities for ice user groups.



Do you anticipate looking for an education or training program in the near future?

Wheatland Further Education: Community Learning

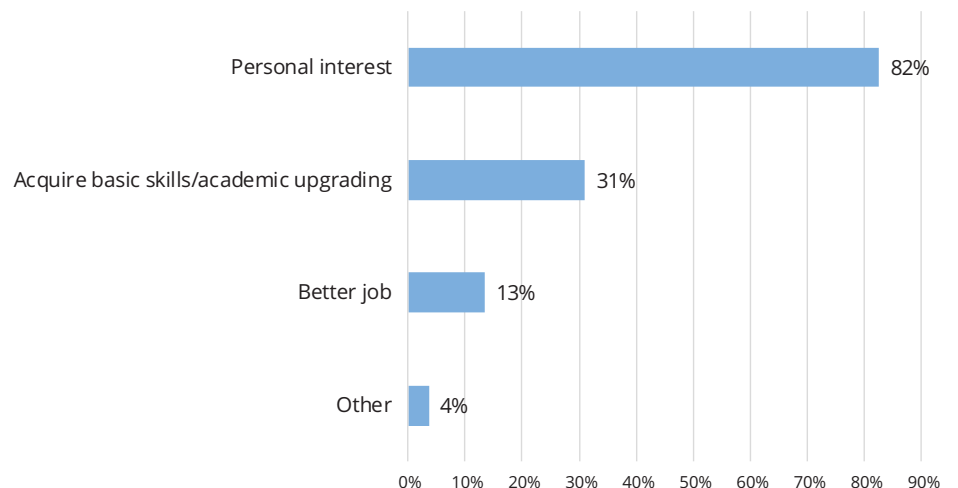
Survey respondents were asked several questions that pertained to Wheatland Further Education. To begin, they were asked if they anticipated looking for an education or training program in the near future. As illustrated in the following graph, approximately one-third (35%) said they anticipated looking for education or training programs in the near future.



Why are you looking for education or training?

Subset: Those who are looking for future training.

Of those who said they are anticipating looking for education or training (n=165), most indicated it is for personal interest (82%). Approximately one-third (31%) indicated that their motivation for education/training is for academic upgrading or to acquire basic skills. See the accompanying graph.



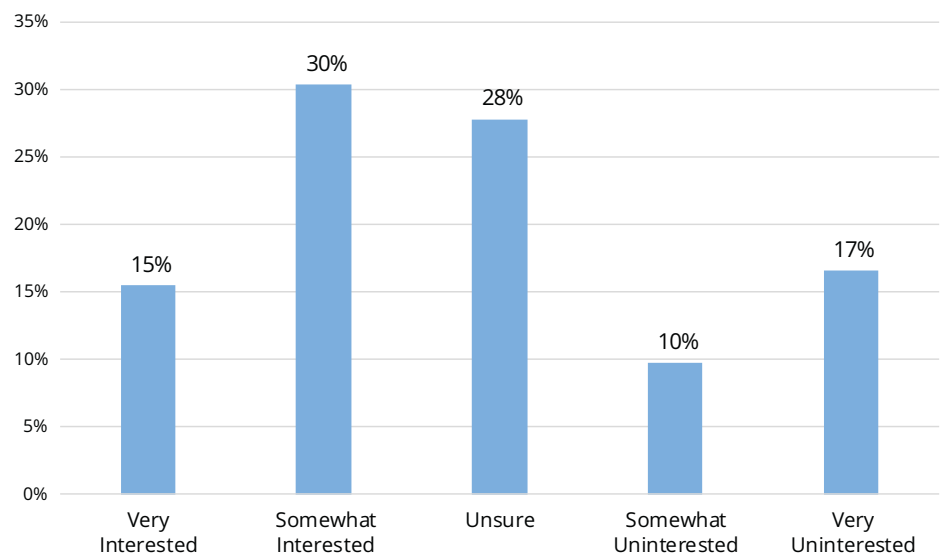
The respondents looking for education or training (n=165) were further asked to consider a list of program types and identify which ones they require to meet their learning or career advancement goals. As illustrated in the table, approximately two-thirds (64%) indicated they needed some training in computer skills—48% said they need some training while 16% said they need in-depth training. Forty-three percent (43%) said they need some level of training in leadership/management and accounting/finance.

Program Types	Not Required	Some Training Required	In-depth Training Required
ESL/English Language Learning	99%	1%	0%
Adult Basic Literacy	97%	3%	0%
Marketing/Sales Skills	75%	20%	5%
Money Management	59%	35%	6%
Accounting/Finance	57%	35%	8%
Effective Communication	66%	31%	4%
Employment Preparation	82%	15%	3%
Computer Skills	36%	48%	16%
Leadership/Management Skills	57%	37%	6%
Other*	0%	69%	31%

* Other training topics included: arts and crafts (incl. music, woodworking, painting), trades, safety (first aid, CPR, WHMIS), health and wellness, Spanish, history/archaeology, martial arts, succession planning, and government courses.

How interested would you be in online/Internet based learning?

All respondents were asked how much interest would they have in online/Internet based learning. While over one-quarter (27%) expressed little interest, close to half (45%) said they had an interest in this form of learning. See the accompanying graph.



Fifteen percent of survey respondents said they are an employer in the area. They were then asked to indicate the type of workplace training they require for their employees. A variety of workplace training was mentioned. Topics mentioned by more than one respondent are noted below.

