

Town of Taber

Recreation Master Plan

January 2020



Recreation Master Plan

Town of Taber





Executive Summary

Recreation activities and services are significant contributors to people's quality of life. These services, including facilities, spaces, programs, and events, enrich communities for residents and visitors alike. While the Town of Taber is a major player in the delivery of recreation, community organizations and volunteers are critical as well. To ensure that residents and organizations continue to benefit from the Town's investment and support, the Town of Taber undertook the development of a Recreation Master Plan. The Research Report (under separate cover) contains all the data gathered in the upfront stages of the planning process.

Foundations

Recreation Department Mission

To provide safe and clean places, spaces and opportunities to encourage active participation and community building as a means to enhance the quality of life of residents in Taber.

Intended Outcomes

High quality of life
Everyone feels welcome
Enhanced sense of community
Good governance
High participation levels
Open communication

Values

Inclusion
Informed
Leadership
Collaboration
Safety
Creativity

Infrastructure

Guiding Principles for Infrastructure

Ensure the safety and ongoing maintenance of recreation infrastructure.

Sustain or decommission existing infrastructure before considering new development.

Prioritize spaces that are multi-functional and serve a wide range of interests.

Inclusion and access need to be considered throughout all infrastructure decisions.

Maintaining Infrastructure

Ensure the safety and ongoing maintenance of recreation infrastructure.

Prioritization Considerations

Use the criteria herein to help prioritize potential capital projects.

Feasibility Process

Follow the feasibility process herein to help guide efficient and informed infrastructure development.

Small Ice Arena

Sustain the small ice arena and invest in safety and modernization.

Indoor Dryland Facility

The next major infrastructure development should be a multi-use indoor dryland facility.

Lease Agreements

Ensure that leased spaces are properly maintained and benefit the community.

Guiding Principles for Parks

Environment stewardship

Acquisition

Structured spaces

Connectivity

Affordability

Service Delivery

Volunteerism

Support and encourage volunteerism.

Community Groups

Continue to support community groups.

Partnerships

Strengthen current partnerships and develop new ones to maximize capacity and community benefit.

Community Events

Continue to host and support community events.

Programming

Expand the delivery of direct programs.

Arts and Culture

Provide and support arts and culture opportunities.

Awareness of Opportunities

Promote awareness of all recreation opportunities in Taber.

Data and Information

Collect data and translate it into useful information to help make informed decisions.

Financial Responsibility

Align subsidy levels with community benefit.

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01

Introduction

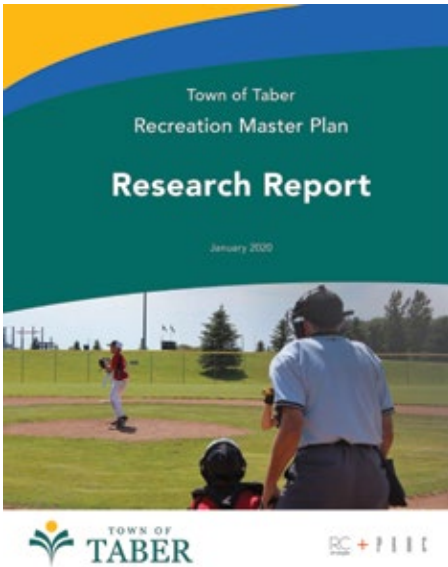
Recreation activities and services are significant contributors to people's quality of life. These services, including facilities, spaces, programs, and events, enrich communities for residents and visitors alike. While the Town of Taber is a major player in the delivery of recreation, community organizations and volunteers are critical as well. To ensure that residents and organizations continue to benefit from the Town's investment and support, the Town of Taber undertook the development of a Recreation Master Plan.

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."

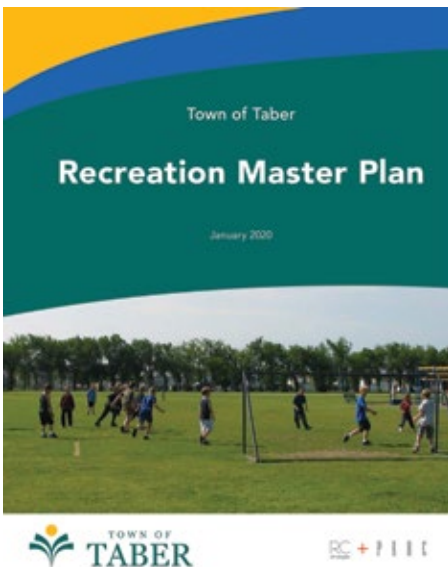
– A Framework for Recreation in Canada (2015)

The planning process was designed to analyze the current state of recreation in the community and to develop strategies to ensure that needs of current and future residents are best met. Two documents were produced in process; the Research Report and Recreation Master Plan as described below.



