

What We Heard

Engage and Play: Shaping Public Recreation in Edmonton

City of Edmonton
Community Services
Community Recreation and Culture
June 2025
[Edmonton.ca/EngageAndPlay](https://edmonton.ca/EngageAndPlay)

| **SHARE** YOUR VOICE
SHAPE OUR CITY

Edmonton

ADVISE

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The City of Edmonton acknowledges the traditional land on which we reside is in Treaty Six Territory. We would like to thank the diverse Indigenous Peoples whose ancestors’ footsteps have marked this territory for centuries, such as nêhiyaw (Cree), Dené, Anishinaabe (Saulteaux), Nakota Isga (Nakota Sioux), and Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) peoples. We also acknowledge this as the Métis’ homeland and the home of one of the largest communities of Inuit south of the 60th parallel. It is a welcoming place for all peoples who come from around the world to share Edmonton as a home. Together we call upon all of our collective, honoured traditions and spirits to work in building a great city for today and future generations.

APPRECIATION

Thank you to all participants for your valuable insights and perspectives. We also deeply appreciate the support from community groups and our partners who shared this community engagement opportunity with their members ensuring we were able to connect with a wide range of Edmontonians.

OUR APPROACH

The City of Edmonton will approach recreation from a holistic and sustainable perspective to address the broad continuum of community recreation needs required by Edmontonians. Edmontonians will have access to safe, welcoming places to:

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| • Socialize | • Build community | • Be active and exercise |
| • Be creative | • Learn and develop physical literacy | • Participate in and/or excel in their desired sport or recreation activity |
| • Play | | |

Using a community building approach, rooted in relationships and partnerships with organizations and communities, the City works to ensure Edmontonians have a variety of recreation programs to meet their needs.

Source: [Approach to Community Recreation Facility Planning in Edmonton \(2018\)](#)

ENGAGE AND PLAY ENGAGEMENT AT A GLANCE

As Edmonton grows towards a population of two million, the City is undertaking efforts to understand the current and future recreation needs of its diverse and evolving population. Engagement was undertaken as part of the larger Engage and Play project, a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary study aimed to identify current and future recreation needs at city and district levels. Engage and Play seeks to understand the needs, expectations, and barriers faced by community members, especially those from equity-deserving groups.

Engagement activities sought insights on:

- How Edmontonians currently participate in sport and active recreation including what activities they are participating in, where, when and how often
- What Edmontonians think the gaps or missing opportunities in sport and active recreation in Edmonton are
- What barriers Edmontonians experience in accessing sport and recreation activities in Edmonton

Feedback, community insights and advice from Edmontonians regarding sport and recreation planning was gathered through an Online Engagement Feedback Survey (November 27 to December 20, 2024) and an Engaged Edmonton webpage (November 27, 2024 to March 28, 2025). The insights Edmontonians shared will assist the City with recreation capital planning.

Through engagement Edmontonians shared how they experience the spaces we use for recreation as important social and community resources. These spaces provide places for Edmontonians to practice or participate in their sports, remain active, exercise and connect. Engagement responses provided insights, challenges and opportunities related to facility demand, price sensitivity, user experiences and the untapped potential of natural and community spaces.

While this community information is not statistically representative of Edmontonians at large, it presents valuable insights into the thoughts, concerns and opinions of those seeking out engagement opportunities.

What We Did	Who We Heard From
Online Engagement Feedback Survey	2,546 responses
Engaged Edmonton Page	2,710 visitors
2 Online engagement tools:	85 ideas and stories:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share Your Ideas• Share Your Stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 70 different contributors• 187 interactions

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Public service recreation plays a vital role in promoting health, community engagement and quality of life by providing accessible, equitable and inclusive recreational opportunities for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.

The [Community Recreation and Culture Branch \(CRC\)](#) in the Community Services Department has a mandate to enhance the livability and vibrancy of the city by providing places and opportunities for all Edmontonians to gather, connect, recreate and celebrate. It delivers public recreation that includes sport, leisure and heritage programming.