- Farm safety/training (9 mentions)
- General safety (9)
- Computer and office skills/administration (9)
- Drivers/equipment training (7)
- Book keeping (3)
- WHMIS/H2S (3)
- First aid (3)
- Communication (2)
- Customer service (2)

Respondents were asked to identify gaps or barriers that impact the ability of adult learners to meet their training needs. Respondents provided a variety of responses. Comments made by more than five respondents are noted below.

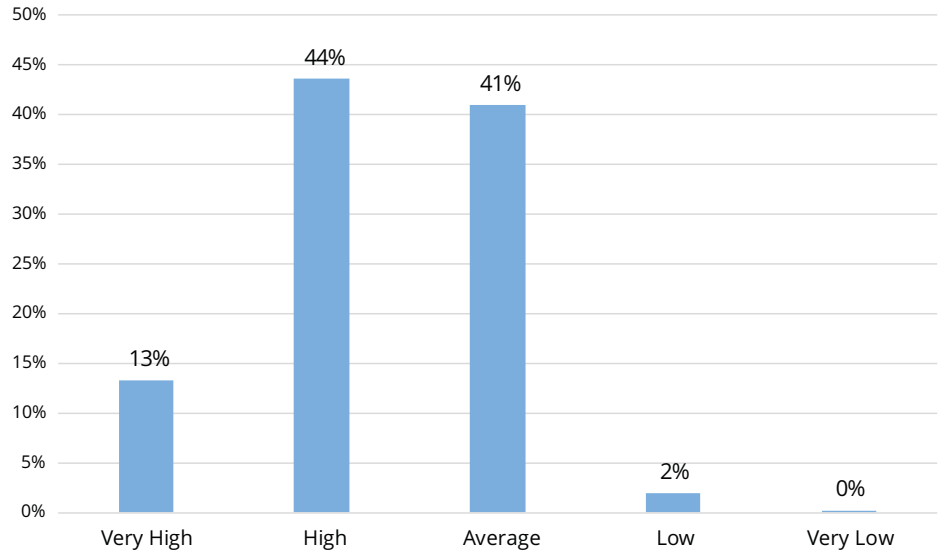
- Access to programs is an issue. Often people have to travel distances to take courses and this can present problems. (47 mentions)
- The cost to take training and courses can be a barrier. Some programs can be expensive. (29)
- The availability of sufficient programs can be limited. People cannot always get the programs that they want. (24)
- The timing when programs are offered can limit people's participation in them. Some people commented, for example, that some programs should be offered during the day and not always during the evening. The timing of programs is not always convenient. (22)
- Generally people are quite busy and lead busy lives. While there may be some interest in taking courses and programs, people may just not have the time. (18)
- The programs and training opportunities that are available to people in the area need to be promoted more. (15)
- There is a lack of childcare preventing some parents from being able to take courses. (9)
- The availability of skilled instructors is limited. (7)
- The small size of the market means the number of people interested in a particular subject can be quite small. As such these courses, if offered, at times get canceled. (6)
- Some people may have limited access to online learning due to poor connectivity or the lack of a computer or computer skills. (6)



Overall Quality of Life as a Resident of Wheatland County

Overall Services

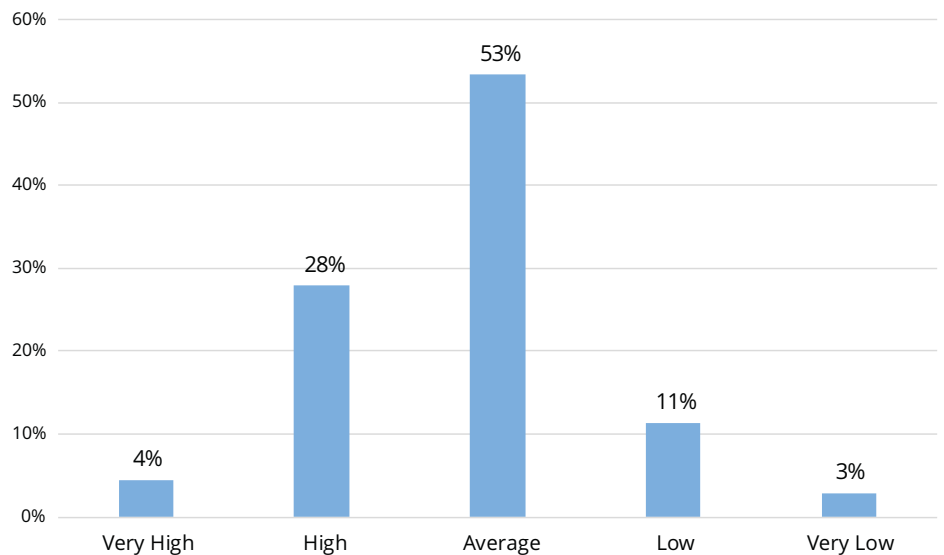
In this section respondents were asked to provide some overall ratings for Wheatland County services. To begin, fifty-seven percent (57%) rated their family's overall quality of life in Wheatland County as very high (13%) or high (44%). Another 41% rated it as average while 2% rated it as low. See the accompanying graph.



Next respondents were asked to rate the general quality of service provided by Wheatland County. Approximately one-third (32%) rated the quality of service as very high (4%) or high (28%). About half (53%) rated the general quality of County services as average. Fourteen percent (14%) rated the general quality of service low. See the graph.

Finally respondents were asked to identify any service gaps within Wheatland County. With a total of 134 responses, nineteen percent (19%) of the comments discussed the lack of road maintenance while seventeen percent (17%) mentioned recreation. Other identified gaps with at least five mentions included communication, snow removal, water, education, and waste management.

