

# RECREATION STRATEGIC PLAN

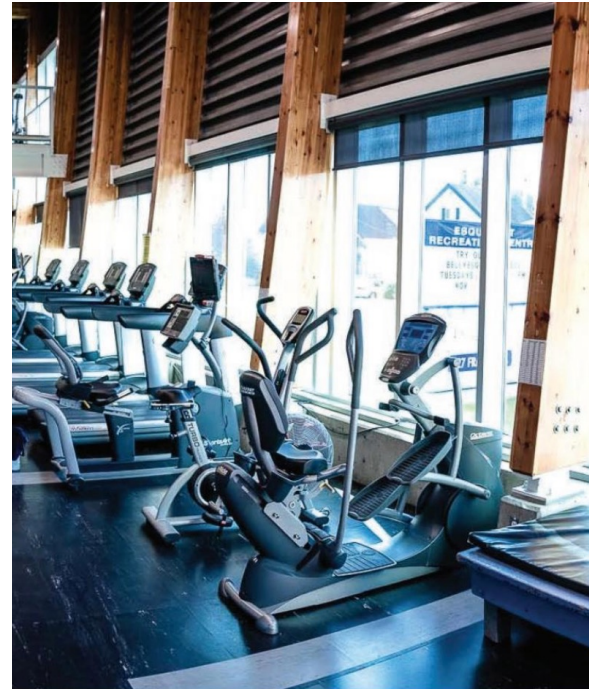
Council Presentation

July 6, 2026

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# Session Agenda

1. Study Context
2. Goals, Approach and Timeline
3. Current Situation
4. Future Planning Factors
5. Strategic Directions
6. Q+A



# Study Context

- Community recreational needs and preferences are continuously evolving due to changing population trends and demographics.
- The existing system faces known program and infrastructure limitations.
- Regional growth is placing increasing pressure on local recreational infrastructure.
- Council and staff require clear, evidence-based guidance to prioritize investments and allocate resources effectively.
- A coordinated 15-year strategy is needed to guide recreation service delivery and infrastructure planning decisions.



# Goals, Approach and Timeline



Develop a comprehensive overview of Esquimalt's recreation system today.



Collect insights from stakeholders and community and analyze the levels of services across recreation.

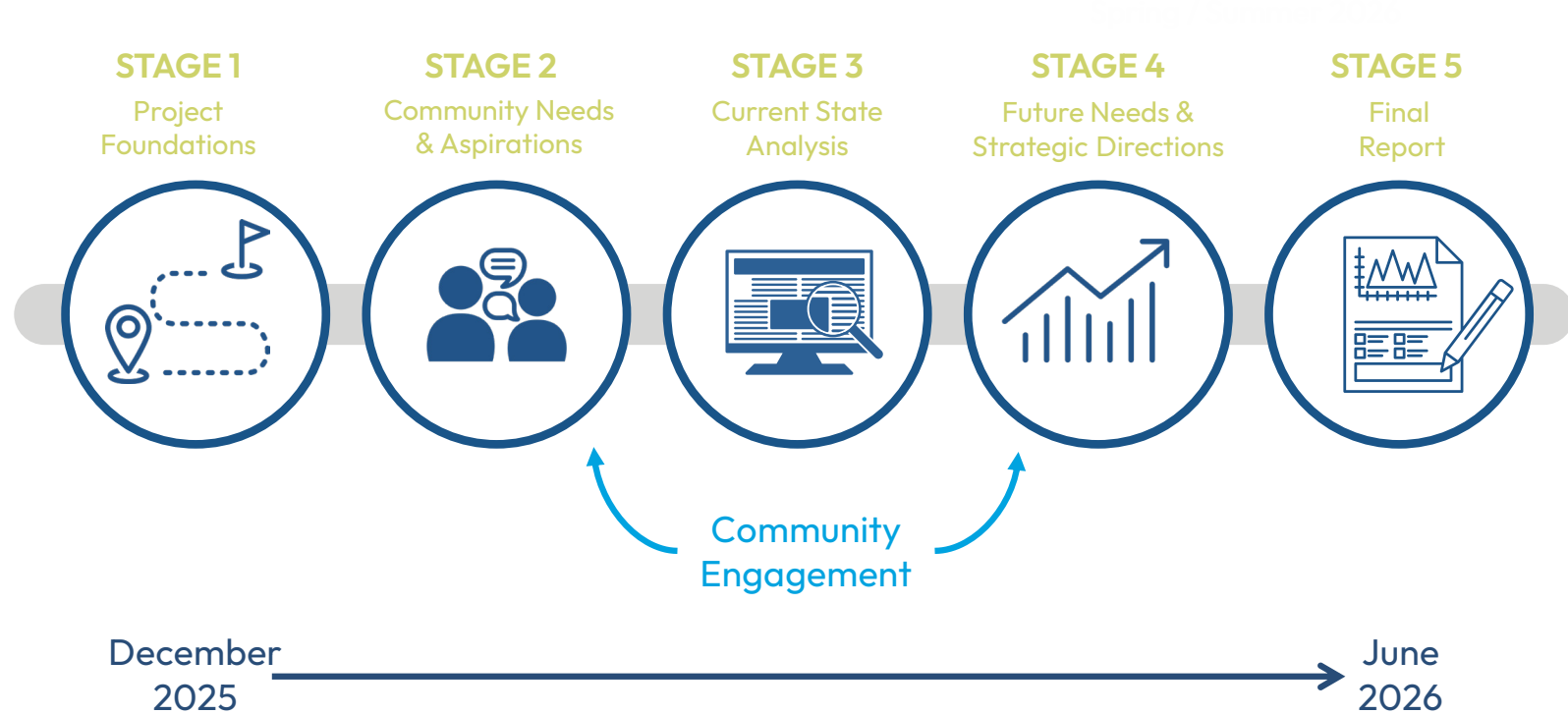


Define future community needs and identify actionable recommendations related to programs and infrastructure.





# Goals, Approach and Timeline



# Current Situation

Indoor recreation in Esquimalt is provided from three main facilities:

1. Esquimalt Recreation Centre
2. Archie Browning Sports Centre
3. Gorge Park Pavilion

*Recreation services are also delivered through non-municipal sites such as Naden Athletic Centre, Wurtele Arena and Ecole Victor-Brodeur.*





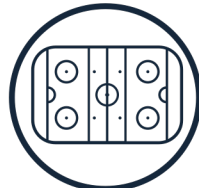
# Current Situation

## Recreation Service Categories

AQUATIC SERVICES



ARENA SERVICES



CURLING SERVICES



COMMUNITY EVENTS AND RENTALS



FITNESS AND WELLNESS



DRY-FLOOR RECREATION



ARTS, CULTURE AND EDUCATION



MULTI-PURPOSE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES



SENIOR'S SERVICES



YOUTH SERVICES





# Current Situation

## Esquimalt Recreation Centre



- Built in 1973; renovated in 2004
- Building Condition (as per 2025 BCA): Reasonable
- The facility will require ~\$8.5m\* over 20-years (~\$420k average annual budget) for capital maintenance and renewal projects.
- Main Recreation Categories: Aquatic Services, Seniors Services, Youth Services, Community Events and Rentals, Dry-floor Recreation, Arts, Culture and Education, Fitness and Wellness and Multi-purpose and Community Services