These activities take place in a variety of facilities, parks and open spaces. CRC works with numerous partners in various ways to provide recreation programming. This includes providing space in City facilities, having partners deliver programming in City-owned facilities and giving financial support through operating grants, leases and licensing agreements.

Community Recreation and Culture is responsible for:

- 5 Large Community Recreation Centres
- 6 Medium Recreation Centres
- 8 Small Leisure Centres
- 5 Outdoor Pools
- Partner-operated facilities
- 2 Stadium facilities
- 22 Ice Arenas (31 rinks)
- 3 Golf Courses, 1 Driving range
- 1,500+ Sportfields (includes Premier/Artificial Turf fields)
- River Valley Parks

Sources: edmonton.ca/reccentres, edmonton.ca/rivervalleyparks, edmonton.ca/sportsfields

With Edmonton's population on track to reach two million people, the City of Edmonton needs to be prepared for the needs of our growing and changing community. The Engage and Play project informs the development of short, medium and long-term priorities for sport and active recreation programming, including capital projects and budget planning through:

- Jurisdictional scan of other municipalities in Canada so the City can critically examine how its programs and service levels compare
- Review of the current state of sporting activities in Edmonton, as well as provincially and nationally, to gain a deeper understanding of the growth and trending of various sports
- Public opinion research that utilized feedback gathering approaches including in-person, online, and telephone, and in-depth interviews
- Engagement using the City's Engaged Edmonton website and an open link online survey available to the broad public, with efforts made to reach equity-deserving communities

The project explored preferences, social benefits of active recreation services and barriers to use across the City's 15 districts to ensure a comprehensive, diverse and statistically valid view of sport and active recreation services and future needs was developed.

The project approached groups that may face unique challenges or barriers in accessing active recreation services or facilities and applied a Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) lens to ensure the inclusion of voices from equity-deserving groups, such as Indigenous Peoples, members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, migrants, racialized Edmontonians and persons with disabilities. It explored both programs and services the City currently offers and sought input on the demand for new service offerings and infrastructure needs.

Definitions:

Active recreational activity: any activity that an individual freely chooses to do for fun, social interaction, fitness or relaxation, and requires them to be physically active.

Sport: any competitive active recreational activity, where a contest is held between two or more people to determine a winner, whether for fun or organized by a sport organization or league. It includes observation of formal rules and regulations, participation either individually or as a team, and may or may not include a coaching or officiating or judging component.

District: a collection of neighbourhoods that contains most of the services and amenities Edmontonians need to meet their daily needs and live more locally. Each District has a unique District Plan created to reflect its location within the city and the residential and non-residential opportunities within it. Edmonton has 15 districts.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SPECTRUM

Public engagement creates opportunities for people to contribute to City Council and Administration's decision-making about the City's policies, programs, projects and services. Public engagement also communicates how public input is collected and used.

The City's Public Engagement Spectrum defines the public's level of influence in engagement processes. Public engagement for Engage and Play was at the **ADVISE** level on the City of Edmonton's Public Engagement Spectrum. The public and interested parties were invited to share their feedback and perspectives on their specific needs regarding sport and active recreation.



GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS PLUS (GBA+)

The City of Edmonton has adopted GBA+ as a process to examine how policies, programs and services impact individuals and groups. GBA+ is the way we work to increase inclusion and inclusive practices, reduce discrimination and ensure equality of outcomes for those we serve.

The City engaged with diverse communities asking groups who were made up of, or serve, equity-deserving groups to share the invitation to participate with their members and those they serve. Engagement activities were designed to ensure equitable participation from groups of people who might experience active recreation and sports participation differently. The GBA+ efforts focused on the following equity-deserving groups:

- Members of 2SLGBTQIA+ community
- Indigenous Peoples
- Low Income
- Migrants
- Racialized Edmontonians
- Persons with disabilities
- Seniors (55+)
- Women
- Youth

INPUTS FOR DECISION-MAKING

The following inputs to decision-making, along with strategic and budget considerations, will:

- Contribute to sport and recreation planning over the short-, mid- and longer term
- Inform facility and program planning, prioritization and budgeting for both capital and operating budgets

Public Engagement Data: Edmontonians experiences of sports and active recreation in Edmonton as well as their ideas about what sports and recreation opportunities are missing or should be expanded and what they think is needed in terms of location and space.

