



Township of Esquimalt Recreation Strategic Plan

June 2026

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
1 INTRODUCTION	4
1.1 STUDY PURPOSE AND APPROACH	4
1.2 COMMUNITY CONTEXT	5
1.3 GUIDING DOCUMENTATION	5
1.4 SERVICE CATEGORIZATION	6
2 RECREATION WITHIN ESQUIMALT TODAY	7
2.1 OVERVIEW	7
2.2 ESQUIMALT RECREATION CENTRE	8
2.3 ARCHIE BROWNING SPORTS CENTRE.....	16
2.4 GORGE PARK PAVILION.....	22
2.5 COMBINED FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE OF THE FACILITIES	28
3 RECREATION BEYOND ESQUIMALT	30
3.1 REGIONAL INVENTORY.....	30
3.2 REGIONAL RECREATION FACILITY BENCHMARKING	32
4 COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES ON RECREATION	35
5 LEVEL OF SERVICE ASSESSMENT	37
6 SUMMARY OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM OF RECREATION IN ESQUIMALT	40
7 FUTURE PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS	41
7.1 POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS.....	41
7.2 RECREATION AND SPORT TRENDS	43
8 RECOMMENDED STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS	46
8.1 AQUATIC SERVICES.....	46
8.2 ARENA SERVICES.....	47
8.3 CURLING SERVICES	48

8.4	FITNESS AND WELLNESS	48
8.5	ARTS, CULTURE AND EDUCATION.....	49
8.6	SENIORS SERVICES	50
8.7	YOUTH SERVICES	51
8.8	DRY-FLOOR RECREATION	52
8.9	MULTI-PURPOSE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES.....	52
8.10	COMMUNITY EVENTS AND RENTALS	53
8.11	STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS, ACTIONS AND TIMELINE	54
9	CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS	57
	APPENDIX A: DOCUMENTATION REVIEW	A1
	APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY.....	B1
	APPENDIX C: RECREATION TRENDS	C1
	APPENDIX D: UTILIZATION METHODOLOGIES AND ASSUMPTIONS	D1

Executive Summary

This Recreation Strategic Plan provides an assessment of the Township of Esquimalt's recreation system and establishes a long-term framework to guide decision-making and investment. The plan responds to evolving community needs, demographic change, and increasing pressure on recreation services, while aligning with Council priorities and financial realities.

The study evaluates the Township's three primary indoor recreation facilities, Esquimalt Recreation Centre, Archie Browning Sports Centre, and Gorge Park Pavilion, through analysis of facility condition, utilization, programming, and financial considerations. This assessment is supported by a regional review, benchmarking analysis, and community engagement to understand current service levels and future expectations.

Findings indicate that Esquimalt's recreation system is well established, highly valued, performing effectively and has capacity to accommodate community growth. The Township provides a comparatively high level of service relative to peer municipalities, with facilities that support a broad range of recreation opportunities. Strong participation rates and high levels of community satisfaction demonstrate the importance of recreation in supporting health, wellbeing, and social connection.

However, the system is increasingly constrained by capacity limitations, particularly in aquatics, fitness, dry-floor recreation, and ice-based services during peak use times. Population growth, regional demand pressures, and changing recreation trends are expected to further intensify these constraints. In addition, aging infrastructure and functional limitations within some facilities highlight the need for ongoing renewal and modernization.

A level of service assessment confirms that while all service areas are meeting community needs to some degree, several are experiencing moderate pressures related to demand, utilization, and facility condition. Targeted improvements are recommended to maintain service levels and enhance system performance.

In response, the plan establishes a set of strategic directions organized by recreation service category. These directions focus on:

- Expanding access and capacity in high-demand service areas.
- Optimizing and modernizing existing facilities.
- Enhancing flexibility and multi-use functionality of spaces.
- Strengthening partnerships and improving service delivery.
- Supporting equity, accessibility, and inclusion.

An implementation framework outlines short-, medium-, and long-term actions, providing a coordinated roadmap for the Township over a 15-year planning horizon.

In summary, this plan positions the Township to build on its strong recreation foundation while proactively addressing emerging pressures, ensuring recreation services continue to meet the needs of current and future residents.

1 Introduction

1.1 Study Purpose and Approach

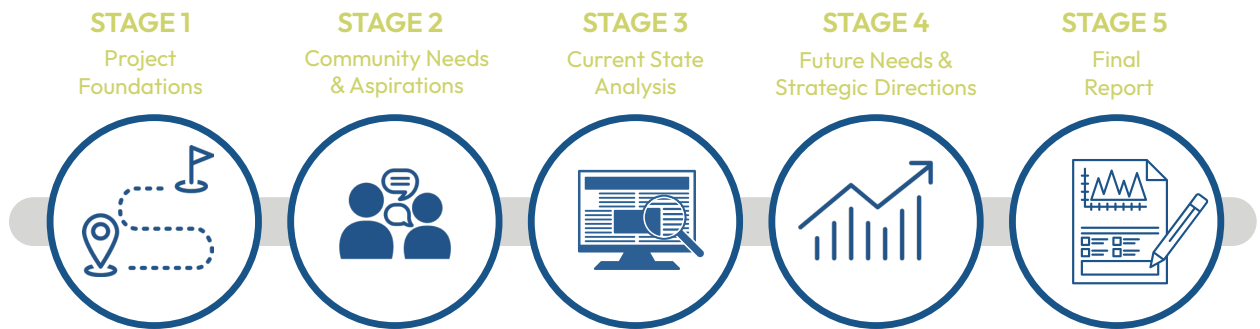
The Township of Esquimalt provides a range of recreation programs, services, and facilities that support physical activity, wellness, and social connection. These services are delivered through a combination of municipally operated facilities, partnerships, and community use of public spaces.

This *Recreation Strategic Plan* has been developed to understand the current state of recreation services and facilities, assess how well existing assets are meeting community needs, identify emerging pressures and opportunities, and establish strategic priorities to guide future investment, planning and service delivery. This plan is informed by a review of Township policy documents, utilization and booking data, facility conditions assessments, financial information, and community engagement.

This study focuses on recommendations and improvements to Esquimalt’s three main indoor recreation facilities – Esquimalt Recreation Centre, Archie Browing Sports Centre and Gorge Park Pavilion. Parks and outdoor recreation amenities are not included in this study as they being assessed through a separate Township initiative.

This study followed a 5-stage planning approach, as presented in the following figure.

Figure 1: Recreation Strategic Plan 5-stage Planning Approach



Stage 1 - Project Foundations: Stage 1 consisted of analyzing historical and available documentation along with conducting facility tours to understand the planning context and current situation of recreation in Esquimalt.

Stage 2 - Community Needs & Aspirations: This phase engaged residents, interest holders and other user groups through a public survey and interview sessions. An engagement plan was developed with Township staff to indicate relevant interest holders and to ensure alignment with the project scope.

Stage 3 - Current State Analysis: A Current State Analysis was prepared to review existing recreation facilities and amenities in the Capital Regional District. Esquimalt recreation facility booking data was analyzed to get an understating of current utilization, programming demand, and participation

patterns. This stage included a level of service assessment, population projections, anticipated demographic shifts, recreation trends, and other factors that influence future demand.

Stage 4 – Future Needs & Strategic Directions: Based on the key findings gleaned from the previous 3 stages of the study, gaps in service and infrastructure were identified and informed the development of strategic directions to ensure recreation services can meet community needs over a 15-year planning horizon. The community was introduced to the initial strategic directions during two open houses. The feedback gathered helped shape the final plan.

Stage 5 - Needs Assessment & Feasibility Report (this report): The final report summarizes the results of the current state analysis and future needs assessment. It presents strategic directions and provides recommendations for subsequent actions.

The study was initiated in December 2025 and completed in June 2026.

1.2 Community Context

The Township of Esquimalt, located approximately 10-minutes from downtown Victoria, is a municipality within the Capital Regional District (CRD). The CRD is the regional government for 13 municipalities and three electoral areas on southern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, serving ~460,000 people. The region includes traditional territories of many First Nations where 11 of these Nations hold reserve lands. The Township is located within the Traditional Territories of the Kosapsum (Esquimalt) Nation and Songhees Nation.

The community is known for its largest employer (the Canadian Forces Base Esquimalt), the West Bay walkway (a boardwalk between Esquimalt and Victoria), the Gorge Vale 18-hole golf course, an arts community, a thriving local events scene, and modern recreational facilities.

1.3 Guiding Documentation


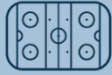








Several documents within the Township’s records directly inform and support this planning process. These materials were reviewed to guide the development of this Recreation Strategic Plan. A summary of each document is provided in Appendix A.

- Township of Esquimalt Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan (2004)
- An Accessibility Audit for the Township of Esquimalt (2009)
- Esquimalt Age-Friendly Assessment (2016)
- Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 2922 (2018)
- Esquimalt Risk Assessment Summary Report (2019)
- Township of Esquimalt Strategic Priorities 2019–2023
- Active Transportation Network Plan (2022)
- Township of Esquimalt Annual Report 2024
- Council Priorities Plan 2023–2026 (2025)
- Esquimalt Recreation Centre Building Condition Assessment (2025)
- Archie Browning Sports Centre Building Condition Assessment (2025)
- Esquimalt Community Survey (2026)

1.4 Service Categorization

Recreation services and spaces in this document are organized into ten categories. This structure provides a consistent framework for assessing existing provision and identifying future needs. The following descriptions are provided to support a clear understanding of the scope and intent of each category.

Table 1: Service Categories and Descriptions

Service Category	Description of Services and Spaces
 Aquatic Services	Provision of water-based recreation, fitness, and therapeutic activities, including instructional programs, lane swimming, leisure use, and aquatic wellness services.
 Arena Services	Provision of organized ice sports, practices, and competitions during the ice season. Delivery of public programming including drop-in skate sessions, skating lessons, and community skate events.
 Curling Services	Delivery of organized curling opportunities, including leagues, lessons, drop-in play, and community events that support skill development and social engagement.
 Fitness & Wellness	Services focused on physical health, active living, and overall wellbeing, including individual or group fitness, and structured wellness programs.
 Arts, Culture & Education	Creative and cultural program that supports artistic expression, learning, and participation across various disciplines, including visual, performing, and cultural arts.
 Senior's Services	Programs and spaces designed to support older adults through physical activity, social engagement, and wellness-focused recreation opportunities.
 Youth Services	Inclusive, youth-focused recreation opportunities emphasizing informal participation, social connection, and community engagement in welcoming environments.
 Dry-Floor Recreation	Indoor sport and recreation activities delivered in non-ice, large-span spaces, supporting court sports, and field sports.
 Multi-purpose and Community Services	Flexible, general-use spaces supporting a wide range of recreation, social, and community activities, including informal recreation, meetings, local gatherings, childcare and out of school care.
 Community Events & Rentals	Provision of spaces and services that support community events, private functions, and gatherings, including facility rentals and event hosting.

2 Recreation Within Esquimalt Today

2.1 Overview

Six facilities in Esquimalt support the delivery of recreation services and activities. Township-led programming is primarily delivered at three indoor facilities, the Archie Browning Sports Centre, Esquimalt Recreation Centre, and Gorge Park Pavilion, as well as across several outdoor sport fields, including Bullen Field, Brodeur Sport Field, and Lampson Park.

The Township also utilizes additional space through a joint-use agreement with School District 93, including École Victor-Brodeur, to accommodate recreation programming. Two additional facilities located on the Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Esquimalt, the Wurtele Arena and the Naden Athletic Centre, further contribute to the recreation system, providing arena, aquatic, and fitness amenities.

For the purposes of this study, recreation services have been organized into ten categories (listed in Section 1.4) reflecting the range of offerings. The study focuses on the Township's three primary indoor recreation facilities:

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

Private and non-municipal recreation amenities within the community, including for-profit fitness centres and strata-based facilities, were not included in this analysis.

For reference, the other identified facilities provide the following community amenities:

- Naden Athletic Centre: Aquatics, Fitness & Wellness and Dry-Floor Recreation.
- Wurtele Arena: Arena
- Ecole Victor-Brodeur: Community & Event Rentals, Dry-Floor Recreation and Multi-purpose & Community Services.

Each facility serves a distinct role within the recreation system, providing a mix of programmed activities, drop-in use, rentals, and community functions. The following sections introduces the programs and spaces available at each of the three facilities, providing a baseline understanding of current operations.

Figure 2: Facilities in Esquimalt that host recreation activities



2.2 Esquimalt Recreation Centre

2.2.1 Overview

Address:	527 Fraser St
Year Built:	1973
Renovation Year:	2004
Building Area:	4,800 m ²
Building Condition (as per 2025 BCA)	Reasonable

Figure 3: Esquimalt Recreation Centre



The Esquimalt Recreation Centre (ERC) is the Township’s primary, multi-service recreation facility, providing year-round programming and services that support a broad range of recreation and wellness activities. Centrally located within Esquimalt and adjacent to both the Archie Browning Sports Centre and Bullen Park, the facility functions as a key component of the community’s primary recreation hub.

The facility accommodates a wide mix of activity spaces designed to serve multiple user groups and program types. Core components include aquatic facilities, fitness and wellness spaces, youth centre, seniors’ activity spaces, multi-purpose program rooms, and indoor recreation areas that support both structured programming and informal use. These spaces facilitate a range of services including swimming, fitness training, group exercise, child and youth programming, and community-based activities. Services are delivered through a combination of municipally operated programs, contracted services, and leased spaces. Leased space within the facility includes Lab Health Physio, a multidisciplinary clinic offering services such as physiotherapy, registered massage therapy, and pool-based treatment.

ERC also benefits from strong physical integration with surrounding recreation assets. The main facility is directly connected to outdoor amenities, including Bullen Park and an adjacent lacrosse box. On-site parking is provided on the north side of the building, supporting access for daily users and program participants.

The following floor plans introduce the spaces within the facility, and the table below identifies the recreation services, spaces and types of programs offered from the centre. The majority of spaces serve multiple functions and can be used for various recreation service activities, depending on availability and functional suitability.

Table 2: Esquimalt Recreation Centre – Recreation Services, Spaces and Programs

Recreation Service Category	Program/Activity Space(s)	Programming Offered
Aquatics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A six-lane, 25-metre lap pool • A warm “lifestyle” pool • A tot pool with spray features • A wheelchair-accessible hot tub • Steam room and sauna • Atrium Convertible (supports dryland advanced aquatic programs) 	These spaces support a range of uses including lap swimming, aquatic fitness, swimming lessons, rehabilitation and therapy programs, family recreation, and leisure swimming.
Fitness & Wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fitness Centre: 420 m² (4,500 ft²) space equipped with cardio and strength training equipment. • Jubilee Hall (Gymnasium) • Craigflower Room (Studio) 	The Fitness Centre supports individual fitness, supervised programming, and informal use by members and drop-in participants. Jubilee Hall and the Craigflower Room support fitness and wellness classes.
Arts, Culture & Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Craigflower Room • Kanaka Room • Pioneer A • Pioneer B • Seniors Centre 	Various spaces support arts, culture and education programming such as music classes, dance programs, painting, amongst others.
Seniors Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seniors Centre • Craigflower Room • Kanaka Room 	The Seniors Centre, located on the main floor of the ERC is the main space dedicated for adults aged 50+, programs and activities that promote active living, social connection, and lifelong learning.
Youth Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower Multi-purpose Room (Youth Centre) • Kitchen • Kanaka Room 	The youth centre, located on the lower floor of the ERC is the main space that offers drop-in opportunities and youth programming. Leadership training and cooking classes dedicated for youth occur in the Kanaka Room.
Dry-Floor Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jubilee Hall (Gymnasium) 	Jubilee Hall is a large, flexible indoor gymnasium space designed to accommodate a variety of sports and recreation activities. Typical uses include drop-in sports, registered programs, and community-based activities.
Multi-purpose and Community Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four (4) multi-purpose rooms available for rent (Craigflower Room, Kanaka Room, Fernhill Room, Atrium Convertible) • Constance Cove (Child Care Centre) • Pioneer A/B • Lower Multi-purpose Room 	Multi-purpose space that supports community use, such as meetings, programming, and social gatherings. The Recreation Centre offers Out of School Care programs, Childminding services and Camps.
Community Events & Rentals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jubilee Hall (Gymnasium) • Atrium • Atrium Convertible 	These spaces are used for recreation programs, community meetings, and social events and celebrations, including weddings.

2.2.2 Facility Utilization

A facility utilization analysis was conducted to assess how frequently the facility is being used. The analysis is based on facility booking data, providing a reliable snapshot of activity types and their frequency. The Esquimalt Recreation Centre daily hours of operation are 5.30am - 10.30pm (17 hours) which represents the longest operating municipal recreation facility in the Greater Victoria region. After accounting for turnaround times, closures and holidays, the Township provides a total of ~5,072 hours of available booking time per year. A detailed overview of the methodology and assumptions is provided in Appendix D – Utilization Analysis Methodologies and Assumptions.

The available booking data show average annual utilization in high (~50%+), medium (~20-30%) and low (<10%) categories.

Highly utilized rooms include Pioneer A, B, Constance Cove, Jubilee Hall, and the Lower Multipurpose Room. All of these spaces overwhelmingly support childcare (~75%+ of total bookings), with the remainder of bookings made up by camps and courses. The Pioneer Rooms and Constance Cove seem to support younger child groups, while Jubilee Hall and the Lower Multipurpose Room have high bookings and Teen Nights /Drop-In. Jubilee Hall supports kids’ recreation including soccer, volleyball, and fitness; it also supports adult classes and activities including Zumba, pickleball, and HIIT classes (as examples). The Lower Multipurpose Room is primarily used for before and after-school care, and classes such as art and leadership.

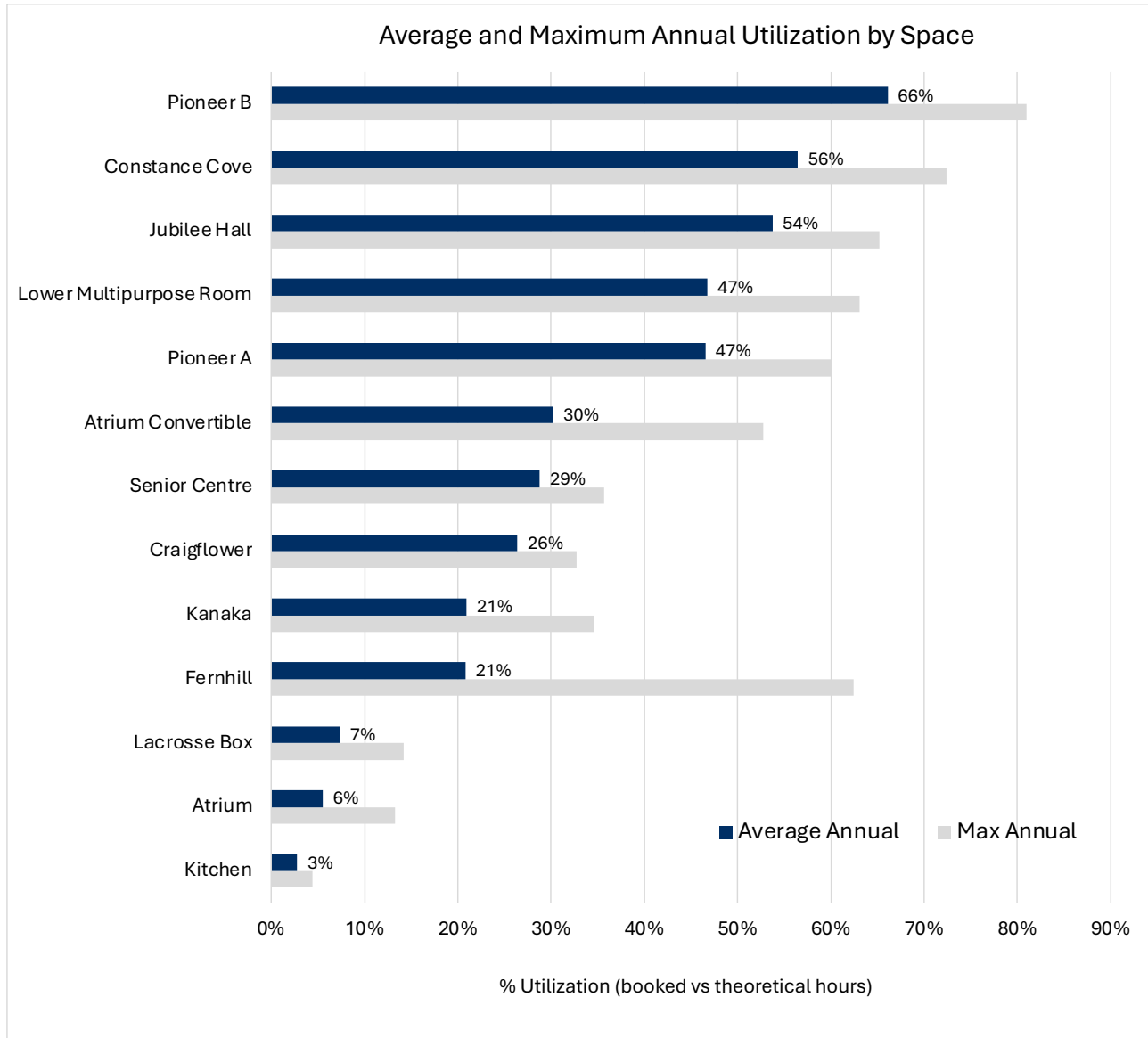
Medium-utilized rooms include the Seniors Centre, Atrium Convertible, Craigflower, Kanaka and Fernhill.

- The Atrium Convertible (average 30%) tends to be booked for aquatics-related classes, such as lifeguard courses. It was fully booked by Lab Health in 2021, increasing its utilization profile overall.
- The Seniors Centre (average 29%) is scheduled for games, arts, and crafts, and social events such as bridge, painting, and conversation cafes. It is also likely to be used more casually, increasing true utilization over the 30% average over the years.
- Craigflower, Kanaka, and Fernhill (between 21%-26%) are used for many of the same activities: games (chess, Mah Jong, and Bridge), fitness (yoga, strength, dance), camps, and music.

Rooms in the low utilization category are the Lacrosse Box, Atrium, and Kitchen, all with average utilization under 10%. Notably, all of these spaces are less flexible than the higher-use ones. The Atrium is a passthrough/event space which is not intended to function as a programmed space; the Lacrosse Box is an outside space (with notable functional issues), and the Kitchen has very specific equipment that limits its flexibility.

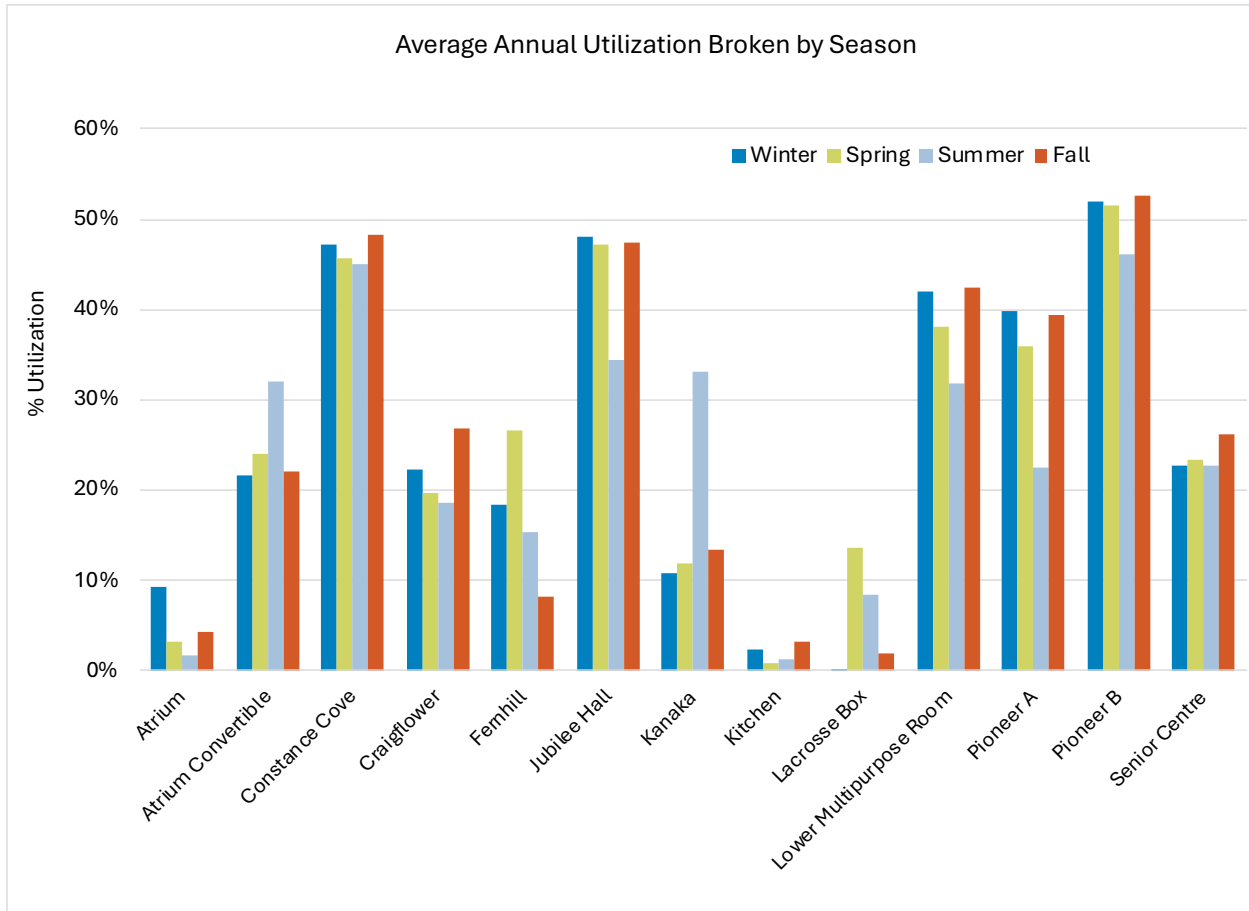
The figure below presents average annual (blue) and maximum annual (grey; 2022-2025) percent booked time (of total available time, per assumptions above) for ERC spaces. Utilization has been steadily climbing over the years, with the highest scheduled hours in 2024 (totalling over 24,000 hours over the spaces analyzed). *NOTE: Aquatic space average and maximum annual utilization is excluded from the chart below, since it relied on a separate method of analysis.*

Figure 6: Average and Maximum Annual Utilization by Space, ERC



Breaking down utilization by season (per the next figure) yields a few interesting variations. Although many rooms are roughly evenly used across winter, spring, and fall, there are differences in the summer months. The Atrium Convertible is most highly used in summer, as is Kanaka (for camps). The childcare-centric spaces (Jubilee Hall, Pioneers A & B, and to a lesser extent Constance Cove) are less-used over the summer and may offer some availability. Unsurprisingly, the Lacrosse Box is unused in the winter and has low use in the fall as well.

Figure 7: Average Utilization by Season, ERC



The utilization of **aquatic spaces** (including the lap pool, leisure pool, and hot pool) is estimated by comparing total annual participation to the theoretical maximum annual capacity, based on water characteristics such as depth, temperature, and surface area.

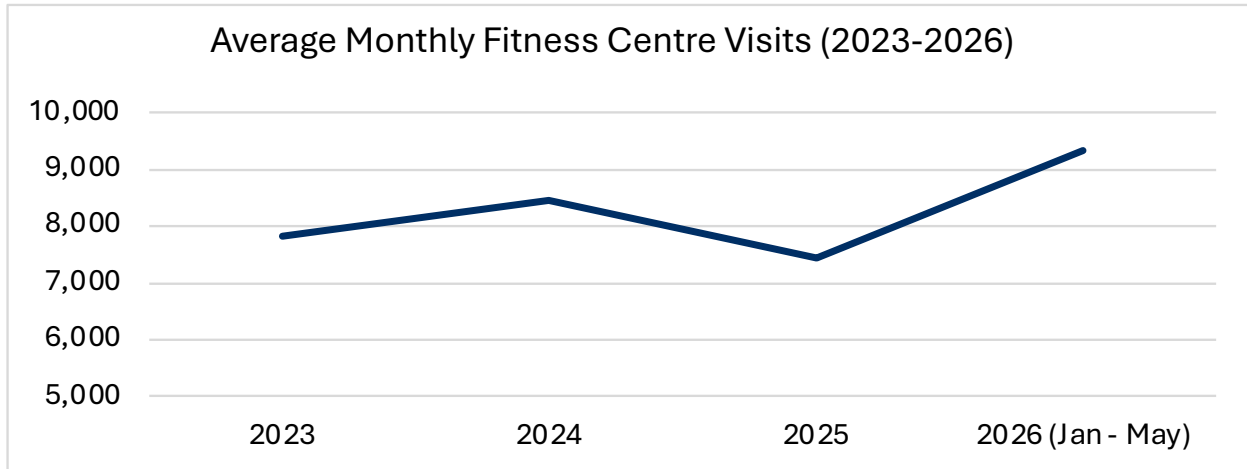
Using 2025 participation data, approximately 170,000 annual visits to the aquatic centre were recorded. Based on the facility’s water types, the estimated theoretical annual capacity is approximately 220,000 visits. This suggests an overall utilization rate of approximately 77%, indicating that the aquatic spaces have capacity to accommodate increased use throughout the year. This assessment does not account for peak demand periods, which are known to occur and result in localized capacity constraints at specific times.