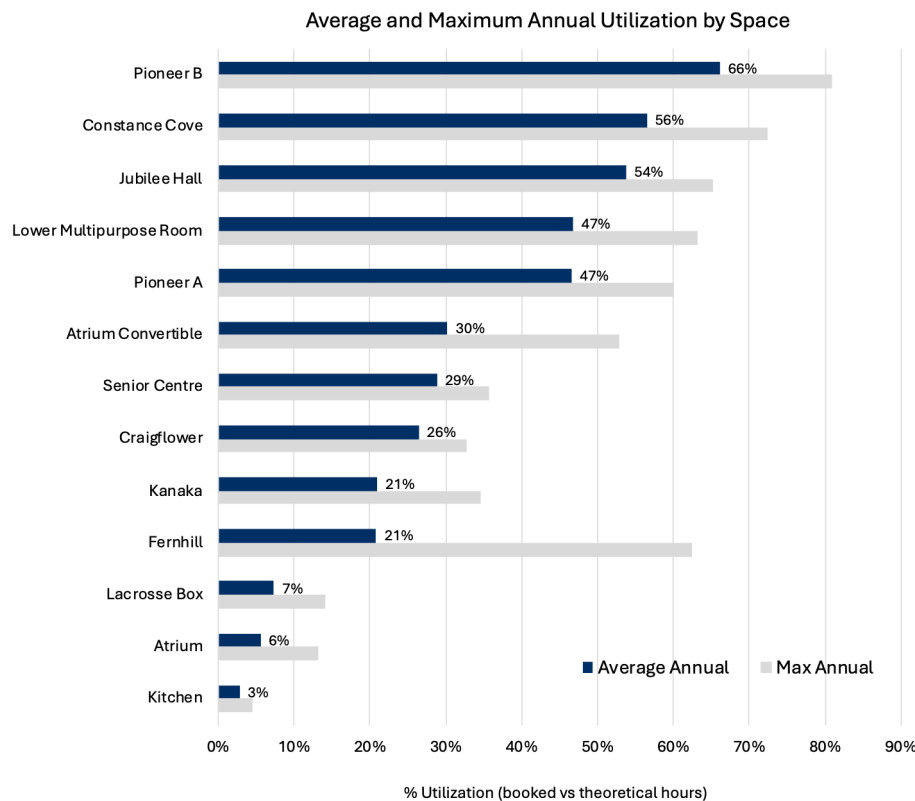
*\* Identified in 2025 BCA report by WSP Engineering*





# Current Situation

## Esquimalt Recreation Centre - Utilization



- Programmed and fitness spaces are well utilized, with increasing scheduled activity year over year.
- Utilization is concentrated in peak periods (mornings and after-school), with off-peak capacity available.
- Aquatic spaces operate at ~77% of theoretical annual capacity, indicating high use.
- Some additional capacity exists, but there are peak-time constraints.

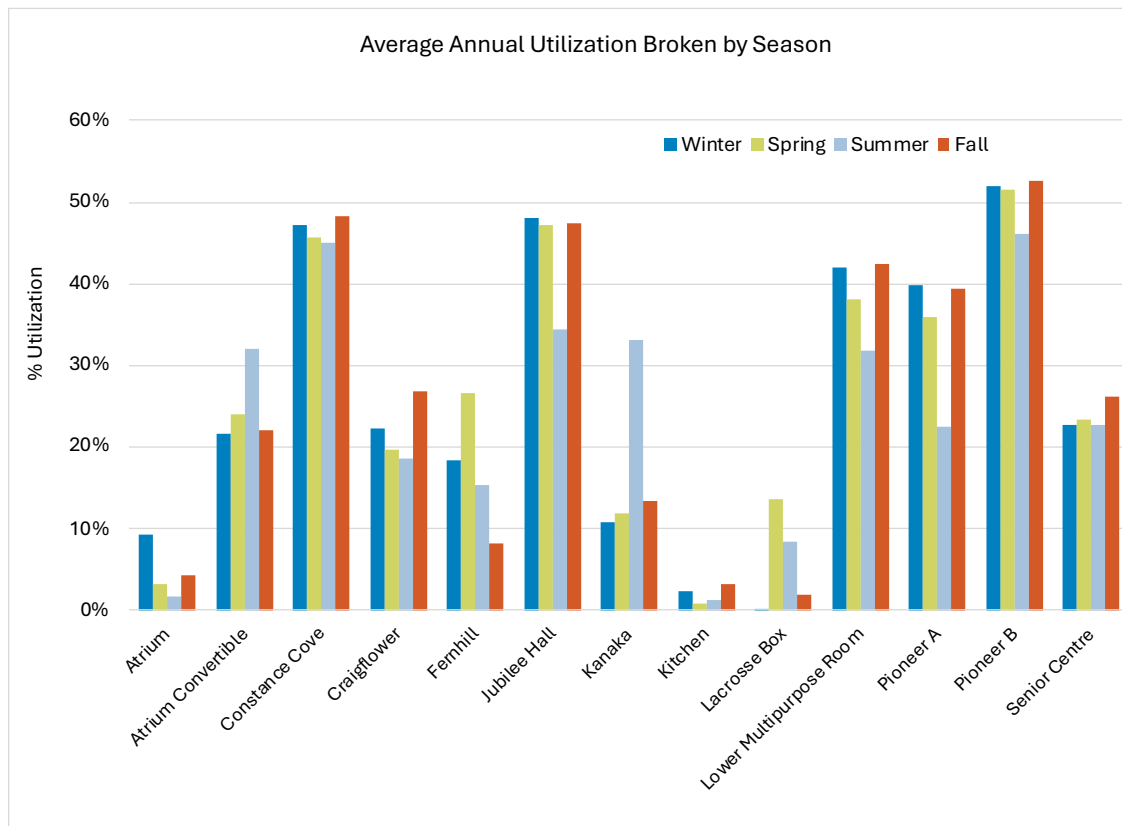
*NOTE: Aquatic space utilization is excluded from the chart above, since it relied on a separate method of analysis.*





# Current Situation

## Esquimalt Recreation Centre – Utilization



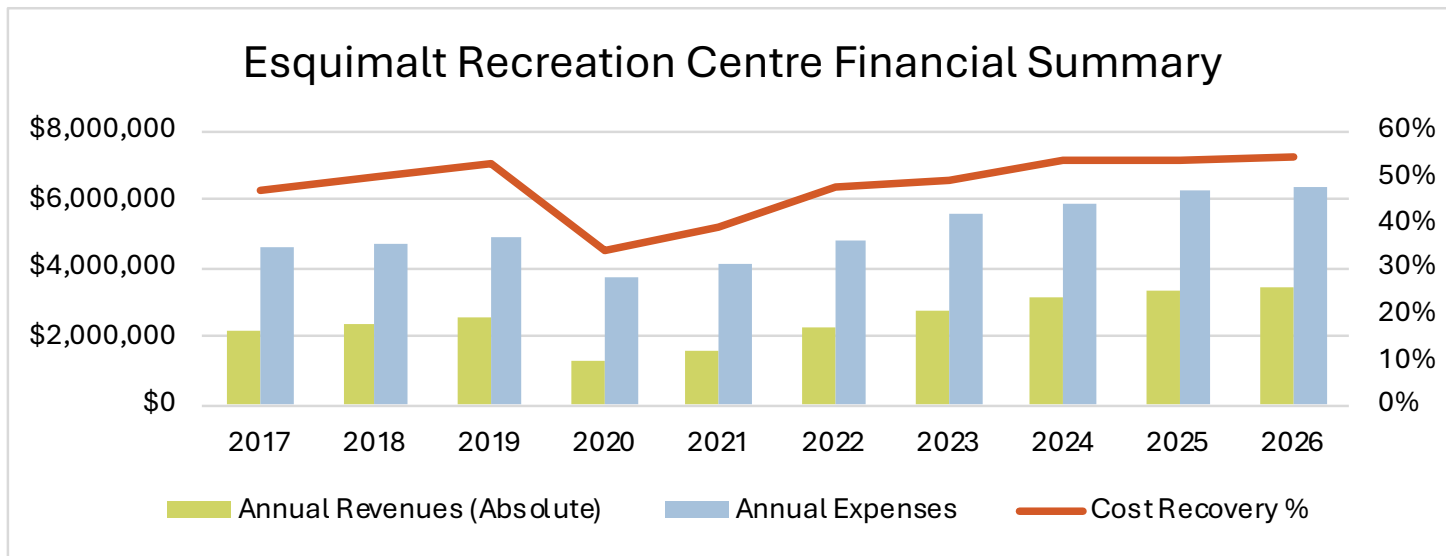
- Minimal seasonal variation in space utilization.
- Consistent use profile by season.