Jurisdictional Scan Data: Information gathered from other municipalities in Alberta and across Canada including budgets, operating models and ability to host events, to compare with the City's programs and service levels.

State of Sport Report: A review of the current state of sporting activities in Edmonton, as well as provincially and nationally, to gain a deeper understanding of the growth and trending of various sports to inform both current and future programming and infrastructure needs.

Public Opinion Research Data: Baseline information on people's current perspectives on and experiences of sport and active recreation: what they do, when, where, with whom/how and barriers to participating. Deeper insight into equitable programming needs of, as well as the similarities and differences expressed by, specific targeted groups.

Strategic Alignment: City Bylaws, policies, plans and services guide the City's work setting the course and conditions for how we plan for the future, budget and understand and share progress.

[ConnectEdmonton](#): Strategic Plan sets the direction for our future and outlines where we need to change today to realize our vision for Edmonton in 2050.

[City Plan](#): A cohesive strategy to guide our choices and navigate future growth as Edmonton grows to two million residents.

[Approach to Community Recreation Facility Planning](#): Overarching plan to meet community recreation facility planning needs in Edmonton, guiding investment in community recreation facilities.

[Equitable Recreation Programming Audit](#): Ensuring we continue to build on and adjust our efforts to provide recreation programming that is diverse, accessible and welcoming for all community members.

[Breathe: Green Network Strategy](#): Guide for future planning to ensure all neighbourhoods are supported by high-quality, accessible, connected open spaces.

[Growth Management Framework](#): How we manage future growth to be within the current urban boundary

Budget Considerations: The [budget](#) is the City's plan for where we get money (revenues) and how we spend it (expenditures). The 2027-2030 capital budget, money for building and maintaining infrastructure, and operating budget, money for every day programs and services, will be set in fall 2026.

WHO WE ENGAGED

The Engage and Play engagement sought input and feedback from Edmontonians whether they currently participate in sport or recreation activities in their community or not, with partner organizations, and City user groups. The City's user groups refers to anyone that rents an amenity (sportsfields, arenas, gymnasiums, aquatics) from the City of Edmonton. Partners are organizations that have an agreement with the City to provide recreation programming, complimenting the City's recreation network.

Community engagement sought city-wide input from both individuals and representatives of these groups. While participation from all Edmontonians was encouraged, additional effort was made to reach out to equity-deserving groups who tend to be underrepresented in public engagement processes.

HOW WE ENGAGED

The project's engagement was completed using an Engaged Edmonton webpage, and an Online Engagement Feedback Survey that was shareable and accessible from the city's Engaged Edmonton webpage as well as from the City's website and through QR codes in communications materials.

Engaged Edmonton: The webpage was open for input from all Edmontonians from November 27, 2024 through March 28, 2025. The website's "Share Your Ideas" section had 80 responses, 5 "Share Your Stories" responses, and 2 "Ask A Question" responses.

Online Survey: The survey mirrored the statistically representative telephone survey (conducted by a third-party market research firm) and targeted Edmonton residents aged 18 and older with 2,546 completed surveys collected between November 27 and December 20, 2024. The online survey was made available broadly to all Edmontonians. The results from this survey are not statistically representative of the Edmonton general public. Specifically this online survey collected more responses from:

- Women, 35 to 54 years old, higher income, born in Canada, and did not identify as racialized, disabled, or 2SLGBTQIA+
- People who are physically active, or exercise frequently

An additional opportunity to provide feedback was made available via the project email address. The project email address was posted on Engaged Edmonton, the edmonton.ca project webpage and used to promote the opportunities to participate. This allowed people another opportunity to share feedback at their convenience.

HOW WE COMMUNICATED

Communication activities were intended to raise awareness of the work and encourage broad participation. A variety of tactics were used to ensure the project would hear not only from current users of City recreation facilities but also those who do not currently use these City facilities.