General Quality of Services Provided by Wheatland County



Respondent Profile

Respondent Characteristics	Proportion
Where do you live?	
Wheatland County	83%
Village of Hussar	4%
Village of Rockyford	5%
Village of Standard	6%
Other	2%
If Wheatland County, which electoral division?	
1	11%
2	16%
3	14%
4	16%
5	18%
6	15%
7	9%
How long have you lived in the area?	
Less than 1 year	3%
1 to 5 years	7%
6 to 10 years	11%
More than 10 years	78%
What is the proportion of the population amongst respondents is in each segment?	
0 – 9 years	11%
10 – 19 years	15%
20 – 29 years	6%
30 – 39 years	10%
40 – 49 years	13%
50 – 59 years	19%
60 – 69 years	16%
70 – 79 years	7%
80 years and older	2%

Community Group Survey

A questionnaire was fielded to community organizations in the Wheatland County area in May 2015. A link to an online version of the survey was sent to a variety of groups that provide or use recreation and related (e.g. culture, leisure) programs and facilities. Group representatives were also provided with the option of completing a hard copy of the questionnaire. In total, 16 responses were provided (a list of participating organizations can be found in the Appendix).

Note: In some cases not every respondent answered every question in the survey.

About the Groups

A variety of organizations completed the questionnaire ranging from community organizations, sports groups, cultural organizations, and others.

- Dance Standard
- Gina Champigny (Yoga Class Provider)
- Town of Drumheller
- Cheadle Lions Club
- Rosebud Community Enhancement Society
- Wheatland Seniors Transportation Society
- Lyalta Community Club
- Gleichen and District Minor Hockey
- Rockyford Library
- Standard Community Hall Association
- Hussar and District Agricultural Society
- Hope Bridges Society
- Rosebud Historical Society/Rosebud and District Centennial Museum
- Rosebud Community Enhancement Society (RCES)
- Duck Lake Community Association
- Standard Baseball

Group representatives were asked to provide information on their organization and its membership/participants/clients. The majority of responding groups indicated that their membership consists of multiple age ranges.

- 10 of the 16 groups have membership/participants/clients that are preschool aged (0 – 5 years old).
- 11 of the 16 groups have membership/participants/clients that are youth (6 – 12 years old).
- 10 of the 16 groups have membership/participants/clients that are teenagers (13 – 17 years old).
- 12 of the 16 groups have membership/participants/clients that are adults (18 – 59 years old).
- 9 of the 16 groups have membership/participants/clients that are seniors (60 years and older).

When asked about expectations for future membership/participants/client numbers, 11 of the 16 groups indicated that they expect to remain stable. Four (4) groups indicated that they expect to grow while only one group indicated that they expect to decline.

Group representatives were also asked to estimate the residency of their organizationsmembers/participants and clients. Seven (7) groups indicated that 50% or more of their members/participants/clients are residences of Wheatland County.



Use of Facilities/Spaces

Responding groups were next asked to identify up to five facilities or spaces that their organization has used most frequently in the previous 12 months and specifically how often they had used each. As might be expected with such a diversity of organizations, 34 unique facilities or spaces in the County or beyond were identified as being used by the responding groups. Facility types identified included community halls (11 mentions), outdoor sport fields/amenities (7), arenas (5), and libraries (4).

The majority of groups were also regular users of the facilities that they access. For the primary facility that groups identified that they use, 10 groups indicated that they had used that facility 21 or more times per year.

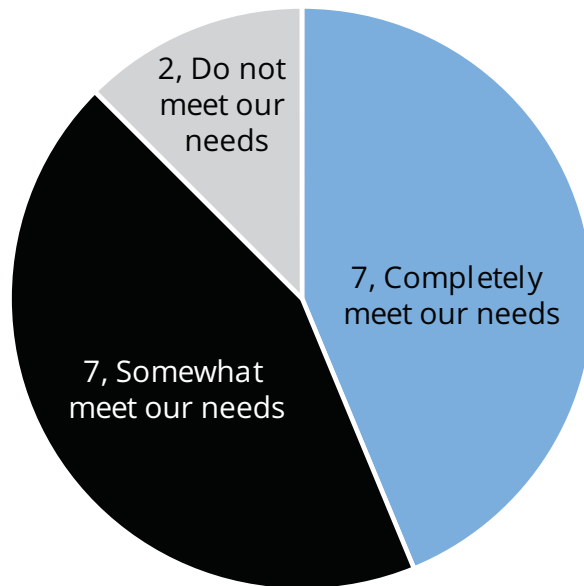
Space was then provided for group representatives to identify enhancements and improvements that are required to the facilities that they use. Fourteen (14) wide ranging comments were provided, which included:

- Enhancements to facility amenities (e.g. better accessibility, washrooms, flooring surfaces, parking).
- Issues with major mechanical systems (e.g. air conditioning, ice plant).
- Major enhancements and upgrades that are needed to outdoor rinks.