Research Report

The Research Report contains all the data gathered in the upfront stages of the planning process. It includes information on demographics, existing planning documents, and inventories of existing spaces. It also contains all the findings to the public and stakeholder engagement conducted such as the household survey, community group survey, and stakeholder discussions. This is presented under a separate cover.



Recreation Master Plan

The Recreation Master Plan considers all the information presented in the Research Report and presents a strategic plan for the future. It is a guiding document that provides a philosophical foundation and strategic directions for Town Council, Administration, and the Recreation Board. This document is the Recreation Master Plan.

02

Foundations

This upfront section of the Master Plan lays a philosophic foundation for recreation services in Taber. It reiterates the mission statement that was developed by the Town's recreation department in 2018 as well as provides a series of values and intended outcomes. The mission and values provide a lens through which decisions are made and strategies are implemented. The strategies throughout the master plan are intended to accomplish the outcomes.

Town of Taber Vision

"The Town of Taber is a leader of the next generation of economic revolution in Canada, a model of good governance in the province of Alberta, and a collaborative growth partner in the southern Alberta region."

– Town of Taber Strategic Plan (2018)

Recreation Department Mission

To provide safe and clean places, spaces and opportunities to encourage active participation and community building as a means to enhance the quality of life of residents in Taber.

– Recreation Department Strategic Plan (2018)

Intended Outcomes



Values



03

Infrastructure

As stated in the mission statement, the Town of Taber provides safe and clean places to encourage participation in recreation. The strategic directions herein are intended to ensure that the Town provides safe and appropriate recreation infrastructure.

This section provides direction on the following topics:

- Guiding Principles for Infrastructure
- Maintaining Infrastructure
- Prioritization Considerations
- Feasibility Process
- Small Ice Arena
- Indoor Dryland Facility
- Lease Agreements
- Guiding Principles for Parks

Guiding Principles for Infrastructure

1. Ensure the safety and ongoing maintenance of recreation infrastructure.
2. Sustain or decommission existing infrastructure before considering new development.
3. Prioritize spaces that are multi-functional and serve a wide range of interests.
4. Inclusion and access need to be considered throughout all infrastructure decisions.

It is critical to have a thorough and ongoing understanding of the condition of Town infrastructure. Regular condition assessments will help identify the maintenance tasks required to maximize the lifespan of an amenity and, more importantly, ensure that the amenity is structurally safe for participants and staff.

Operating costs will increase with the addition of new facilities and spaces. Before constructing new facilities and spaces, it is important to ensure that existing spaces are well maintained. If a facility no longer meets the needs of the community or is not worth reinvesting in, then its decommissioning may be warranted. The Facility Condition Index (FCI) is a model that indicates that if the cost of reinvestment in a facility is greater than 50% of that facility's replacement value consideration should be given to replacing that facility. Should that be the case then further investigation is needed to determine whether the facility should be replaced at all. This involves an examination of the uses of the existing facility and whether those uses can be accommodated elsewhere.

As well prior to developing any new facility a feasibility analysis needs to be conducted (as described in a subsequent section of this report).

Town recreation facilities are subsidized by the general public, therefore it is important to prioritize investment in spaces that accommodate a variety of interests, ages, and activity preferences.

Intended Outcomes



Values



Maintaining Infrastructure

Ensure the safety and ongoing maintenance of recreation infrastructure.

This strategic direction will help ensure that the recreation department achieves its mission of providing safe and clean places for recreation opportunities to occur.

As part of the master planning process, architectural assessments were conducted on the Community Centre and the Aquafun Centre. While the facilities are structurally in good condition, a number of maintenance items were identified. A summary of costs required to address these items are presented below.

Community Centre

- 0-5 year costs: \$1,380,000
- 5-10 year costs: \$1,870,000
- 10+ year costs: \$2,325,000
- Total: \$5,575,000

Aquafun Centre:

- 0-5 year costs: \$270,000
- 5-10 year costs: \$525,000
- 10+ year costs: \$840,000
- Total: \$1,635,000

The following steps are suggested to ensure the safety and ongoing maintenance of recreation infrastructure:

- Conduct regular facility condition assessments.
- Identify maintenance items.
- Incorporate expenses into capital planning and budgeting process.
- Place a high priority on allocating resources to maintain infrastructure.