# Current Situation

## Esquimalt Recreation Centre



- The facility consistently operates at ~50% cost recovery.
- Slight increase in cost recovery year over year (since 2022).



# Current Situation

## Archie Browning Sports Centre



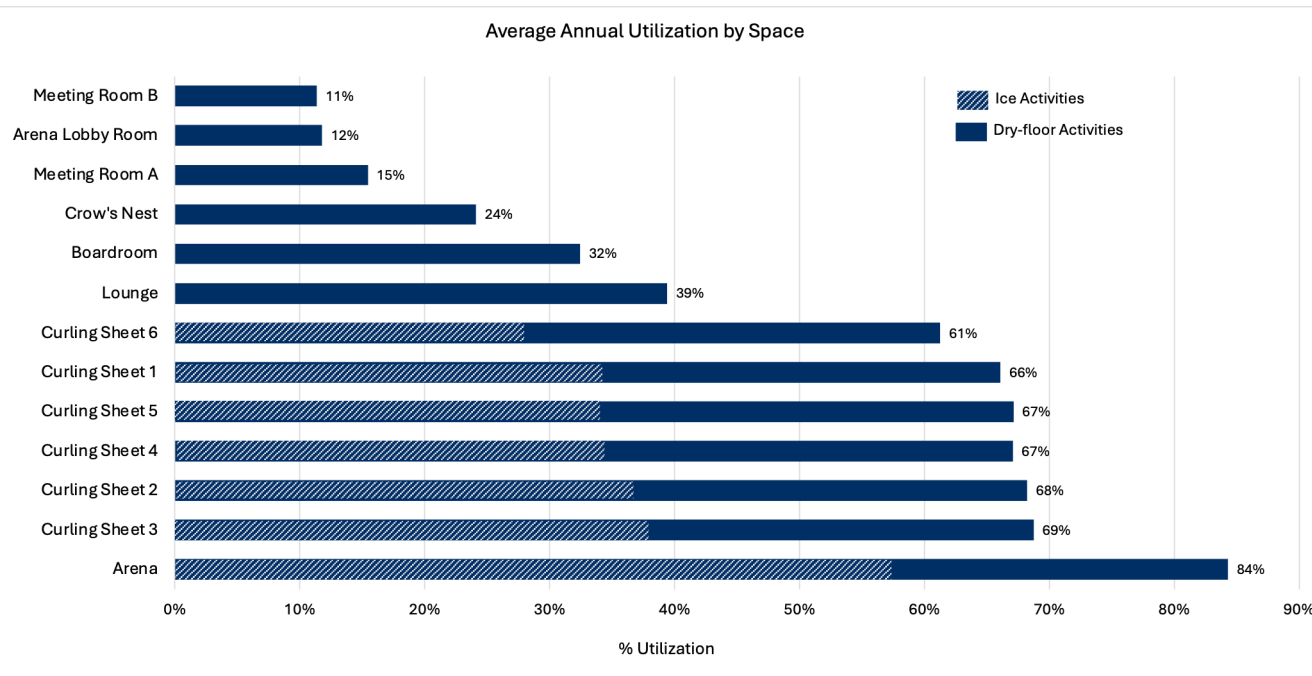
- Built in 1960; renovated in 1985 and 2007
- Building Condition (as per 2025 BCA): Serviceable
- The facility will require require ~\$7.7m\* over 20-years (~\$385k average annual budget) for capital maintenance and renewal projects.
- Main Recreation Categories: Arena Services, Curling Services, Fitness and Wellness, Dry-floor Recreation, Community Events and Rentals, and Multi-purpose and Community Services

*\* Identified in 2025 BCA report by WSP Engineering*



# Current Situation

## Archie Browning Sports Centre - Utilization



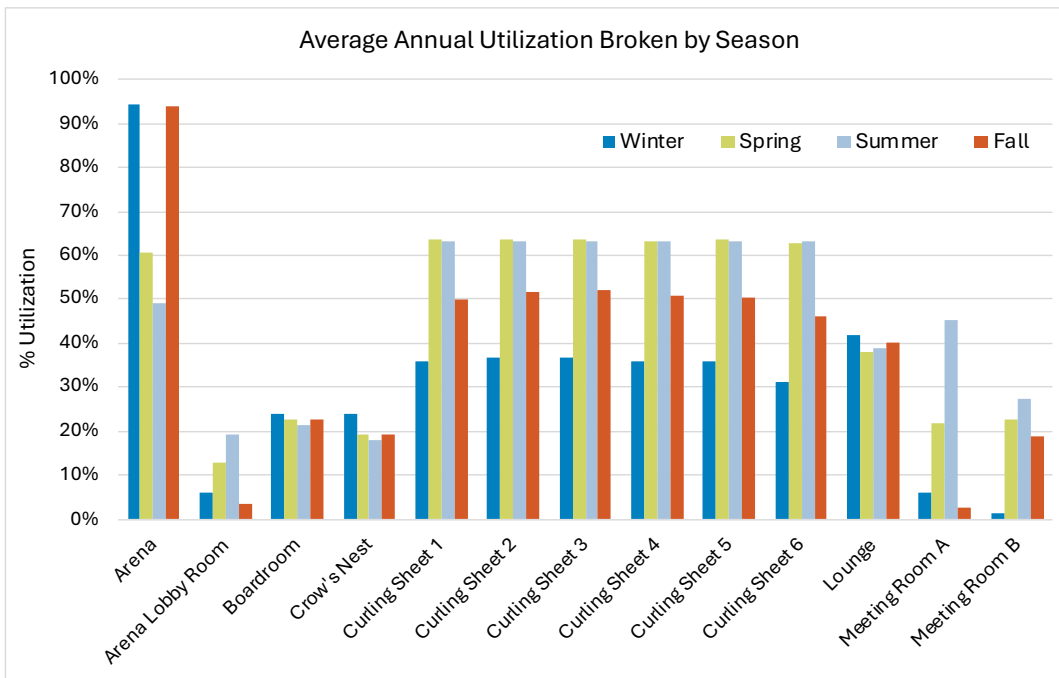
- The Arena is the most booked space with an average utilization of 84%.
- The next most-booked spaces are the Curling Sheets, which are roughly equally booked at ~66% each.