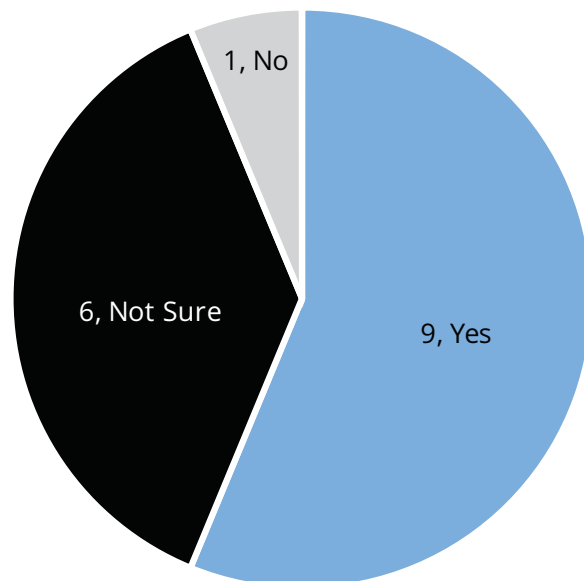
Do the current recreation facilities and spaces in the Wheatland County area meet the needs of your organization?

Group representatives were next asked if, overall, the current recreation facilities and spaces in the Wheatland County area met the needs of their organization. As illustrated in the graph, 7 groups indicated that current facilities and spaces completely meet their needs while 7 groups indicated that needs are being somewhat met. Two (2) groups indicated that their facility and space needs are not being met.



Is there a need for new and/or upgraded recreation facilities?

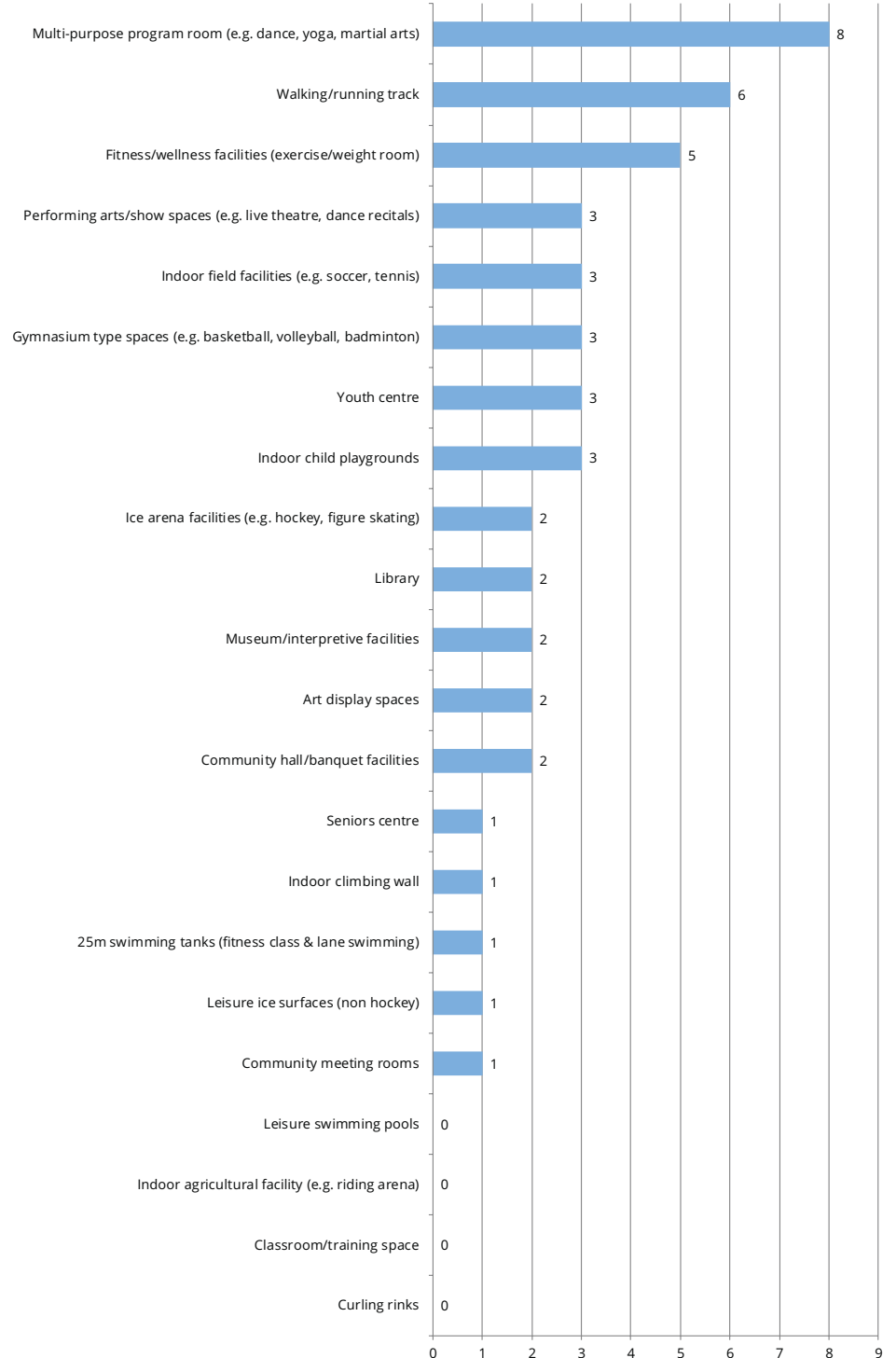
Group representatives were next asked if their organization believes that there is a need for new and/or upgraded recreation facilities to be developed in the Wheatland County area. As reflected in the graph, 9 responding groups believe that new and/or upgraded recreation facilities are needed.