Intended Outcomes



Values



Prioritization Considerations

Use the criteria herein to help prioritize potential capital projects.

Municipalities cannot afford to provide every recreation facility or space desired by their residents. Potential infrastructure projects should be prioritized to help guide decision makers. The following criteria can be used to ensure transparency in the decision making process.

The criteria serves as a means to structure discussion about what facility project should be a priority over others. This criteria does not suggest that one project is worthy or unworthy or whether it is important or unimportant, rather it enables several different facility projects to be ranked.

The criteria is broken into three different categories which indicates their relative importance in the prioritization process. For example if a facility project is better at meeting the needs of many different users than another project, the former project would be the higher priority.

The Research Report that accompanies this Master Plan can provide some information to inform the discussion of facility priorities. For other criteria or during discussions farther into the future other research may need to be conducted or expert opinion sought. Because these criteria form the basis for discussion exact answers are not always needed rather there needs to be an understanding of how different projects relate to each other.

This prioritization process can be implemented by Council, administration, the Recreation Board or any combination.

A new or enhanced recreation facility, space or amenity should be a priority over others if...

Very Important

- It is multi-purpose and meets the needs of many different activities, programs and users.
- It responds to demands/requests from the community.

Important

- Funding and grants are available that would lower the costs.
- It is not readily available in the Taber area.
- It has potential for attracting users from outside of the Taber area into the community.

Moderately Important

- The costs to run it are lower than others.
- The costs to build it are lower than others.

Intended Outcomes



Values



Feasibility Process

Follow the feasibility process herein to help guide efficient and informed infrastructure development.

Before building new infrastructure, it is important to have a complete sense of community needs and the costs required as well as other impacts. In order for the Town to make an informed decision on whether to proceed with a given project or not, the following process should be utilized and communicated to community interest groups.

1. Idea brought forward by the community.
2. Preliminary research performed by interested party¹ and presented to Recreation Board.
 - » Alignment with Recreation Master Plan foundations
 - » Current capacity and use
 - » Market demand; amount of potential users
 - » Participation and infrastructure trends
 - » Partnership opportunities
 - » High-level cost estimates
 - » The Town's role in the project development
3. Recreation Board recommends to Council whether the Town should further investigate feasibility.
4. If Council agrees, detailed feasibility analysis conducted by the Town.
 - » Investigate data presented by interested party
 - » Conduct public and stakeholder consultation
 - » Consider the condition and functionality of existing spaces
 - » Explore capital and operating cost impacts
 - » Design and location
 - » Prioritize the project compared to other potential projects
 - » Explore further details as required
5. Administration recommends a course of action to Council.

Intended Outcomes



Values



¹ Depending upon the resources available to the interested party, the Town (through the Recreation Board) may provide some support to ensure the primary research gets completed.

Small Ice Arena

Sustain the small ice arena and invest in safety and modernization.

During the development of the Recreation Master Plan, it became apparent that direction was needed regarding the future of the small ice arena. An engineering assessment conducted in 2017 confirmed the need to invest in the facility; options included investing in the small ice, expanding the facility to replace the small ice sheet with a full size sheet, or to construct a new building on the same site to accommodate a full size sheet.

After considering a variety of options, it is recommended to maintain the small ice arena and invest in the facility to ensure staff and user safety as well as to enhance the functionality and comfortability of the space.

The following are reasons supporting the decision to invest in the existing small ice facility.

- While a full-size arena replacement may be desired among some current ice users, indoor dryland spaces are in higher demand in the community and are not currently provided.
- A full-size arena replacement would cost more than small ice modernization and would therefore delay other infrastructure priorities.
- In regard to utilization, increased ice capacity is not warranted at this time.
- A majority of the ice user groups welcomed the idea of fixing the small ice arena.
- Hockey Canada recently mandated half-ice games for the novice age group; the small ice could become a desired location and act as a regional attraction for the younger age groups.
- It is speculated that the ground underneath the small ice has remained frozen for decades; reconstruction of the facility could require years of thawing as well as foundation regrading (as per the architect assessment).