# Current Situation

## Archie Browning Sports Centre - Utilization

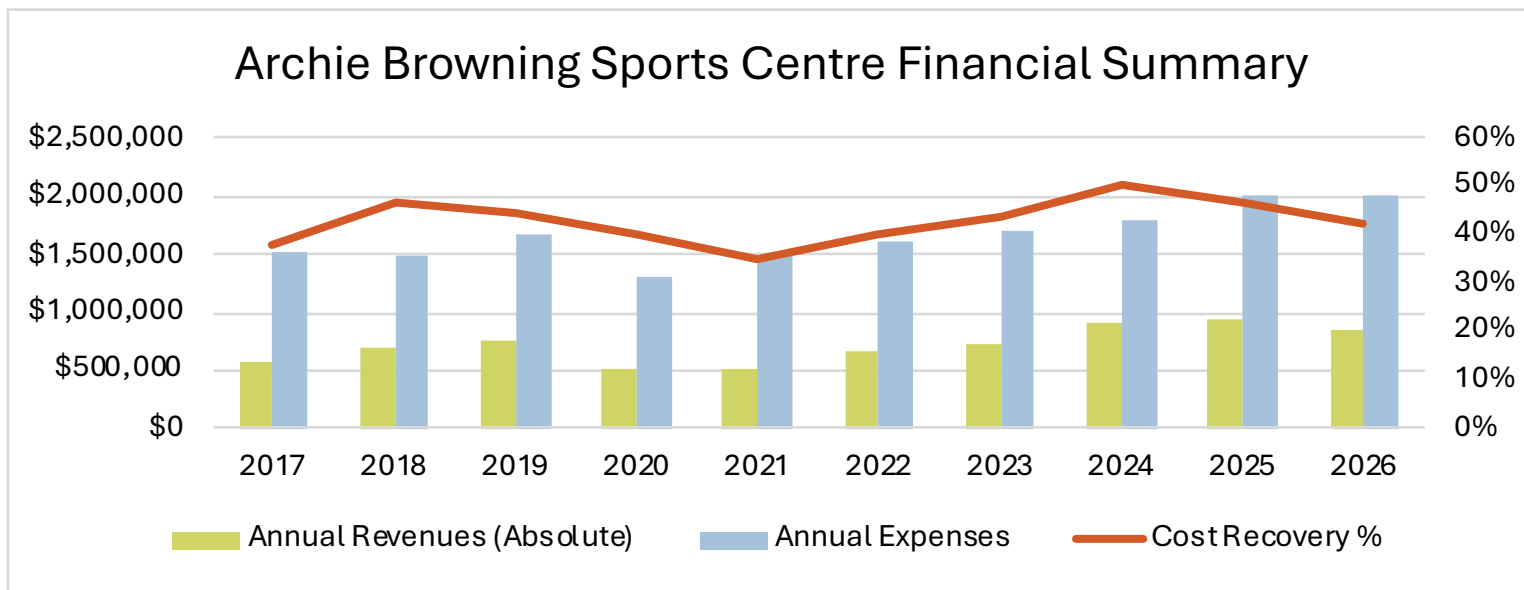


- Arena use is strong, particularly in fall and winter, with limited non-peak capacity available.
- Curling rink use peaks in spring and summer (pickleball), while curling activities may have potential for growth outside peak periods.
- Opportunities exist to expand dry-floor programming and increase use of underutilized administrative and multi-purpose spaces.



# Current Situation

## Archie Browning Sports Centre



- Cost recovery for this facility is more unstable and currently trending downward.
- Rising costs are placing increased pressure on the operating subsidy.



# Current Situation

## Gorge Park Pavilion



- Built in 2022
- Building Condition: Good\*
- Main Recreation Categories: Community Events and Rentals, Arts, Culture and Education, Fitness and Wellness and Multi-purpose and Community Services

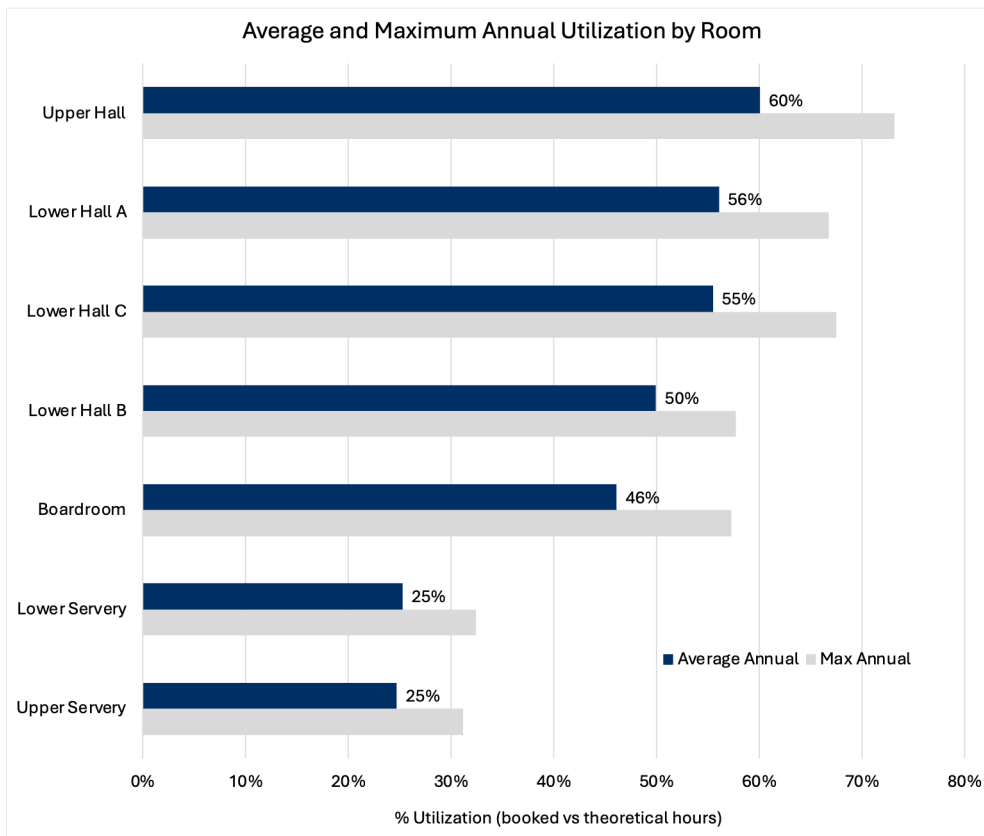
*\* No formal Building Condition Assessment has been completed given the age of the facility. Feedback and visual inspection suggest it is in good condition.*





# Current Situation

## Gorge Park Pavilion – Utilization



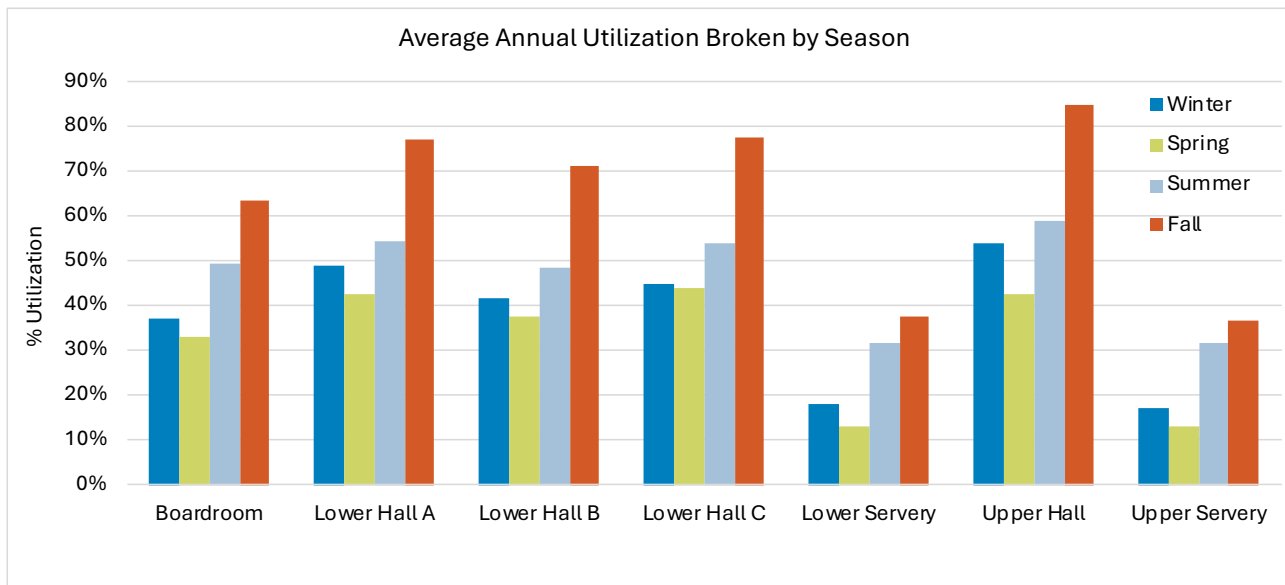
- The Pavilion shows strong booking activity across its rooms, averaging 60% utilization across the Halls.
- The serveries show less booked activity but have a special-use profile.
- The Boardroom is booked about half the time.