Indoor Facility Priorities

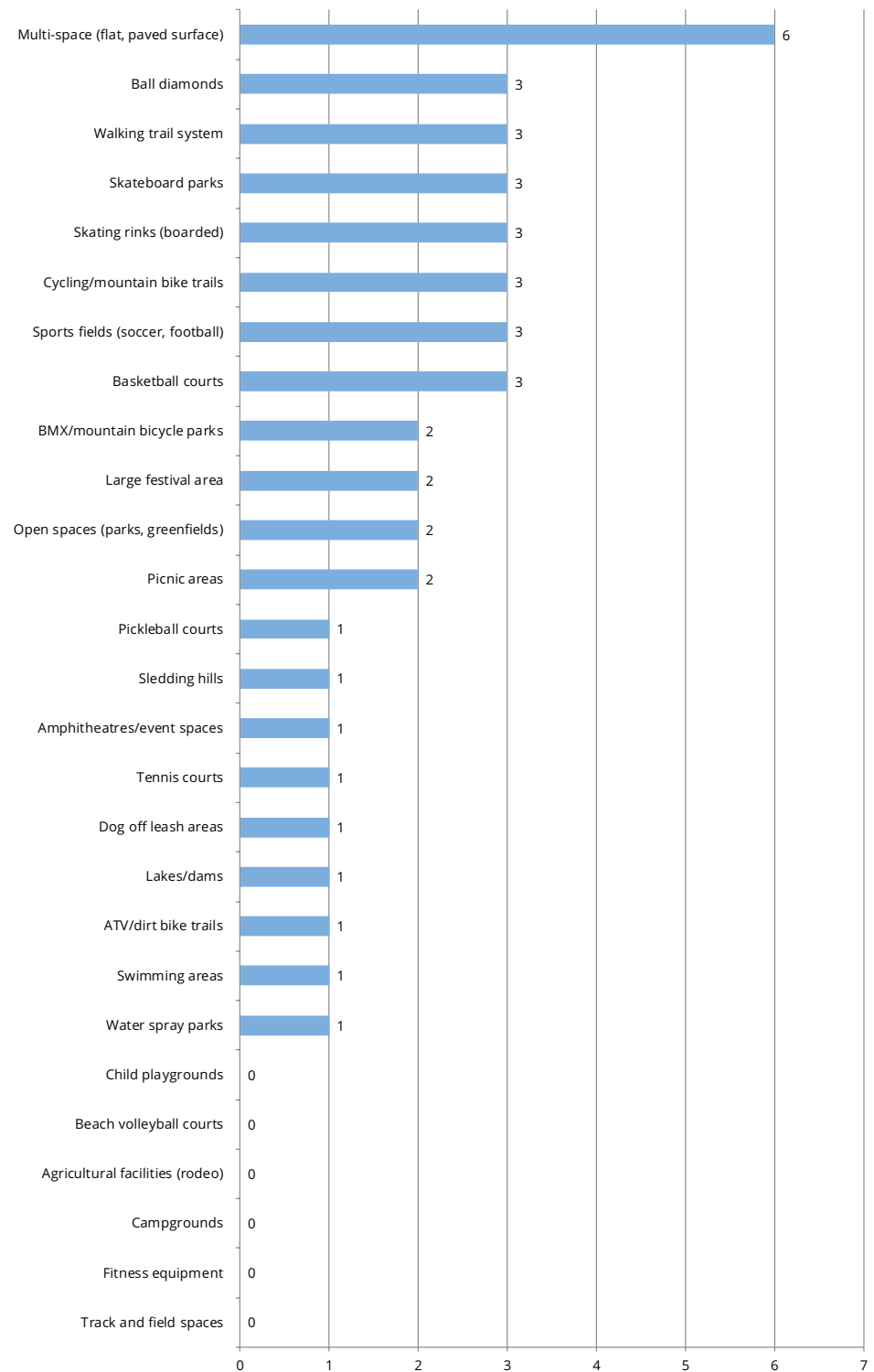
Group representatives who indicated that new and/or upgraded recreation facilities are needed (or were unsure) were next provided with separate lists of indoor and outdoor facility and amenity types. For each, group representatives were asked to identify up to five that should be more readily available in the area.

As illustrated in the following graph, the top 3 indoor facility needs identified by the high proportion of responding groups were multi-purpose rooms (8 groups), walking/running track (6 groups), and fitness/exercise facilities (5 groups).



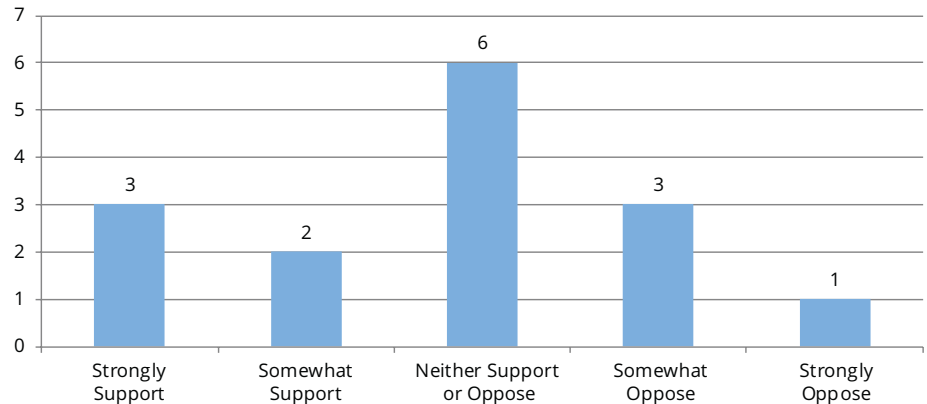
Outdoor Facility Priorities

The top outdoor facility need identified by the highest proportion of responding groups was a multi-space paved surface (5 groups). Three (3) groups identified ball diamonds, walking trail systems, skateboard parks, skating rinks (boarded), cycling/mountain bike trails, sports fields (soccer, football), and basketball courts as priorities.