Intended Outcomes



Values

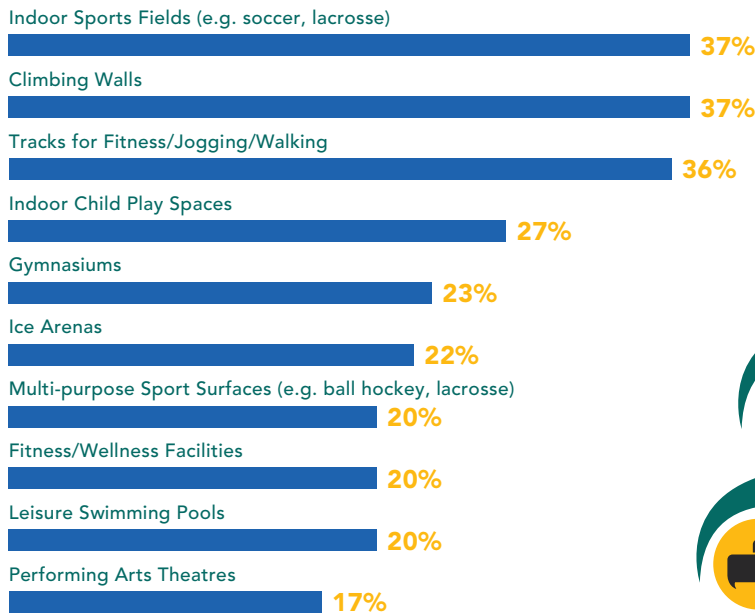


Indoor Dryland Facility

The next major infrastructure development should be a multi-use indoor dryland facility.

The desire for an indoor multiplex facility has been expressed in Taber for many years. In 2015, a committee of community members formed to conduct a feasibility study for such a facility.

Top 10 Desired Indoor Spaces



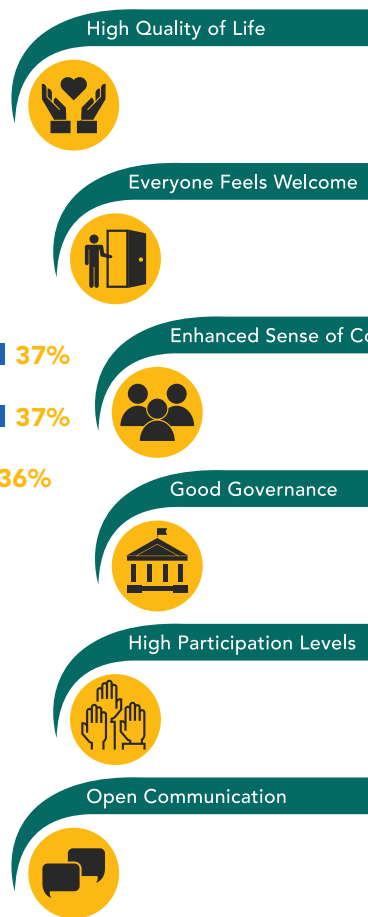
Through the research and engagement conducted it was confirmed that indoor dryland spaces are highly desired in the community. As shown in the accompanying graph from the household survey, the top desired indoor spaces include indoor fields, climbing walls, indoor walking tracks, indoor playgrounds, and gymnasiums.

The request for indoor dryland spaces were also brought forward in the community group survey and stakeholder discussions. Most of these spaces are currently a gap in Taber.

The Town should continue the feasibility process, which was started by the community in 2015, to obtain a better understanding of the potential capital and operating costs of building and providing an indoor dryland facility.

Open communication will be essential to set and maintain expectations, timelines, cost implications, and responsibilities. Potential sites should be planned to accommodate long-term phasing of other spaces.

Intended Outcomes



Values



Lease Agreements

Ensure that leased spaces are properly maintained and benefit the community.

The Town of Taber owns land and facilities that are leased to community organizations for recreation purposes. Since the Town is committed to collaboration and partnerships, it is encouraged that leased spaces continue so long as they are properly maintained and benefit the community.

The following spaces are currently operated via lease agreements:

- Curling rink, Archery range, Fitness space, Parkside Manor, Arts and Crafts Centre, Taber Agriplex, Legion Youth Centre, Taber Gymnastics Fitness Club, and Taber Golf Club.

Lease agreements should clearly state the following:

- Annual reporting and meeting requirements. The Town should meet at least annually with each lease holder to check in with the group to determine how well “things are going”. This meeting may coincide with the annual reporting. The Town is leasing the space to an organization in order for that group to deliver its programs. There should be some reporting on what programs are being delivered and who is participating in those programs. In the same manner that the Town reports on the uses of its own managed facilities, the same (or similar) requirements should be expected of lease holders.
- Accountability to maintenance requirements. A maintenance program needs to be described in the agreement. In the agreement the responsibilities of each entity (Town vs Lease) as it relates to regular maintenance versus capital repair or investment. The Town needs to be assured that ongoing regular maintenance is occurring as proper asset management practices suggest.
- Financial responsibilities. The terms of the lease need to be clearly defined. Included in this is the cost structure, payment schedule, and financial responsibilities described in the maintenance requirements.