For a population of approximately 19,500 (2025), 170,000 annual visits reflect a highly engaged user base. On a simple per capita basis, this equates to roughly 9 visits per resident per year. However, this figure should be interpreted with caution, as the facility likely draws users from neighbouring communities. Even so, it indicates a strong level of overall participation and regional draw.

The utilization of the fitness centre is assessed based on overall visitation and the frequency and uptake of programmed activities, using a limited available data set. Looking at data from January 2023 to May 2026 (as shown in Figure 8), the fitness centre demonstrated strong utilization with a monthly average of 8,270 visits. The first five months of 2026 had the highest utilization of the ~3.5 years of

data, with a monthly average of 9,335 visits. These visits are inclusive of membership scans to the fitness centre and paid drop-in admissions.

Figure 8: Average Monthly Fitness Centre Visits (January 2023- May 2026), ERC



NOTE: These numbers are likely lower than the actual number of visits as the system cannot track individuals who enter the fitness centre after visiting the aquatic facility, attend a drop-in fitness class first, or use LIFE passes from other centres.

2026 participation in structured and drop-in programming also showed positive growth trends. Drop-in fitness classes maintained a consistent schedule of 33 weekly offerings and saw increased attendance (8,988 visits, up from 8,138), while registered fitness programming expanded to 40 classes per week and experienced significant growth, with 1,463 participants compared to 921 in the same period in 2025. Additional indicators of engagement include 43 new personal training clients and participation in virtual initiatives such as the 60 Day Challenge (25 participants). Overall, the data reflects increasing program uptake and strong demand for organized fitness services.

In summary, the programmed spaces and fitness spaces within the recreation centre are well utilized. Scheduled activities are increasing year over year (except for a minor dip in 2025), and the utilization profile is consistent with heavy utilization in peak times (e.g., 6 hours/day covering mornings and after-school). There is opportunity to increase utilization across programmed rooms during off-peak times of day and year.

The aquatic spaces are estimated to be operating at approximately 77% of their theoretical annual capacity, indicating a high level of use. While there remains some capacity to accommodate additional use, peak periods are likely already experiencing localized constraints.

2.2.3 Building Condition Assessment

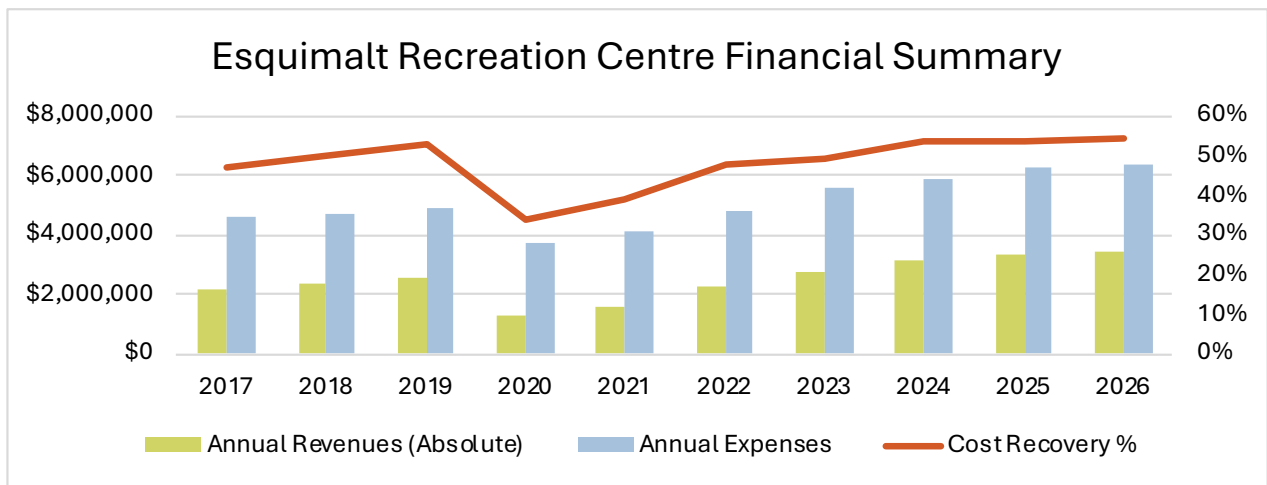
Esquimalt Recreation Centre has an approximate gross floor area of 4,828m². The original facility was constructed in 1973, with a major expansion and renewal completed in 2004. As a result, the building consists of both original structural components (primarily associated with the pool and select common areas) and newer systems and spaces introduced as part of the expansion. The facility is currently at an age where lifecycle renewal of major building components is expected, particularly those installed during the 2004 renewal.

Overall, the ERC is reported to be in reasonable condition and is adequately performing its intended function as a community recreation facility. However, the facility’s age, along with the specialized demands of aquatic and multi-use recreation functions, indicates an ongoing need for strategic lifecycle renewal. The Building Condition Assessment, completed by WSP Engineering, identifies that the facility will require ~\$8.5m over 20-years (~\$420k average annual budget) for capital maintenance and renewal projects.

2.2.4 Financial Assessment

This section summarizes long-term financial trends at the Esquimalt Recreation Centre between 2017 and 2026 (budget), focusing on revenues, expenditures, and cost recovery performance. The following figure illustrates these trends.

Figure 9: ERC Financial Summary



Cost recovery at the Esquimalt Recreation Centre has remained stable over the long term (~50%), with variation primarily driven by the pandemic rather than structural performance.

- 2017–2019: Steady improvement from 47% to 52% cost recovery, indicating strengthening revenue performance relative to costs.
- 2020–2021: Sharp drop to 34%, reflecting pandemic impacts on revenue while costs were less flexible.
- 2022–2026: Recovery back to ~49–54%, consistent with pre-pandemic levels.

The facility consistently operates at roughly 50% cost recovery, but rising expenditures mean the net subsidy has increased in absolute dollars, despite stable efficiency.

2.3 Archie Browning Sports Centre

2.3.1 Overview

Address:	1151 Esquimalt Road
Year Built:	1960
Renovation Year:	1985 & 2007
Building Area:	6,050 m ²
Building Condition (as per 2025 BCA)	Serviceable

Figure 10: Archie Browning Sports Centre



The Archie Browning Sports Centre is a multi-purpose recreation facility that serves as Esquimalt’s primary venue for ice-based sport and large indoor events. The facility includes a regulation ice arena and a six-sheet curling rink, supported by spectator seating, lounge areas, and administrative space for Parks and Recreation operations.

The ice arena accommodates a range of programmed and drop-in activities, including public skating, hockey, figure skating, and skill development programs, as well as organized league play and tournaments. The curling rink operates as a dedicated space for club use, leagues, and competitive events.

In addition to sport-specific functions, the facility provides flexible indoor space that can be adapted for non-ice uses during off-season periods. The arena floor is converted to support activities such as lacrosse, camps, and community rentals, while the curling rink is converted to support activities such as roller derby and pickleball. The overall facility is frequently used for events, exhibitions, and large gatherings.

Supporting amenities include a licensed lounge, meeting spaces, and multi-purpose rooms which enhance the facility’s role as both a recreation hub and an event venue.

The following floor plans introduce the spaces within the facility, and the table below identifies the recreation services, spaces and programs offered from the arena.

Figure 11: Archie Browning Sports Centre Floor Plan – Upper Floor

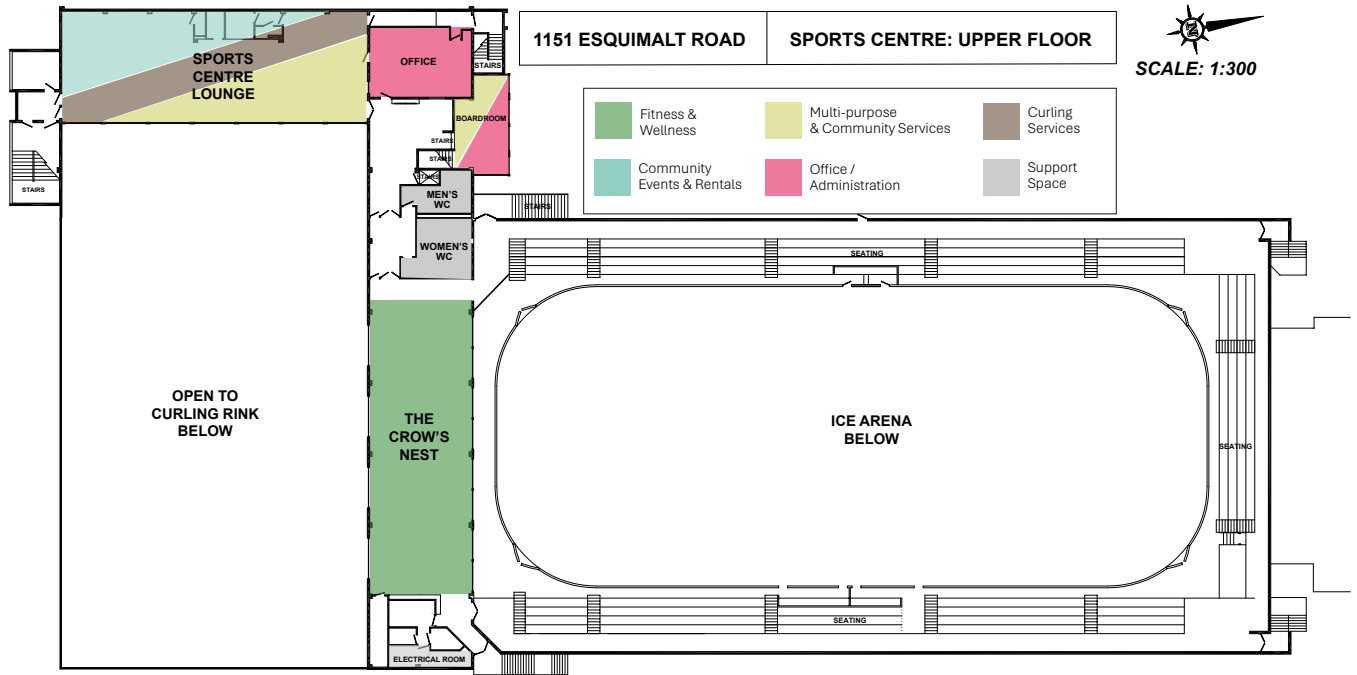


Figure 12: Archie Browning Sports Centre Floor Plan - Lower Floor

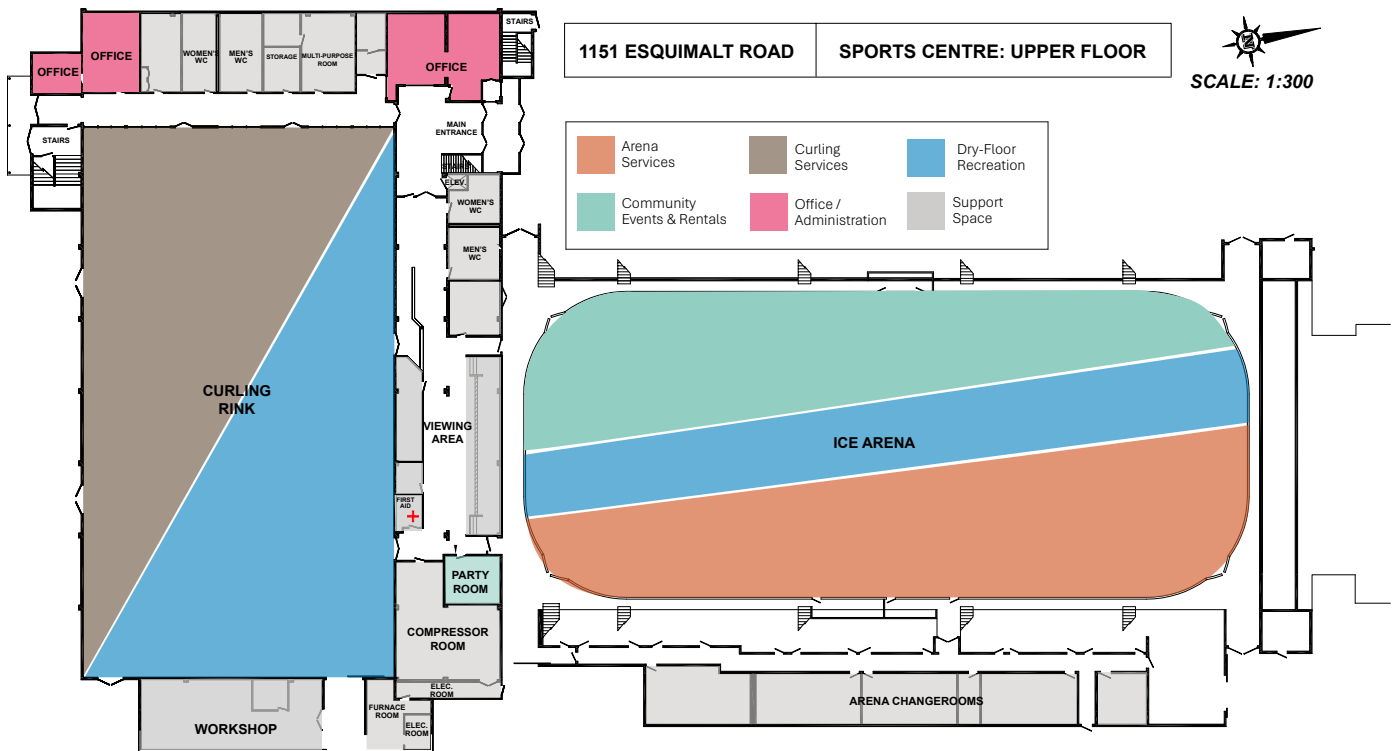


Table 3: Archie Browning Sports Centre – Recreation Services, Spaces and Programs

Recreation Service Category	Program/Activity Space(s)	Programming Offered
Arena Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ice Arena 	<p>The ice arena supports organized ice sports, practices, and competitions during the ice season.</p> <p>Township-led programming includes drop-in skate sessions, skating lessons, and community skate events.</p>
Curling Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6-sheet curling rink 	<p>The curling rink provides dedicated space for curling activities during the curling season (~September to April) for the Esquimalt Curling Club, schools and general public.</p>
Fitness & Wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crow’s Nest 	<p>The Crow’s Nest accommodates group fitness programming, primarily spin classes.</p>
Dry-Floor Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ice Arena 6-sheet curling rink 	<p>The ice arena and curling rink are converted into dry-floor space to accommodate recreation programming such as pickleball, roller derby and lacrosse.</p>
Multi-purpose and Community Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sports Centre Lounge Boardroom Meeting Rooms 	<p>Multi-purpose space that supports community use, such as meetings, programming, and social gatherings.</p>
Community Events & Rentals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ice arena Sports Centre Lounge Arena Party Room 	<p>These spaces are used for recreation programs, community meetings, and social events and celebrations.</p>

2.3.2 Utilization

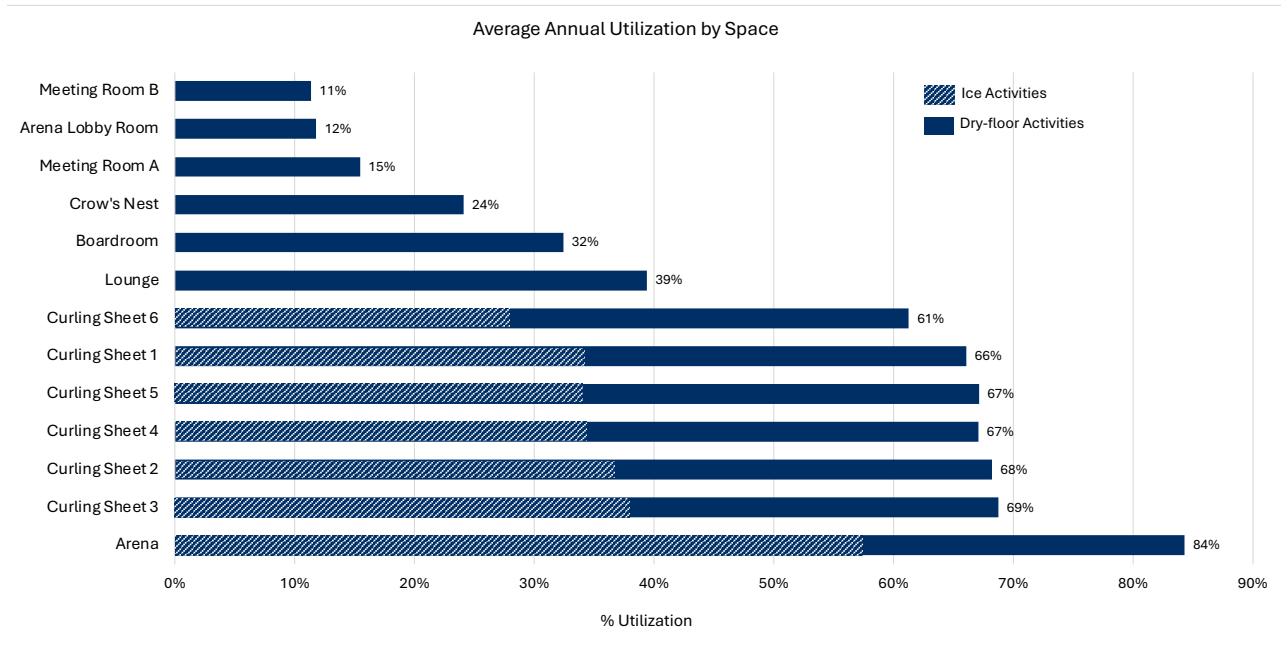
A facility utilization analysis was conducted to assess how frequently the facility is being used. The analysis is based on facility booking data, providing a reliable snapshot of activity types and their frequency. A detailed overview of the methodology and assumptions is provided in Appendix D – Utilization Analysis Methodologies and Assumptions.

The booking data shows substantial use of the facility. The Arena is the most booked space as on average it is utilized 84% of the time. Its booked hours are steadily increasing by an average 5% year over year, from 76% in 2022 to 95% in 2025.

- The Arena is mostly booked for hockey (~60% of booked time), with general skate and ice maintenance activities making up the next biggest times (at ~15% each).
- The next most-booked spaces are the Curling Sheets, which are roughly equally booked, at around 66% each (consistent across 2024 and 2025). The curling rink is mostly used for its namesake activity in winter, and pickleball in the summer, which is the primary dry-floor activity accommodated within the curling rink. Prior to 2024, the curling rink dry floor was also used for roller skating.
- The Lounge is primarily used by Curling Leagues (booked along with ice).

The following figure presents the average annual utilization by space within Archie Browning Sports Centre.

Figure 13: Average Annual Utilization by Space, ABSC



NOTE: Curling rink data is provided for the year 2024-2025 only as this represents the years pickleball was offered at the curling rink during the dry-floor season.

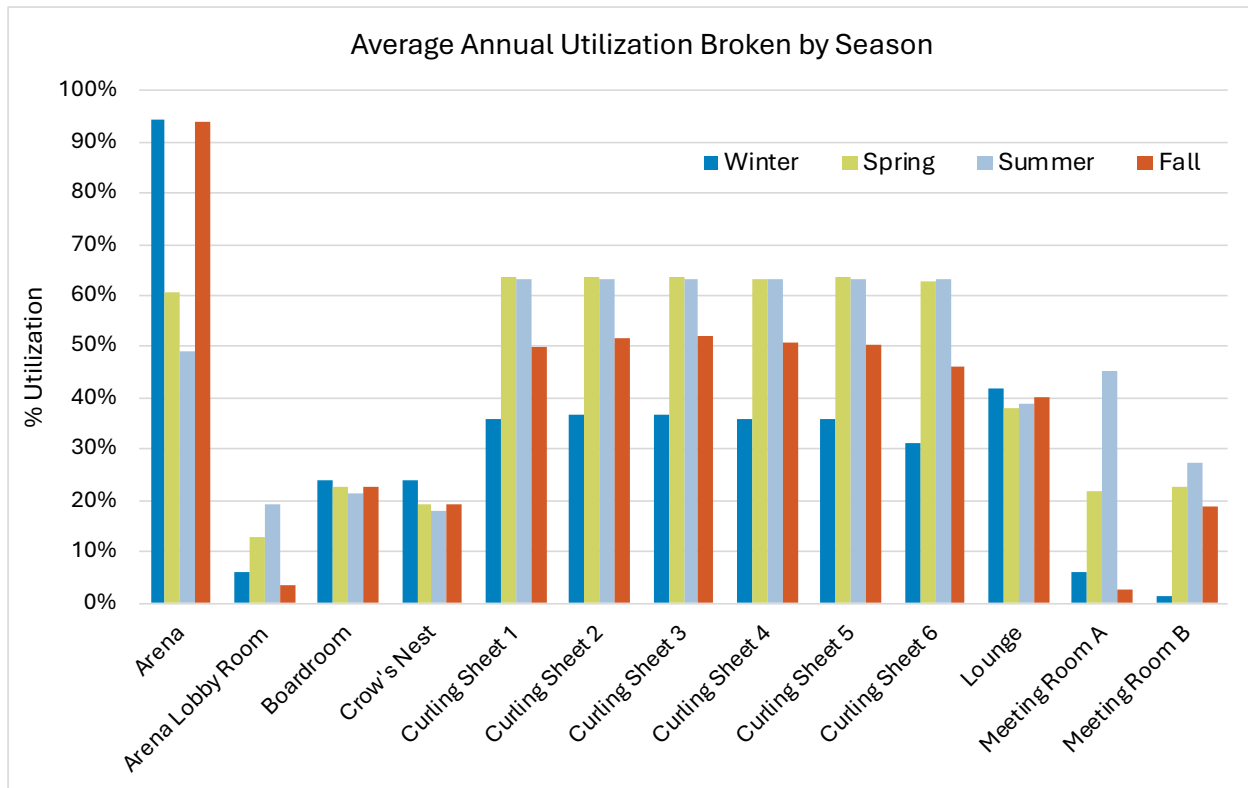
Viewing the utilization seasonally yields more interesting insights.

- The Arena is 94% utilized in fall and winter, with a slight decrease in spring and a larger decrease in summer (to 49%).
- The Curling Sheets are used about a half the time in fall, 40% of the time in the winter, and about 63% in spring and summer (representing its use as pickleball courts).
- The Lounge, Boardroom, and Crow’s Nest are used about the same amount across the year. The latter two have lower utilization, maxing out at 25%.
- The Arena Lobby Room and Meeting Rooms A and B have notably lower utilization in fall and winter (<10%), which may be an opportunity area.

Spaces with lower utilization are notably spaces which typically do not function as programmed spaces and support other facility functions. For example, although the Arena Lobby Room is booked occasionally to support specific events, this space is not considered a programmed space and therefore should not expect considerable utilization. This use profile is consistent when compared to other arena facilities.

The following figure presents the average annual utilization by season and space within ABSC.

Figure 14: Average Annual Utilization by Season and Space, ABSC



In summary, the Arena is well used, with what limited capacity is available outside of non-peak periods. The curling rink also experiences steady use, particularly during spring and summer for pickleball activities. Maximizing winter and fall utilization may prove challenging as the curling surface is very specialized, and peak times are saturated already.

There appears to be an opportunity to increase dry floor programming within the ice arena during the spring and summer, and to maximize curling sheets outside of peak times. The more administrative and multi-purpose spaces do have some capacity to offer, but these spaces primarily function in a supporting role for on-ice activities and are not core program areas.

2.3.3 Building Condition Assessment

Archie Browning Sports Centre consists of a two-storey recreational facility with an approximate gross floor area of 6,050m². The original building was constructed around 1960, with major renovations completed in approximately 1985 and 2007. Therefore, the facility includes a mix of original structural elements and systems alongside components that have been renewed or replaced over time. At approximately 65 years of age, the building is approaching a stage where comprehensive lifecycle renewal of major components is expected. The facility is reported to be in serviceable condition.

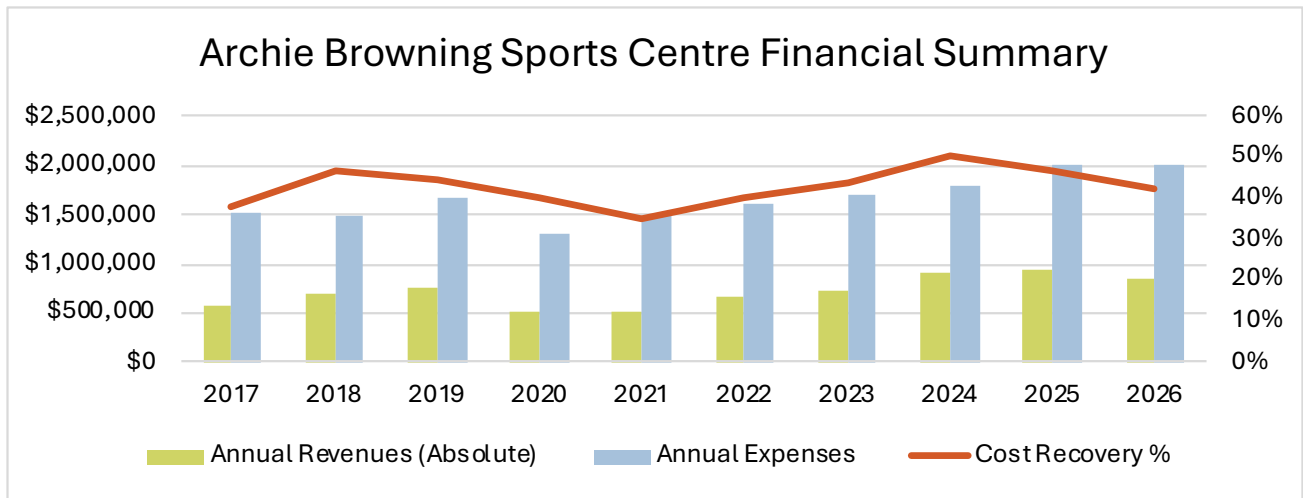
Recent capital investments demonstrate sustained efforts to maintain facility operations, including ice plant upgrades, roofing replacement, entrance renewal, and lighting upgrades. Despite these investments, the facility's age and specialized infrastructure result in ongoing and increasing capital renewal requirements across multiple building systems.

According to its Building Condition Assessment, Archie Browning is approaching a stage in its lifecycle where major system renewals and strategic reinvestment will be required to sustain service delivery. The Building Condition Assessment, completed by WSP Engineering, identifies that the facility will require ~\$7.7m over 20-years (~\$385k average annual budget) for capital maintenance and renewal projects.

2.3.4 Financial Assessment

This section summarizes long-term financial trends at the Archie Browning Sports Centre between 2017 and 2026 (budget), focusing on revenues, expenditures, and cost recovery performance. The following figure illustrates these trends.

Figure 15: ABSC Financial Summary



Cost recovery for this facility has been more variable over time (typically ~40–50%), with performance influenced by both the pandemic and post-pandemic cost escalation.

- 2017–2019: Moderate improvement from 38% to 44%, with some year-to-year fluctuation as revenues and expenses grew at similar rates.
- 2020–2021: Decline to 35%, reflecting pandemic-related revenue disruption combined with relatively fixed costs.
- 2022–2024: Gradual recovery, reaching a peak of 51% in 2024, slightly above pre-pandemic levels.
- 2025–2026: Softening back to 44%, driven by continued growth in expenditures outpacing revenue.

The facility does not demonstrate the same stable ~50% recovery profile as the Esquimalt Recreation Centre; instead, cost recovery is more volatile and currently trending downward, with rising costs placing increased pressure on the operating subsidy.

2.4 Gorge Park Pavilion

2.4.1 Overview

Address:	1070 Tillicum Road
Year Built:	2022
Renovation Year:	n/a
Building Area:	560 m ²
Building Condition	Good*

Figure 16: Gorge Park Pavilion



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

The Esquimalt Gorge Park Pavilion is a multi-purpose community facility located within Esquimalt Gorge Park, overlooking the Gorge Waterway and adjacent to the Japanese Gardens. The pavilion functions primarily as an indoor venue supporting a range of community, cultural, recreation and event-based uses.