How supportive would your group be of an increase in user/rental fees to ensure community needs for recreation are better met?

Group representatives were then asked if their organization would support an increase in user/rental fees to help ensure community needs for recreation can be better met. As reflected in the graph, 5 groups supported an increase while the highest proportion (6 groups) neither supported nor opposed. Four (4) groups opposed an increase.



Group representatives were next asked a series of questions related to current or potential partnerships. First, group representatives were asked to identify any **current partnerships** that their organization is involved in. Twelve (12) groups identified a variety of partnerships and collaborations, which included:

- Support from Wheatland County through the Community Enhancement Grant program;
- Sharing of volunteers;
- Working with other groups to coordinate joint programs and workshops; and
- Community fundraising initiatives to support the ongoing provision of community facilities, programs and events.

When asked about **future** opportunities for partnerships and collaborations, eleven (11) group representatives identified a variety of possibilities. The majority of the comments were related to future infrastructure projects that groups are undertaking or would like to complete and the need for support from the County and other municipalities in the region. A handful of comments were also provided on the need for better communication and coordination between groups in order to ensure existing facilities are maximized.

Group representatives were asked to identify the **main challenges** that their organization is dealing with in the delivery of its programs. Thirteen (13) groups provided comments on challenges that they are facing. Six organizations identified that volunteers are a challenge in delivery of their programs or events. Five (5) groups identified that cost of lack of financial resources are an

issue for their organization. Other challenges identified by multiple respondents included a lack of suitable facilities or space (3 groups) and facility locations or proximity (2 groups). Group respondents were then asked to identify the single most important action or resource that the County could provide to help address their challenges and better meet program goals. Thirteen (13) comments were provided, which included:

- Continued or increased funding for recreation programs, facilities and organizations;
- Facilitate cooperation and coordination between communities within the County;
- Assist with identifying financial partners that would have interest in supporting community initiatives and/or facilities; and
- Help address transportation issues.

Group representatives could identify any training or educational programs that, if offered, would increase the effectiveness and capacity of their organization. Four (4) groups commented that they would like assistance or training with grant procurement and writing. Two (2) groups identified marketing as an area in which they could use training assistance.

Stakeholder Interviews

Interviews were scheduled with stakeholders in the community to discuss the current state of recreation in the County. The conversations spanned a range of topics including facilities, programming, volunteerism, and the role of the County. Some interviews took the form of a group discussion with several individuals participating. Most interviews were conducted in-person at the Wheatland County Hall on May 19 and 20, 2015, some via telephone. In total twenty-nine conversations took place with perspectives as diverse as: libraries, community halls, agricultural societies, arts and culture groups, and seniors and youth groups. See the appendix for the complete list.

The findings from the interviews are presented below according to theme. They represent a synopsis of the conversations and are an interpretation by the consultants of the comments made.

Community Enhancement Grant

This program is well subscribed to as many organizations have applied to it. The applications for grant funds has far surpassed the amount available (~\$1.2M in requests with ~\$400,000 awarded in 2015). Some changes were suggested for the grant program. First of all it was suggested that the amount available for community groups be increased sizeably. With three times as much for requests as was available the need for additional funds is needed. Requests for funding related to large capital expenditures, smaller capital items and operating amounts. A single large capital request could account for all the dollars available. The committee tasked with awarding the funds does work to ensure a number of groups are grant recipients. However, if a single capital project received all the money, the funds may be insufficient for large projects. Getting a fraction of the funds would mean that large capital projects would still need to get the majority of its funds elsewhere.

There was some suggestion that in addition to greater amounts of grant money being available, having different types of grant programs would make it easier to allocate funds. Setting up a grant program for capital items (perhaps two pools: one for large capital expenses and another for smaller items) and another grant fund for operating expenses would make it easier to adjudicate applications. This would ensure that similar project requests are adjudicated together.

Those interviewed felt that it would be beneficial if the program became more transparent. Having a better understanding of how grants are awarded was desired. There were several notions expressed about how the funds were awarded but there was little clarity about why one project was successful over another. Suggestions that it was related to previous grants awarded to an organization or community was offered however some firmer guidelines would aid understanding.

Funding

The community organizations rely on the funding available through casino fundraising activities. Without this crucial funding source the sustainability of many organizations would be in doubt. As stated previously the County's Community Enhancement Grant program has been well subscribed to—it is an important source of funds for many. Many of the community organizations have instituted their own fundraising programs—much occurs through the provision of programming (i.e. fundraising events). This is labour intensive and a number of organizations spoke about fatigue from the individual donors for what can seem like constant fundraising. The purpose/mandate of the community organizations is not to fundraise yet a significant amount of volunteer resources are being dedicated to sourcing funds.

Program/Service Needs

Through the interview and meeting process several suggestions were offered as to specific programming needs through to service opportunities. While in some instances there are programs and services in place, the comment was that generally more are needed. The suggestions included the following.

- **Transportation** is a need, particularly for seniors in the area. Some people are limited in their ability to access programs and services. This can limit their participation and can also contribute to social isolation.
- **Family programs.** Opportunities for families to recreate together were considered a good idea and one that would help strengthen families and ultimately the community. An example of this might be a movie night—this could also be a specific program opportunity for specific segments of the community.