This is not to suggest that those entities leasing facilities from the Town are derelict in their duties, rather it is to ensure that the Town’s facilities are appropriately maintained.

The intent of the Town providing spaces to lease holders is to provide space to organizations and entities who are in turn providing space to the community to participate in recreational pursuits. There may come a time when the Town has to decide between a variety of interests for its spaces; as such it needs the proper information from the lease holders. This information will enable the Town to make the best decision about how that space is used.

As revealed through the community group survey and stakeholder discussions, the Taber Exhibition Association would like to collaborate with the Town to determine a long-term vision for their site.

Intended Outcomes



Values



Guiding Principles for Parks

Taber residents are proud of their park spaces and the Town has done great work to ensure a variety of high quality features and amenities. The following principles should be kept in mind to ensure that parks continue to provide many benefits to local residents and visitors. These principles can be applied as decisions are being made for new park spaces and / or for existing spaces.

Environmental Stewardship

- Ensure that new park development and ongoing maintenance considers and minimizes negative environmental impacts.
- Offer residents the opportunity to enjoy nature within the town.

Acquisition

- Garner as much parks and open space inventory as possible through land development.
- Consider purchasing land for recreation purposes as needed to supplement or enhance land acquired through development.

Structured Spaces

- Continue to work with community groups to provide and enhance specialized amenities.
- Geographic Distribution and Accessibility.
- Ensure a balance of neighbourhood vs. specialized amenities.
- Each existing and new residence should be located within close proximity to a park space in their neighbourhood.

Connectivity

- Continue to connect neighbourhoods, parks, and recreation amenities with multi-use trails and pathways.

Affordability

- Continue to provide a variety of spontaneous outdoor recreation amenities such as playgrounds and dog parks so that all residents can enjoy spaces without paying user fees.

Intended Outcomes



Values



04

Service Delivery

Service delivery refers to the ways in which the Town operates effectively to ensure that recreation opportunities are available to local residents. As outlined in the intended outcomes, the Town is striving for high levels of participation and an enhanced sense of community. The manner in which services are delivered can help achieve these outcomes. The Town also recognizes that an effective delivery system relies upon community organizations and other partners.

This section provides direction on the following topics.

- Volunteerism
- Community Groups
- Partnerships
- Community Events
- Programming
- Arts and Culture
- Awareness of Opportunities
- Data and Information
- Financial Responsibility

Volunteerism

Support and encourage volunteerism.

A majority of the recreation delivery system relies on volunteers who offer their time to community groups and non-profit organizations. Volunteer burnout is a challenge faced throughout the recreation sector in Canada and Taber is not an exception. Over one-third (39%) of respondents to the community group survey indicated that attracting and retaining volunteers is a challenge.

A strong volunteer community not only enhances civic pride and community wellbeing, it ensures that a variety of opportunities and services are available to local residents.

To increase the capacity of the volunteer community, the following are example actions to help support and encourage volunteerism.

- Promote volunteer opportunities. Currently each organization is relying on its own efforts to promote its volunteer opportunities. This presents some challenges for the organization but also for community members knowing where to find appropriate and attractive volunteer opportunities. A more coordinated approach to promotion will be beneficial to those offering and those looking for volunteer positions.
- Conduct training opportunities. While many community organizations rely on volunteers the actual management of their volunteers is left to the knowledge and skills brought to the fore by the volunteers themselves. Providing training (as determined by soliciting needs of the groups from the groups) related to recruitment and retention as well as ongoing operations of a volunteer organization would be valuable.
- Create volunteer opportunities for youth. As a means for skill development and to enhance experience, volunteer opportunities can be particularly valuable for youth. Providing volunteer opportunities specifically for youth is a way for individuals to benefit but organizations as well. The energy of youth can be brought in-house. These opportunities also provide means for the community's youth to be involved in building their community.
- Recognize the efforts of volunteers. While most volunteers do not volunteer to receive recognition their efforts should be recognized. It is a way to communicate to the community the importance and value that volunteers have in building and supporting the community.

Intended Outcomes



Values



Community Groups

Continue to support community groups.

Community groups are the heartbeat of the community. The whole delivery system relies strongly upon the efforts of local community groups that offer opportunities to residents. These groups are often run by volunteers. Since many of the opportunities offered to Taber residents are provided by community organizations, it is in the Town's best interest to support these groups and to foster volunteerism (as previously described). Supporting community groups helps sustain and increase the amount and quality of recreation opportunities available.

