OUR CITY. OUR FUTURE.

What We Heard

Recreation Master Plan







Prepared by RC Strategies
June 2024

ST. JOHN'S

Disclaimer

- This document provides a summary of what was heard from participants during this engagement process. It is not meant to reflect the specific details of each submission word-for-word, although attempts have been made to do so when possible.
- The City produces a What we Heard document for every city-led public engagement project. This collected commentary is shared with the community to ensure we heard you correctly.
- The City protects the privacy of those who provide feedback as per Access to Information and Privacy Legislation.
- The full scope of commentary is used by city staff and Council to help inform recommendations and decisions.

Context

- Recreation facilities, spaces, and programs are critical community assets and services that contribute to residents' quality of life and provide opportunities for residents to be connected to each other and their community.
- The City invests in a variety of recreation facilities, spaces, programs and services throughout the city.
- Over the past decade investment in recreation services has been guided by the City of St. John's Recreation Master Plan 2008-2018. To ensure investment continues to be directed in an appropriate manner to the benefit of all residents, the City is developing a new plan to guide the next decade of recreation services.

Background

- The City has engaged RC Strategies and Tract Consulting to complete a Recreation Master Plan.
- The Master Plan will be developed based on sound research and a comprehensive program of engagement.
- The Master Plan will be an innovative and progressive roadmap to guide the delivery of recreation programs and services for the City, community partners, and residents for the next 10 years.
- The Master Plan will provide a long-term vision that will be a foundation for planning and decision-making, along with actionable recommendations that will build on the City's current strengths in the provision of recreation facilities, programs, and services for residents.

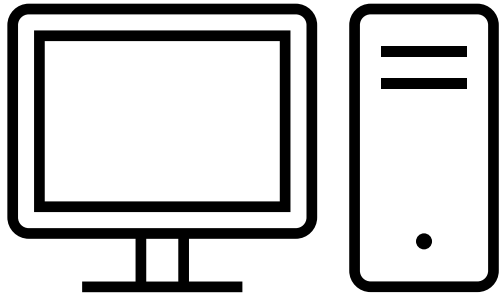
Public Engagement Plan - Purpose

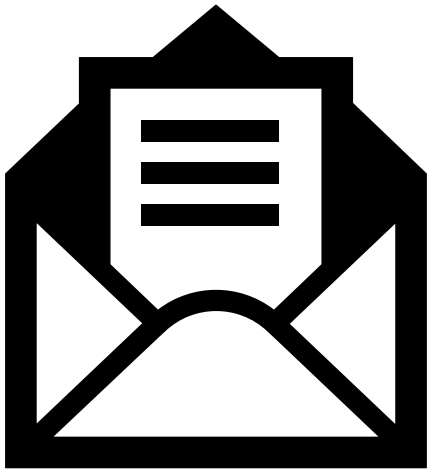
- The purpose of the engagement process was to gather insights and perspectives on:
  - How the public uses and supports (indoor and outdoor) recreation facilities and amenities
  - How the public uses and supports recreation programs and services (including accessible, inclusion and financial assistance)
  - Community expectations of recreation experiences
  - Barriers and challenges that exist
  - Importance of values related to the provision of recreation.

Public Engagement Plan - Approach

- The engagement process included various tactics:
  - EngageStJohns.ca project page with interactive tools
  - Resident Survey
  - User Group Survey
  - Community Discussion Sessions
  - Community Pop Up Events
  - Community Group Discussion Sessions
  - Advisory Committee Presentations

Engagement and Communications





- Engage Page published February 26, 2024
- Newsletter sent out February 27, 2024
- Regular social media posts on City channels – X, Instagram, Facebook (Feb. 27 – March 31)
- Posts on digital screens in City facilities
- Posters distributed in City facilities

Who Engaged



On EngageStJohns.ca

- Total Visits: 1,670
- Max Visitors Per Day: 444
- New Registrations: 16

- **Engaged Visitors** (People who posted questions/ comments or answered surveys): 36
- Informed Visitors: 348
- **Aware Visitors** (Unique visitors): 1,390

Feedback:

- Resident Survey: 1,167 responses
- Community Group Survey: 20 responses
- Online Mapping Tool: 31 pins
- Community Meetings: 56 attendees
- Pop-Up Events: ~ 450 individuals
- Emails - 8

What We Heard Highlights

- Recreation services are highly valued by residents.
- Residents expressed a desire for more neighbourhood level facilities and services to participate in recreation close to home.
- Lack of consistent information sharing and ease of accessing information online was an area of concern and barrier for some.
- Need to improve and address transportation barriers to access programs and services.
- Ensuring affordability should be a focus on future planning, along with enhancing accessibility and inclusive opportunities.
- Importance of working with community partners, including sport and recreation organizations, schools and educational institutions, and health and social organizations.