# Current Situation

## Gorge Park Pavilion – Utilization



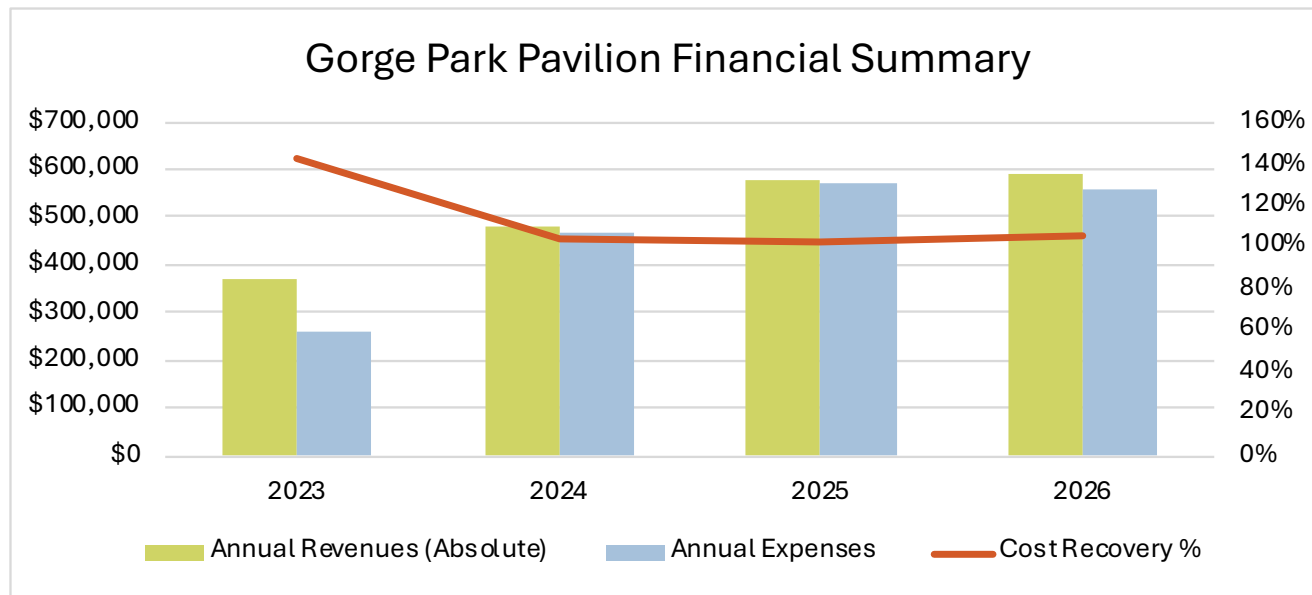
- Across all spaces, usage peaks in the fall, with summer next, then winter and spring.
- These seasonal patterns are driven by whole-facility bookings, such as weddings (50% of booked hours) and other events.





# Current Situation

## Gorge Park Pavilion



- This facility operates on a net revenue-positive basis, exceeding cost recovery benchmarks.
- However, recent trends suggest a gradual narrowing of the operating surplus as costs increase.





# Community Perspectives

## Four Community Engagement Methods:

Activity	Dates	Participation Levels
Public Survey	Active Feb. 11 <sup>th</sup> – Mar. 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 725 responses</li></ul>
Interview Sessions	Feb 18 <sup>th</sup> – Mar 4 <sup>th</sup> , 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 4 sessions, 19 participants</li></ul>
Committee Presentations	Jan 28 <sup>th</sup> , 2026 Feb 25 <sup>th</sup> , 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Esquimalt Environment, Parks, and Recreation Advisory Committee</li><li>• Capital West Accessibility Committee</li></ul>
Public Open House Session	April 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community members and recreation users</li></ul>





# Community Perspectives

## Community Engagement Key Findings

- Recreation services and facilities are highly valued and widely used.
- High participation is creating capacity constraints, particularly during peak times.
- Residents rely on neighbouring municipalities for select programs and specialized services.
- Overall satisfaction is high, though some facility-related issues (fitness equipment, change rooms, ventilation, maintenance, outdated spaces) affect user experience.
- Aquatics and fitness services are top community priorities, with strong demand and ongoing pressure on existing facilities.





# Current Situation

## Level of Service Assessment

**Capacity & Provision:** Supply, distribution, and regional comparison of recreation spaces.

**Condition & Functionality:** Physical condition, lifecycle needs, and suitability for intended use.

**Access & Inclusion:** Accessibility, affordability, location, and inclusivity for all users.

**Demand & Utilization:** Level of use vs capacity, including peak demand and availability constraints.

Assessment findings are summarized using a qualitative rating scale:

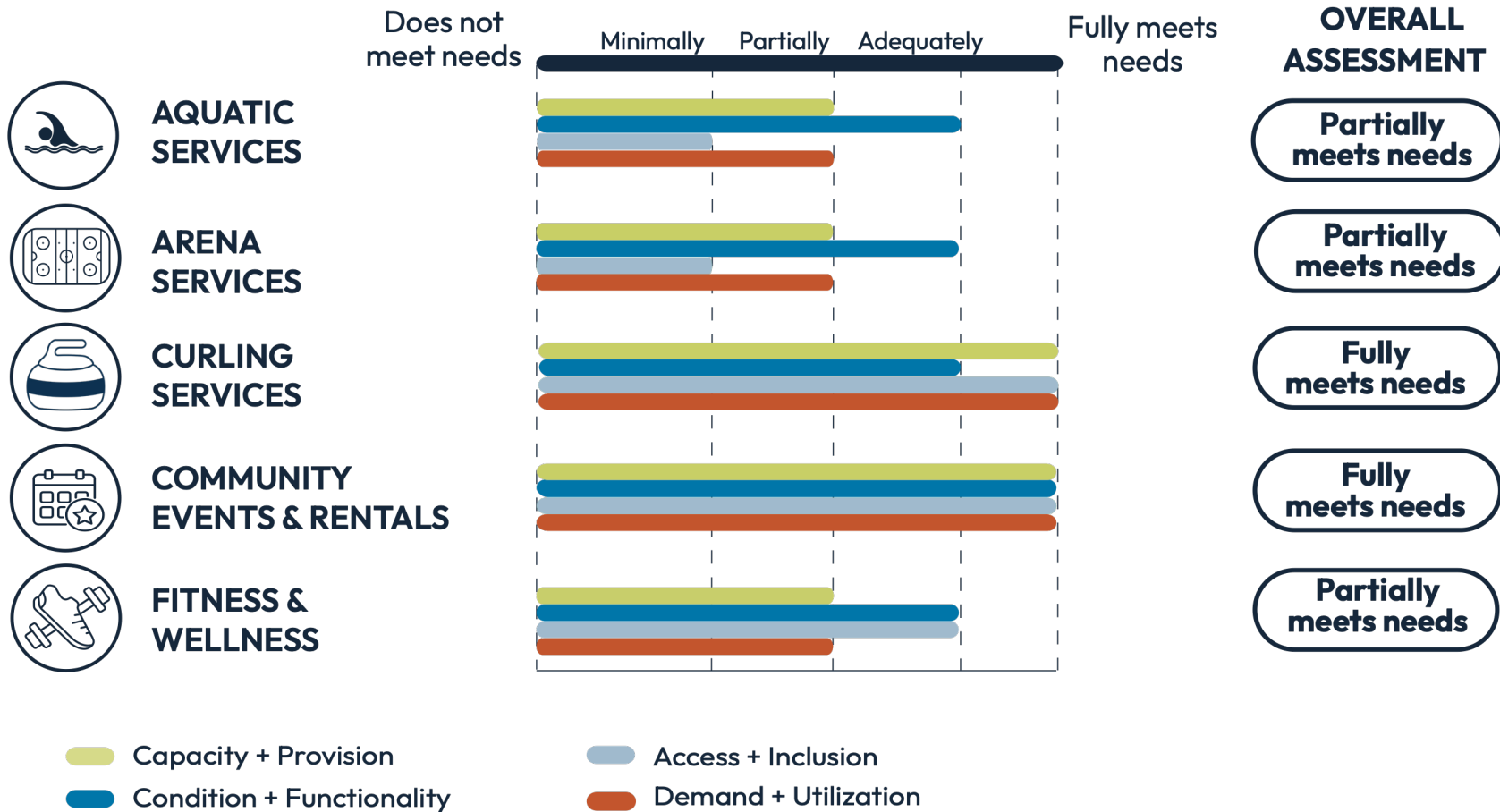
Does not meet needs	Minimally	Partially	Adequately	Fully meets needs
Little to no provision; requires major investment or redesign	Significant gaps; insufficient provision.	Some needs met; notable gaps requiring improvement.	Mostly sufficient with minor gaps.	Meets or exceeds current and near-term needs; aligned with best practice.