What challenges, if any, is your organization facing?



Intended Outcomes



Values



In addition to providing subsidized rental spaces, the Town supports groups with its community grant program. Such supports should be evaluated on an ongoing basis to ensure their effectiveness and enhanced as warranted.

The following are ideas to help support local community groups.

- Continue the community grant program.
- Continue to provide community groups access to subsidized facility rentals if their programming benefits the community.
- Host and facilitate user group meetings to keep communication open about topics such as allocations and user fees.
- Help promote the opportunities provided by groups.
- Facilitate communication and partnerships between organizations.
- Offer board development workshops.
- Have a Town representative attend the occasion board meeting or annual general meeting.

Partnerships

Strengthen current partnerships and develop new ones to maximize capacity and community benefit.

The Town of Taber is just one stakeholder in the delivery of recreation services. The breadth of opportunities available to local residents is dependent upon all stakeholders working together to ensure an integrated delivery system. It is important to build upon current partnerships and strive to develop new ones that foster community benefits.

When considering new partnerships, the Town should collaborate with organizations that share similar visions and values. If the partnership does not forward the Town’s intended outcomes nor align with the values, then the partnership is likely not warranted.

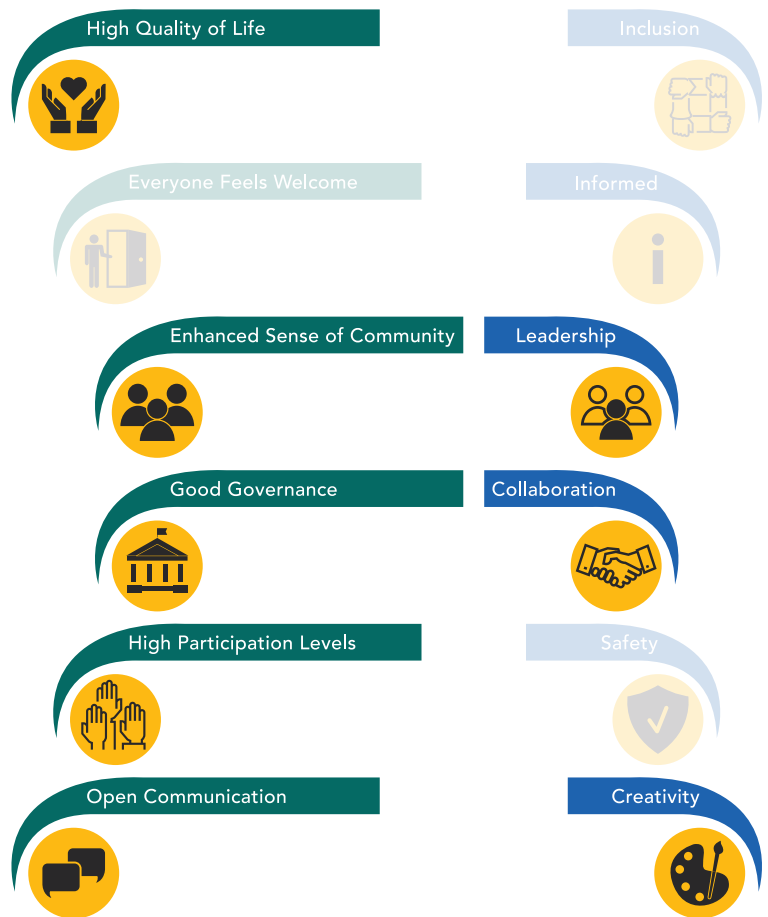
As user expectations for new facilities and spaces increase, so do the costs of building and providing these spaces. Creative approaches to providing these spaces may have to be considered in order to meet modern demands. This could include partnering with organizations such as community groups, schools, and neighbouring municipalities.

The M.D. of Taber currently provides cost share funding for its residents to access Town facilities. It is important to continue to work with the M.D. of Taber to help provide recreational opportunities to regional residents. Ongoing communication is important to ensure that both municipalities are achieving its goals in an effective manner.

Community groups currently have some access to school spaces such as gymnasiums, however there is not a formal agreement in place. Engaging the school districts to develop a joint-use agreement would help maximize the use of community spaces (both school and Town facilities) and would help clarify to community groups the process of booking school spaces. An enhanced relationship with the schools could also encourage more school use of Town facilities during weekday school hours.