What We Heard Details – Favourite Activities

- Popular indoor activities include:
  - Swimming (46%)
  - Walking (38%)
  - Fitness training (36%)
  - Fitness classes (35%)
- Popular outdoor activities include:
  - Hiking/walking (75%)
  - Gardening (40%)
  - Swimming (39%)

What We Heard Details – Facility Visitation

- 44% of survey respondents indicated they visit a City recreation facility or space (indoor or outdoor) weekly.
- 31% of survey respondents indicated they visit a facility in another municipality regularly (weekly).

What We Heard Details – Value Statements

- Recreation programs and services are very important to my quality of life – 96% agree
- I have an active and healthy lifestyle – 90% agree
- Recreation activities and events bring the community together – 96% agree
- It is important to ensure that recreation opportunities are available and accessible for all residents in the community – 98% agree
- Outdoor recreation spaces (parks and trails) help contribute to building climate change resilient communities – 89% agree
- Recreation services can contribute to the local economy by attracting visitors and new residents – 93% agree
- Recreation programs and services should be provided through partnerships with community organizations (e.g. grants to community groups) when possible – 87% agree

What We Heard Details – Barriers

- Inconvenient programming times was the most commonly indicated barrier to participation (29%); followed by unaware of opportunities available (27%) and programs not being offered in desired neighbourhood (25%)

What We Heard Details – Does the City meet the recreation needs of residents?

- 19% of respondents indicated that the City does meet the needs of residents; 29% were unsure and 53% indicated that the City is not meeting the needs of residents.
- When asked to explain their answer, the respondents who indicated the City does not meet their needs, suggested:
  - Challenges with program availability, lack of facilities in their neighbourhoods
  - Issues with transportation to reach existing facilities
  - Concerns about the lack of inclusive programs for different age groups and abilities; and facility accessibility for individuals with disabilities
  - Need for enhanced outdoor recreation opportunities year round.

What We Heard Details – Levels of Satisfaction

Levels of satisfaction with the following types of recreation services…	Response Satisfied (%)
Access to community recreation centres	70%
Access to aquatics facilities and programs	51%
Access to ice arena facilities and programs	46%
Access to sport fields and ball diamonds	53%
Availability of indoor recreation programming	51%
Availability of outdoor recreation programming (Summer / Spring)	50%
Availability of outdoor recreation programming (Winter / Fall)	45%
Community events (Summer / Spring)	51%
Community events (Winter / Fall)	45%
Parks and playgrounds	67%
Trails	73%

What We Heard Details – What are your BIG Ideas to Improve Recreation?

- Enhance recreational opportunities by:
  - improving safe active transportation routes
  - promoting a culture of sports clubs
  - offering more programs and activities for diverse age groups
  - improving communication about programs
  - promoting inclusivity and affordability
  - improving Goulds community recreation facilities

What We Heard Details – Pop Up Event Key Themes

- Good variety of opportunities available.
- Paul Reynolds Community Centre is a great facility, excitement for new Mews Centre.
- Excellent trail system throughout the city.
- Consider affordability when planning recreation opportunities.
- Need for improved awareness and communication of recreation opportunities and services.
- Need for improved transportation options and connectivity to facilities.
- Challenges with swim lesson registration process and lack of/limited opportunities.
- Focus on serving the entire city and providing opportunities in neighbourhoods.
- Including social services (health, wellness) at community recreation centers.

What We Heard Details – Community Group Meeting Key Themes

- More collaboration with providers will enhance capacity and services.
- Organizations facing escalating costs and volunteer challenges.
- Concerns about cost impacting youth participation in sport.
- Networking will enhance capacity of organizations.
- Need to include a recreation lens as city grows.
- Procedures and policies should be developed to ensure consistent quality for all opportunities and events.
- Better promotion of opportunities.
- Embrace new technologies.
- Improve transportation connections to recreation programs and events.
- Enhanced services for diverse groups as immigration grows.

Next Steps



Release What We Heard to Public



Draft the Recreation Master Plan



Public Review of Recreation Master Plan



Plan Approved and Adopted by Council



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Thank you for contributing!