# Current Situation

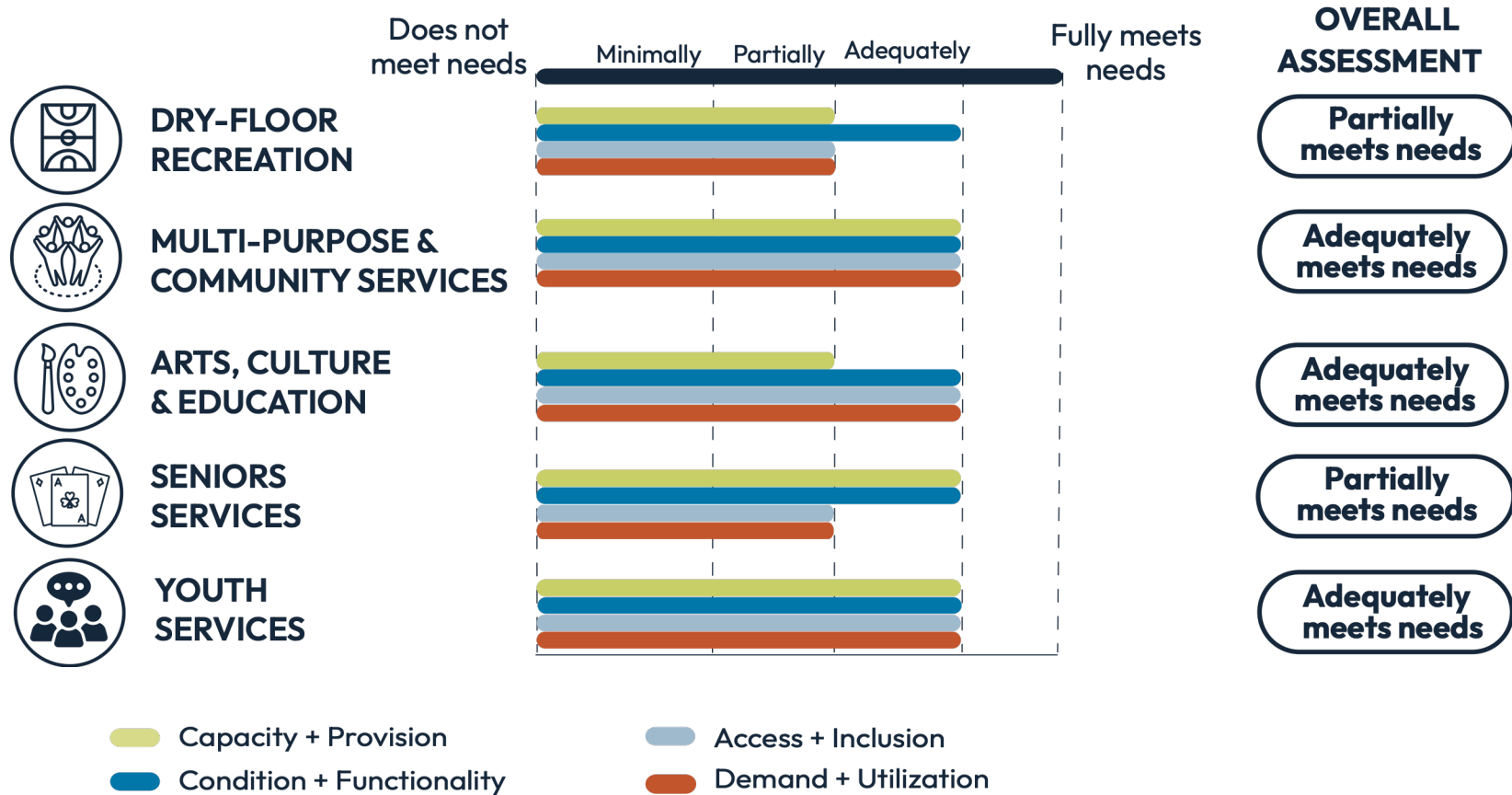
## Level of Service Assessment





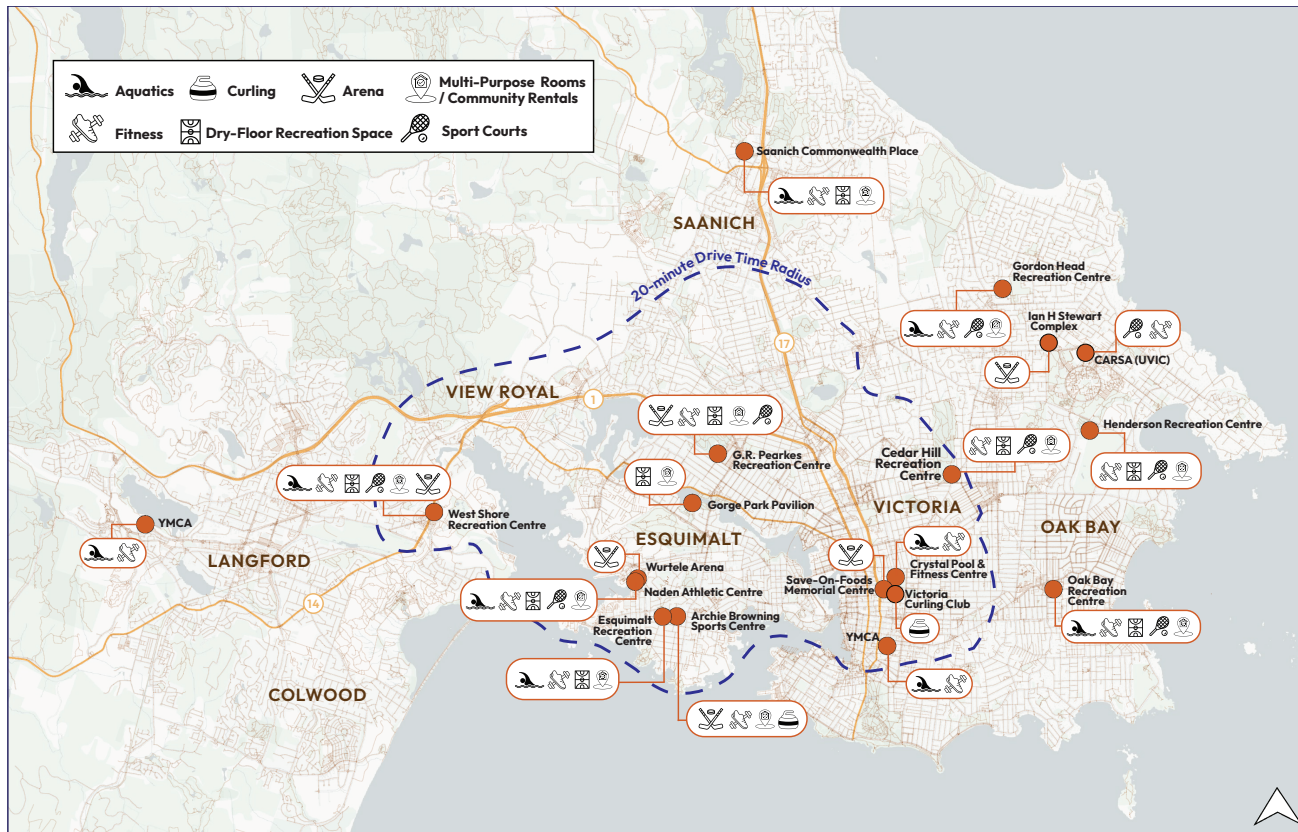
# Current Situation

## Level of Service Assessment





# Regional Recreation Inventory



- 12 recreation facilities sit within a 20-minute drive radius.