Intended Outcomes

Values



Community Events

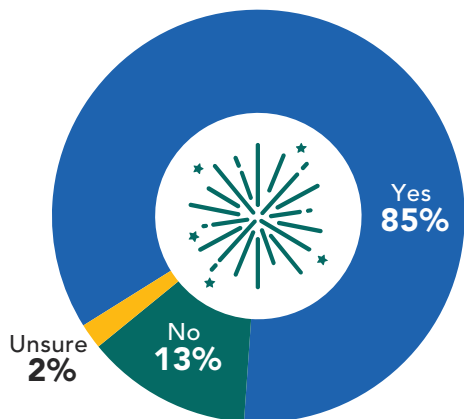
Continue to host and support community events.

The Town is involved in providing a variety of events throughout the year. While some events are run by community groups (that often use Town facilities and spaces), others are provided directly by the Town. The Town is committed to continue hosting community events to promote community pride, to provide opportunities for local residents to gather and socialize, and to foster a welcoming environment.

As the Household Survey shows, attendance and satisfaction with events is very high. 85% of respondents attended an event in the previous year and 97% were satisfied to some extent with the event(s) they attended.

The Town should continue to host and support large events such as Cornfest and as well as host and support smaller events. It is important to communicate the scheduling of events with community stakeholders and schools to ensure that event dates do not cause potential conflicts.

Did anyone in your household attend a major indoor or outdoor event in Taber in the past 12 months?



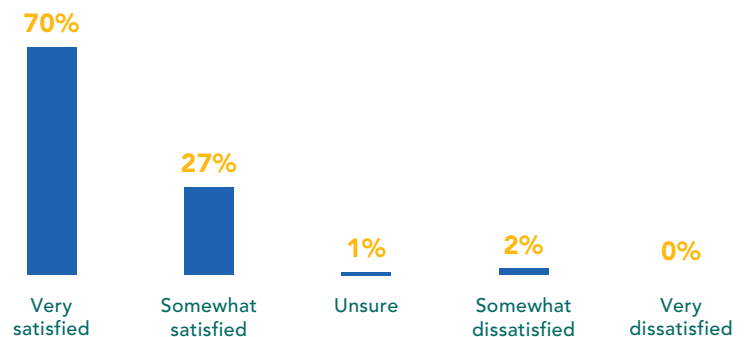
Intended Outcomes



Values



How satisfied were you with the events you attended?



Programming

Expand the delivery of direct programs.

The Recreation Department conducted an internal strategic planning session in 2018 and programming surfaced as a top priority. Whether it is swim lessons, special events or anything else in between, there is a lot of opportunity with programming for the Department to deliver on its mission and intended outcomes. Programs are also a means to ensure Town facilities and spaces are utilized to their capacity.

Residents indicated in the Household Survey that they would like to see a greater variety of programs. Space was also provided in the survey for residents to suggest programming that they would like to see. Suggestions included:

- Organized sports leagues for adults
- Music programs
- Walking programs
- More events and drop-in activities for youth and teenagers
- Parent and tot programs
- Indoor play opportunities in the winter
- Family activities
- Performing arts
- Cooking programs
- English as a second language social clubs
- More animation of parks spaces, such as movies in the park
- Opportunities for people with special needs
- Programming for seniors, including fitness and woodworking
- More availability of swim lessons

Town delivered programs should not compete with the offerings provided by other community organizations. The Town's role should be to fill gaps that are not being provided by community groups or the private sector.

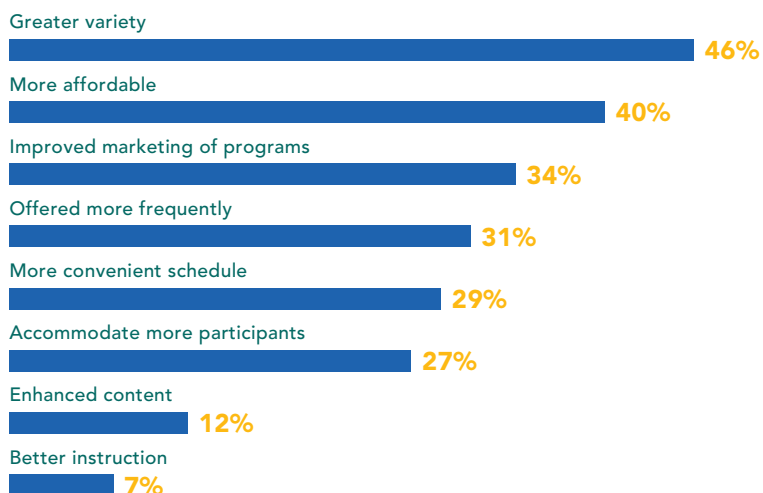
Intended Outcomes



Values



What improvements or changes are needed regarding programming?