- **Intergenerational programs.** Another way to address social isolation amongst some of the community's seniors, intergenerational programs can be used to focus the energy of some of the region's youth in a manner that helps strengthen ties across an age divide. These sharing and learning opportunities benefit all involved and strengthen the fabric of the community.
- **Social programs.** Social programs and recreational programs can be achieving the same ends—in fact one program could be considered both a social and recreation program. Those in the interviews identified social programs as ones with a focus to strengthen and build resilience within individuals and families.
- **Leverage the library.** Libraries are community hubs and centres of learning and programming. Any discussion of programming for residents throughout the County should consider the role of libraries and the niche they have already established in the region. These centres can act as physical locations as well as points from which services can be offered. Literacy programs was a specific program suggested that could leverage the library; their programs can also be considered social programs.
- **Youth programs.** While many of the points made previously can apply to the youth in the area, the identification that there is a need for youth programming was made by several in the interviews. Comments were made that programs are available for children in the community but that youth (e.g. teens) need to be the focus for activities.
- **Community events.** Events in the community are seen as activities that really help strengthen the fabric of the communities. These events need to continue as they are valuable and are becoming more valuable as newcomers arrive. They can tax a volunteer base so consideration needs to be given to how they are undertaken.
- **Programming in the hamlets.** Many felt it is important to offer programming out in the hamlets and not solely at single central locations. While this can prove difficult in terms of securing sufficient numbers of program participants, where possible people felt that the programming should go “out to the people”.

Facility Needs

Facility needs. Those in the interviews did offer some suggestions for new and/or enhanced recreational facilities in the area to serve County residents. While the facility needs were not unanimous the items (and approaches) mentioned included the following.

- A multiplex in the area is needed with many different specific recreational amenities.
- Some suggested that the County needs to focus on supporting more of a centralized approach to provision rather than supporting a myriad of facilities throughout the County. Others argued that the facilities within the hamlets are important for each of the communities and their identities and that these facilities help draw and retain residents.
- Gymnasium space
- Indoor walking track
- Outdoor rink (Carseland)
- Playground (Speargrass)
- Hard surface outdoor court (Rosebud)
- Outdoor hard surface boarded rink (Lyalta)

Volunteerism

A sizeable amount of the programming and the facilities available throughout the County are due to the good work done by volunteers. Many of these organizations are experiencing difficulties recruiting new volunteers. This is due in part to the demands on volunteers to operate facilities, undertake fundraising activities, and manage the organizations. Some of the individual organizations do recognize their volunteers but there is some suggestion that a County wide recognition would be beneficial. Some assistance from Wheatland County with some of these volunteer challenges was seen as beneficial.

Wheatland County's Role

There were a variety of suggestions (beyond those noted throughout the former points) for the role the County could play.

- **Funding.** Make available a larger pool of funds including assistance with operating expenses on a more regular basis.
- **In-kind support.** Several examples were presented by those interviewed of instances in which the County did provide in-kind support (e.g. use of heavy equipment).
- Use of a **staff position** to:
 - » Provide information to groups about available funds (a fund directory).
 - » Support groups in the completion of grant applications.
 - » Provide coaching and training in how to operate a not for profit organization.
 - » Offer suggestions and assistance in capital project development and completion.
 - » Help get programs off the ground that are offered by community groups. This could be short term subsidies or even promotions.
- **Summer programming.** Some suggested that the County could directly offer summer programming at hamlets throughout the County for children and youth.
- **Promotions.** The County could serve as a central overriding body to help promote the facilities, programs, events, and organizations throughout the County. There needs to be better awareness of the County's residents of the services and opportunities available.
- **Partnerships.** The County could facilitate partnerships and conversations between groups and organizations in the County. This was modeled in a small way through the County convening the interviews and meetings.

- **Regional approach.** Some suggested that the County needs to work with the Town of Strathmore in order to take a more regional approach to recreation provision. These comments were not made to suggest the County has not made these efforts. Rather the feeling was that a regional approach to provision is the most efficient and effective approach.
- **Classification system for facilities.** A standard for what amenities should be community based versus County wide facilities would be useful. This would help manage requests/demands from some if it is clear what the County considers as base level community facilities.

Other Issues

Those in the interviews and meetings offered several other comments.

- The County needs to listen to the community in an ongoing way to better understand the changing needs of the community.
- The County needs to continue to explore partnerships with others in the provision of recreation services and opportunities.
- Concerns were expressed about tax increases that may result from any additional recreation services that may result from this Needs Assessment.
- Amongst County residents there may be little support for a regional provision model. This model however is sustainable while the decentralized model is not.
- Affordability to access recreation programs and services is an issue for many in the County. Consideration is needed to ensure affordability does not become a large barrier.
- Recreation is an important contributor to people's quality of life and it is critical to ensure these opportunities are available to residents.

SECTION *Seven*

Conclusions

Based on the information presented herein several conclusions can be drawn.

- Wheatland County believes strongly in providing a high quality of life to its residents. It is partially through the support to community organizations that the County strives to achieve this.
- Wheatland County's population is growing but it still is very rural based. The largest population centre within the County's borders is the Town of Strathmore in the western portion.
- Wheatland County offers community organizations access to approximately \$400,000 through its Community Enhancement Grant Fund. In the past year \$1.2M of applications were received. Grants are awarded for large and small capital projects as well as for operating costs.
 - » Some suggestions from community stakeholders included:
 - Increase the amount of funding in the Community Enhancement Grant Fund.
 - Separate funding pools for capital and operating expenses (and consider having separate pools for large and small capital projects).
 - Provide more transparency on why projects are successful compared to others.
- Community organizations and stakeholders feel that, aside from additional funding, they would benefit from additional in-kind support from the Grant Coordinator or another dedicated position. Assistance with facility development processes, fundraising tactics and approaches, grant applications, and not-for-profit management would be helpful. As well some assistance with volunteer recruitment and retention challenges and recognition would be welcome.