The facility includes approximately 560 m² of indoor space distributed across two floors, each providing large, adaptable program areas. The upper floor features a banquet and event hall with access to outdoor balconies. The lower floor is divisible into smaller rooms, allowing for concurrent uses and smaller-scale programming. A boardroom space hosts meetings and administrative functions. The Pavilion is integrated with surrounding park amenities, providing direct access to outdoor spaces, gardens, and the waterfront, which extend the facility's usable area.

Primary uses of the Pavilion include community events, meetings, recreation and cultural programming, workshops, and private rentals such as weddings, conferences, and celebrations. The layout allows the facility to accommodate a range of group sizes and event formats, supporting both formal and informal gathering functions.

The following floor plans introduce the spaces within the facility, and the table below identifies the recreation services, spaces and programs offered from the pavilion.

Figure 17: Gorge Park Pavilion Floor Plan – Main Floor

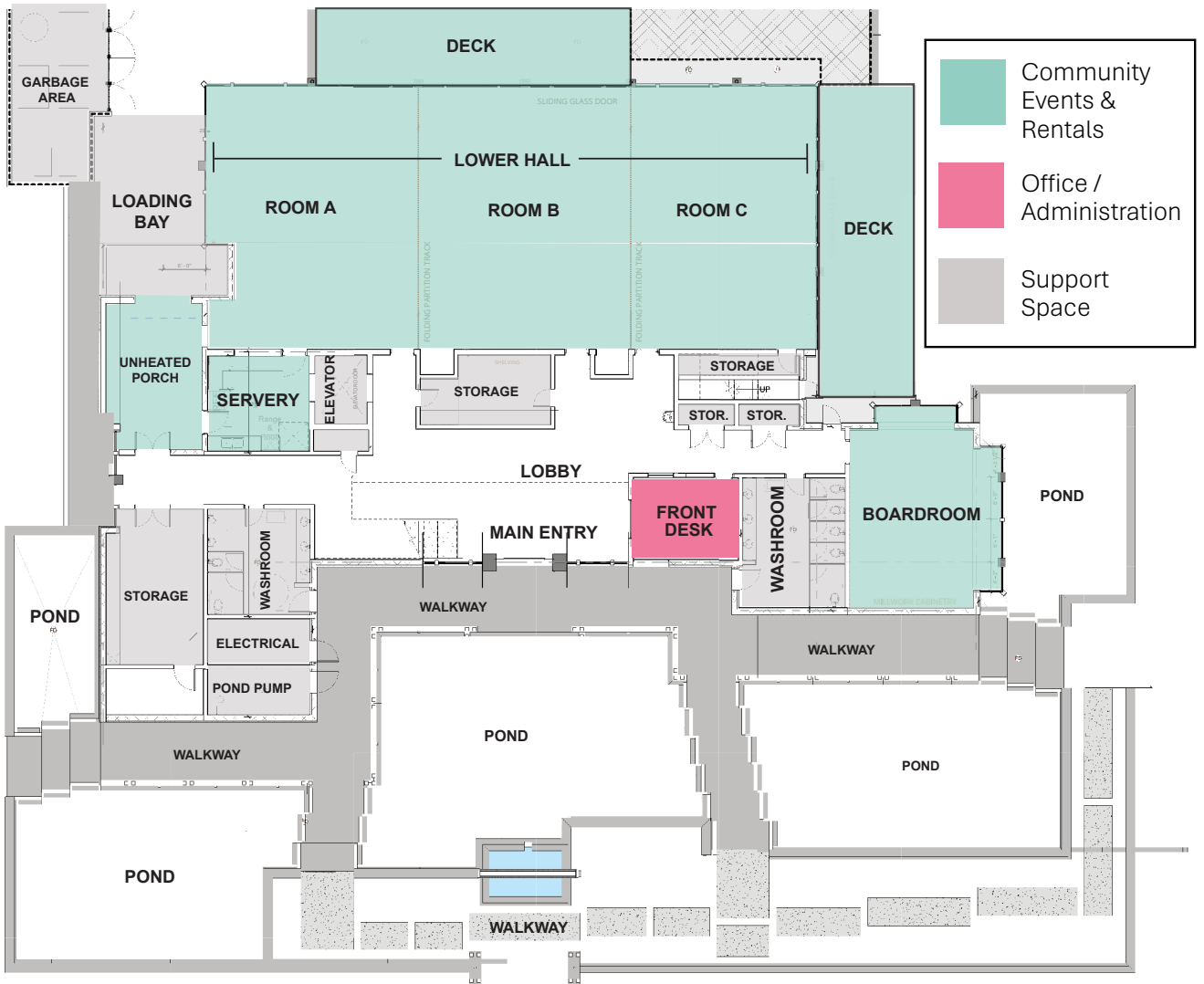


Figure 18: Gorge Park Pavilion Floor Plan – Second Floor

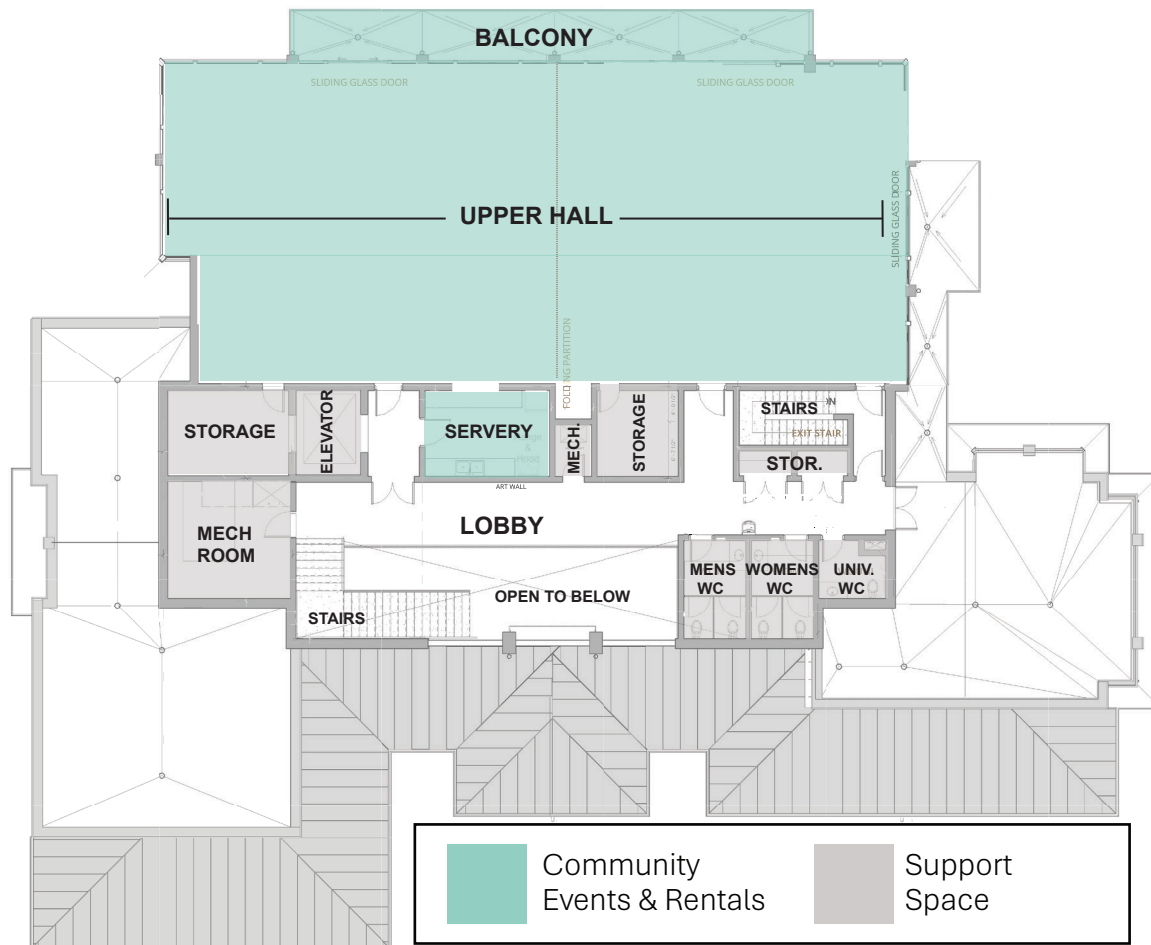


Table 4. Gorge Park Pavilion – Recreation Services, Spaces, and Programming

Recreation Service Category	Program/Activity Space(s)	Programming Offered
Fitness & Wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upper Hall Lower Hall 	The halls support group fitness classes, such as yoga, dance fitness, Pilates, etc.
Arts, Culture & Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boardroom 	The boardroom support arts, culture and education programming such painting, language and culture classes.
Multi-purpose & Community Services		The halls and boardroom are multi-purpose space that support community use, such as meetings, programming, and social gatherings.
Community Events & Rentals		The upper and lower halls are heavily used for community meetings, and social events and celebrations, including weddings.

2.4.2 Facility Utilization

A facility utilization analysis was conducted to assess how frequently the facility is being used. The analysis is based on facility booking data, providing a reliable snapshot of activity types and their frequency. A detailed overview of the methodology and assumptions is provided in Appendix D – Utilization Analysis Methodologies and Assumptions.

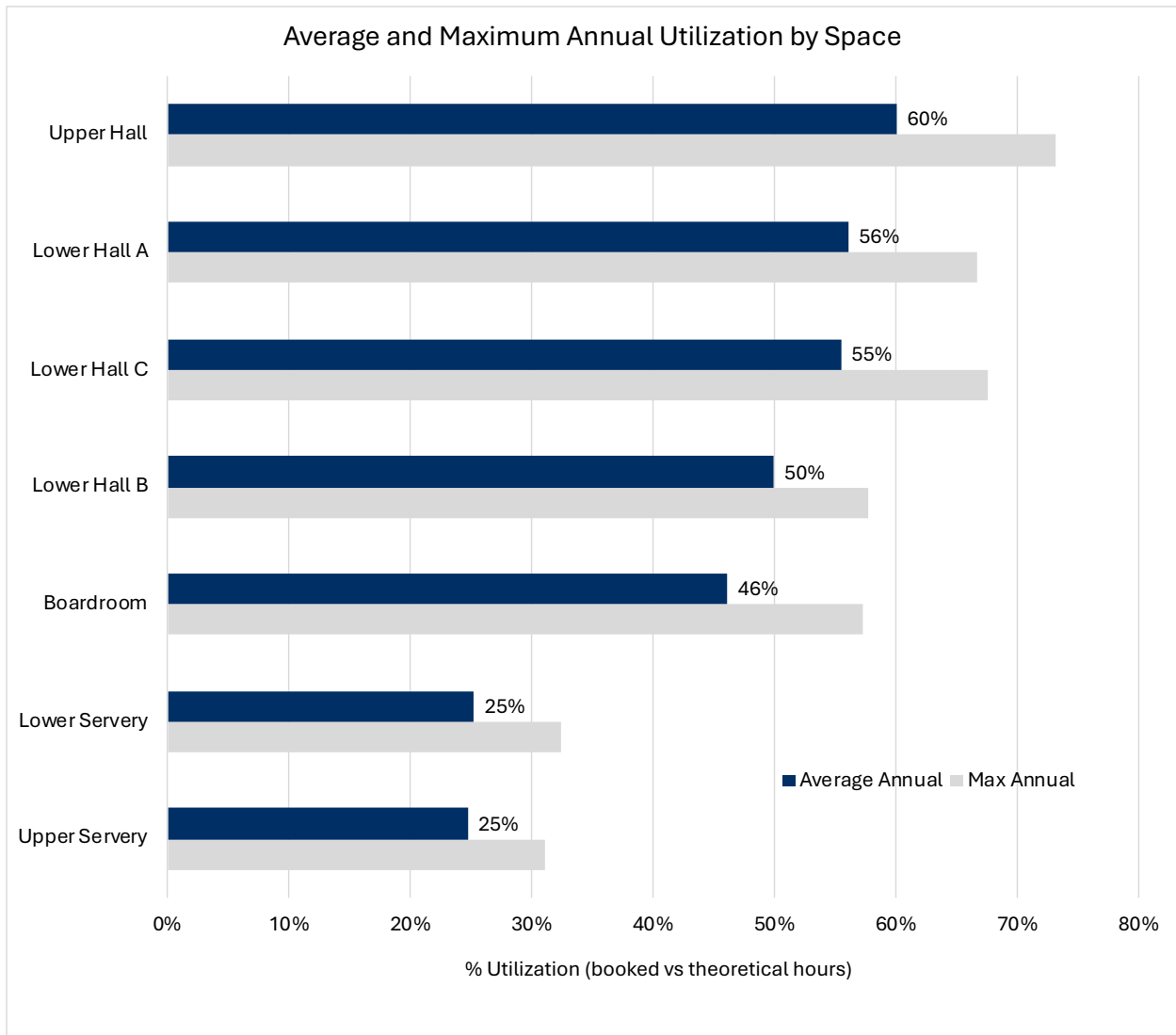
The Pavilion shows strong booking activity across its rooms, averaging around 60% utilization across the Halls. The serveries show less booked activity, which is not surprising given their special-use profile. The Boardroom is booked about half the time.

The activities across the Pavilion are sometimes repeated (such as church services every Sunday), but are mostly one-off events, such as community dinners, weddings, birthday parties, and memorials. Some trends do become apparent:

- The Upper Hall is mostly used for fitness activities such as yoga, pilates, and dance. It also supports choirs, classes, church services, events including parties (mostly as part of a full-facility booking for weddings), memorials, and meetings. The Upper Servery is sometimes (but not always) booked for these same times.
- The Lower Halls tends to be used for song and dance, camps, and events. Hall C supports a lot of the recurring bookings, including yoga, dance, preschool, and music. Hall A is event-friendly, supporting training, workshops, and supports full-facility bookings. Hall B is not often used alone, except for smaller events.
- The Boardroom mostly supports workshops, training, and meetings (33% of activity), with events and church services rounding out the bookings.

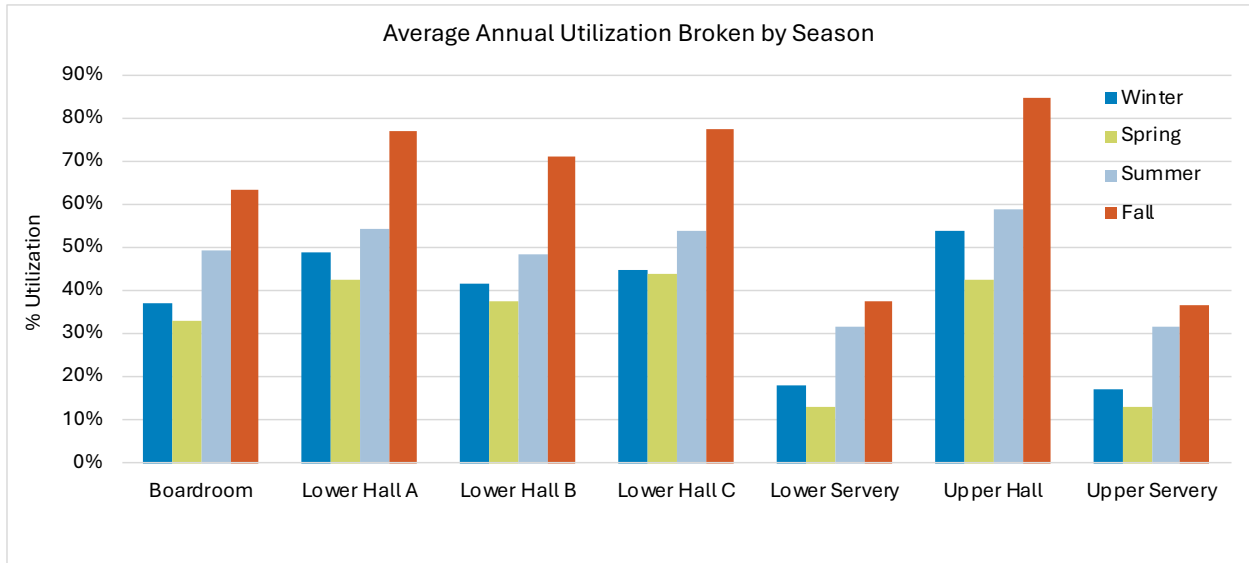
The following figure presents the average and maximum annual utilization by space in Gorge Park Pavilion.

Figure 19: Average and Maximum Annual Utilization by Space, GPP



A look at the seasonal variations of utilization shows a clear trend: the heaviest use for all spaces occurs in the fall, followed by summer, winter, and finally spring. As might be expected, this trend is driven by whole-facility bookings, specifically weddings (50% of booked hours), and a variety of events.

Figure 20: Average Annual Utilization by Season, GPP



In summary, the Pavilion appears to be a well-used space for the community. Utilization could be improved by attracting more frequently repeating activities in off-peak times (such as weekly classes on weekday mornings), or by maximizing use outside of the fall, with a focus on spring.

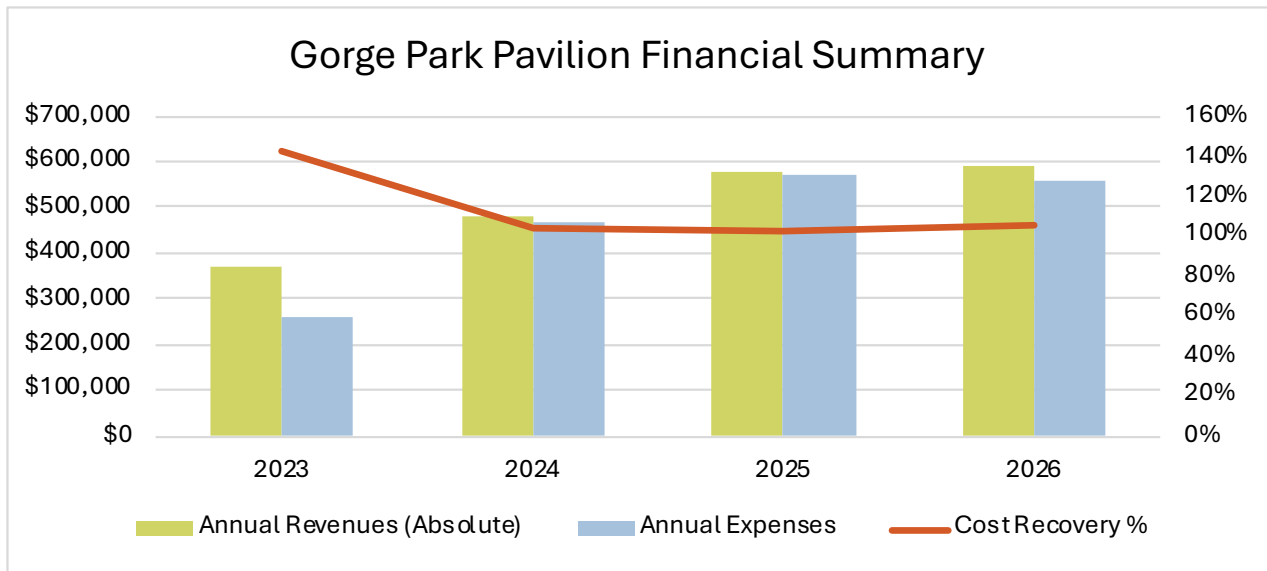
2.4.3 Building Condition Assessment

Given the relatively recent construction of the Gorge Park Pavilion, a formal Building Condition Assessment has not yet been undertaken. Based on input from staff and visual inspection, the facility is considered to be in good overall condition.

2.4.4 Financial Assessment

This section summarizes long-term financial trends at the Gorge Park Pavilion between 2022 and 2026 (budget), focusing on revenues, expenditures, and cost recovery performance. The following figure illustrates these trends. *NOTE: 2022 is not shown on the figure as it was the initial year of operations, with revenues introduced but limited comparable cost recovery metrics.*

Figure 21: Gorge Park Pavilion Financial Summary



Cost recovery for this facility reflects a new service ramp-up followed by strong cost recovery performance (typically >100%), indicating that revenues have consistently exceeded operating costs since opening.

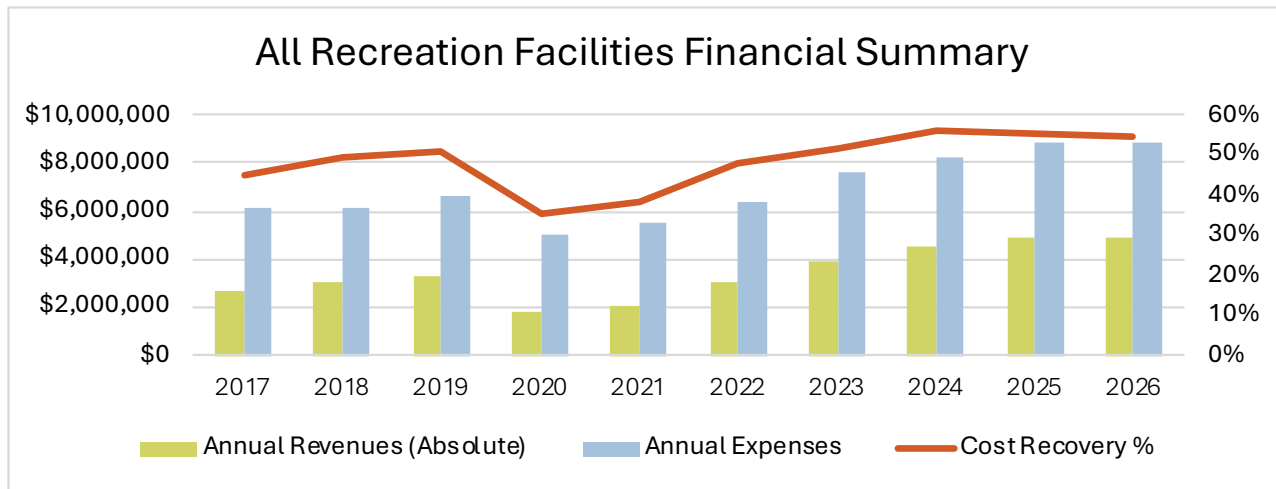
- 2023–2025: Strong performance, with cost recovery ranging from 101% to 143%, indicating that the facility generated a net operating surplus.
- 2026: Moderation to 106%, reflecting some softening as expenses increase and revenues stabilize.

Unlike other facilities, 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.

2.5 Combined Financial Performance of the Facilities

The combined financial performance of the Esquimalt Recreation Centre, Archie Browning Sports Centre, and Gorge Park Pavilion shows a clear long-term trend of recovery and strengthening cost recovery, set against population growth. The following figure presents the systems financial position year-over-year.

Figure 22: Financial Summary Across all Three Recreation Facilities



The following observations can be made from the historical financial data. *NOTE: the Township had access to Safe Restart¹ grant funding between 2021 and 2024 to offset revenue losses that were a result of COVID-19 pandemic related closures and operational disruptions.*

- 2017–2019: Gradual improvement from 45% to 51%, indicating strengthening revenue performance relative to costs across the system. Population growth during this period was modest (+1.7%), suggesting gains were primarily operational rather than demand-driven.
- 2020–2021: Significant decline to 35%, reflecting pandemic-related revenue loss while a substantial portion of operating costs remained fixed.
- 2022–2024: Strong recovery, with cost recovery increasing to 56% in 2024, surpassing pre-pandemic levels. This period aligns with both the return of demand and the introduction/expansion of revenue-generating services (e.g., Gorge Park Pavilion).
- 2025–2026: Stabilization at ~55%, indicating a new, higher-performing baseline.

The Township’s population increased from 18,372 (2017) to 19,599 (2026) (+6.7%), which supports higher overall revenues, but the magnitude of revenue growth exceeds population growth, indicating improved utilization and/or pricing rather than purely demographic change.

The combined service portfolio has transitioned from a pre-pandemic baseline of ~45–50% cost recovery to a post-pandemic level exceeding 50%, representing a structurally stronger financial position. However, rising expenditures mean the total subsidy requirement continues to grow in absolute terms, despite improved cost recovery performance.

¹ Province of British Columbia (2020). COVID Safe Restart Grant: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ). Ministry of Municipal Affairs. Retrieved from: [link](#)

3 Recreation Beyond Esquimalt

Esquimalt is situated within a closely connected urban context, with neighbouring municipalities providing complementary recreation opportunities. As a result, residents both access facilities outside the Township and are served by users from the broader region. To better understand this context, a high-level inventory of surrounding recreation assets has been considered to provide a regional perspective on service provision and overall supply.

While funding and planning decisions are necessarily grounded within the Township's jurisdiction, this broader perspective offers important context for understanding how well the community is served and where gaps may exist.

Considering the regional context also supports comparison with neighbouring municipalities, helping to assess the Township's relative level of service.

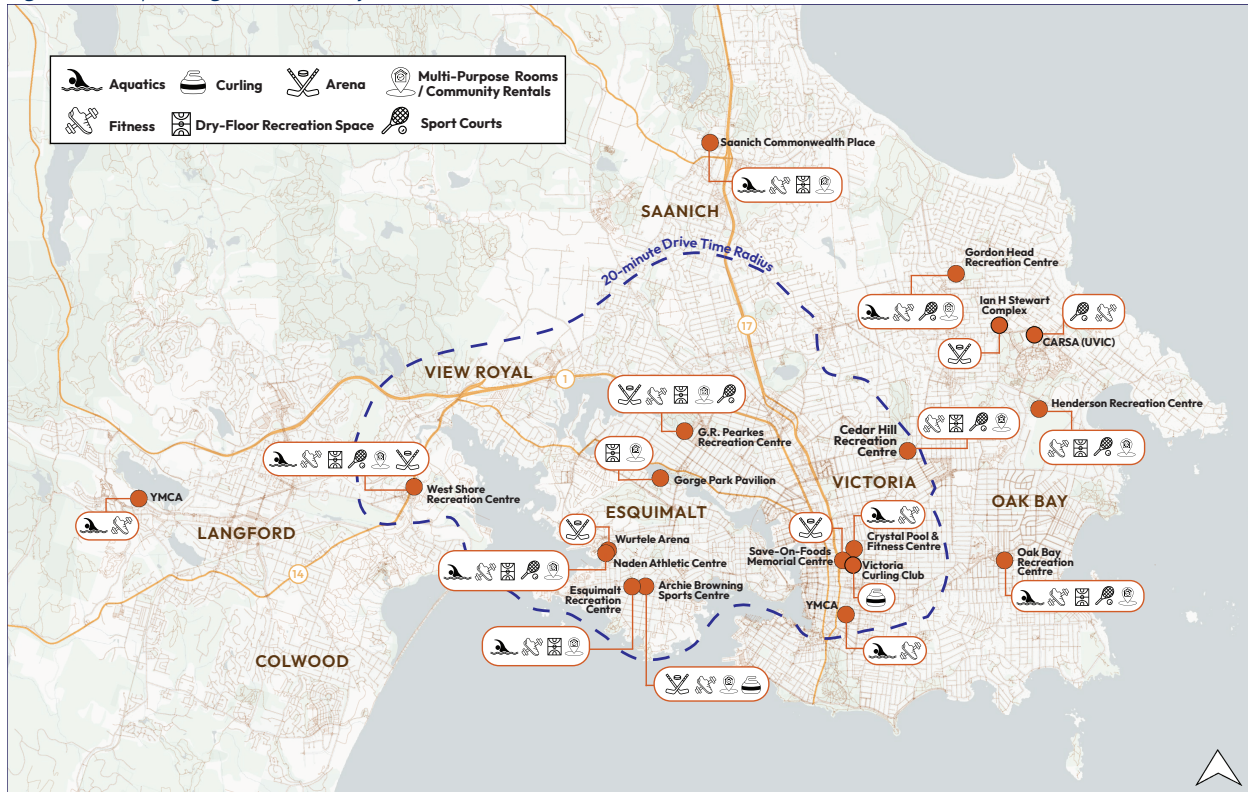
This section summarizes the regional inventory and presents comparative metrics across surrounding communities.

3.1 Regional Inventory

A high-level inventory of recreation facilities within Esquimalt and neighbouring municipalities in the Capital Regional District (CRD) was compiled to support regional analysis. The inventory identifies the range of recreation spaces available and provides context for how facilities are distributed across the broader service area.

The following figure illustrates the location of major recreation facilities within a reasonable travel distance of Esquimalt, providing an overview of the regional distribution of recreation assets.