Arts and Culture

Provide and support arts and culture opportunities.

The definition of recreation reaches beyond traditional sports and the benefits accrued from arts and culture activities warrant provision. Many municipalities support the delivery of arts and culture activities through direct programming and by supporting community groups. The Town of Taber already engages in arts and culture through community events and by supporting the Arts and Crafts Centre, however a stronger focus could be applied.

This strategic direction provides formal recognition that arts and culture are within the scope of the Town's Recreation Department and that such opportunities should be provided and supported. The Taber Arts & Crafts Society is one organization that provides cultural programming in the community. These types of organizations should be supported in a similar and equitable manner as the more traditional recreation organizations.

Intended Outcomes



Values



Awareness of Opportunities

Promote awareness of all recreation opportunities in Taber.

Residents can only benefit directly from recreation opportunities if they are aware that they exist and know how to access them. It is imperative to spread awareness of Town programs and opportunities provided by community organizations.

A series of communication methods are currently employed to spread awareness of the opportunities available to local residents and visitors. The following is a list of ways the Town currently promotes recreation opportunities to its residents.

- Leisure Guide
- Town website
- Newsletters
- Email blasts
- Facebook
- TV in the Administration Entrance and Large Ice Lobby Entrance
- Electronic sign in front of the Community Centre
- Signage placed in facilities

The following actions could be considered to help the effectiveness of current promotional efforts.

- Review current advertising efforts.
- Identify underserved markets.
- Continue to promote opportunities provided by community organizations.
- Develop and execute a marketing plan.
- Gather feedback from program attendees to learn how they heard of the program.
- Measure changes in facility and program attendance.
- Educate groups on how to access the leisure guide, electronic sign.
- Re-evaluate and adjust as necessary.

Intended Outcomes



Values



Data and Information

Collect data and translate it into useful information to help make informed decisions.

In order to help make informed decisions, it is important to have accurate and relevant information. This is especially true for infrastructure decisions. Understanding the levels of use for recreation spaces will become increasingly important as the Town contemplates investment in existing and new infrastructure.

Data collection methods for tracking utilization should be performed as consistently as possible throughout all types of spaces. In order for the data to be useful, the data collection methods should outline how the data points can be analyzed and converted to useful information.

An understanding of capacity (e.g. hours available) is needed to find a utilization percentage (i.e. hours used divided by hours available). A commitment to quarterly or annual reports can help identify usage trends, monitor the effectiveness of marketing campaigns, and identify the need for additional spaces and programs.

Potential areas to focus on include:

- Participation rates
- Facility utilization
- Operating costs
- User trends
- Program feedback

Intended Outcomes



Values



Financial Responsibility

Align subsidy levels with community benefit.

Public recreation services are paid for by a combination of user fees and tax support. Finding an appropriate balance between the two requires a comprehensive understanding of how much it costs to provide each service followed by a well-thought-out approach to setting fees and subsidy levels.

Setting fees becomes a lot easier and transparent when unit costs are understood. Unit costs are the expenses the Town incurs to provide a given service (e.g. the cost to provide an hour of arena ice; the cost to provide a drop-in swim). Often user fees are tied those same services. Gather all relevant expenses and utilization data to calculate how much it costs the Town to provide services.

For example, the unit cost for an hourly ice arena rental would be calculated by dividing the total annual expenses required to operate ice arenas by the total number of hours they are used in a year. If use increases, then unit costs decrease.

Developing and implementing a structured approach for setting fees for recreation services is a great way to ensure that user fees are set upon a solid foundation, are logical and equitable, and can be justifiably explained. If unit costs are understood and calculated (as described above), then user fees can be set based on them, which results in equitable fees across the board. If the approach to setting fees is based on subsidy level, for example, then Administration and Council can work together to determine subsidy levels for the types of users (e.g. 50% for youth, 25% for adults) and fees would be calculated from the unit costs. It should be noted however that user fees may be set with consideration to a number of other variables such as the market's willingness to pay, fees for other similar services, fees charged by other municipalities, and even philosophical considerations. Having said that, it is important to have an understanding of the true costs of providing a service.

The more the community benefits from a given services, a higher amount of subsidy can be warranted.

In summary:

- Understand existing subsidy levels for each service.
- Develop a sound approach to setting user fees.
- Place primary focus on participation rates and benefits (as opposed to cost recovery).

Intended Outcomes



Values





RC + P E R C
strategies