The City's [project webpage](#) provided information on the project as well as directed Edmontonians to opportunities to provide input (e.g. online survey and Engaged Edmonton webpage). Various communications channels were used to share information and encourage participation including public service announcements, social media posts, online ads through Facebook, Instagram, Google Display and Google Search, posters, road signs, bus signs, radio ads and targeted emails.

- Online ads promoted via Facebook and Instagram, Google Display and Google Search delivered over 4.32 million impressions and more than 23.4 thousand click-throughs to the campaign landing page
- 12 transit shelter ads and 22 road signs generated almost 15 million views from the public
- 329 radio spots were played on various radio stations, including Windspeaker, Connect FM, CHED, CISN and CIUP

The project team engaged City staff with working relationships in communities to directly share participation recruitment emails with their organizational contacts and ask them to distribute the information to their membership on behalf of the City. For example: [Sport Edmonton](#) shared via their regular e-newsletter, Edmonton Public Schools shared via Schoolzone and Community Leagues and Home Owners Associations shared in a variety of formats depending on the channels available to the individual group. Further, to increase reach to equity-deserving groups specifically, the City reached out directly via email to organizations that provide services or supports to specific populations including:

- 18 seniors organizations, e.g.: Alberta 55+ Games, Council of Muslims Aging Gracefully, the various Edmonton Seniors Associations and the Shaama Centre for Seniors and Women.
- 19 persons with disabilities organizations, e.g.: Alberta Sports and Recreation Association for the Blind (ASRAB), Centre for Autism Services Alberta, Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta - Edmonton Chapter and the Steadward Centre (National Centre of Physical Activity and Disability).
- Over 40 migrant and racialized Edmontonian serving organizations, e.g. the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, Edmonton City Centre Church Corporation - E4C, the Hindu Canadian Association of Edmonton, the Multicultural Family Resource Society and the Newcomer Centre.

- 13 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations, e.g.: Edmonton Two Spirit Society, the Firefly Institute for Gender and Sexual Diversity, Inclusion Alberta, the Newcomers Centre - Rainbow Refuge, the Pride Centre of Edmonton and Queer and Trans Health Collective.
- 31 youth focused organizations, e.g.: cadets, the Boys and Girls Club, the Cultural Youth Initiative, Free Play for Kids, iHuman Youth Society and Youth Empowerment and Support Services.

ENGAGEMENT - WHAT WE HEARD

The spaces we use for recreation are important social and community resources. The engagement data found that many people view these spaces as important places to practice and participate in their sports and to remain active and exercise. Some respondents noted that recreation opportunities are community and social hubs.

Engagement responses provided several themes and observations related to:

- Recreational Demands and Geographic Distribution which includes considerations of facilities, amenities and programs
- User Experience which includes considerations on approaches to the funding and fiscal responsibility of offering municipal recreation opportunities, the accessibility and ease of use attributed with the City's website and booking systems, and the maintenance of existing facilities
- Untapped Potential of Natural and Community Spaces

The sections below describe the engagement feedback organized by key themes followed by further detail related to equity-deserving groups.

Note on data and analysis: The Information and figures gathered through the Engage Edmonton website and as part of the online survey are not statistically representative of the population of Edmonton. The Engage Edmonton responses were examined to determine themes and assigned codes for analysis. The online survey open text feedback was aggregated and examined by City staff, including the use of AI.

Definitions:

Community Recreation Facility: A publicly accessible venue for recreation activity to occur; a recreation facility can include any combination of recreation amenities. Examples of recreation facilities are the Booster Juice Community Recreation Centre and the Ivor Dent Sports Park.

Community Recreation Amenity: A specific component within a recreation facility or place. Sports fields, swimming pools and ice arenas are examples of recreation amenities.

Programming of community recreation facilities: Includes the facilitation and provision of

organized recreation activities and opportunities in community recreation facilities.

DEMAND (FACILITY / AMENITY / PROGRAMMING) AND GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Leading an active lifestyle is important to Edmontonians with the majority of engagement participants desiring to start new recreation activities or do more activities. The engagement results found most participants express high demand for additional facilities and programs favouring indoor amenities (multi-purpose recreation centre, pools, courts, sports fields and arenas), but also noting demand for outdoor amenities (pools, bike parks, sports fields, courts, skating surfaces and rinks). The need for indoor facilities is particularly high among individuals with children, migrants and racialized individuals. It is lower among low-income households and seniors. Those with children in the household or with disabilities identified outdoor swimming pools as desirable outdoor facilities.