# Benchmarking Analysis

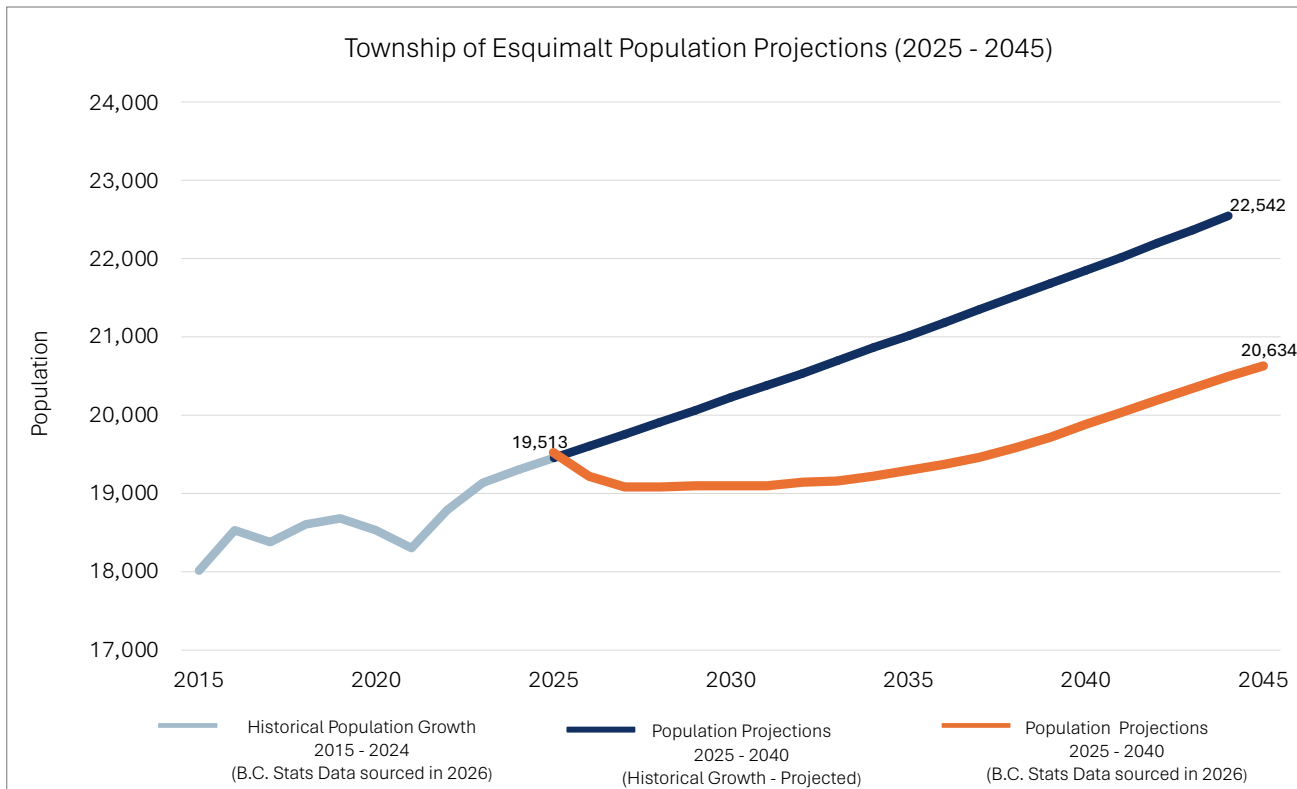
- Open 5.30am-10.30pm daily, the Esquimalt Recreation Centre keeps the longest hours in Greater Victoria, yielding roughly ~5,072 bookable hours annually.
- Benchmarking gauged the Township's service level against peer municipalities. Key findings include:
  - Per 10,000 residents, its facility provision consistently tops both regional and external comparators.
  - The Township surpasses Capital Regional District averages for aquatic facilities, arenas, curling rinks, fitness centres and gymnasiums.
- Across the Esquimalt Recreation Centre, Archie Browning Sports Centre and Gorge Park Pavilion (excluding arenas, pools, and childcare), net usable recreation space\* totals 1.3 ft<sup>2</sup>, which is higher than 1.0 - 1.2 ft<sup>2</sup> benchmark other communities are targeting.

\*The net usable recreation space metric offers a high-level assessment of recreation space provision. Communities such as Burnaby and Vancouver are targeting 1.0 - 1.2 ft<sup>2</sup> of community centre recreation space (excluding arenas, pools, childcare and library) per resident.



# Future Planning Factors

## Population Growth



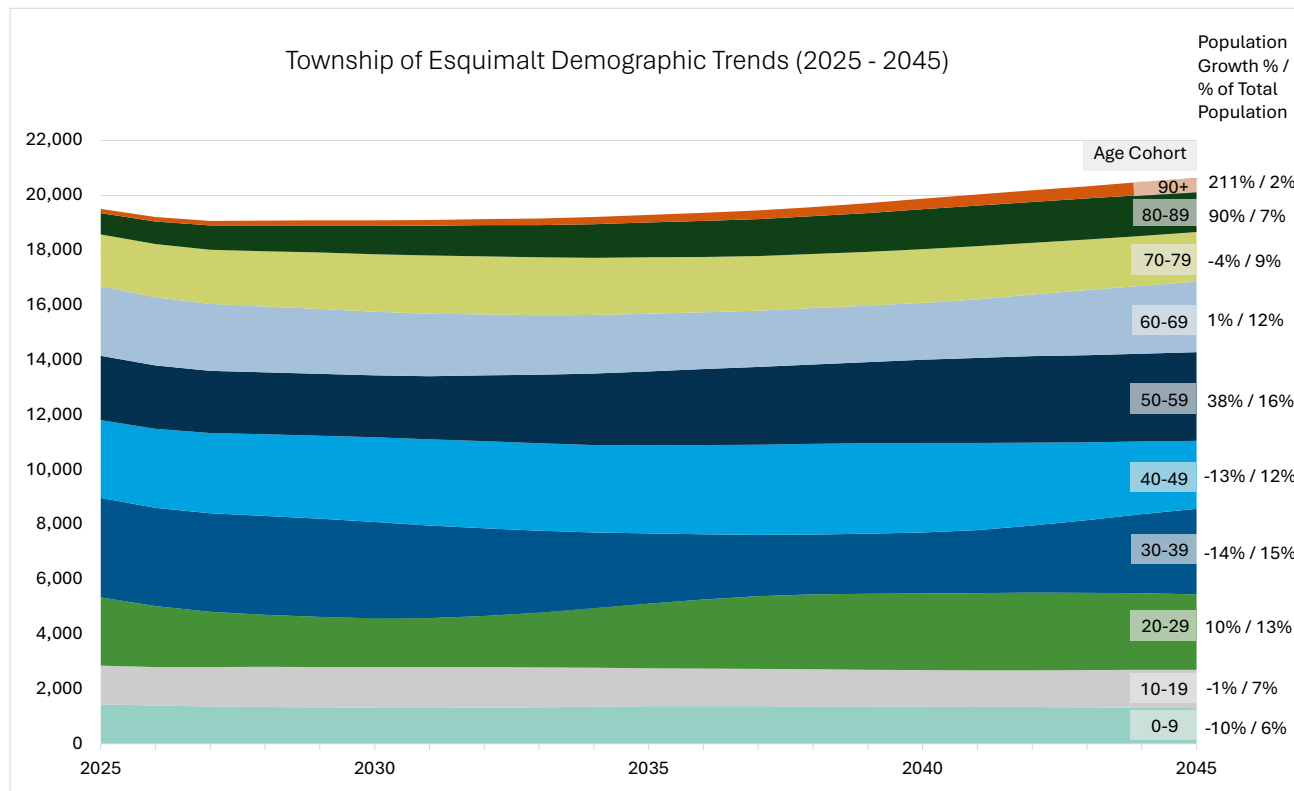
- BC Stats estimates 1,121 new residents (5.7% increase over a 20-year period)
- The historical growth rate projected forward estimates 3,029 new residents over the same period.