Figure 23: Map of Regional Inventory



As shown in the figure, Esquimalt residents have access to approximately 12 recreation facilities within a 20-minute driving radius, indicating a strong overall supply of recreation assets at a regional level.

Recreation facilities within the Capital Regional District (CRD) operate as a shared system, with several facility types serving a distinct regional function. Curling is limited to two primary public venues (Esquimalt and Victoria) and relies on regional participation. Arena facilities are similarly used on a regional basis, with demand exceeding supply across the CRD² and resulting in constrained access, particularly during peak periods. Larger indoor event and spectator venues, such as the Save-On-Foods Memorial Centre, function at a regional scale, hosting major events and attracting users from across the region.

The capacity of the regional system is expected to be further affected by planned facility closures and upgrades. The City of Victoria will decommission the Crystal Pool and Fitness Centre in fall 2026 as part of a redevelopment project, with interim aquatic services to be provided at an alternate downtown location during the anticipated five-year construction period³. The Ian Stewart Complex Ice Arena at the University of Victoria is also scheduled for closure in March 2027⁴, removing an additional ice surface from the regional supply. While primarily serving university athletics, this facility does support community use, and its closure will increase pressure on remaining arenas.

² District of Saanich Ice and Dry Floor Demand Analysis Study. 2023. Cornerstone Planning Group. Retrieved from: [link](#)

³ Crystal Pool Replacement Project. City of Victoria. Retrieved from: [link](#)

⁴ Aging UVic ice rink to stay open one more year after repairs. Vancouver Island Free Daily. Published March 25, 2026. Retrieved from: [link](#)

At the same time, several projects are being considered to address regional demand. Potential upgrades to Gordon Head Recreation Centre as part of the Lambrick Park Campus Renewal Project may include additional ice surfaces⁵, and the SEAPARC Recreation Centre is in the early stages of exploring a second arena⁶.

Overall, while the regional inventory indicates strong access to recreation facilities, this planning exercise focuses on facilities within the Township of Esquimalt. At the same time, it acknowledges that the broader recreation landscape, shaped by neighbouring municipalities, plays an important role in influencing access and service levels for residents.

3.2 Regional Recreation Facility Benchmarking

3.2.1 Number of Recreation Facilities per Capita

Benchmarking was conducted to assess the Township’s relative level of service compared to peer municipalities. The analysis has been completed at a level of detail which considers the number of facilities provided per 10,000 residents by type of recreation facility.

NOTE: While benchmarking provides useful context for evaluating recreation infrastructure in Esquimalt, several limitations should be noted:

- Identifies the presence of amenities but does not assess quality, condition or functionality.
- Does not account for differences in facility size, capacity, or configuration.
- Does not assess the type of programs offered in each community.
- Does not reflect operating hours, scheduling, or accessibility of space.
- Does not capture participation rates, demand, or user satisfaction.

The following table presents service level metrics for five core recreation facility types (municipality owned): aquatic facilities (indoor and outdoor), arenas (number of indoor ice sheets), curling rinks, fitness centres, and gymnasiums (indoor). Metrics are expressed as the number of spaces per 10,000 residents, with higher values indicating a greater provision of service. Results are organized by region, with Capital Regional District municipalities listed first, followed by municipalities of relatively comparable population sizes in the Lower Mainland and central Vancouver Island. Regional averages are included to support comparison.

Table 5: Recreation Facility Benchmarking

	Population (2025)		Aquatic Facility(ies)	Arena(s)	Curling Rink(s)	Fitness Centre(s)	Gymnasium(s)
Capital Regional District							
Esquimalt	18,886		0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53
Saanich	126,618		0.16	0.16	0.00	0.32	0.16
Sooke	16,961	21,716 ^A	0.46	0.46	0.00	0.46	0.00
Oak Bay	19,075		0.52	0.52	0.00	0.52	0.52
City of Victoria	101,498		0.20	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.00
Langford	55,613	98,997 ^B	0.10	0.20	0.00	0.10	0.10
Colwood	21,614						

⁵ Lambrick Campus Redevelopment – FAQs. District of Saanich. December 2025. Retrieved from: [link](#)

⁶ SEAPARC Recreation Strategic Plan (2025-2035). May 2025. SEAPARC. Retrieved from: [link](#)

	Population (2025)	Aquatic Facility(ies)	Arena(s)	Curling Rink(s)	Fitness Centre(s)	Gymnasium(s)
Metchosin	5,347					
Highlands	2,923					
View Royal	13,500					
North Saanich	13,359	45,190 ^C	0.22	0.44	0.00	0.22
Central Saanich	18,550					
Sidney	13,281					
Average (Capital Regional District)		0.33	0.36	0.09	0.40	0.22
Central Vancouver Island						
Port Alberni	19,678	0.51	1.02	0.51	0.51	0.51
Campbell River	38,312	0.26	0.52	0.26	0.26	0.52
Average (Central Vancouver Island Comparator Municipalities)		0.38	0.77	0.38	0.38	0.52
Lower Mainland						
Langley (City)	36,104	0.28	0.28	0.00	0.28	0.28
White Rock	25,174	0.00	0.40	0.40	0.40	0.00
Port Moody	39,331	0.51	0.51	0.00	0.25	0.25
Pitt Meadows	21,224	0.47	1.41	0.00	0.47	0.47
West Vancouver	48,909	0.20	0.20	0.00	0.41	0.41
Mission	45,976	0.22	0.44	0.22	0.22	0.22
Average (Lower Mainland Comparator Municipalities)		0.28	0.54	0.10	0.34	0.27

The table above shows combined population figures for certain groups of municipalities as they have formed sub-regions to share recreation services. Recreation commissions formally oversee these sub-regions and jointly manage their recreation services and facilities. The commissions are listed below.

- A: SEAPARC provides recreational facilities, programs and activities for the Sooke population and residents within the JDF Electoral Area (Otter Point, Shirley, Jordan River and East Sooke). The population figures includes population estimates Sooke and the JDF Electoral Area combined and was sourced from the SEAPARC Recreation Strategic Plan (2025-2035)⁷.
- B: West Shore Parks & Recreation is governed by the West Shore Parks & Recreation Society's Board of Directors, made up of representatives from the City of Colwood, the City of Langford, the District of Metchosin, the District of Highlands and the Town of View Royal. Each municipality contributes, through tax requisition, toward the operation of the parks and recreation facilities.
- C: Panorama Recreation Centre is governed by the Peninsula Recreation Commission which is a partnership of the municipalities of Sidney, North Saanich and Central Saanich. Funding for the Commission's operations comes from user fees and requisitions from the three municipalities.
- D: The North Vancouver Recreation & Culture (NVRC) Commission is an agreement between the City and District and enables joint planning and delivery of municipal recreation and culture services.

Esquimalt demonstrates a consistently higher level of facility provision on a per 10,000 residents basis compared to both regional and external comparators. At approximately 0.53 facilities per 10,000 residents across all categories, Esquimalt exceeds the Capital Regional District averages in

⁷ SEAPARC Recreation Strategic Plan (2025-2035). May 2025. SEAPARC. Retrieved from: [link](#)

aquatic facilities (0.33), arenas (0.36), curling rinks (0.09), fitness centres (0.40), and gymnasiums (0.22). This trend generally holds when compared to Central Vancouver Island and Lower Mainland municipalities, where Esquimalt surpasses most averages, with the exception of arenas in Central Vancouver Island, where comparator communities show a notably higher ratio. Overall, the data indicates that Esquimalt is well-served, and in many cases has a higher provision of recreation facilities relative to peer municipalities, suggesting a strong level of local recreation infrastructure.

3.2.2 Net Usable Recreation Space per Capita

An additional way to assess recreation provisions is the net usable space per capita metric. As municipalities are increasingly considering a systems approach to the provision of recreation spaces, the net usable recreation space metric offers a high-level assessment of recreation space provision. The City of Vancouver is using this metric to guide recreation planning and aims to provide 0.11 m² (1.2 ft²) of community centre recreation space (excluding arenas, pools, childcare and library) per resident⁸. The City of Burnaby has set their target provision at 0.09 m² (1.0 ft²) of net usable recreation space (excluding arenas, pools, childcare and library) per resident.⁹

Looking at Esquimalt, the Township is currently exceeding the provision of 0.09 m² (1.0 ft²) of net usable recreation space. Adding up all the net usable recreation space at the Esquimalt Recreation Centre, Archie Browning Sports Centre, and Gorge Park Pavilion (excluding arenas, pools, and childcare), the Township provides 0.12 m² (1.3 ft²) of net usable recreation space.

Similarly, this comparison metric indicates that the current provision of recreation space in Esquimalt meets or exceeds the referenced municipal benchmarks. This suggests that, at a high level, the Township is providing an appropriate amount of indoor recreation space relative to its current population.

⁸ City of Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation. 2019. VanPlay: Strategic Bold Moves. Retrieved from: [link](#)

⁹ RC Strategies. (September 2020). *Burnaby Northeast Quadrant Community Space Needs Assessment*. Prepared for the City of Burnaby. Retrieved from: [link](#)

4 Community Perspectives on Recreation

Community engagement undertaken as part of the strategic plan identified a consistent set of recreation needs, pressures, and aspirations across public survey responses, interest holder sessions, committee discussions, and open house feedback.

Figure 24: Recreation Strategic Plan Landing Page Graphic



While perspectives varied across user groups and engagement formats, several themes emerged consistently throughout the process. For a detailed report of the community engagement process and findings, please refer to Appendix B – Community Engagement Summary Report.

Key findings below reflect the experiences and priorities by residents and provide context for future strategic directions, facility planning, and service considerations.

- Recreation Services and Facilities are Highly Valued and Well Used** Recreation services and facilities in Esquimalt are widely understood to be important, highly valued, and well utilized. Facilities are seen as key spaces for physical activity, social interaction, and community gathering. The range of programs offered is generally well regarded, with strong appreciation for staff, particularly in aquatics and recreation programming.
- Importance of Recreation for Community Well-Being** Recreation is recognized as a critical contributor to community health, social connection, and overall well-being. It supports physical and mental health outcomes, reduces isolation, and strengthens community cohesion. Demand for these benefits has increased in recent years, particularly among youth, seniors, and more vulnerable population groups.
- High Participation is Driving Capacity Constraints** Recreation participation levels are high, with many residents engaging in activities multiple times per week. This level of use is contributing to capacity constraints across facilities, particularly during peak periods such as evenings and weekends. Overcrowding, limited space, and scheduling challenges are key factors restricting access and limiting the Township’s ability to meet current and growing demand.
- Active Participation Across Local and Regional Facilities** While local recreation facilities are heavily used and form the foundation of service delivery, there is continued reliance on neighbouring municipalities to access certain programs, amenities, and specialized

opportunities. This reflects both strong local participation and unmet demand within the Township’s current system.

Overall Satisfaction is High, with Recurring Operational Issues Identified

Overall satisfaction with recreation facilities is high. However, recurring operational and facility-related issues were identified, including the condition of fitness equipment, functionality of showers and plumbing, cleanliness and comfort of change rooms, ventilation, storage, and layout challenges. These factors affect user experience but do not diminish overall satisfaction levels.

Community Priority for Increased Access to Aquatics and Fitness Programs

Aquatics and fitness services are consistently identified as priority areas. These services are experiencing some of the highest levels of demand and system pressure, with concerns related to pool operations, change room conditions, and fitness equipment noted.

Collectively, these themes highlight a recreation system that is highly valued and actively used but increasingly constrained by capacity and facility limitations. Recreation plays a central role in supporting community well-being, with strong demand for expanded services, particularly in aquatics and fitness, and continued investment in facility improvements.

Figure 25: Open House Session Engagement Boards within Esquimalt’s Recreation Centre Lobby



5 Level of Service Assessment

This section presents a level of service assessment to evaluate how effectively the Township is currently supporting residents with recreation facilities and services, and how well the existing system is positioned to meet future needs.

The level of service assessment draws on multiple inputs, including engagement findings, current state analysis and relevant background studies and documentation. Service levels are shaped by a combination of space availability, financial sustainability, programming viability, and equitable access. In response, an assessment framework was developed to support consistent and transparent decision-making. The framework evaluates each type of recreation service against criteria that reflect the Township’s strategic priorities, operational context, and community needs.

Based on this framework, recreation services were assessed across four interrelated criteria, as outlined in the following table.

Table 6: Level of Service Assessment Criteria Description

Criteria	Criteria Description
Capacity & Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers whether a sufficient quantity and range of this type of recreation opportunity is available to meet current and anticipated demand. • Considers the scale and distribution of facilities or spaces within Esquimalt. • Compares the local provision of space to neighbouring municipalities and the broader regional recreation context.
Condition & Functionality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers the physical condition of the facility, including building condition assessment (BCA) findings and lifecycle stage. • Assesses whether the facility supports its intended use and contemporary recreation programming.
Access & Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers physical accessibility, geographic location and ease of access for residents in the community. • Considers affordability and other barriers to participation faced by different age groups, abilities, and community members. • Considers the extent to which spaces and services are inclusive and welcoming to diverse users.
Demand & Utilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers level of use relative to intended capacity, including whether the space is overused, underused, or appropriately utilized. • Assesses peak demand pressures, scheduling constraints, and availability.

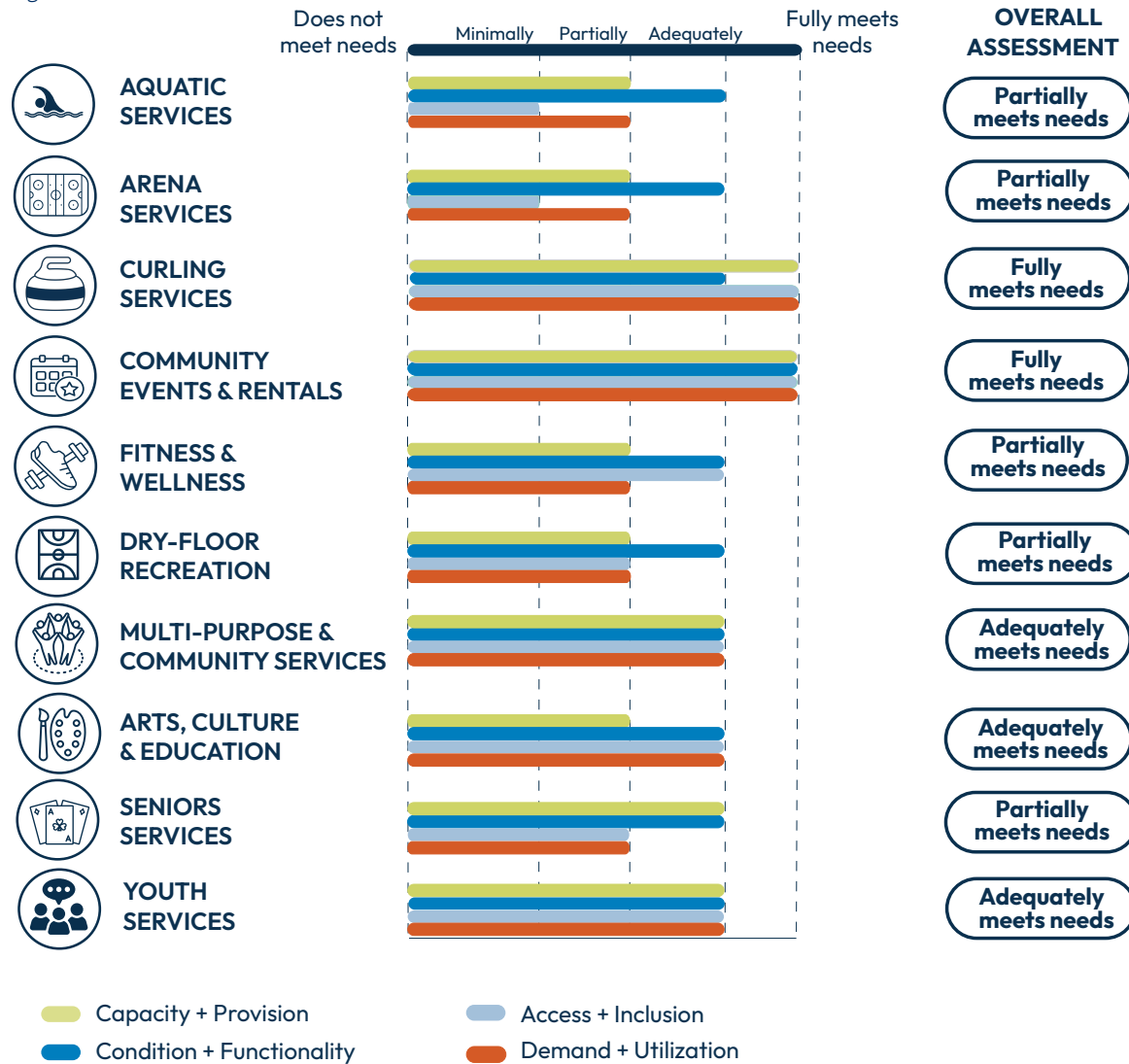
Each recreation category was assessed using this standardized framework to evaluate how well the current system meets community needs. Findings are summarized using a qualitative rating scale that reflects both current performance and alignment with evolving community demands.

- **Fully meets community needs:** Fully meets current and near-term needs; aligns with or exceeds best practice.

- **Adequately meets community needs:** Mostly meets needs; minor gaps exist but service levels are acceptable.
- **Partially meets community needs:** Some needs met; noticeable gaps or limitations; improvement required.
- **Minimally meets community needs:** Significant gaps; facility, program, or governance structure is insufficient.
- **Does not meet community needs:** Little to no provision; major investment or redesign required.

The following graphic summarizes the outcomes of the Level of Service Assessment.

Figure 26: Level of Service Assessment



The results of the assessment indicate that Esquimalt’s recreation system is functioning well overall, with all service areas fully, adequately or partially meeting community needs.

- Community event and rental spaces are performing strongly, providing appropriate capacity, flexibility, and functionality to support a range of gatherings and activities.

- Multi-purpose, cultural, and youth-oriented spaces are also generally performing well, with sufficient provision and functionality to support current programming and community use, although some minor limitations are present.
- Aquatics, arenas, fitness and wellness, dry-floor recreation, and seniors' spaces are experiencing moderate capacity pressures related to high participation levels and facility availability. While these services are functioning and meeting many current needs, there are limitations during peak periods and reduced flexibility to respond to evolving demand. Targeted improvements and optimization of existing spaces would help strengthen service delivery in these areas.

Overall, the assessment highlights a recreation system that is well used, valued by the community, and largely effective, but increasingly limited by capacity constraints in key service areas. These findings identify priority areas for future investment and inform the strategic directions that follow.

6 Summary of the Current System of Recreation in Esquimalt

The assessment of Esquimalt's recreation system identifies several key strengths and challenges that inform future planning and investment priorities. Overall, the system is well established, highly valued by residents, and performing effectively, with opportunities to enhance capacity, functionality, and flexibility over time.

Recreation facilities and services are widely appreciated by the community and are seen as important spaces for physical activity, social connection, and overall well-being. This is supported by consistently high levels of satisfaction and participation, with facilities demonstrating strong utilization and improving cost recovery. Esquimalt compares favourably to other B.C. municipalities on a per capita basis, providing a relatively high level of recreation facilities and usable space. The Township's facilities collectively support a comprehensive range of recreation services that are well aligned with current community needs.

Facilities are generally in good condition and well maintained. While the Esquimalt Recreation Centre and Archie Browning Sports Centre are aging, maintenance and capital renewal requirements are consistent with expectations and do not represent atypical risk. Operationally, the Township delivers recreation programming at a high standard, supported by recognized service excellence and a demonstrated ability to respond to changing conditions. This includes adapting to service disruptions, adjusting programming to meet demand, and implementing targeted initiatives to support recruitment and program availability. The Gorge Park Pavilion represents a successful recent investment, with strong utilization, high cost recovery, and positive community reception.

At the same time, several challenges are evident. Demand for certain programs and spaces, particularly aquatics, fitness, and some dry-floor activities, can exceed available capacity during peak periods. While these services are functioning and meeting many needs, there are limitations in flexibility and availability that affect access at specific times. Some facility components would benefit from modernization to improve functionality, accessibility, and the overall user experience, and there are opportunities to optimize the use of existing spaces to improve efficiency and expand programming potential.

Residents continue to access recreation opportunities in neighbouring municipalities for certain programs and amenities, indicating areas where local provision may be limited. In addition, parking constraints during peak periods affect access at key facilities, and heavily utilized spaces limit the Township's ability to respond to emerging needs or accommodate growth. While youth programming is available, there are fewer opportunities for informal or drop-in use, particularly in outdoor settings.

In summary, Esquimalt's recreation system provides a strong and effective foundation of facilities and services. The system is performing well overall, with all service areas meeting community needs to some degree. **Targeted improvements focused on capacity, modernization, and space optimization will help ensure the system continues to meet evolving community needs and maintain service levels over time.**

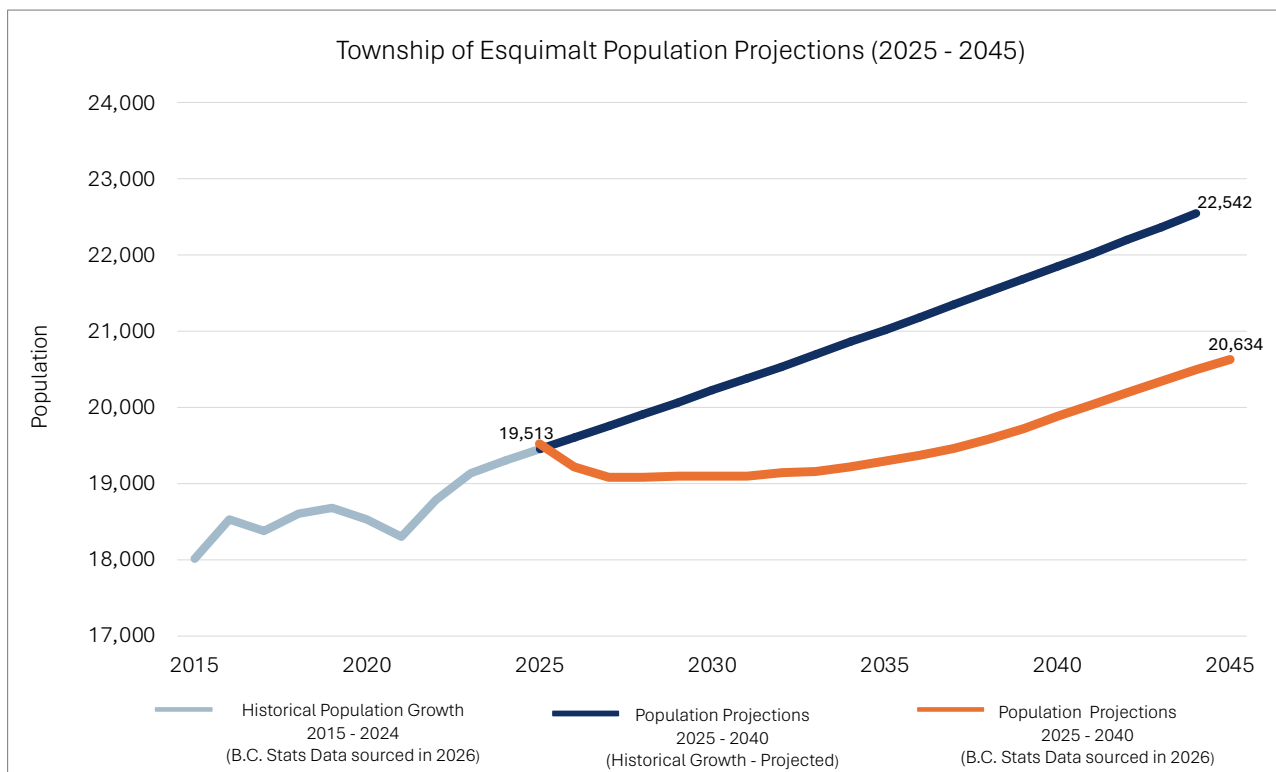
7 Future Planning Considerations

This section examines the planning factors expected to influence demand for recreation facilities and programming over time. Specifically, it considers population projections, demographic trends, and evolving recreation programming and infrastructure trends, providing context for anticipated changes in community needs and future service delivery.

7.1 Population and Demographic Trends

Data sourced from BC Stats P.E.O.P.L.E. Population Estimates and Projections estimates an increase of 1,121 new residents by 2045, representing a 5.7% increase in Esquimalt’s population over a 20-year period¹⁰. This projection, shown in Figure 27 below, was sourced from BC Stats in May 2026.

Figure 27: Township of Esquimalt Population Projections (2025-2045)



Shown in light blue, historical population growth (2015 – 2024) is also illustrated in Figure 27. The average historical growth rate was projected forward (dark blue), estimating future increases should this trend continue. A comparison between current BC Stats population projections and the projected historical trend reveals a difference of approximately 1,908 individuals.

¹⁰ BC Stats. *Population Estimates and Projections (Population App)*. Government of British Columbia, <https://bcstats.shinyapps.io/popApp/>. Accessed 10 June, 2026. Note: *BC Stats relies on the May 2026 P.E.O.P.L.E model which accounts for the following growth factors: fertility, mortality, migration, employment, immigration, housing indicators, and local plans.*

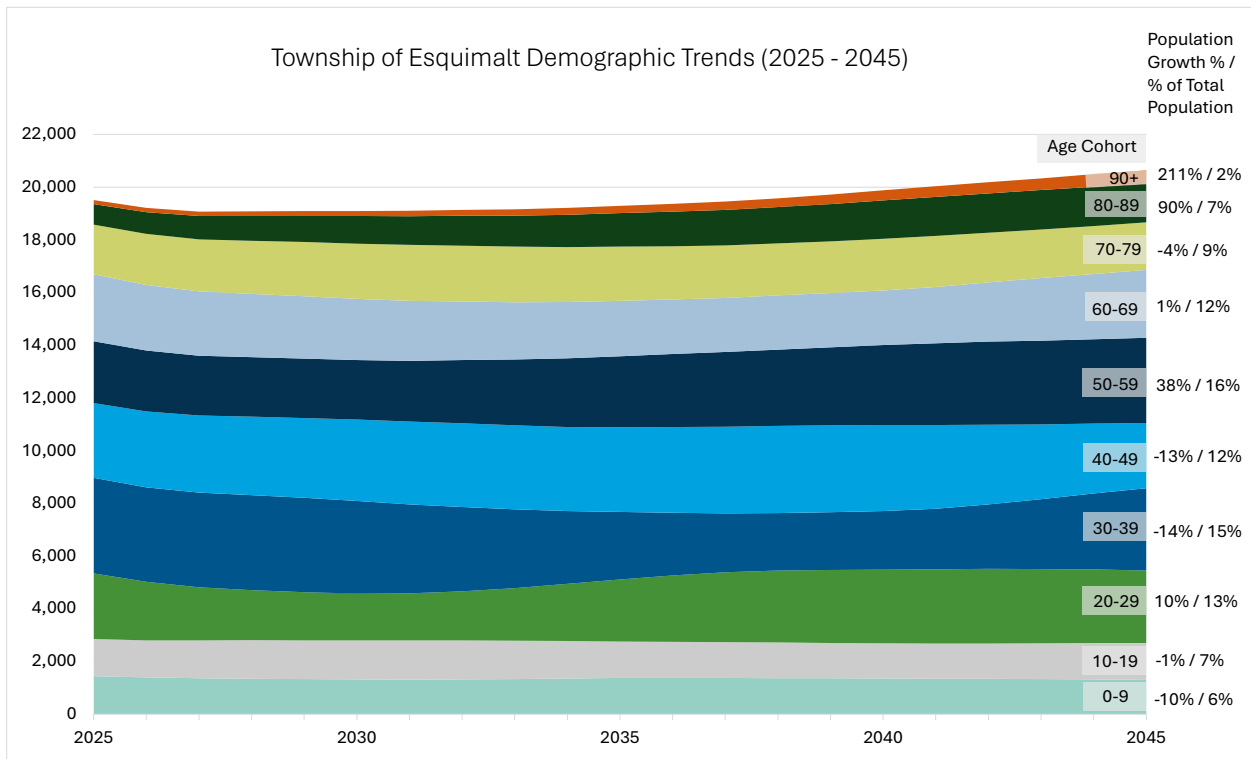
Looking at regional growth, the CRD is expected to grow from ~455,000 to ~523,000 over the same period, which represents a 15% increase. Given the regional usage of recreation facilities and services in the CRD, this growth will likely impact utilization of Esquimalt’s recreation facilities, increasing pressures on the current regional recreation system.