"I love the new spaces the City created to support recreation during COVID, such as Summer streets. The bike lanes are excellent. I also appreciate the skateways and cross country ski trails maintained by the City. You make getting outside and being active year-round possible and enjoyable."

"I think that our facilities are top-knotch! We are very lucky to have such beautiful rec centres, and I love the new skating trails and things to try like the ice bikes. It would be great to have little local cafes and firepits around winter recreation areas like you had at Hawrelak Park. More of that please!!!"

Recreational experiences are not the same for everyone. The engagement feedback shows a clear divide based on where people live. It is not just about the quantity of facilities, but the distribution and accessibility for all Edmontonians. Residents in newer suburban areas, particularly in the Southwest and West of the Henday, feel underserved with a lack of municipal facilities. There are also specific calls for better access for seniors and people with disabilities, and a need for more affordable, non-club level sports for youth.

Facilities

A significant number of comments express frustration that there simply isn't enough physical space to meet the demand for Edmonton's most popular sports. There are repeated, urgent calls for more ice rinks/arenas, a clear and coordinated push for more high-quality baseball diamonds (including indoor turf/batting cages for winter), and a growing demand for more dedicated pickleball and tennis courts. There were also several requests for specific sporting infrastructure (skateboarding, equine and dive tanks).

The nature of being a winter city creates seasonality to the recreation offerings. Some respondents made calls for more indoor facilities such as soccer domes and multi-sport gym spaces distributed to serve all parts of the city. There were several comparisons made to recreational offerings found within other municipalities from Vancouver's Coopers Park Basketball Courts, Kelowna's water stations and Calgary's Bowness Eddies/Harvie Passage Whitewater Park.

"We need more ice rinks. There isn't enough for the demand. No one is able to buy extra ice."

"Many North side families will not engage in South side only sport opportunities because public and private transport is too long to get there. We REALLY need another fully servicing indoor track and field facility to replace the UofA Butterdome, to host daily bookings and large event bookings!"

Amenities

There was a very strong and repeated call for basic amenities like washrooms and running water at sports fields. Some residents noted they now leave the city to play sports due to the lack of amenities at facilities. There were comments associated with the lack of washrooms and water availability at park spaces and fields. Some feedback noted respondents now participate in recreation at neighbouring municipalities that have built these amenities or specialized facilities.

"Fields need Washrooms. I have been so disappointed with the lack of facilities at sports fields, that I now play ball in Sherwood Park."

"Need better fields for baseball! Better baseball diamonds with washrooms and outdoor batting cages will really help the community!"

Programs

There were noted opportunities to provide enhanced service offerings at City facilities. There were calls for a broader and more innovative approach to recreation that could include a focus on the arts and culture, such as with the expansion of offerings of dance or theatre.

Residents also asked for more accessible and flexible options that fit modern lifestyles. This includes adding family-friendly programming like child-minding in neighbourhood facilities, installing, and adapting program pricing and schedules for non-traditional families, such as co-parenting situations. Finally, there were requests for specific new programming ranging from adult-only gym times and unique fitness challenges (beep test, EPS/Army fitness challenges).

"blend arts with sport. make unique facilities that are human scaled. partner with library. introduce 'speakers', art shows, 'learn a new skill' drop-ins".

USER EXPERIENCE

Engagement found there are day-to-day frustrations that diminish the quality of the recreation experience, even when facilities are available. It includes both the physical environment, such as a very strong and repeated call for washrooms and running water at sports fields, and the digital tools used to access them. In the digital realm, users are frustrated with only being able to access recreation information online, the City website's poor accessibility, search functionality and the process for booking fields and ice times. A significant portion of the feedback focused on the City's management of recreation, with concerns including fiscal responsibility, the quality of City-run websites and operational priorities.