# Future Planning Factors

## Demographic Trends



- Adults 70+, led by the 80–89 and 90+ cohorts, are set for the strongest growth.
- Those aged 40–69 should stay largely flat, remaining a sizable but stable share of the population.
- Youth (10–19) and adults 20–39 remain steady.
- Children under 10 are expected to grow only minimally.





# Current Situation

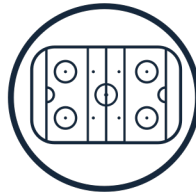
## Recreation Trends

### AQUATIC SERVICES



High demand for swim lessons, aquatic fitness, and leisure swimming; organized sports stable or declining.

### ARENA SERVICES



Increasing demand for leisure ice; decline in organized ice sports.

### CURLING SERVICES



Stable or declining participation. Popular among older adults.

### COMMUNITY EVENTS & RENTALS



Growing demand for events and social connection opportunities; declining support from volunteers.

### FITNESS & WELLNESS



Rising demand for fitness training and wellness opportunities, especially drop-in programming.





# Current Situation

## Recreation Trends

### DRY-FLOOR RECREATION



Growing demand for low-barrier drop-in court sports (pickleball, badminton, etc.).

### ARTS, CULTURE & EDUCATION



Shift toward informal, social, and flexible activities.

### MULTI-PURPOSE & COMMUNITY SERVICES



Increasing demand for affordable, flexible community spaces .

### SENIOR'S SERVICES



Growing demand for age-friendly services driven by aging population.

### YOUTH SERVICES



Youth inactivity levels remain high; need accessible attractive recreation opportunities.





# Recreation Trends

## Service and Infrastructure Implications

These trends are shaping how recreation services are delivered and how infrastructure is being planned:

- Recreation facilities and arenas are being rethought as multi-use community hubs that foster social gathering and connection.
- Expanding flexible and convertible multi-purpose spaces to accommodate a range of recreation, arts, culture, and community programming.
- Upgrading fitness areas to respond to demand and user expectations (e.g. wellness amenities).
- Renewing or replacing aging recreation facilities (e.g. curling rinks).
- Modernizing facilities to enhance user experience (changerooms, accessibility requirements, etc.).
- Expanding flexible programming that is accessible, inclusive, and age-friendly.
- Rentable, revenue-generating spaces that bolster financial sustainability.
- Exploring policies to guide service distribution based on established community recreation values.





# Current Situation – Summary

- Esquimalt's recreation system is well established, effective, and highly valued, delivering strong service and satisfaction with capacity to grow in some service categories.
- Certain recreation categories experience peak-time capacity challenges.
- Some portions of the existing facilities are outdated and should be renovated to improve functionality and user experience.
- Population growth, regional demand pressures, and changing recreation trends are expected to further intensify the capacity, programming, and facility constraints.





# Strategic Directions

- While all service areas meet needs, several face moderate pressure, prompting recommendations for targeted improvements.
- Rather than focusing solely on expansion, the recommended strategic directions emphasize:
  - Optimizing existing facilities and programming.
  - Addressing capacity constraints in priority service areas.
  - Modernizing key spaces to improve functionality and user experience.
  - Enhancing system flexibility to respond to changing community needs.
  - Strengthening partnerships to maximize access to additional space.

Action Item	Description	Short-Term (0-5)	Med.-Term (5-10)	Long-Term (10-15)
Develop / Expand Use Policy	Develop/expand use policy for recreation services, including aquatics, arenas and curling, and dry-floor activities. The policy should establish clear, transparent criteria for facility use across user groups, including established and emerging organizations, community and not-for-profit groups, private providers, and the general public. Policy should consider prioritized access for residents for programs with high demand.	Initiate	Monitor / Update	Monitor / Update
Partnership Discussions	Initiate discussions with local school districts to explore opportunities for increased community access to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spaces suitable for arts and culture programming.</li> <li>• Dry-floor recreation activities.</li> <li>• General multi-purpose rental spaces.</li> </ul> Explore feasibility of introducing swimming lessons into school offerings to students.	Initiate	Monitor / Update	Monitor / Update





# Strategic Directions

## Programming / Activity Strategic Directions and Actions

Action Item	Description	Short-Term (0-5)	Med.-Term (5-10)	Long-Term (10-15)
Develop / Expand Use Policy	Develop/expand use policy for recreation services, including aquatics, arenas and curling, and dry-floor activities. The policy should establish clear, transparent criteria for facility use across user groups, including established and emerging organizations, community and not-for-profit groups, private providers, and the general public. Policy should consider prioritized access for residents for programs with high demand.	Initiate	Monitor / Update	Monitor / Update
Partnership Discussions	Initiate discussions with local school districts to explore opportunities for increased community access to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spaces suitable for arts and culture programming.</li> <li>• Dry-floor recreation activities.</li> <li>• General multi-purpose rental spaces.</li> </ul> Continue collaborating with schools to provide swimming lessons for students during off-peak hours throughout the day.	Initiate	Monitor / Update	Monitor / Update
Program Expansion	Explore opportunities to expand program activities for residents: swim lessons, aquafit, and dry-floor recreation.	Initiate	Monitor / Update	Monitor / Update
ABSC Space Optimization	Increase program opportunities within the Crow's Nest at ABSC and promote community awareness.	Initiate	Monitor / Update	Monitor / Update
Youth and Seniors Programs	Explore opportunities to enhance and expand program offerings for youth and seniors.	-	Initiate	Monitor / Update
Volunteer Framework	Explore the development of a modern volunteer framework that integrates flexible engagement models, expanded recruitment pipelines, and reduced barriers to participation, to address declining volunteer availability/	-	Initiate	Monitor / Update
Curling Use Agreements	Review/update use agreement with groups utilizing the Curling Sheets.	-	Initiate	Monitor / Update





# Strategic Directions

## Facility / Infrastructure Directions and Actions

Action Item	Description	Short-Term (0-5)	Med.-Term (5-10)	Long-Term (10-15)
ERC+ABSC Renovation	Renovate and modernize washrooms and changerooms.	Initiate	-	-
ERC or ABSC Renovation	Explore feasibility of expanding fitness space.	Initiate	-	-
ERC Renovation	Explore feasibility of redeveloping the lacrosse box to become a covered box.	Initiate	-	-
Accessibility Audit	ERC + ABSC: Conduct an accessibility audit and upgrade where required.	Initiate	-	-
Outdoor Youth Amenity	ERC: Explore feasibility of developing an outdoor, youth appropriate space (e.g. basketball court).	Initiate	-	-
ERC Renovation	Refresh youth dedicated spaces.	-	Initiate	-
ABSC Renovation	Renew/re-imagine sports centre lounge space to better meet modern needs, including opportunities to accommodate growing staff administration requirements.	-	Initiate	-
ABSC Renovation	Upgrade AV equipment.	-	Initiate	-
ERC+ABSC Renovation	Improve flexibility and functionality of multi-purpose spaces through refreshed room infrastructure.	-	Initiate	-
Master Plan Development	ERC + ABSC + GPP: Develop a recreation facilities master plan – including the strategy for facility renewal / replacement of aging assets.	-	-	Initiate





# Q+A

Thank you!