BC housing population projection data is one indicator of community growth; however, housing development is an additional growth indicator that is particularly relevant for understanding population growth in Esquimalt. Housing start information provided by the Township reveal that there are currently 643 units currently under construction in Esquimalt, with occupancy anticipated between 2026 and 2027. An additional 686 units are expected to come online in the next few years. If all units are built and occupied, assuming an average household size of 2.0 people¹¹, the population will increase by 2,658 residents in the short term.

Given the number of housing units being actively built and planned for, it is likely Esquimalt’s growth will exceed what is projected by BC Statistics.

In addition to population growth, it is anticipated that Esquimalt will experience demographic changes. The following graph shows the relative increase in demographic categories to 2045.

Figure 28: Township of Esquimalt Demographic Trends (2025-2045)



A summary of key demographic changes include:

¹¹ Capital Regional District. 2020 Capital Regional District Housing Needs Assessment, Draft Housing Needs Report – Appendix A (Esquimalt, BC: District of Esquimalt, n.d.), accessed May 8, 2026.

- Older adults (70+ years) are projected to experience the most significant growth over the forecast period, particularly among the 80–89 and 90+ age groups. This reflects an aging population and increasing demand for age-friendly services, wellness programming, accessibility, and social supports.
- Mid-life adults (40–69 years) are expected to see little to no overall growth. While these age groups remain a large share of the population, projections suggest relatively stable numbers over time rather than significant expansion or decline.
- Youth (10–19 years) and younger adults (20–39 years) show modest fluctuations but generally remain stable over the projection period. The 20–29 age group experiences slight growth, while the 30–39 group remains relatively consistent following an earlier decline. Overall, these cohorts do not demonstrate substantial long-term population increases
- The cohort of children under 10 years is likely to remain relatively stable with minimal growth.

7.2 Recreation and Sport Trends

There are various trends across Canada that influence physical activity, recreation participation, and programming. Having an understanding of these trends is required to ensure outcomes in these facilities and services are inclusive, sustainable, and responsive to community needs. The overarching sport and recreation trends are listed below, and more detailed review of these trends and research references can be found in Appendix C: Recreation Trends. The following trends are organized into General Recreation Trends and Recreation Activity and Sport Participation Trends.

7.2.1 General Recreation Trends

Population, Lifestyle and Activity Preference Trends

- **Physical Activity & Sedentary Behaviour:** Many Canadians, including children, youth, and adults, are not meeting physical activity guidelines, and sedentary habits remain high. Most adults exceed the recommended 9-hour daily sedentary limit, while screen time for children and youth is decreasing but still high.
- **Changing Demographics:** Throughout Canadian communities demographics are shifting with the most notable changes being an aging population and increasing cultural diversity through significant immigration numbers. These changes impact demand for certain programming and require thoughtful planning to ensure recreation is culturally response and inclusive to older adults.
- **Activity Preferences:** There is a shift towards more informal and individualized activities that can be performed at personally convenient times and places. Swimming, running, and cycling are among the most popular forms of informal recreation in Canada.
- **Participation Barriers:** Barriers to sport participation are varied and include: a lack of interest, lack of time, age, and cost. Many Canadians have limited time to participate in recreation due to work, education, and family commitments. Financial barriers limit the ability for many Canadians to participate in sport and recreation activities. Costs associated with equipment, registration and program fees, facility rentals, and transportation can be prohibitive.
- **Evolving Family Structure and Peak Recreation Demand:** As family structures continue to evolve, dual-worker households face pronounced scheduling challenges that restrict their available time for recreation. Consequently, demand for recreation services typically peaks, resulting in facility overcrowding and increased competition for program participation.

Infrastructure and Modern Facility Trends

- **Aging Infrastructure:** Recreation facilities across Canadian municipalities are aging and many are approaching the end of their functional lifespan. Significant reinvestment is required to maintain and operate aging recreation facilities.
- **Accessibility Upgrades:** Municipalities are looking to increase accessibility of recreation facilities to ensure broad community participation across all recreation services. Facilities are being renovated or replaced, prioritizing accessibility standards. Upgrades focus on areas such as pool entries, spectator viewing spaces, change rooms and washrooms, front counters, circulation routes and elevators, and fitness equipment.
- **Placemaking Destinations:** Recreation facilities are increasingly used to enhance public spaces and create community destinations, contributing to local identity and attracting visitors.
- **Increasing Social Role of Recreation Facilities:** There is an increasing social role of recreation facilities as they are being seen as social spaces where community members connect and engage in informal activities.
- **Recreation Campuses:** Sites that combine recreation uses improves convenience, increases participation, and strengthens the role of facilities as community hubs. Facilities that accommodate a wide range of activity types and have adaptable spaces that can accommodate concurrent uses are best suited to respond to changing demand.

7.2.2 Recreation Activity and Sport Participation Trends

Table 7: Recreation Activity and Sport Participation Trends

Recreation Service	Trend	Service and Infrastructure Implications
Aquatics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aquatic fitness programming and swim lessons are consistently in high demand. • Access to leisure and informal drop-in aquatic opportunities are increasingly popular. • Participation in organized aquatic sports is generally remaining stable or decreasing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is increasing demand for opportunities that enhance wellness including warm-water pools, cold plunges, sauna and steam rooms. • These amenities are sought after in conjunction with fitness activities, such as group fitness and weight room activities.
Indoor Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing demand for low barrier dry-floor recreation activities (pickleball, badminton, basketball, volleyball, etc.). • There is a shift towards more informal and individualized activities that can be performed at personally convenient times and places. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing urbanization contributes to growing demand pressure on indoor and community recreation infrastructure. • Increased need for convertible and flexible indoor spaces that can accommodate multiple activities.
Arena Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing demand for leisure ice opportunities and drop-in leisure programming. • Decreasing participation in organized ice-based sports (hockey, curling). Except women's ice hockey which is increasing in popularity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing community access to leisure ice activities (e.g. North Vancouver Shipyards skating rink). • Increasing expectation for arenas to support more than ice-based uses. They are increasingly positioned as central community hubs that facilitate

Recreation Service	Trend	Service and Infrastructure Implications
		social interaction and multi-generational engagement.
Curling Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in curling is stagnant, but Curl BC expects growth. A large proportion of curling participants are older adults. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aging curling facilities will require significant re-investment or replacement to remain operational and meet demand.
Fitness & Wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing demand for small-group training. Health and fitness are the leading motivator for sport participation. Growth in short duration and hybrid programming formats (e.g. flexible classes, varied schedules). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing fitness centres to ensure a wide variety of equipment is available for users, accommodating multiple distinct areas (stretching areas, weight rooms, cardio rooms, and free floor space). Providing easy access to wellness amenities (sauna, steam rooms, cold plunges, etc.) near fitness centres.
Arts, Culture & Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in arts and culture is increasingly informal, social, and participatory. Arts and culture are increasingly recognized for their role in supporting community wellbeing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using existing structures and spaces for multiple purposes – requires spaces to be functionally appropriate for arts, culture and education activities. Increasing integration of arts and culture programming into multi-purpose community facilities.
Seniors Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing demand for older adult programming, social opportunities and support services, especially communities across Canada experience aging demographics. Mobility / access barriers shape participation relevant to senior’s service planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase provision of low-impact and progressive activity spaces, such as gentle fitness areas and multi-purpose rooms for social and active programming Increasing need for accessible design and local proximity.
Youth Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth inactivity levels remain high nationally, supporting continued need for accessible and more welcoming youth recreation opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicated youth centres, drop-in programming, leadership and training opportunities are becoming increasingly more prevalent.
Multi-purpose and Community Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing demand for low-barrier, low-cost multi-purpose and meeting room space for local organizations and non-profits. Recreation facilities are increasingly used for crisis response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilities should be designed and managed for flexible conversion and community resilience functions. Facility allocation is an emerging focus.
Community Events & Rentals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demand for community events continues to grow as a means of fostering social connection. Event support from volunteers is declining as busy lifestyles and high cost of living impede the ability to donate time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revenue Generating Spaces: Municipalities are increasingly looking at ways to include revenue generating spaces into new and redeveloped recreation facilities, as operating costs continue to rise. Facilities or areas available for rental by private groups for events, meetings, and gatherings are being prioritized to help offset costs.

8 Recommended Strategic Directions

Building on the analysis of Esquimalt’s current recreation system and identified needs, the following strategic directions are proposed to guide the provision of recreation services over the next 15 years. The directions are organized by recreation service category and address both programming and facility considerations.

Each strategic direction includes a description of the intended focus, potential facility interventions, order-of-magnitude capital cost implications, and other relevant considerations. In addition, each direction clearly identifies the specific opportunity or challenge it responds to within its description.

A complete list of recommended strategic directions, along with indicative implementation timelines, is provided following the introduction of each direction.

Order of Magnitude Capital Cost Estimate Assumptions:

- The intention of the Order of Magnitude Cost Estimate is to provide indicative capital costs to exhibit the scale of the proposed intervention. These estimates are high level, based on early planning assumptions. Estimates should not be used for budgeting.
- Estimates are presented as construction costs only (excludes project related soft costs).
- Estimates exclude any costs related to the procurement of additional land.
- Estimates are generated utilizing the 2026 Canadian Cost Guide, Altus Group – Public Sector, Recreation/Entertainment Buildings, Vancouver.
- Estimates have not been escalated and instead are presented in 2026 dollars.

8.1 Aquatic Services



Challenge(s) to overcome/address:

- The facility is experiencing capacity constraints, particularly during peak periods. This is most evident in limited availability of swim lessons for children (and long wait lists) and aquafit programming.
- The quality and layout of existing washroom and change room spaces are negatively affecting the overall user experience.

Program/activity strategic direction(s):

- Review aquatic service delivery and program priorities to identify opportunities to expand access and increase capacity for core offerings, including swim lessons, aquafit, and drop-in leisure use. This review may consider the opportunity for resident priority access to select programs.
- Explore opportunities to improve off-peak utilization of the aquatic facility. For example, expanding partnerships with local school districts to integrate swimming lessons into the curriculum, particularly for high-demand introductory programs, thereby shifting some instructional programming to lower-use periods.

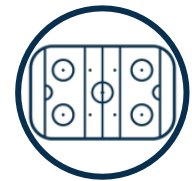
Facility/infrastructure strategic direction(s):

- Upgrade and modernize the washroom and change room facilities within Esquimalt Recreation Centre to improve functionality, accessibility, and overall user experience.

Possible facility intervention(s):

Intervention	Approx. Area (m ²) of Intervention	Approx. Capital Cost of Intervention	Approx. Timeline of Intervention
Renovate and modernize Esquimalt Recreation Centre's washrooms and changerooms.	~170m ² (current area of aquatic washrooms and changerooms)	~\$890k	~1 year

8.2 Arena Services


Challenge to overcome/address:

- The ice arena is operating at capacity during peak periods and seasonal demand, limiting overall availability.
- Access to arena ice time is constrained, reducing equitable opportunities for a broader range of user groups.
- Portions of the Archie Browning Sports Centre are outdated, negatively affecting functionality and user experience. For example, poor elevator functionality, washrooms and changerooms are dated.

Program/activity strategic direction:

- Review ice service delivery and program priorities to identify opportunities to improve equitable access to ice time, while maintaining high-quality programming.
- Develop/expand policy that defines how ice time is distributed based on established community recreation values. The policy should prioritize equitable access, while recognizing user group participation levels and demand characteristics. It should define methods for Esquimalt residents to get priority access and methods for new user groups to access facilities. Policy could consider the inclusion of expectations related to local School District access.

Facility/infrastructure strategic direction:

- Upgrade and modernize washrooms, change rooms, and audio-visual equipment to improve overall facility quality and user experience.

Possible facility intervention(s):

Intervention	Approx. Area (m ²) of Intervention	Approx. Capital Cost of Intervention	Approx. Timeline of Intervention (Design and Construction)
Renovate and modernize Archie Browning Sports Centre washrooms and changerooms.	290 m ² (area of current washrooms and changerooms)	\$920k	~12 months
Upgrade arena AV equipment.	n/a	\$850k	~8 months

Intervention	Approx. Area (m ²) of Intervention	Approx. Capital Cost of Intervention	Approx. Timeline of Intervention (Design and Construction)
Renew/renovate Sports Centre Lounge	315 m ² (area of current sports centre lounge and kitchen)	\$1.9m	~12 months

8.3 Curling Services



Challenge to overcome/address:

- The curling rink and sports centre lounge are underutilized, with existing operating agreements that do not reflect current usage patterns or cost realities. In addition, the sports centre lounge was originally designed to support alcohol service to curling club members, which does not align with current Township values, goals, or recreation practices.
- Portions of the Archie Browning Sports Centre are outdated, negatively affecting functionality and user experience. For example, the sports centre lounge and washrooms are dated.

Program/activity strategic direction:

- Update operating agreement with Esquimalt Curling Club to reflect modern use and cost realities. Review ice service delivery and program priorities to identify opportunities to improve equitable access to ice time, while maintaining high-quality programming.
- Develop/expand policy that clearly defines how curling ice time is distributed based on established community recreation values. The policy should prioritize equitable access, while recognizing user group participation levels and demand characteristics.

Facility/infrastructure strategic direction:

- Assess opportunities for renewal of the sports centre lounge within Archie Browning Sports Centre with the goal of increasing participation and equity of access.

Intervention	Approx. Area (m ²) of Intervention	Approx. Capital Cost of Intervention	Approx. Timeline of Intervention (Design and Construction)
Renovate and modernize Archie Browning Sports Centre washrooms and changerooms.	Identified in 8.2 Arena Services	Identified in 8.2 Arena Services	Identified in 8.2 Arena Services
Renew/renovate Sports Centre Lounge	Identified in 8.2 Arena Services	Identified in 8.2 Arena Services	Identified in 8.2 Arena Services

8.4 Fitness and Wellness



Challenge to overcome/address:

- The existing facility is operating at or near full capacity, resulting in overcrowding and limited access to fitness services. There is demonstrated demand for additional space, including expanded weight training areas, studio space, and dedicated stretching areas.
- Equipment maintenance timelines and service disruptions are impacting availability and diminishing the overall user experience.
- Anticipated population growth and continued residential development are expected to further increase demand, creating a future shortfall in fitness and wellness service provision.

Program/activity strategic direction:

- Increase awareness of programming offered within the Crow’s Nest at Archie Browning Sports Centre to maximise participation and utilization of existing spaces.

Facility/infrastructure strategic direction:

- Undertake a planning assessment to evaluate opportunities for expanding fitness and wellness space at either Esquimalt Recreation Centre or Archie Browning Sports Centre.
- Consider the inclusion of complementary amenities, such as cold plunge pools, saunas, and steam rooms, to enhance the overall wellness offering, increase participation, and broaden recreational opportunities.

Possible facility intervention(s):

Intervention	Approx. Area (m ²) of Intervention	Approx. Capital Cost of Intervention	Approx. Timeline of Intervention (Design and Construction)
Expanded Fitness Space at Esquimalt Recreation Centre	~300 m ²	\$2.7m (assumes new construction)	~18 months
Renovation of space within Archie Browning Sports Centre to accommodate fitness and multi-purpose programming activities.	~300 m ²	\$1.8m (assumes renovation of existing space)	~12 months

8.5 Arts, Culture and Education



Challenge to overcome/address:

- Limited availability of arts and culture appropriate spaces require programs to be delivered across multiple facility types, resulting in inconsistent service delivery.
- There is a need to maintain and expand access to arts and cultural programming across a broad range of age groups and interests.

Program/activity strategic direction:

- Expand access to arts and cultural programming across age groups and interests.

- Explore partnership opportunities (expanded and new) with school districts to increase community access to school-based facilities (e.g., theatre spaces).

Facility/infrastructure strategic direction:

- Improve the flexibility and functionality of multi-purpose spaces to better support arts and cultural programming.

Possible facility intervention(s):

Intervention	Approx. Area (m ²) of Intervention	Approx. Capital Cost of Intervention	Approx. Timeline of Intervention (Design and Construction)
Retrofit multi-purpose rooms with finishes that support arts, culture and education activities (durable and easily cleanable flooring or sprung flooring for movement, utility sink, flexible AV and lighting)	Craigflower: 90 m ² Kanaka: 40 m ² Pioneer A: 90 m ² Pioneer B: 80 m ² Fernhill: 20 m ² ABSC Crow's Nest: 242 m ² Total: 562 m ²	\$2.5m	~12 months

8.6 Seniors Services



Challenge to overcome/address:

- There is a need to continually adapt programming and social connection opportunities to respond to a growing senior population.
- Access to informal, drop-in spaces that support social connection is currently limited.

Program/activity strategic direction:

- Continue to expand programs that support active living, health, and social connection for seniors.
- Assess opportunities to broaden the range and variety of programming that promotes active lifestyles and community connection.
- Increase the availability of social programming and informal gathering opportunities.

Facility/infrastructure strategic direction:

- Enhance existing seniors' spaces within Esquimalt Recreation Centre to improve comfort, accessibility, and overall user experience, ensuring spaces are adaptable to evolving needs.
- Address physical accessibility issues present at Esquimalt Recreation Centre and Archie Browning Sports Centre. An updated Accessibility Audit of the recreation facilities (previously completed in 2009) should inform this work.

Possible facility intervention(s):

Intervention	Approx. Area (m ²) of Intervention	Approx. Capital Cost of Intervention	Approx. Timeline of Intervention (Design and Construction)
Address accessibility challenges with a focus on elder focused design principles with current facilities.	To be determined through development of an Accessibility Audit.	TBD	TBD

8.7 Youth Services



Challenge to overcome/address:

- Access to informal, youth-friendly spaces, particularly for drop-in and unstructured use, is constrained within existing facilities.
- There is a need to provide a broader range of age-appropriate environments, including outdoor spaces, that support social interaction, physical activity, and youth-led programming.

Program/activity strategic direction:

- Expand both informal and structured programming opportunities that foster youth engagement, social connection, and active participation.
- Increase the variety and accessibility of low-barrier, drop-in programs.

Facility/infrastructure strategic direction:

- Upgrade existing youth-dedicated spaces within Esquimalt Recreation Centre, including improvements to furnishings, technology, lighting, and spatial layout to create a more inviting and inclusive environment.
- Explore the development of dedicated outdoor youth amenities, such as a basketball court, to support informal recreation.

Possible facility intervention(s):

Intervention	Approx. Area (m ²) of Intervention	Approx. Capital Cost of Intervention	Approx. Timeline of Intervention (Design and Construction)
Upgrade and modernize existing Youth Centre.	120 m ²	\$120k	~6 months
Explore development of outdoor youth appropriate space.	Example: Basketball court development. ~510 m ²	\$140k	~6 months

8.8 Dry-Floor Recreation



Challenge to overcome/address:

- Limited availability of indoor dry floor recreation space.
- Increasing demand for both: structured programming (e.g., basketball, volleyball, roller derby), and unstructured/casual use.
- Growing demand in recent years has placed pressure on existing court users and limited scheduling flexibility.

Program/activity strategic direction:

- Expand programming opportunities for gymnasium and court-based activities to better align with growing demand.
- Explore joint use agreements with local School Districts to increase community access to gymnasium space.

Facility/infrastructure strategic direction:

- Redevelop the existing outdoor lacrosse box with a cover to enable year-round use. Design the facility to support multi-functional use, including lacrosse, pickleball, basketball, community and social activities. Include upgraded support spaces, such as, storage, washrooms, gathering/social areas.

Possible facility intervention(s):

Intervention	Approx. Area (m ²) of Intervention	Approx. Capital Cost of Intervention	Approx. Timeline of Intervention (Design and Construction)
Redevelop lacrosse box adjacent to the Esquimalt Recreation Centre.	1,800 m ² (lacrosse box and area for support spaces)	\$5.7m	~18 months

8.9 Multi-Purpose and Community Services



Challenge to overcome/address:

- Some congestion occurs during peak use times, and some activities are accommodated in spaces that are not functionally appropriate for their intended use.

Program/activity strategic direction:

- Continue to deliver flexible, high-quality programming that responds to a broad range of community needs and interests.
- Explore and formalise Joint Use Agreements with local School Districts to expand community access to underutilised school spaces and support program delivery.

Facility/infrastructure strategic direction:

- Refresh rooms within ERC to improve functionality and adaptability, including enhanced acoustics, improved storage capacity, and the introduction of movable partitions where appropriate to support multi-use configurations and concurrent programming.

Possible facility intervention(s):

Intervention	Approx. Area (m ²) of Intervention	Approx. Capital Cost of Intervention	Approx. Timeline of Intervention (Design and Construction)
Refresh ERC studios and ABSC Crow's Nest	Craigflower: 90 m ² Kanaka: 40 m ² Pioneer A: 90 m ² Pioneer B: 80 m ² Fernhill: 20 m ² ABSC Crow's Nest: 242 m ² Total: 562 m ²	\$2.5m	~12-18 months

8.10 Community Events and Rentals



Challenge to overcome/address:

- Some unmet demand for affordable rental space for community groups and non-profit organizations.
- There is a considerable reliance on volunteers to support events, alongside a declining availability of volunteers to fulfil these roles.

Program/activity strategic direction:

- Continue to support community events and rental opportunities that foster social connection and community cohesion.
- 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.
- Expand access to low-cost rental space for community groups and non-profit organizations delivering community-based programs and services.

Facility/infrastructure strategic direction:

- Maintain existing facilities to ensure continued availability of functional, reliable, and accessible rental spaces.

Possible facility intervention(s):

Intervention	Approx. Area (m ²) of Intervention	Approx. Capital Cost of Intervention	Approx. Timeline of Intervention (Design and Construction)
n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

8.11 Strategic Directions, Actions and Timeline

Strategic directions across service categories include several overlapping and cross-cutting recommendations. This section consolidates the actions identified in the preceding service-specific sections into a coordinated implementation framework, removing duplication and aligning related initiatives. Actions are organized across three planning horizons: short term (0–5 years), medium term (5–10 years), and long term (10–15 years), and are grouped into programming/activity and facility/infrastructure priorities.

Table 8: Consolidated 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"> • Spaces suitable for arts and culture programming. • Dry-floor recreation activities. • General multi-purpose rental spaces. 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

Action Item	Description	Short-Term (0-5)	Med.-Term (5-10)	Long-Term (10-15)
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

Table 9: Consolidated Facility/Infrastructure Strategic 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	-

Action Item	Description	Short-Term (0-5)	Med.-Term (5-10)	Long-Term (10-15)
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

9 Conclusion and Next Steps

The Recreation Strategic Plan confirms that Esquimalt’s recreation system is strong, well utilized, and valued by the community. The Township provides a high level of service relative to comparable municipalities, supported by a diverse range of facilities, programs, and partnerships that contribute to community wellbeing and quality of life.

At the same time, the system is entering a period of increasing pressure. High participation levels, population growth, evolving recreation trends, and regional demand are contributing to capacity constraints across several service categories. Additionally, aging infrastructure and functional limitations within key facilities highlight the need for targeted reinvestment and modernization.

The strategic directions outlined in this plan provide an actionable path forward. Rather than focusing solely on expansion, the recommended approach emphasizes:

- 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.

To advance the plan, the Township should prioritize the following actions:

Initiate Short-Term Priority Projects (0–5 Years)

- Develop/expand and implement use policy across key service areas to improve community access.
- Formalize and expand partnerships with local school districts and community organizations for increased community access to space.
- Review existing agreements (e.g., curling) to align with current demand and operational realities.
- Assess feasibility and plan for renovations of washrooms and changerooms at Esquimalt Recreation Centre and Archie Browning Sports Centre.
- Undertake feasibility assessments for fitness space expansion and lacrosse box redevelopment.
- Conduct a comprehensive accessibility audit of major recreation facilities.
- Initiate program expansion and service optimization in high-demand areas (aquatics, fitness, dry-floor recreation).

Advance Medium-Term Projects (5–10 Years)

- Modernize priority facility components at ERC and ABSC, including sports centre lounge, program spaces, and multi-purpose rooms.
- Develop/explore a modern volunteer framework.
- Enhance youth and seniors’ spaces and programming opportunities.
- Continue to optimize underutilized spaces and improve system efficiency.

Plan for Long-Term Infrastructure Renewal (10–15 Years)

- Develop a comprehensive Recreation Facilities Master Plan to guide long-term renewal, replacement, or expansion of aging assets.
- Align future capital investments with population growth, regional context, and evolving service demands.

Appendix A: Documentation Review

Several municipal planning documents and initiatives were reviewed as part of the first stages of the study given their relevance in planning for future recreation services.