- Wheatland County's grant program is the largest of the comparable municipalities. However, its total expenditure on recreation is less than the others as is its per capita expenditures.
- There are innumerable reasons to support and provide recreational opportunities to residents including its contributions to quality of life.
 - » Enhances personal, family, and community health and well being.
 - » Attracts and retains residents and businesses.
 - » Residents say it is important.
- Trends suggest the importance of providing opportunities to walk, cycle, and engage in fitness programs and activities. The consultation conducted points to the need for indoor walking, gymnasium space, fitness facilities, meeting/program rooms, arenas, and aquatic facilities.
 - » Consultation activities also identified priorities for outdoor recreation facilities: trails, campgrounds, picnic areas, skating rinks, paved courts, spray parks.
- The provision of multi-use spaces and places that accommodates spontaneous and drop-in activities is important. There are mixed feelings from community stakeholders about the regional provision (and support) of recreational facilities. Facilities distributed across the County help attract and retain residents and provide community identity.
- Partnerships are important. Resources are limited and there are many other entities that provide services. Working together and offering support to these entities is paramount.
- Enhanced communications and marketing of available recreation opportunities is needed. A one stop shop that identifies all facilities and contacts as well as programs and contacts would be very beneficial to residents and visitors.
- Programming gaps lean towards nature and outdoor programs for children and youth and trend towards fitness and wellness programs into the older age segments.
 - » In terms of community learning, a minority are looking for personal types of topics including computer skills and accounting/finance.
 - » Challenges with programming relates to limited schedules that do not best accommodate people.
- While the broader community supports recreation projects if they meet community needs and benefit the community, there is limited support for an increase in property taxes to support these recreation projects.
- Over half (57%) of residents say their quality of life is high or very high while 41% rate it as average. Approximately one-third (32%) of respondents rate the quality of County services overall as high or very high while 53% rated the services as average.



APPENDIX *A*

Stakeholder Interview Participants

1. Wheatland Seniors Transportation—Ruth Wall
2. Carseland Jet Setters—Sharon Alce and Marg Richarson
3. Rockyford Community Association—Robert Koester
4. Rosebud Community Enhancement Society—Bill Hamm
5. Lions Clubs:
 - » Carseland Lions Club—Wayne Shapka
 - » Carseland Kids Wellness Coalition—Jennifer Alce
 - » Standard Lions—Lance Larsen and Darren Firkus
 - » Cheadle Lions Club—Sonny Warrack
 - » Rockyford Lions Club—Justin Geeaert
6. Gleichen and District Minor Hockey Association—Cara Sheppard
7. Gleichen and District Agricultural Society—Steve Yule and Ian
8. Wheatland Family and Community Support Services—Lynn Walker
9. Strathmore and District Agricultural Society—Jodi Vanderlaan and Jodi
10. Gleichen Skating Club—Kathryn Brown and Denise Brown
11. Community Halls:
 - » Gleichen and District Community Association—Alice Booth
 - » Rosebud Memorial Hall Association—Jackie Hymas
 - » Standard Community Hall—Susan Bragg and Brent Gregory
 - » Hussar Community Hall—Wendy Kaiser and Kathy Dundas
 - » Dalum Community Hall Association—Gerald Rasmussen
 - » Rosebud Community Hall—Brenda Kelemen-Tkachuk
 - » Level Land Community Hall—Ewalt Lang

12. Wheatland Society of Arts—Brandy Hebbes
13. Cheadle Community Club—Arnold
14. Standard and District Agricultural Society—Perry Ellis
15. Carseland and District Community Association and Agricultural Society—Bev Ross
16. Growing Families Society for East Rural Communities—May Rostecki-Budzey
17. Standard Curling Club—Darrin Firkus and Don Cuthill
18. Rockyford Curling Club—Randal Melcher
19. Libraries:
 - » Gleichen—Sandra Burke
 - » Hussar Municipal Library—Kathy Dundas
 - » Rockyford—Gary Billings
 - » Standard—Mark Clark and Adrenna Carter
20. Nightingale Community Association—Chantelle Jacobs
21. Junior Achievement of Southern Alberta—Tristan Periard
22. Friends of East Wheatland Society—Kathryn Brown and Greg Lendvay
23. Rosebud School of Arts—Adam Furfaro
24. Youth Club of Strathmore—Shannon Ieman
25. Lyalta Community Club—Barry Brattly
26. Standard Community Facility Enhancement Society—Don Sungaard
27. Cairnhill Community Association—Keith Clayton
28. Hussar Sundowners Seniors Club—Myrtle Christensen
29. Lakes of Muirfield Recreation Society—Kim Schneider

APPENDIX *B*

Community Group Survey Respondents

1. Dance Standard
2. Town of Drumheller
3. Standard Baseball
4. Rosebud Community Enhancement Society
5. Lyalta Community Club
6. Rockyford Library
7. Hussar and District Agricultural Society
8. Duck Lake Community Association
9. Hope Bridges Society
10. Standard Community Hall Association
11. Rosebud Historical Society/Rosebud and District Centennial Museum
12. Gleichen and District Minor Hockey
13. Rosebud Community Enhancement Society (RCES)
14. Wheatland Seniors Transportation Society
15. Cheadle Lions Club
16. Gina Champigny (Yoga Class Provider)