General Fiscal Responsibility and Funding

Respondents expressed concerns about tax increases and advocated for alternative funding models. There was an emphasis on strong fiscal prudence and a need for strategic development for new recreation facilities. There were comments advocating for prioritizing functional multi-use facilities that provide value application over aesthetics, and leaving specialized facilities for specific sports left to the private sector.

Maintenance

There were calls for better maintenance of existing facilities and questions about the City's priorities, such as snow removal on trails versus sidewalks and safety in City facilities. There were several calls for better maintenance of outdoor skateparks and to improve security by limiting loitering, nearby encampments and addressing locker break-ins.

"..not every facility needs to be an expensive architectural wonder, I don't care what the facility looks like so long as it has space and equipment to do the activity".

Website and Booking Systems

The recreation portions of the City website's functionality posed challenges for some respondents and could benefit from improvements such as multiple location searches, viewing all rink times and drop-in functionality. Many users found the City's website difficult to navigate, which they believe hinders program participation. There was significant frustration shared regarding the digital systems and the administrative processes required to access or register for recreation. City websites such as MoveLearnPlay are poorly viewed and considered difficult to navigate. Engagement found that residents are looking for more user-friendly interfaces with current information and improved search functionality.

UNTAPPED POTENTIAL OF NATURAL AND COMMUNITY SPACES

Engagement also found a more opportunistic and forward-looking theme that looks beyond building new recreation centres. Edmontonians see potential in activating existing public spaces in simpler, more creative ways. Suggestions included enhancing the river valley with more access points, fitness stations and infrastructure for water sports (kayaking, canoeing). There are also calls to better inclusion utilize local community spaces, such as allowing basketball nets on residential roads and opening up school gyms more often for community use.

Edmonton hosts one of the largest disc golf tournaments within the river valley, and some user feedback noted users having to drive to other municipalities to play due to lack of nearby courses. The feedback highlighted demands for expansion of field usage to serve the growing disc golf community.

Engagement also found respondents want a reimagining of the spaces within our community to enable safe and affordable recreation opportunities. These opportunities could include free outdoor gym equipment and additional splash parks. At the neighbourhood level, removing barriers to spontaneous play, such as allowing basketball nets on residential roads and streamlining the "slow" and "unpredictable" process for community access to school gyms.

"I would appreciate that the City would start installing outdoor gym equipment for everyone to use that are barrier free and at no extra cost to use"

THEMES RELATING TO EQUITY-DESERVING GROUPS

While members of equity-deserving groups participated in engagement, the insights below do not necessarily represent their particular perspectives directly. Instead, the following sections reflect insights found in the online survey open text that are relevant or applicable to those groups when a theme emerged.

Responses associated with equity-deserving groups related to accessibility, inclusion and the desire to have spaces for specialized recreation opportunities. Comments included the need to have growth in swimming lessons, non-club sporting opportunities, and low-cost exercise facilities and programming during winter for youth.

Responses highlighted how recreational experiences are not the same for everyone. Distribution of, and accessibility to, facilities based on where people live as well as the quality of the facilities and programming available impact equity-deserving communities more. There were specific calls for better access for seniors and people with disabilities, and a need for more affordable, non-club level sports for youth.

2SLGBTQIA+ Community

While overall engagement feedback was provided by 2SLGBTQIA+ participants, only a select few provided specific comments and there was no community-specific feedback shared on Engaged Edmonton or within the open text of the online survey.

Income

A recurring and prominent theme was the financial barrier to accessing recreation, with many residents feeling that costs are prohibitive. The cost of memberships and programs is seen as a major obstacle with feedback suggesting that even double-income families struggle to afford them, making access for lower-income families challenging. There are comments suggesting that recreation opportunities should be available to all children who want to participate.

"Should be funding or better discounts for middle income families. We also can't afford extras for our kids to do and be active in this economy"

"The cost of the benefits plus membership is far too expensive now, even for us, a double income family. We used to get a family pass but with everything costing more and more, we can't afford it anymore. We really miss being able to go swimming as a family..."

Indigenous Peoples

While overall engagement feedback included Indigenous participants, there was no community-specific feedback shared on Engaged Edmonton or within the open text of the online survey.