Table 10: Relevant planning and Township documents

Document	Relevancy
Recreation Facility Floor Plans	Floor plans of the Archie Browning Sports Centre, Esquimalt Recreation Centre, and Gorge Park Pavilion were provided to inform the study.
Township of Esquimalt Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan (2004)	<p>This strategic plan provides a framework to guide parks and recreation planning and decision-making. It addresses why parks and recreation are important, what the Township aims to achieve, how goals will be met, and which specific actions are required.</p> <p>The plan establishes the benefits of recreation as core values, defines a strategic vision for the community, and identifies a set of prioritized initiatives with implementation steps. In developing the plan, it was recognized that the future of parks and recreation is closely linked to the broader vision for the Township, ensuring alignment with community-wide goals.</p>
<p>An Accessibility Audit for the Township of Esquimalt</p> <p>(Social Planning and Research Council of BC; 2009)</p>	<p>This report presents the findings and recommendations of an Accessibility Audit conducted in 2009 to assess the level of accessibility across community amenities in the Township of Esquimalt. The report includes municipal buildings, parks and recreation facilities, pedestrian infrastructure, retail and hospitality establishments, and places of worship. The findings were reviewed with the Accessibility Advisory Committee through a prioritization workshop, resulting in recommended actions for Council's consideration.</p> <p>Reviewing existing accessibility conditions, the study identified barriers and areas for improvement for the Township. Further, it outlined practical steps the Township could take to become more inclusive and accessible for people with disabilities. It also sought to increase awareness and understanding of accessibility challenges within the community.</p> <p>Overall, the Township was found to demonstrate leadership in accessibility through committee support, surveys, and facility improvements. The report recommended continued support for the Access Advisory Committee, prioritization of physical accessibility upgrades, securing funding for improvements, preventing future barriers through inclusive design practices, encouraging accessibility in non-municipal facilities, and increasing community awareness.</p>

Document	Relevancy
Esquimalt Age-Friendly Assessment (2016)	<p>This report presents the Esquimalt Age-Friendly Assessment, building on the Township’s recognition as an Age-friendly BC Community in 2012. The assessment engaged older adults and community organizations to develop goals, objectives, and policies that support seniors’ participation, health, and ability to age in place.</p> <p>The report addresses the anticipated growth of the senior population, planning for a complete and safe community with essential services, and provides recommendations for inclusion in the review and update of the Official Community Plan. It also aims to foster future community partnerships that advance Esquimalt’s age-friendly initiatives.</p>
Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 2922 (2018)	<p>The Official Community Plan (OCP) provides a framework guiding Council decisions on planning, land use, and community development within Esquimalt, including recreation and wellness services. It sets objectives and policies to ensure facilities, programs, and spaces meet diverse community needs and support lifelong active living.</p> <p>Key recreation-related elements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities (10.3.1): Design recreation, wellness, and cultural facilities with flexibility to accommodate changing demographics, eliminate physical access barriers, and allow spaces to be adapted for evolving user needs. • Active Living (10.3.2): Promote healthy, active lifestyles for all ages through unstructured play, organized programs, and design solutions that reduce barriers for children, youth, and aging populations. • Community Connections (10.3.3): Enhance opportunities for social interaction and connection to the physical environment via parks, public spaces, and a multi-use trail network linking key parks and residential areas. • Partnerships (10.3.4): Collaborate with stakeholders to co-plan and co-deliver sport events, festivals, and community activities, and guide future recreation and wellness facility planning to meet community needs. <p>Overall, the OCP integrates recreation and wellness into the broader vision for Esquimalt, ensuring that planning supports active lifestyles, social connection, and adaptable, accessible spaces for all residents.</p>
Esquimalt Risk Assessment Summary Report (Together for Climate Project,	<p>This report summarizes the Township of Esquimalt’s climate risk assessment, identifying the most significant climate-related risks and outlining objectives for proactive planning. The assessment includes current conditions and anticipated climate projections, and is intended as a living document to be updated regularly as climate science and local capacity evolve</p>

Document	Relevancy
ICLEI Canada; 2019)	<p>Key climate risks identified include extreme rainfall affecting sewer systems, increased demand on public services, heat-related health impacts, stress on trees and biodiversity, damage to infrastructure from extreme weather, declining air quality, wildfire risk, and sea level rise affecting cultural and historical sites. Risks are prioritized to focus planning and adaptation efforts where they are most needed.</p> <p>The report outlines objectives to guide action, including protecting infrastructure and the natural environment, safeguarding public health, minimizing climate risks, and integrating climate considerations into decision-making. In a subsequent phase, the Township will develop specific actions and assign responsibilities to address Esquimalt’s top climate vulnerabilities.</p>
Township Of Esquimalt Strategic Priorities 2019-2023	<p>This document outlines the Township of Esquimalt’s strategic priorities for 2019–2023, providing guidance for Council, staff, and community stakeholders in planning, decision-making, and service delivery. The priorities inform operational strategies and work plans, ensuring that municipal actions align with Council’s goals and the community’s evolving needs.</p> <p>Key recreation and parks priorities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completing the Esquimalt Gorge Park restoration and education plan. • Developing operational plans for the new Gorge Park Pavilion with public consultation. • Completing construction of the Gorge Park Pavilion, fully utilizing the \$17 million McLoughlin amenity funds. <p>Other strategic priorities focus on local services and infrastructure, including identifying infrastructure repair needs and proactively planning for replacements to maintain safe, functional, and sustainable community assets.</p>
Township of Esquimalt Active Transportation Network Plan (Watt Consulting Group; 2022)	<p>This report presents the Township of Esquimalt’s Active Transportation Network Plan (ATNP), the community’s first comprehensive plan to guide walking, cycling, and rolling throughout the Township. The plan aligns with the Township’s broader strategic priorities, including health, livability, and sustainability, and implements the vision of a connected, safe, and enjoyable active transportation network for residents of all ages and abilities.</p> <p>The ATNP sets four key planning goals: improve protection from motor vehicles, reduce climate impacts, enhance active transportation facilities, and strengthen regional connectivity. To achieve these goals, the plan identifies five priority actions, including developing a quick-build cycling network, lowering vehicle speeds, improving intersections, filling sidewalk gaps, and dedicating staff to implement the plan. The report emphasizes the need for financial investment, external funding, and ongoing monitoring to</p>

Document	Relevancy
	<p>successfully deliver a safer, more accessible, and sustainable active transportation network in Esquimalt.</p>
<p>Township of Esquimalt Annual Report 2024 (2024)</p>	<p>This report highlights key achievements, projects, and initiatives across municipal services. It provides an overview of capital investments, facility upgrades, and program enhancements that support community wellness, active lifestyles, and accessible public spaces. As part of Council’s current-term priorities, the report outlines areas of focus including the Asset Management Program, with the development of a comprehensive Recreation Inventory and Plan.</p> <p>Key Parks & Recreation highlights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archie Browning Sports Centre: HVAC and roof replacement, including a new arena condenser, cooling tower, and electric dehumidifier, reducing GHG emissions. • Esquimalt Recreation Centre: Full sauna refurbishment with new cedar walls, ceiling, benches, tile flooring, and improved lighting. • Non-capital projects: Installation and maintenance of new pickleball courts at Archie Browning Sports Centre, with programs and rentals exceeding expectations, and two new flagpoles at the Gorge Park Pavilion. • Gorge Park Pavilion: Continued popularity as a venue for events, programs, and meetings, with rising rental demand. • The Township received the BC Recreation and Parks Association Facility Excellence Award for capital projects over \$3 million. <p>The report also includes Financial Statements, covering Management’s Responsibility for the Financial Statements, the Independent Auditor’s Report, and detailed Financial Statements. These statements provide insight into the Township’s fiscal position, operating results, and cash flows for 2024.</p>
<p>Township of Esquimalt Council Priorities Plan 2023-2026 (Township of Esquimalt; 2025)</p>	<p>This report outlines the Township of Esquimalt’s Council Priorities Plan for 2023–2026, identifying key projects and initiatives to be undertaken during the Council’s term. The Township provides essential services, including parks and recreation, sewer, transportation infrastructure, fire protection, land use planning, and economic development, with these services reflected in the annual financial and service reports.</p> <p>Key initiatives under Good Governance and Organizational Excellence include the completion of the Parks & Recreation Asset Management Program, whose findings will inform the Facilities Master Plan, and the ongoing Recreation Strategic Plan. The report serves as a framework for guiding Council priorities, project implementation, and service delivery over the 2023–2026 term.</p>

Document	Relevancy
<p>Esquimalt Recreation Centre Building Condition Assessment</p> <p>(WSP Canada Inc.; 2025)</p>	<p>This report provides a 20-year capital renewal plan for the Esquimalt Recreation Centre, focusing on system and component replacements (excluding energy efficiency and site works). The report indicates that the building is in reasonable condition, with original portions at 52 years old and the majority renovated in 2004. Lifecycle renewal of major components is expected over the planning horizon.</p> <p>Key findings highlight corrosion in steel columns and joists in the pool area, aging roofs and metal cladding, and mechanical priorities including the pool AHU/dehumidifier, outdoor AHUs, domestic hot water tank, and solar heat recovery system. Specialty pool systems will require ongoing maintenance and component replacement. Windows remain serviceable.</p> <p>The report excludes interior finishes, site works, and tenant-specific equipment. Overall, the facility is functional but will need ongoing structural and mechanical investment to maintain reliable operation.</p>
<p>Archie Browning Sports Centre Building Condition Assessment</p> <p>(WSP Canada Inc.; 2025)</p>	<p>This report provides a 20-year capital renewal plan for the Archie Browning Sports Centre, focusing on system and component replacements (excluding energy efficiency and site works). At 65 years old, the facility is in serviceable condition but approaching the lifecycle stage where major systems and building elements require renewal.</p> <p>Key findings highlight aging building envelope components (south balcony, windows, flat roofs, gutters), mechanical systems (boilers, HVAC, dehumidifiers, ice rink heaters), and ice infrastructure (slabs, brine piping, compressors, chillers). Electrical distribution and lighting are nearing renewal, and the pedestrian lift is outdated. The report identifies these areas as priorities for capital investment over the next 20 years to maintain safe, reliable operation.</p> <p>Energy upgrades, interior finishes, and tenant-specific equipment were excluded from the assessment.</p>
<p>2026 Esquimalt Community Survey</p>	<p>This survey summarizes resident perceptions of quality of life, municipal services, and key community issues, based on 376 responses (23.5% response rate). Overall results indicate very high satisfaction with living in Esquimalt and with Township services.</p> <p>Residents report strong quality of life, with 96% rating it as good or very good, alongside high ratings as a place to raise children (97%) and retire (89%). Access to nature is a defining strength, with 45% identifying parks and the waterfront as the most valued aspect of living in the Township.</p> <p>Traffic, transportation, and parking are the primary community concern (19%), followed by housing affordability (12%). Traffic is also the leading</p>

Document	Relevancy
	<p>environmental issue, along with concerns related to development and density.</p> <p>Satisfaction with municipal services is high (93%), with staff rated positively for courtesy, accessibility, and knowledge. Recreation facilities and program offerings are also viewed very positively, with residents reporting high levels of satisfaction.</p> <p>Overall, the Township is perceived as delivering good value for taxes, with 77% in agreement, while transportation and growth pressures remain key areas for ongoing focus.</p> <p><i>Note: This survey was conducted separately and not a part of the Recreation Strategic Plan.</i></p>

Appendix B: Community Engagement Summary

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Community engagement conducted in early 2026 as part of the Esquimalt Recreation Strategic Plan demonstrates strong participation, high overall satisfaction with existing recreation services and facilities, and direction on where improvements are most needed. Findings consistently point to strong participation in recreation services, growing capacity pressures, and clear community priorities for future investment. The following key findings summarize what we heard through the engagement process.

Importance of Recreation for Community Well-Being



Recreation is widely viewed as essential to community health, social connection, and overall well-being. Participants emphasize its role in supporting physical and mental health, reducing isolation, and fostering inclusive and connected communities. Demand for these benefits has increased in recent years, especially among youth, seniors and vulnerable populations.

Recreation Services are Highly Valued and Well Used



Across all engagement methods, recreation services and facilities in Esquimalt are consistently described as important and well used. Survey respondents, interview participants, and open house attendees identify recreation facilities as key spaces for physical activity, social interaction, and community gathering. Many participants acknowledge the range of programs offered and expressed appreciation for staff, especially in aquatics and recreation programming.

High Participation is Driving Capacity Constraints



Public survey results indicate high levels of recreation participation, with a majority of respondents engaging in recreation activities multiple times per week. Interest holder interviews and open house feedback reinforce that demand frequently exceeds available capacity, especially during evenings and weekends. Overcrowding in facilities is identified as the most common barrier to recreation participation from survey respondents, and interview participants reinforce that limited space and scheduling constraints are restricting the Township's ability to meet current and growing demand.

Active Participation Across Local and Regional Facilities



Survey results indicate that recreation participation is very high, with the majority of respondents engaging in recreation several times a week. The Esquimalt Recreation Centre was identified as the primary recreation facility residents attend. However, respondents also report leaving Esquimalt to access recreation facilities and services.

Overall Satisfaction is High, with Recurring Operational Issues Identified



Survey respondents report high overall satisfaction with recreation facilities. However, written feedback from the survey and open house sessions, as well as interest holder sessions, reference operational and facility-related issues. Commonly identified concerns include the condition of fitness equipment, functionality of showers and plumbing, cleanliness and comfort of change rooms, ventilation, storage, and layout challenges.

Community Priority for Increased Access to Aquatics and Fitness Programs



Aquatics and fitness services generate the highest volume of comments across engagement methods. Survey respondents prioritize aquatics and fitness programs and spaces, while interest holders and staff identified these as the areas experiencing some of the greatest pressure. Open house feedback includes numerous comments related to pool operation, change rooms, and fitness equipment conditions as well.



INTRODUCTION

The Township of Esquimalt has undertaken a Recreation Strategic Plan to guide the future planning and delivery of recreation facilities, spaces, programs, and services within Esquimalt for the next 15 years. The approach to complete this study has been organized into five stages of work, detailed in the figure below. Each stage is intended to build consecutively on the previous stage and advise the stages that comes after it.



Stage 3: *Community Needs & Aspirations* involved community engagement to better understand current recreation use, identify gaps and barriers, and gather feedback on future priorities and opportunities. This consisted of a public survey promoted on the Township’s social media channels, as well as through printed materials, such as posters around its recreation facilities. It also involved interest holder sessions, presentations to two relevant committees, as well as public open houses. This report summarizes findings from community engagement conducted as part of the Esquimalt Recreation Strategic Plan. The table below presents further details of the community engagement conducted throughout this study.

Table 11: Community engagement activities completed for the Esquimalt Recreation Strategic Plan

Activity	Details	Participation
Public Survey	Active Feb. 11 th – Mar. 11 th , 2026	725 responses
Interview Sessions	Feb 18 th – Mar 4 th , 2026	4 sessions, 19 participants
Committee Presentations	Jan 28 th , 2026 Feb 25 th , 2026	Esquimalt Environment, Parks, and Recreation Advisory Committee & Capital West Accessibility Committee
Public Open House Session	April 11 th , 2026	Community members and recreation users

The purpose of these engagement activities was to gather insight into the community’s priorities, needs, and potential interest in recreational changes.

The public survey was created as a tool to engage with community members, especially those with a strong interest in recreation services and regular usage of recreation facilities in Esquimalt. While the survey included responses from several Esquimalt residents, it was not intended to be a statistically representative sample of the entire population of Esquimalt. The survey findings, therefore, reflect the

views of those who are actively engaged with and use recreational services, rather than the broader community. The insights gained through interviews and public open houses complement this input and provide additional context for the findings.

A public open house session was held at Archie Browning Sports Centre and the Esquimalt Recreation Centre. This provided residents with an opportunity to validate findings from earlier engagement phases, learn about the Recreation Strategic Plan process, and provide input on draft strategic directions. Participants were invited to express their level of support through dot-voting exercises and to provide written feedback through sticky notes.

The main body of this report focuses on high-level themes and takeaways, while detailed data tables, charts, and full engagement results are provided in the appendices for reference.



PUBLIC SURVEY FINDINGS

This section presents a high-level summary of key themes emerging from the public survey, including who participated, how facilities are currently used, levels of satisfaction, and priorities for future investment. Detailed survey results and full response distributions are included in Appendix A1.

Respondent Demographics

Survey participation was strongly concentrated among Esquimalt residents, with 79% of respondents identifying as residents of the Township and 90% reporting a V9A postal code. Responses reflected a broad range of household types and age groups, including families with young children, working-age adults, and seniors. The largest group of survey respondents consisted of individuals in the 40-49 age range, alongside households with children aged 0-4, reflecting a strong presence of family households within the respondent group.

Usage of Esquimalt Facilities

Survey results indicate high levels of recreation participation in Esquimalt, with 73% of respondents engaging in recreational activities several times per week. The Esquimalt Recreation Centre is the primary recreation hub within the community, with 81% of respondents reporting use of the facility. Participation trends reflect a strong emphasis on fitness (93%) and aquatics (74%), highlighting sustained pressure on core, year-round recreational activities. Other activities, including ice and arena activities (26%), arts (26%), social and community programming (26%), play an important but secondary role within the recreation system.

Usage of Facilities Outside of Esquimalt

Despite strong local participation, many respondents also reported accessing recreation services outside of Esquimalt. Approximately 73% of respondents indicated that they travel to other municipalities for recreation opportunities, most commonly for aquatics, fitness, and sports-related activities.

Frequently used regional facilities included Saanich Commonwealth Place (30%), G.R. Pearkes Recreation Centre (27%), Oak Bay Recreation Centre (16%) and West Shore Recreation Centre (16%). Other responses indicate that survey respondents who leave Esquimalt for recreational facilities that were not listed as survey options access a wide range of facilities across the Greater Victoria region, including public recreation centres, private gyms and studios, school-based facilities, and outdoor spaces like parks and trails. Frequently referenced destinations listed in the free form responses for “other” included private gyms and studios, Naden Athletic Centre (mentioned despite being in Esquimalt), and Victoria West Community Centre.

Aquatics emerged as the leading activity category for which residents travel outside the Township (41% of respondents). This was followed by fitness and exercise including strength training, cardio, and group fitness classes (25%), followed by sports and physical play such as indoor and outdoor sports, and drop-in play (20%). Open-ended responses also referenced travel outside Esquimalt for activities not explicitly listed in the survey, including outdoor recreation and golf.

Current Satisfaction

Survey results indicate a high overall level of satisfaction with recreation facilities in Esquimalt, with the majority of respondents reporting that they are satisfied or very satisfied (78%), and a very small proportion indicating dissatisfaction (7%).

Despite strong overall satisfaction, responses suggest variability across different service areas. Aquatic, fitness, and arena amenities show generally positive feedback, though with some levels of dissatisfaction that may reflect capacity constraints, facility limitations, or evolving user expectations. The following operational and facility-related concerns were identified:

- Persistent maintenance issues, particularly related to broken or out of service fitness equipment.
- Shower and plumbing concerns, including inconsistent or cold-water temperatures and water pressure issues.
- Cleanliness challenges, especially in change rooms and shared spaces.
- Poor ventilation or air circulation in fitness and program areas.
- Storage and layout inefficiencies, resulting in crowded or spaces that are hard to navigate.

Higher levels of “not applicable” responses to levels of satisfaction were observed for programming related to youth, seniors, and curling amenities. This suggests that certain of these services may not be widely used across the population or survey respondents, rather than indicating poor performance, and may reflect differences in awareness or relevance among user groups.

Among respondents who expressed dissatisfaction, the most commonly identified issues include parking challenges (28%), overcrowding (22%), and concerns related to facility functionality (24%), such as showers and water temperature. These insights point to targeted opportunities for operational and facility improvements.

Recreation Facility Inclusivity and Barriers

Survey responses suggest that recreation facilities are widely perceived as inclusive (90%), with the vast majority of respondents feeling that spaces are welcoming to people of different ages, genders, ethnicities, and ability levels. However, perceptions of how well recreation programs support different age groups vary. Adults (71%) and seniors (63%) are viewed as very well supported, followed by children (59%) and youth (43%).

Survey results indicate that participation in recreation is influenced by a combination of personal, logistical, and facility-related barriers. The most commonly identified barriers for households include overcrowding, reinforcing high demand and potential capacity limitations in facilities. Program timing and inconvenient hours is also identified by almost half of the respondents, followed by lack of time, suggesting that competing priorities and busy schedules limit participation for many residents. In addition to the structured survey responses, open-ended feedback highlights the following barriers:

- Overcrowding and capacity limitations, especially in pools, fitness areas, and popular programs
- Registration challenges, with programs filling extremely quickly and limited availability for high demand activities like swim lessons, camps, and fitness classes
- Parking constraints
- Scheduling limitations, especially a lack of evening and weekend programming for working adults
- Affordability concerns for certain programs and facilities
- Transportation and access challenges, including bike security and transit connectivity

Community Demand

Survey respondents indicate strong demand for aquatic programs (42%), fitness programs and services (40%), and more drop-in swimming opportunities (30%). Demand for facility types closely aligns with program preferences. Fitness spaces (48%) and aquatic spaces (47%) are identified as the highest priorities, indicating a need to expand or enhance core recreation infrastructure that supports high demand activities. Open-ended responses for this question also include more evening and weekend programs, youth and teen-focused programming, childcare and family-oriented services, and senior programming. Inclusive and accessible programming, including supports for neurodiverse participants and multilingual offerings was also emphasized.

When asked to prioritize facility improvements, respondents identify modernizing aging facilities (57%) as the most important investment, indicating maintaining and upgrading existing infrastructure as a top priority for the community. Improvements to support areas such as washrooms, change rooms, and café spaces (40%) are also highly ranked. Interest in flexible, multi-use spaces (23%) and energy efficiency upgrades (21%) are prioritized as well. Open-ended responses to this question identify the need for expanded fitness and aquatic facilities to address overcrowding, improved change rooms and support spaces, and additional or enhanced specialized spaces for activities like pottery and arts, roller sports, climbing, etc.

Looking ahead the next 10 years, respondents' most valued outcome was a healthy, active, and connecting community (77%). There is also a strong emphasis on accessibility (46%) and inclusivity (34%), indicating that residents expect recreation services to be equitable and responsive to the needs of a diverse population. Several open-ended responses emphasized opportunities to strengthen community connection through recreation, including more community-based events and social programming, creation of welcoming gathering spaces, and programs that support newcomers and cultural inclusion.

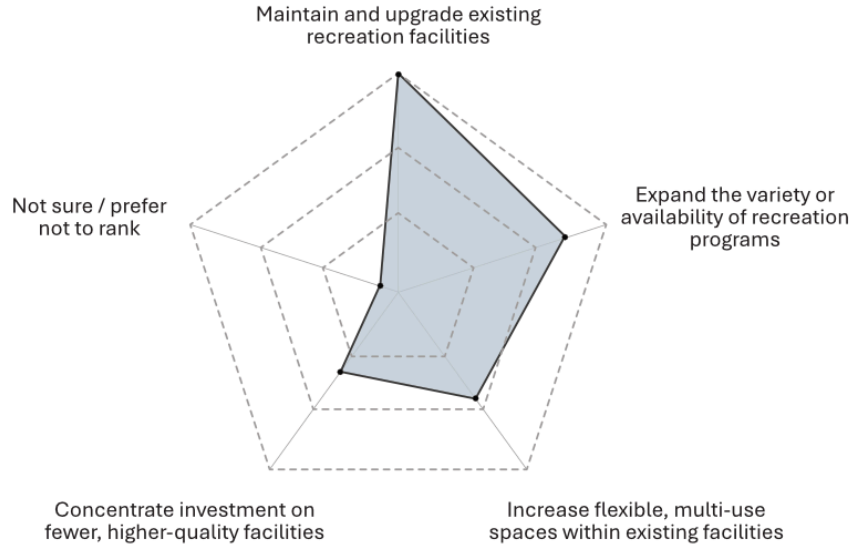
In terms of funding, respondents demonstrated openness to a range of approaches to support recreation improvements. The most supported options include grants and senior government funding (43%), followed by development-related funding tools such as Development Cost Charges (40%), followed by Amenity Cost Charges (37%). These responses suggest a preference for funding mechanisms that distribute costs broadly and leverage external contributions.

Prioritizing Recreation Investments

Survey respondents were asked to prioritize recreation investments, given the Township's limited funding and resources. Ranking was assigned with 1 as the most important option, and 6 as the least important. Results showed the following top priorities:

1. Maintain and upgrade existing recreation facilities
2. Expand the variety or availability of recreation programs
3. Increase flexible, multi-use spaces within existing facilities

Below is a graphic that shows a visual representation of the distribution of survey responses to this question:



Other themes



Open-ended survey responses provide additional context to the quantitative findings and provide deeper insight into community priorities, concerns, and expectations for recreation services in Esquimalt. Several consistent themes emerged across responses and are listed below.

- **Facility Capacity and Growth Pressures:** A dominant theme across responses is the perception that existing recreation facilities are reaching or exceeding capacity. Residents frequently referenced overcrowding in key areas and noted that recent and anticipated development is increasing demand at a pace that current infrastructure is not designed to accommodate, resulting in space constraints and limited opportunities for expansion at existing sites. This has led to calls for larger facilities, new infrastructure, and expansion to meet future demands.
- **Facility Condition and Maintenance:** Respondents highlight the importance of maintaining and modernizing existing facilities, with common issues including outdated or broken equipment, aging infrastructure, and challenges within change rooms and support areas.
- **Access, Parking and Transportation:** Access-related challenges are frequently identified. Limited parking availability is one of the most common concerns, particularly during peak times, along with accessibility barriers for families, seniors, and individuals with mobility needs. Some respondents also note opportunities to improve walkability, proximity, and transportation connections, indicating that access to recreation is also influenced by how easily residents can reach and use these spaces.

INTEREST HOLDER INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Interest holder sessions reinforced that recreation services in Esquimalt are highly valued, well used, and play an important role in supporting community well-being. Participants consistently described recreation facilities as important spaces for physical activity, social connection, inclusion. Many groups acknowledged the strength of existing recreation system, including the range of programs offered, the quality of staff, and the Township's role as a regional recreation destination. At the same time, interest holders identified growing pressure on facilities, programs, and infrastructure, with demand increasingly exceeding available capacity. An analysis of interest holder sessions identified the following themes:

System Capacity Challenges and Programming Gaps

Across all engagement groups, participants noted that recreation demand in Esquimalt is exceeding available capacity, particularly during evenings and weekends. High demand programs such as swim lessons and fitness programming were described as filling quickly, with limited ability to expand within existing facilities. User groups also reported increased competition for space and reduced available hours since COVID.

Aquatics, fitness, gymnasium space, and ice time were identified as areas under the greatest pressure. Staff and user groups emphasized the need for additional and more flexible recreation space to support programming growth, drop-in activities, and community events. Participants also identified gaps in youth programming for those aged 12 to 18, as well as inclusive and culturally relevant programming.

Facility Gaps and Infrastructure Limitations

A consistent theme across all groups is that existing facilities are insufficient, aging, and not fully aligned with community needs. Several user groups noted that available facilities do not adequately meet the needs of specialized activities, limiting their ability to operate locally.

A major gap identified across engagement groups is the lack of weather-protected or year-round recreation spaces, which results in cancellations and inconsistent access due to weather conditions. There is strong support for investment in all weather and covered facilities, such as artificial turf fields and roofed outdoor spaces, which would improve reliability and extend programming seasons.

There was also broad support for more flexible and multi-use recreation spaces that can accommodate a range of activities and community uses. Participants identified opportunities to improve existing assets through renovations, shared-use models, improved scheduling, and upgrades to underutilized spaces. Staff additionally highlighted unmet demand for larger event rental spaces, dry floor facilities, and additional sports field capacity.

Barriers to Access and Participation

Beyond physical space, participants highlighted that rising costs are impacting affordability for some groups. These challenges are contributing to inequities in who is able to participate. Community organizations emphasized the importance of ensuring that non-profits and groups serving vulnerable populations have reliable access to space, given their role in supporting community-wellbeing. Rising costs of living were also mentioned as barriers that make it increasingly difficult for low-income residents, seniors and families to participate in recreation. Other barriers listed that limit participation include scheduling constraints and transportation challenges.

Staff also identified operational barriers, including challenges with the online registration system and difficulties navigating available programs and services.

Importance of Recreation for Community Well-Being

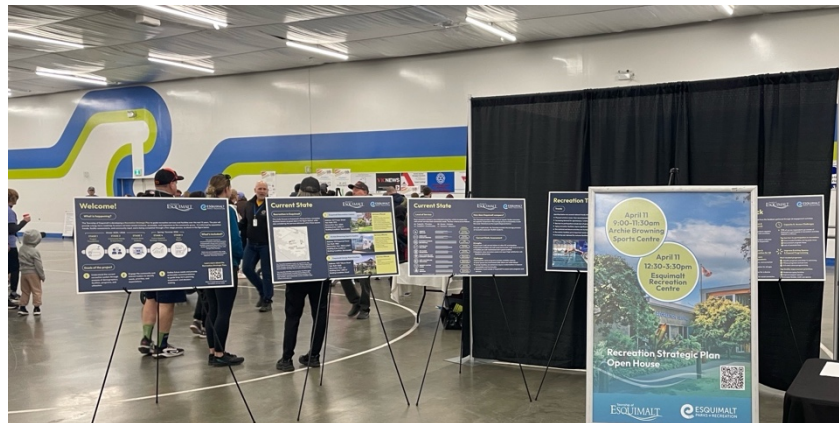
Recreation is widely viewed as essential to support community health, social connection and overall well-being. Participants emphasized its role in reducing isolation, supporting mental health, and creating inclusive spaces for diverse populations. Demand for these benefits has increased in recent years, reinforcing the importance of accessible and inclusive recreation opportunities.

Recreation spaces are viewed as important community gathering places that contribute to quality of life and help reduce isolation. Interest holders emphasized the need for a proactive, long-term approach to recreation planning that keeps pace with growth. This includes balancing investment in new facilities with the renewal of existing assets, improving system efficiency, and ensuring that future planning considers changing community needs and climate-related impacts.



OPEN HOUSE FINDINGS

Feedback from the open house strongly reinforced findings from the public survey and interest holder sessions. Participants expressed high levels of support for the proposed strategic directions. Key themes emerging from the open house are listed below, with more details from the open house in the Appendix.



Overall Sentiment and Support for Strategic Directions

Participants indicated support for the proposed strategic directions through dot-voting across the open house boards. Most boards showed a predominance of green dots indicating support, with some yellow dots indicating neutral responses and fewer red dots indicating low support.

High Value Placed on Aquatics and Fitness Services

Aquatic and fitness services generated the highest volume of written feedback. Comments included expressions of appreciation for staff and programming, as well as repeated references related to showers, change rooms, equipment condition, and available space.

Support for Fixing and Maintaining Existing Facilities

Across multiple service areas, participants left written feedback related to the condition and maintenance of existing facilities. Common comments referenced repairing broken or out-of-order equipment, improving change rooms, upgrading finishes, and ensuring spaces are clean, functional, and comfortable.

Requests Related to Dry-Floor and Multi-Use Space

Open house feedback included multiple references to gymnasium, court-based, and dry-floor recreation space. Written comments referenced improving or resurfacing the lacrosse box, adding basketball nets, increasing access to gymnasium space, and exploring use of school gyms. Dot-voting on boards related to dry-floor recreation showed a concentration of support responses.

Interest in Arts, Culture, and Creative Programming

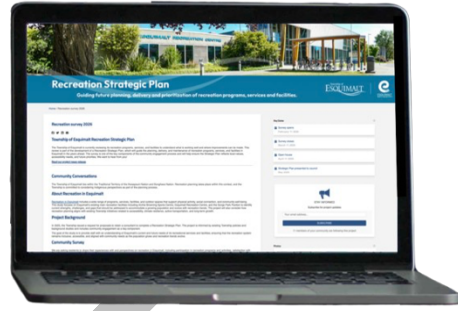
Participants provided written feedback expressing interest in arts and culture programming. Comments referenced pottery, dance programs, creative and craft activities, and small-scale performance or theatre spaces. Arts-related comments appeared primarily on the Arts, Culture and Education board and on the Multi-Purpose and Community Services board.

Feedback Related to Seniors and Youth Spaces and Programming

Written feedback related to seniors and youth referenced social programming, gathering spaces, and dedicated or improved spaces for these age groups. Seniors-focused comments included requests for social spaces and programming, while youth-related comments referenced drop-in spaces, safety, outdoor recreation options, and youth-oriented programs.