Migrants and Racialized Edmontonians

Some comments noted a need for more inclusive and adaptable programming in City recreation facilities. This could take the form of introductory classes tailored for different cultural groups, potentially with language support which could assist newcomers with creating and strengthening community connections.

"The development of active recreation facilities & parks, is important, but so is the delivery of enhanced education and social services for our new Canadians, indigenous Canadians, the homeless, and all those our present society tends to "leave behind!""

Seniors

Comments associated with seniors noted a perceived lack of facilities, programming and amenities to enable recreation. The engagement survey found that most residents across districts were willing

to pay for improvements, however, willingness to pay is lower among those with disabilities, seniors and low-income individuals.

Feedback related to seniors focused on the desire for more inclusive and adaptable programming that respects individual skill levels rather than relying on age-based stereotypes. There were comments to move beyond age-segregated classes and offer a wider range of activities accessible to seniors based on their individual abilities and interests. Additionally, adding more benches or rest areas at recreation sites and including benches within shower areas would enable seniors opportunities to continue to participate and engage in recreation. The City's initiatives to offer discounts during the day (11:30-1:00PM) were seen as a fair price without committing to any one facility.

Persons with Disabilities

Multiple comments pointed to a significant gap in services for residents with physical disabilities and those who are neurodivergent. There was a clear demand for the City to create more specialized and adaptive programs to meet these diverse needs. Feedback noted a perceived lack of facilities and programming to enable recreation for this group.

There was a clear demand for the City to expand its offerings to better include residents with diverse physical and cognitive needs.

"More sports/recreational activities for neurodivergent individuals"

"We need more programs for kids and adults with special needs"

"Limited programs for children with disabilities"

"I am grateful that the City has the free admission for the caregiver of a person with disabilities in order to support the person with disabilities to successfully participate in a recreational activity at a City rec center".

Women

The engagement survey respondents include more women, 35 to 54 years old, higher income, born in Canada, and not identify as racialized, disabled, or 2SLGBTQIA+. The perspectives shared through the survey and on the Engaged Edmonton webpage include the need to ensure safe programming, facilities and for the recreation environment to enable women to feel comfortable and secure while partaking in recreation.

Suggestions included expanding private change areas, having more controlled family change areas, and potentially offering programming or times specifically for them.

Youth

The engagement data found the main barriers for youth participation in active recreation and sports were associated with the lack of access to facilities and programs, financial constraints and time spent travelling for recreation opportunities.

The Engage Edmonton and online survey feedback highlighted significant barriers in accessing programs and facilities for youth and young families, such that even when facilities are accessible, parents report that programs fill up almost instantly, making it difficult to register their children for activities. There are also perceived challenges in getting children to recreation facilities due to distance and a lack of convenient and affordable public transit. Further, scheduling early or late into the day makes it increasingly difficult for children to participate.

There is a strong demand for more recreational, non-competitive sports classes or leagues targeting youth (eg. volleyball, soccer). Many feel the current system is focused on developing elite “make it or break it” teams. This leaves children who don’t make school teams or a club team with no further options.

“It’s not easy for my teen kids to get to a City recreation facility. The bus is quite far. There’s great deals for kids after school but we can not enjoy these deals because the facilities are not easily accessible.”

“Not enough spaces for my child to make the team. ie- tryouts for school sports and getting cut in Junior High when in reality, it should be about kids learning skills.”

“Our Elementary school doesn’t offer any active recreation sports or activities after school. Our junior high only offers very limited after school sports and recreation (ie teams made up of 12-15 students when there are more than 800 students in school)”

NEXT STEPS

Following comprehensive research, CRC’s next steps involve a strategic plan to translate findings into action. CRC will refresh the recreation facility planning framework using new community insights and data, which will yield a refined strategic guide. This implementation work will align with overarching City strategies, such as Breathe: The Green Network Strategy. Concurrently, an internal committee will review recommendations, identify immediate opportunities and develop detailed roadmaps for longer-term initiatives, including communication plans. This coordinated effort aims to ensure that research insights directly inform and guide future recreation investment and service delivery.