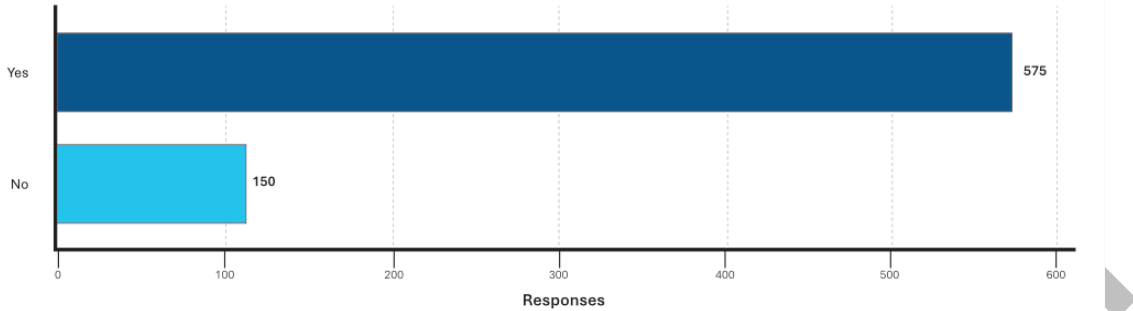
APPENDIX B1: PUBLIC SURVEY DATA

This section contains the survey’s detailed findings, with detailed results including all 725 responses received.

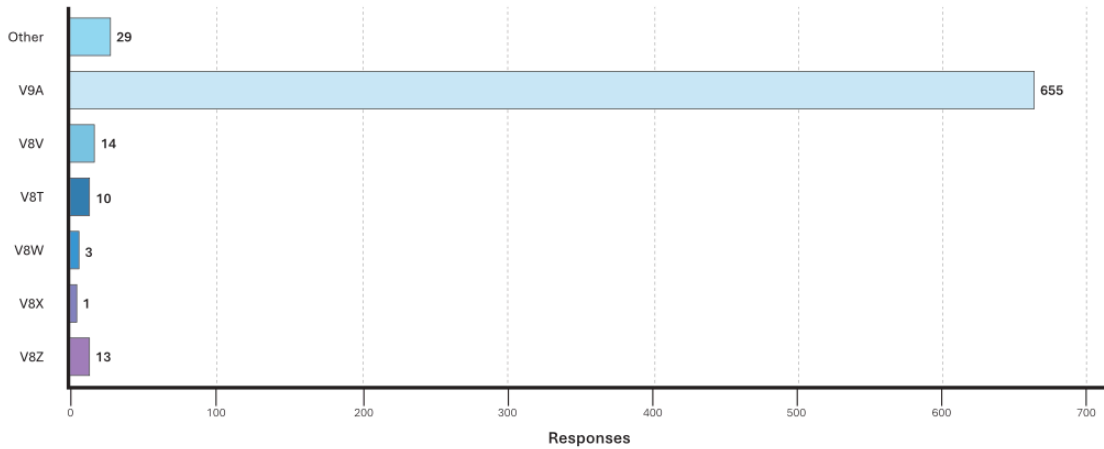


Key Findings

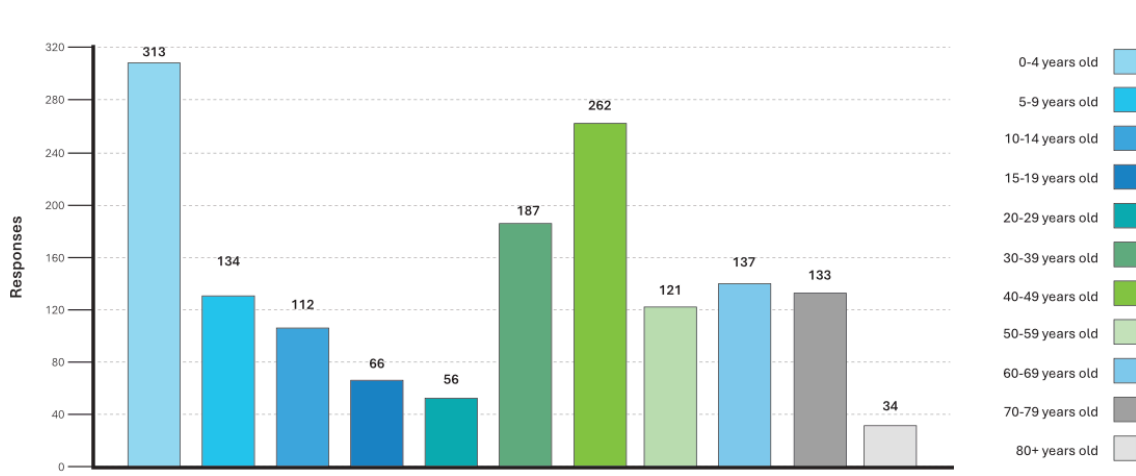
Are you a resident of the Township of Esquimalt?



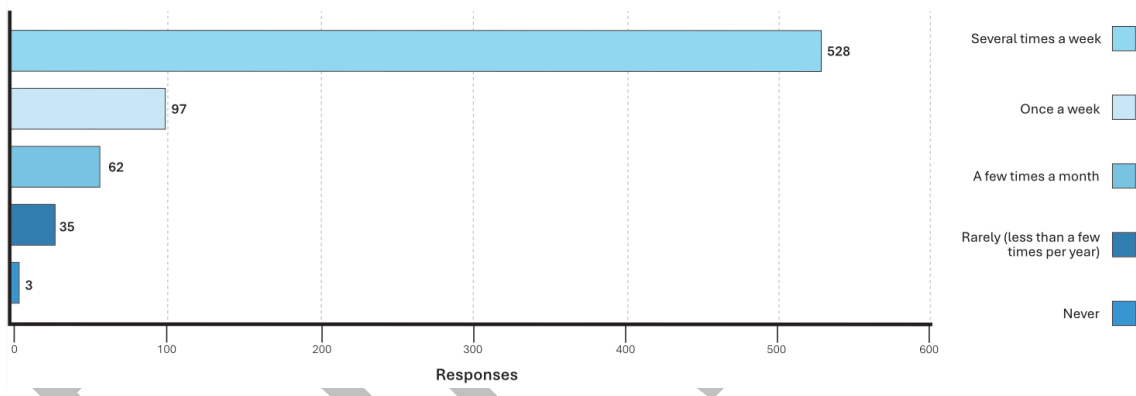
Please select the first three characters of your postal code.



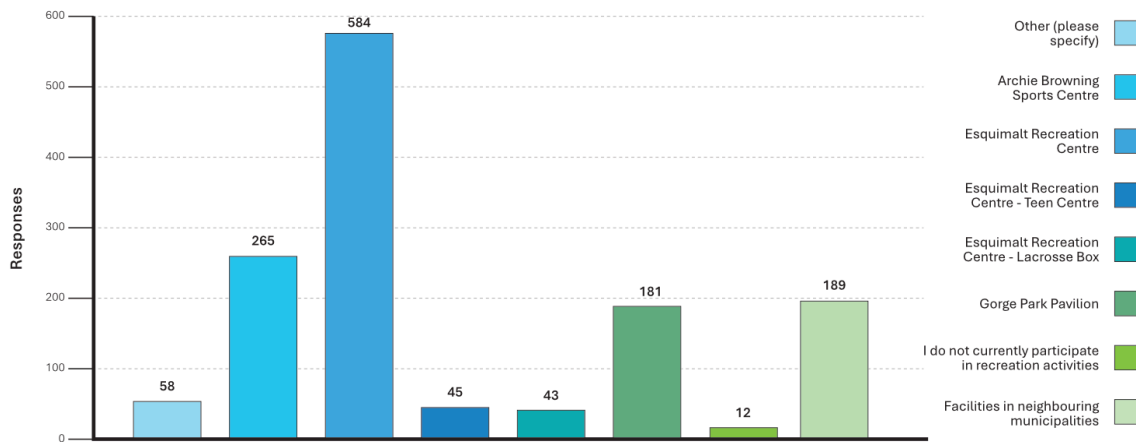
Please describe your household by checking the age group(s) which best represent your household. (Include yourself)



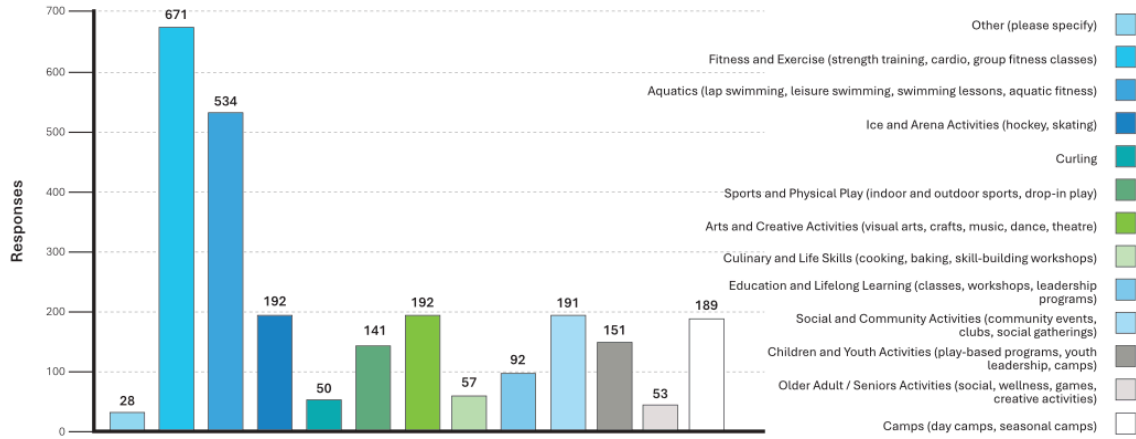
How often do you participate in recreation or leisure activities?



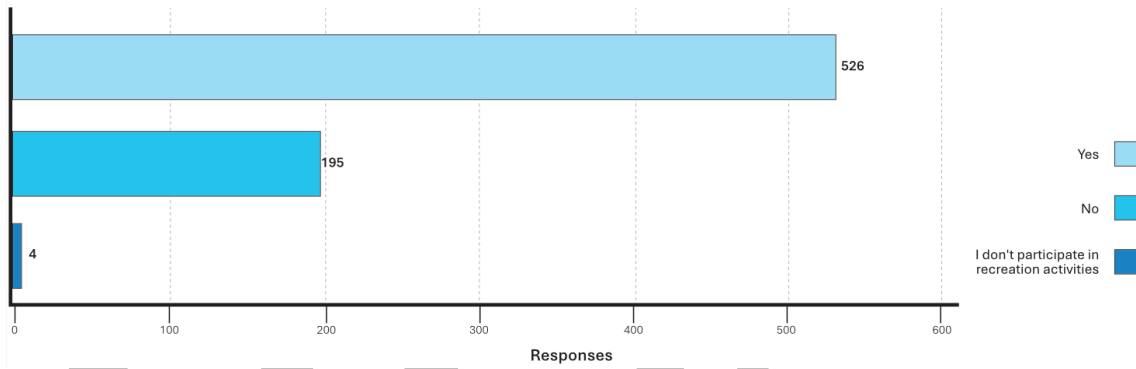
Which recreation facilities do you or members of your household currently use? (Select all that apply)



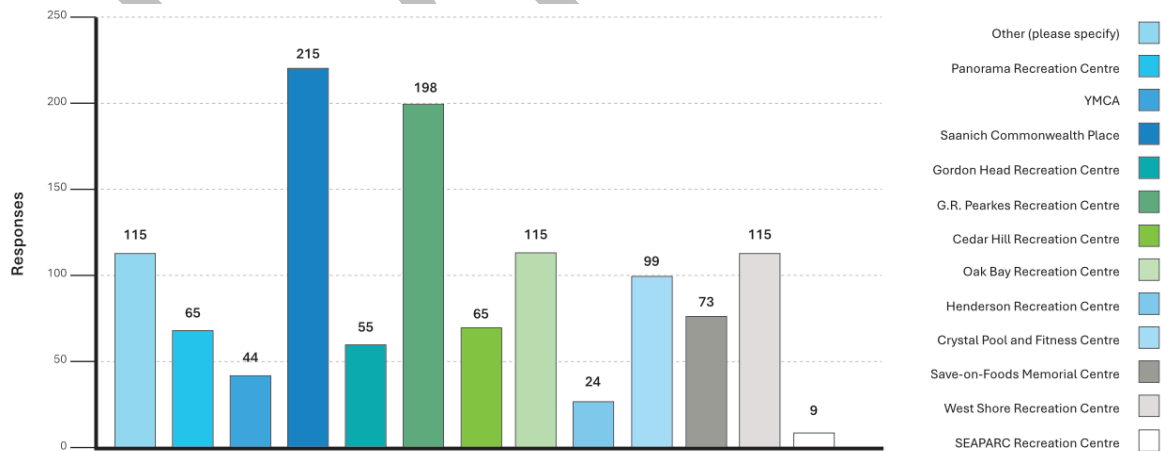
What types of recreation activities do you or your household normally participate in? (Select all that apply)?



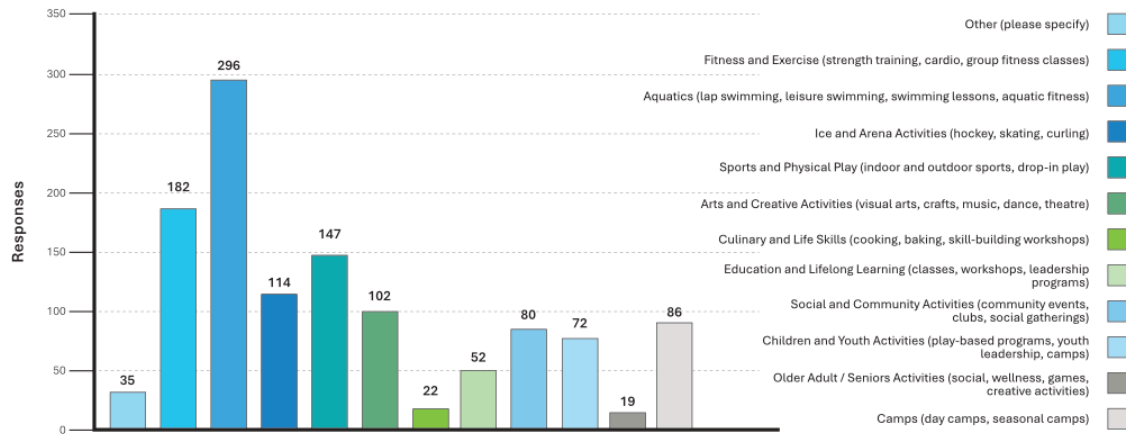
Have you ever chosen to go outside of Esquimalt to participate in recreation activities?



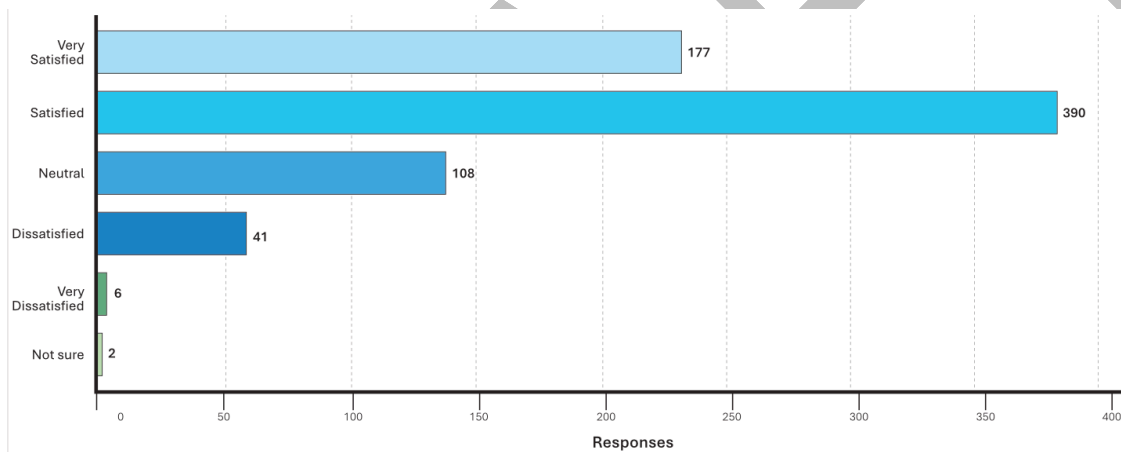
Which recreation facilities outside of Esquimalt do you use most often? (Select all that apply).



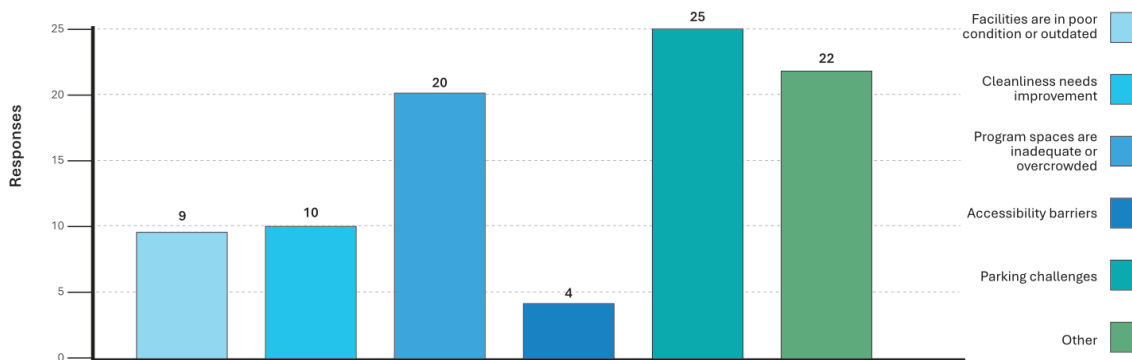
What types of activities do you travel outside Esquimalt to access? (Select all that apply).



How satisfied are you with Esquimalt's recreation facilities overall?



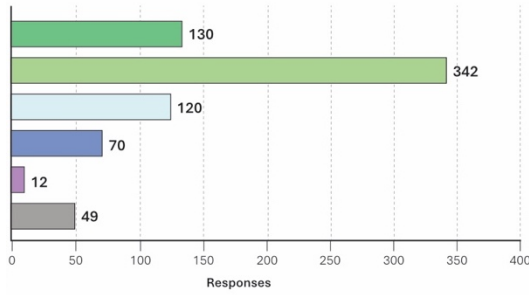
What issues do you experience at these facilities? (Select all that apply).



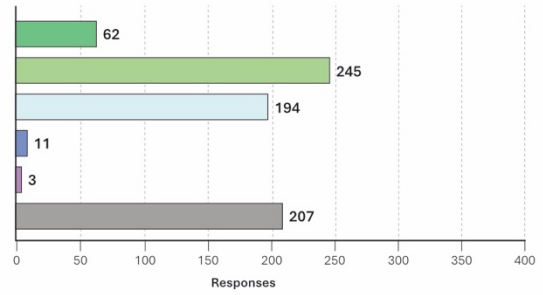
How satisfied are you with the following recreation amenities and services?



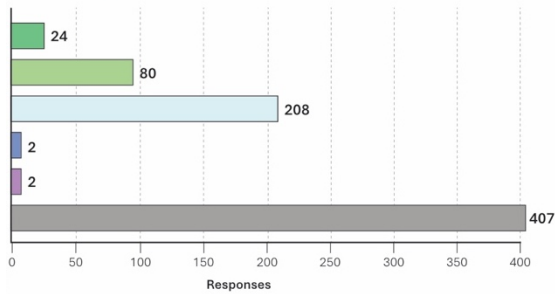
Aquatic amenities and services



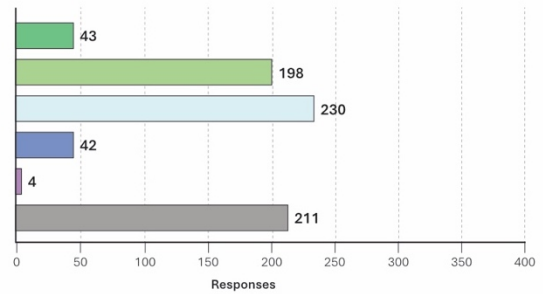
Arena amenities and services



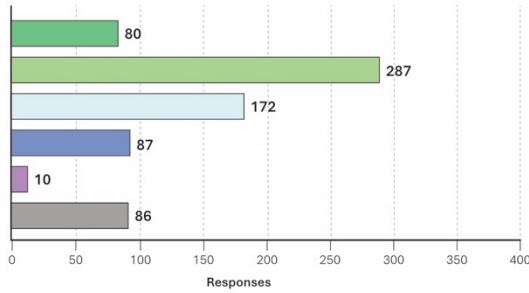
Curling amenities and services



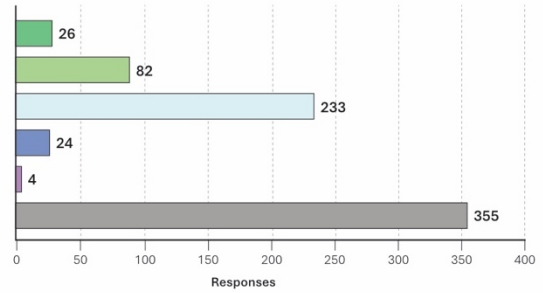
Arts and culture



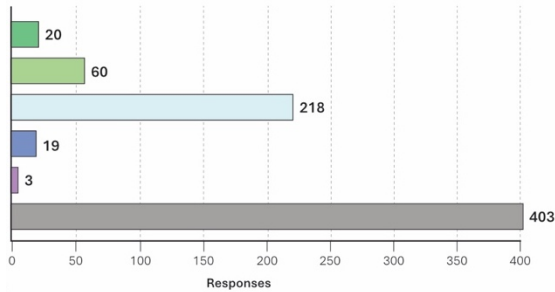
Fitness centre and programming



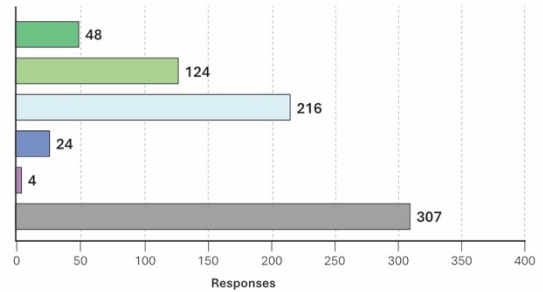
Youth spaces and programming



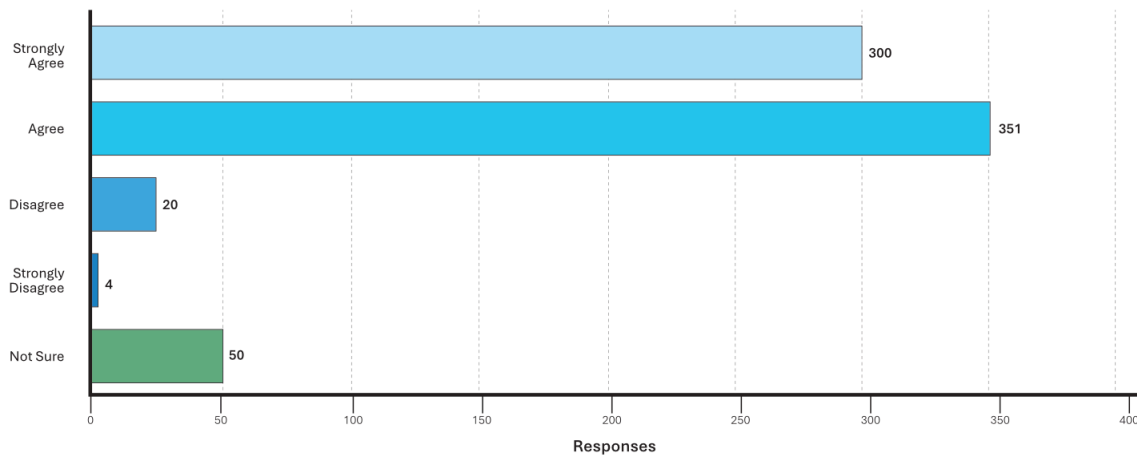
Senior's spaces and programming



Children's spaces and programming



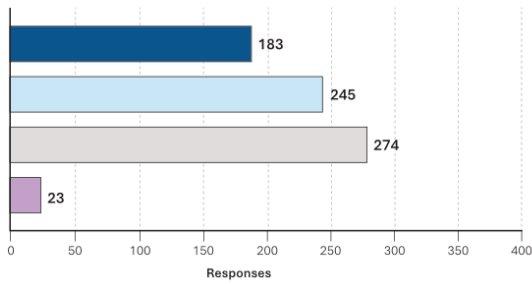
Esquimalt's recreation facilities feel socially inclusive to people of all ages, gender, ethnicities, and ability levels:



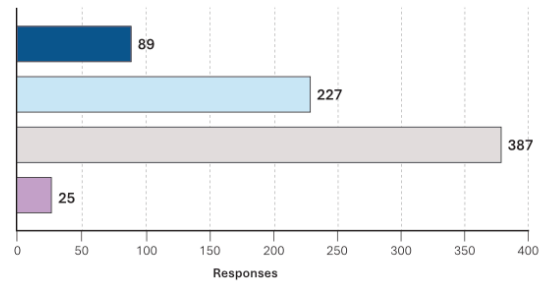
How well do current recreation programs support the following life stages?:



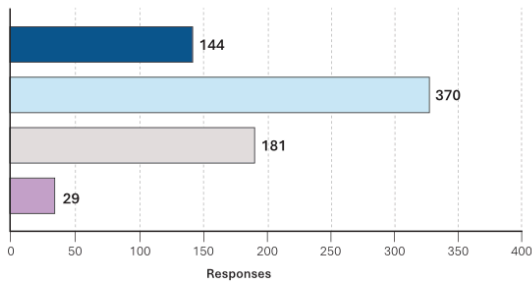
Children



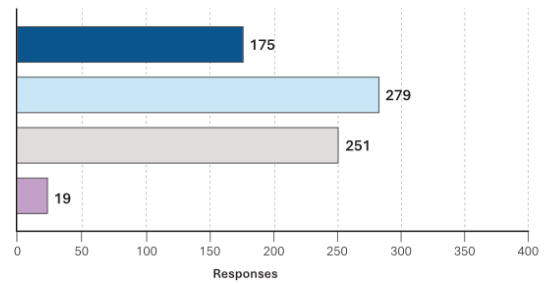
Youth



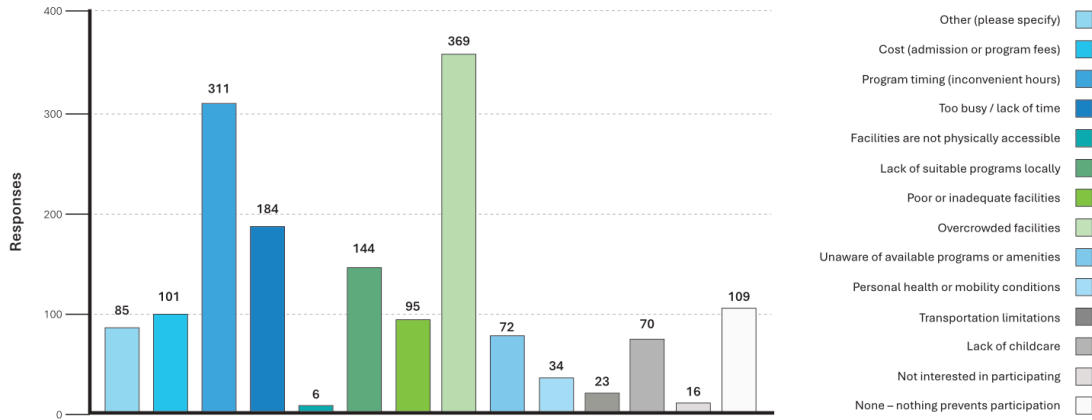
Adults



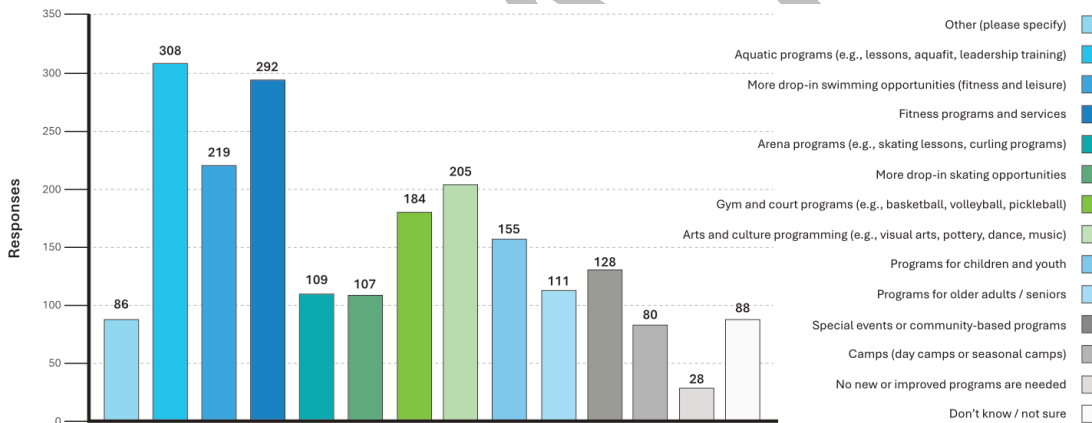
Seniors



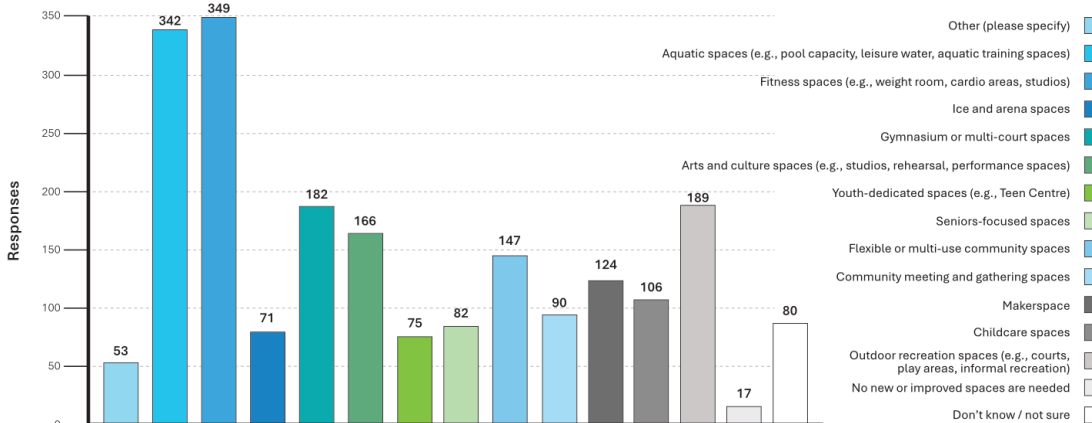
Do any of the barriers listed below limit you or your household's participation in recreation activities?
(select all that apply)



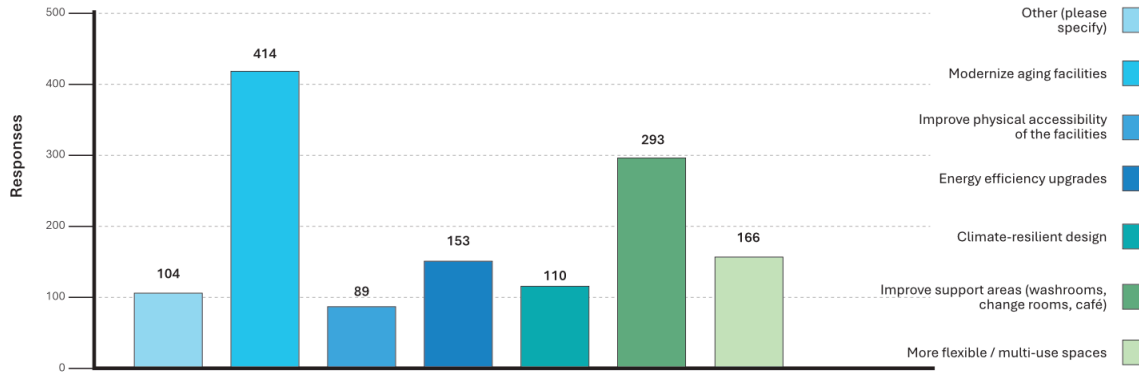
What new, improved, or expanded recreation programs or activities are most needed to support the growing community? (select all that apply)



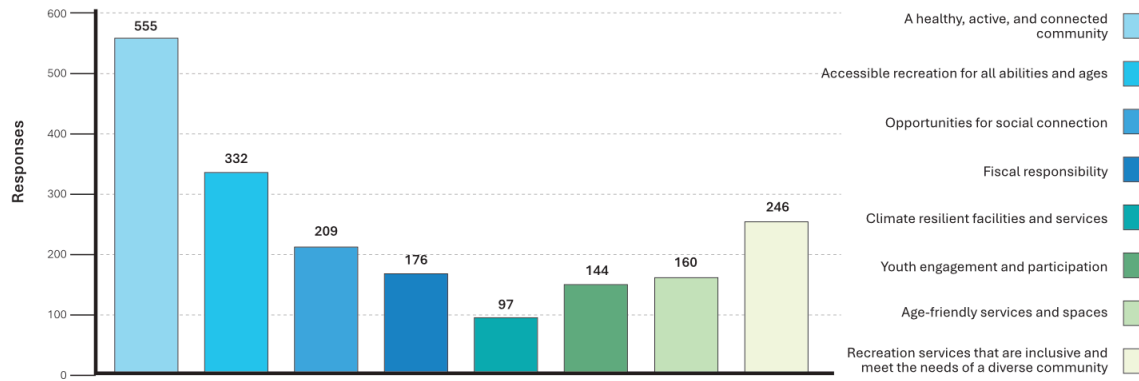
What new, improved, or expanded recreation spaces or facility types are most needed in Esquimalt? (select all that apply)



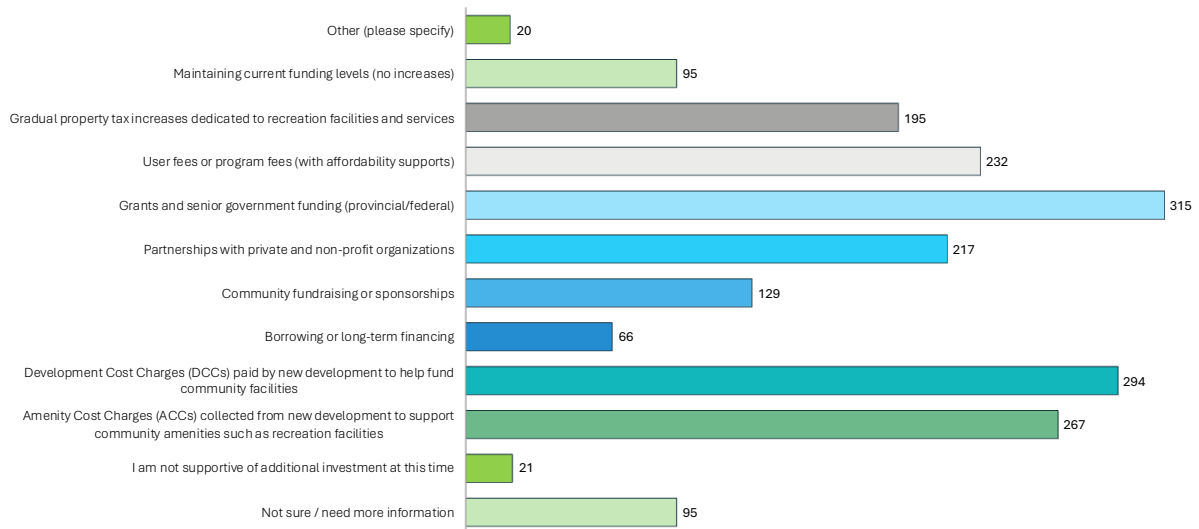
What facility improvements should be prioritized?



Which outcomes do you most value for recreation services the next 10 years? (select up to 3 options)



Recreation facilities and services require ongoing investment. Which funding approaches would you be open to supporting to help maintain, improve, or expand recreation facilities and programs in Esquimalt? (select up to 3 options)



APPENDIX B2: INTEREST HOLDER SESSIONS



Sessions with key interest holders occurred from February to March of 2026. Groups were identified based on their usage of recreational facilities, involvement with community organizations and connections with groups who may face barriers in accessing recreational services.

The following table summarizes engagement with these groups and their perspectives on recreation facilities and activities in Esquimalt.

Table 12: Engagement Summary Key Highlights Table

Engagement Group	Highlights
Recreation User Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong consensus that year-round access to recreation space is the top system gap, with weather-related field closes and limited indoor alternatives significantly disrupting programming across multiple sports. • Facility availability is widely seen as insufficient and mismatched to user needs, with specialized groups (e.g., roller derby, lacrosse) highlighting very limited venues that meet minimum requirements. • Consistent concern that loss or reallocation of space (e.g., curling rink conversion) is displacing long-standing user groups and reducing overall system capacity. • Organizations report declining access since COVID, with fewer hours, increased competition for space, and reduced scheduling certainty. • Strong agreement that all-weather and covered facilities (e.g., artificial turf, roofed lacrosse boxes) would significantly improve reliability, extend seasons, and reduce cancellations. • Multiple groups emphasize that lack of space is forcing programs, events, and tournaments out of Esquimalt, resulting in loss of economic activity and community visibility. • Demand for recreation is growing across all user groups, including significant increases in youth, women’s, and inclusive programming participation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recreation programs are seen as critical for inclusion, particularly for these groups, and marginalized genders who may not engage in traditional sport pathways. • Strong interest in multi-use and shared facility models, with examples of past success and calls for more coordinated, high-efficiency use of space throughout the day. • Ongoing challenges with allocation and scheduling fairness, including access to desirable time slots and balancing needs across user groups. • Aging infrastructure remains a concern, with existing facilities requiring upgrades or replacement to remain functional and support growth. • Organizations expressed willingness to co-invest in capital projects or partnerships, particularly where access agreements can be secured. Examples consist of the School District having had third party organizations approach them for betterment of facilities in exchange of use outside of

Engagement Group	Highlights
	<p>school hours. The Gorge Soccer Association has also committed capital funding towards a turf field, with the Township submitting a grant application for the remaining funding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreation in Esquimalt functions as a regional hub, with many users travelling from outside the municipality. • Tension identified between dedicated sport-specific space and flexible multi-use design, with both seen as necessary but sometimes competing priorities.
Local Community Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong concern that population growth and increasing density are putting pressure on existing parks and facilities, with a need for more accessible open space. • Although Esquimalt has high-quality facilities and programming, key sites such as Archie Browning Centre, are operating at or near capacity. • Desire to maintain smaller, community-oriented facilities, even as demand grows, rather than shifting entirely to large, centralized spaces. • Recognition that some facilities are aging and require renewal or upgrades to remain functional. • Interest in better utilization of existing assets, including underused spaces and expanded use of pocket parks. • Affordability is a major concern, especially for low-income seniors and families, with rising cost of living impacting participation in programs. • Organizations are actively working to reduce financial barriers, including subsidizing program access, purchasing program “seats”, and covering partial registration costs. • Concern that free or low-cost community program is being deprioritized in favour of revenue-generating uses (e.g., loss of free room rentals, limited access to facilities). • Strong call for prioritized or structured access for non-profits and community-serving organizations, especially those supporting vulnerable populations • Existing funding models are seen as insufficient, with static funding levels despite growing demand. • Demand for services has increased significantly since COVID, particularly in areas such as food security, mental health, and social connection. • Community organizations are playing a critical role in addressing isolation, loneliness, and overall well-being, especially among seniors (including a high proportion of residents 80+). • Esquimalt has a notably high proportion of low-income seniors, increasing demand for accessible, low-cost recreation and social programming. • Youth engagement remains a priority, with efforts to reduce barriers and create inclusive opportunities. • Loss of support of activities like childminding has created additional barriers to participating • Accessibility challenges persist, including limited transportation options to Gorge Park, as well as need for more accessible parking and drop-off areas, especially for seniors.

Engagement Group	Highlights
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong preference for centrally located, walkable facilities, which are more accessible to residents.
Xwsepsum Nation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members living on reserve have formal access to recreation facilities, coordinated through the nation, but participation rates are lower than expected. • Program scheduling is a barrier, especially for members who work during the day while many programs are offered. • Transportation is a significant barrier to participation, and there are numerous challenges getting to and from programs and games. • Investment in on-reserve recreation infrastructure is a priority, with a new wellness centre currently under construction that will include a safe space for children, as well as a fitness centre.
Township Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand is heavily concentrated in evenings and weekends, creating a significant bottleneck despite some off-peak availability. • Registration for high demand programs fills within minutes, indicating unmet demand. • Aquatics identified as the single highest pressure area, with swim lessons significantly oversubscribed and demand extending regionally beyond Esquimalt. • Key constraint across programs is available time and space, with limited ability to expand programming within existing facilities. • Drop-in and fitness programming is highly popular, but physical space limitations restrict growth, even where demand exists. • Birthday parties are a major demand driver and revenue source, but are constrained by gym space availability and often fully booked with waitlists. • Arena and ice allocation is characterized by prime-time scarcity and off-peak underutilization, with long-standing user groups holding priority access. • Curling is experiencing declining participation locally, alongside high operating costs and an aging user base, prompting consideration of alternative uses for the space such as pickleball. • Community events are increasing in both number and complexity, requiring more staff resources, coordination and safety measures. • Private sector providers are helping to absorb some demand, but do not address core gaps in public facility access. • Emerging equity concern that users with greater financial means can access private or premium options, while others remain on waitlists. • Key system-wide constraints include limited physical space, demand concentration during peak hours, aging infrastructure and declining volunteer capacity. • Strong interest in converting underused spaces into flexible, multi-purpose areas, including the addition of roofs, shade, and basic amenities. For example, the lacrosse box was identified as a major short-term opportunity to increase usable space with relatively low investment. • Recognition that flexible, adaptable spaces provide the highest utility, supporting multiple program types and user groups, and also being a cost-

Engagement Group	Highlights
	<p>effective solution with lower cost than major facilities, high demand and revenue potential, and being flexible for a wide range of programming.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Schools identified as a significant but underutilized opportunity for additional space, particularly after hours and during summer. ● Barriers to school partnerships include coordination complexity, perceived lack of value for schools, user reluctance to access school-based programming. ● Facility condition and design impact usage, with older or less appealing spaces like Archie Browning underutilized despite availability. ● Small-scale upgrades (lighting, aesthetics) could significantly improve utilization of existing spaces. ● Interest in demand management strategies (e.g., pricing, scheduling), though some approaches (e.g., paid parking) are seen as potentially controversial. ● Recreation system is highly valued but over-capacity, with constraints driven by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Time (when people can participate) ○ Space (limited and fully booked facilities) ○ Access (barriers for new users and lower-income participants) ● Most viable near-term solutions identified include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maximizing existing assets ○ Expanding flexible, multi-use spaces ○ Strengthening partnerships ○ Improving allocation and demand management approaches
<p>Capital West Accessibility Advisory Committee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Emphasis on improving accessibility for individuals with hearing impairments across recreation facilities. Recommendations include implementing assistive technologies such as hearing loop or T-coil systems in key service areas such as reception. ● Strong need for visual alert systems such as flashing strobes to complement audible alarms and improve safety. ● Interest in visual communication tools like display boards for announcements, particularly in high noise or water-based environments where hearing aids may not be used. ● Opportunity to enhance staff training to include deaf culture awareness and effective communication strategies. ● Identification of local resources such as Island Deaf or Hard of Hearing Centre as potential partners to support accessibility improvements and staff education.
<p>Environment, Parks, and Recreation Advisory Committee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strong emphasis on ensuring inclusive and representative engagement, particularly with historically underrepresented groups. ● Need to build meaningful relationships with local First Nations, recognizing that engagement may require tailored approaches and coordination through existing municipal channels. ● Importance of improving family representation, as they are key recreation users but have been historically difficult to engage.

Engagement Group	Highlights
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognition of a significant military population in the community, with implications for recreation demand, existing service provision, and future planning projections.• Identified gap in youth programming between the ages of 12 to 18, suggesting a need to better understand and address this demographic's recreation needs.

APPENDIX B3: OPEN HOUSE SESSIONS

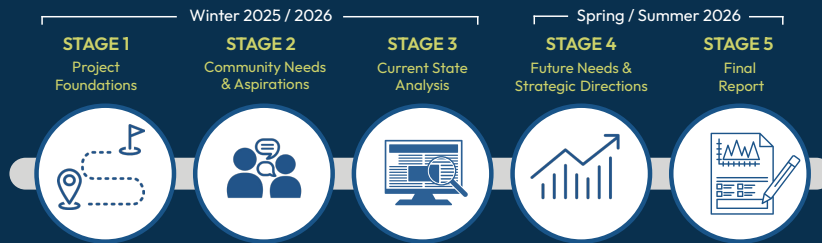
This appendix provides detailed information on the open house sessions, including the boards presented, as well as a detailed record of the feedback received at the open houses, expanding on the high-level findings presented in the report.

The following pages contain the boards from the open house sessions, in the order they were presented in.

Welcome!

What is happening?

The Township of Esquimalt is developing a **Recreation Strategic Plan** to guide recreation services and facilities over the next 15 years. The plan will provide a long-term roadmap to ensure services remain inclusive, accessible, and responsive as the community grows. It is informed by population trends, facility assessments, and community input, and is being completed through a five-stage process, as shown in the figure below.



What's included?

This study focuses on recommendations and improvements to Esquimalt's three main recreation facilities: Esquimalt Recreation Centre, Archie Browning Sports Centre, and Gorge Park Pavilion.

Parks are not included in this study, as they are being assessed through a separate Township initiative.

Goals of the project

- 1** Understand the current recreation system through analysis of demographics, facilities, programs, and utilization.
- 2** Engage the community and interest holders to identify needs, priorities, and expectations.
- 3** Define future needs and provide actionable recommendations to guide long-term planning, investment, and decision-making.

Learn more about the Recreation Strategic Plan:

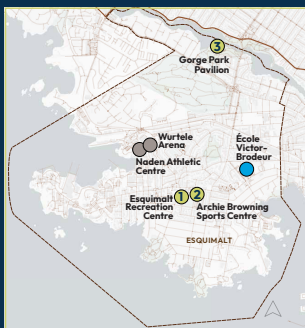


<https://engagingsquimalt.ca/recreation-survey-2026>

Current State

Recreation in Esquimalt

This study focuses on Esquimalt's three primary recreation facilities (shown as green dots in the figure below), while also considering the services delivered within these spaces.



The Township maintains a joint-use agreement with School District 93 and regularly uses spaces within École Victor-Brodeur School (blue dot on the figure above) to accommodate Township-led recreation programming.

The map also identifies two recreation facilities (grey dots) on the Esquimalt Canadian Forces Base (CFB). These facilities primarily serve military members and their families, with limited public access available under certain circumstances.

1 Esquimalt Recreation Centre

Address: 527 Fraser Street
Year Built: 1973
Renovation Year: 2004
Building Area: 4,800 m²
Building Condition: Reasonable



Services Offered:

- Aquatics
- Indoor Dry-Floor Recreation
- Fitness and Wellness
- Multi-Purpose Space
- Arts, Culture, and Education
- Youth and Social Programming
- Seniors and Active Living
- Community Events and Rentals
- Camps and Childcare

2 Archie Browning Sports Centre

Address: 1151 Esquimalt Road
Year Built: 1960
Renovation Year: 1985 & 2007
Building Area: 6,050 m²
Building Condition: Serviceable



Services Offered:

- Ice and Curling Activities
- Indoor Dry-Floor Recreation
- Multi-Purpose Space
- Fitness Programming
- Community Events and Rentals
- Curling Lounge
- Camps and Childcare

3 Esquimalt Gorge Park Pavilion

Address: 1070 Tillicum Road
Year Built: 2022
Renovation Year: n/a
Building Area: 1,280 m²
Building Condition: Good



Services Offered:

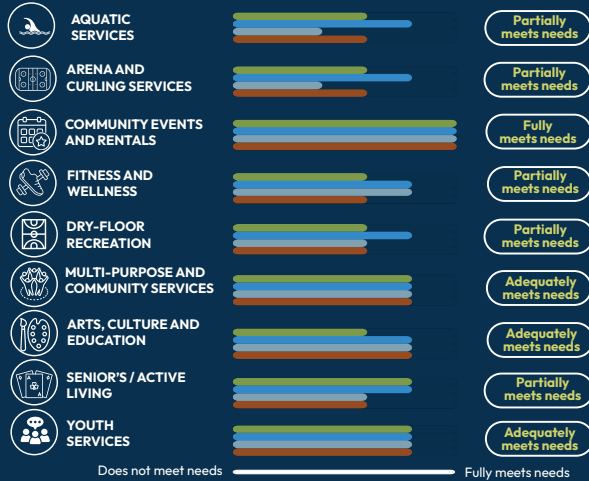
- Community Events and Rentals
- Arts, Culture, and Education
- Fitness Programming

Current State

Level of Service

Each recreation category was evaluated using four criteria to assess how well current services meet community needs. The four criteria are as follows:

- Capacity + Provision
- Condition + Functionality
- Access + Inclusion
- Demand + Utilization



How does Esquimalt compare?

The Township provides a higher level of aquatic facility and arena ice capacity compared to the average across municipalities in both the Lower Mainland and the Capital Regional District.

On a per capita basis, the Township exceeds the average provision of recreation space per 10,000 residents.

Current State Assessment

Strengths

- Esquimalt is well-served relative to other BC municipalities
- Recreation facilities are well-used and provide a high level of service
- Facilities are well-maintained and in good condition
- Residents value recreation assets and report high satisfaction with facilities and services

Challenges

- Demand for some programs exceeds available capacity
- Some spaces are constrained while others are underutilized
- Certain facilities are dated and require modernization to improve accessibility and functionality
- Residents travel outside of Esquimalt to access some programs and services

Recreation Trends

Trends

Identified below are several national trends influencing demand for recreation programming:

- Physical activity is lower than recommended levels; sedentary behaviour is high, especially among children and youth.
- Increasing demand for spontaneous / unstructured recreational opportunities, with swimming among the most popular activities.
- Barriers to participation include lack of personal time, interest, age, and financial costs.
- Aging recreation facilities require significant reinvestment.
- Recreational and leisure activities are increasingly more popular than competitive sport.
- Recreation facilities serve important social roles, fostering community connection and mental well-being.
- Increasing user demand for inclusive facilities that support physical accessibility.



Planning Implications

These trends highlight the need to expand flexible, drop-in recreation opportunities while improving access and inclusivity for all users. They also point to the importance of enhancing and modernizing existing facilities to support community connection and ensure spaces remain welcoming, functional, and well-maintained.

Collaboration and partnerships can support the delivery of diverse, community-centered programming while helping to manage costs. New and creative partnership approaches should be explored to strengthen and expand existing services and respond to emerging community needs.

Community Engagement Feedback

Community engagement was a key part of developing the Recreation Strategic Plan. In early 2026, engagement activities included a public survey, interviews, and advisory committee presentations.

The purpose was to gather input on barriers to access, participation, satisfaction, and priorities for future improvements.

Several key themes emerged from the feedback gathered through all engagement activities:



High Satisfaction & Participation Levels

- 69% of survey respondents regularly participate in leisure and recreation activities
- 78% of survey respondents indicated they are satisfied with Esquimalt's recreation facilities



Capacity & Access Challenges

- 73% of survey respondents go outside of Esquimalt to participate in recreation activities (aquatics & fitness).

Top barriers to participation in recreation:

- 1 Overcrowded facilities during peak times
- 2 Inconvenient program times
- 3 Lack of personal time

Public Survey 725 Responses

79% of survey respondents are Esquimalt Residents

Interviews 19 Participants

Recreation user groups, community organizations, Xwsepsum Nation, and Township staff

Committee Presentations 2 Presentations

- Esquimalt Environment, Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee
- Capital West Accessibility Committee



Prioritize Inclusive & Accessible Recreation for All

The following priorities were identified by survey respondents:

- 1 Support a healthy, active, and connected community
- 2 Ensure accessible recreation for all ages and abilities
- 3 Provide inclusive services for a diverse community
- 4 Increase opportunities for social connection



Improve Existing Spaces & Expand Programming

Most needed programs:

- 1 Aquatic programs and drop-in swimming
- 2 Fitness programs and services
- 3 Arts and culture programming

Top facility improvement priorities:

- 1 Modernize aging facilities
- 2 Improve support spaces
- 3 Increase flexible, multi-use spaces

Future Planning Considerations

Several planning factors are being considered in the development the strategic directions for Esquimalt's Recreation Strategic Plan, most notably population growth and the regional recreation system.

Population Growth

Both Esquimalt and the Capital Regional District are expected to experience population growth, increasing demand on existing recreation facilities.

- Esquimalt is projected to grow by ~2,400 residents* over the next 15 years.
- The Capital Regional District is projected to grow by ~43,600* residents over the next 15 years.
- Demographic shifts include an aging population and greater cultural diversity.
- Housing Development**: 643 housing units currently under construction in Esquimalt, with occupancy anticipated for 2026 - 2027. An additional 686 units are expected in the coming years.

* Population data sourced from BC Stats Population Estimates and Projections.
** Housing starts data provided by the Township of Esquimalt.

Regional Recreation Facilities

The Capital Regional District experiences regional use of recreation facilities, with assets in neighbouring communities serving Esquimalt residents, and Esquimalt facilities serving residents from the region. As shown on the map below, there are ten (10) publicly accessible facilities located within a 20-minute drive time from central Esquimalt, offering a range of recreation services and amenities.



Strategic Directions

The following **draft** strategic directions are proposed to guide recreation in Esquimalt over the next 15 years.


	AQUATIC SERVICES	ARENA AND CURLING SERVICES	COMMUNITY EVENTS AND RENTALS
<p>Programming Strategic Directions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review aquatic service provision and priorities to identify opportunities to increase access and capacity for core programs, including swim lessons, aquafit, and drop-in leisure opportunities. <p>Facility Strategic Directions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maintain, upgrade, and modernize - including renewal of support spaces (changerooms, washrooms and social areas). <p>Possible Facility Intervention(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Renovate washrooms and changerooms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review ice service provision and priorities to explore opportunities to increase equitable access to ice time, while continuing to deliver high-quality ice programming. <p>Facility Strategic Directions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maintain, upgrade, and modernize. <p>Possible Facility Intervention(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Upgrade changerooms and washrooms, spectator seating, boards and AV equipment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue supporting community events and rental opportunities that foster community connection. <p>Facility Strategic Directions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maintain existing facilities. <p>Possible Facility Intervention(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● n/a 	
What do you think?			
<p>Place a dot sticker to show your level of support for each draft strategic direction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green = Support • Yellow = Neutral • Red = Low Support 			


Strategic Directions

The following **draft** strategic directions are proposed to guide recreation in Esquimalt over the next 15 years.




	FITNESS AND WELLNESS	DRY-FLOOR RECREATION	MULTI-PURPOSE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
<p>Programming Strategic Directions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Expand access to fitness programs and services. <p>Facility Strategic Directions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explore opportunities to expand fitness and wellness spaces. ● Expansion and renovation to current Fitness Centre within Esquimalt Recreation Centre or the provision of a new fitness area within Archie Browning Sports Centre. <p>Possible Facility Intervention(s)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Expand program opportunities for gymnasium and court-based activities. Explore opportunities through a Joint Use Agreement with SD61 to expand community access to school spaces (e.g. gymnasiums). ● Explore opportunities to expand dry-floor recreation spaces. ● Redevelop outdoor lacrosse box with a covering to provide year round access. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue to provide flexible, high-quality programming for a diversity of community needs. Explore opportunities through a Joint Use Agreement with SD61 to expand community access to multi-purpose spaces. ● Improve flexibility and functionality of existing multi-purpose spaces. ● Renovate existing halls with improved acoustics, storage, and movable partitions. 	
What do you think?			
<p>Place a dot sticker to show your level of support for each draft strategic direction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green = Support • Yellow = Neutral • Red = Low Support 			

Strategic Directions





The following **draft** strategic directions are proposed to guide recreation in Esquimalt over the next 15 years.


	 ARTS, CULTURE AND EDUCATION	 SENIOR'S / ACTIVE LIVING SERVICES	 YOUTH SERVICES
<p>Programming Strategic Directions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand access to arts and cultural programming opportunities across age groups and interests. Explore opportunities through a Joint Use Agreement with SD61 to expand community access to school spaces (e.g. theatre). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue and expand programs that support active living, health, and social connection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand informal and structured youth programming opportunities to support social connection and engagement. 	
<p>Facility Strategic Directions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve flexibility and functionality of multi-purpose spaces to support activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure spaces are accessible, comfortable, and adaptable to support seniors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain, upgrade, and modernize. 	
<p>Possible Facility Intervention(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retrofit multi-purpose rooms with finishes that support activities (sprung floors, sinks, AV, lighting). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade flooring, seating, lighting, and accessibility features with elder focused design principles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade furnishings, technology integration, improve lighting and layout to strengthen youth engagement and inclusion. 	


What do you think?

Place a dot sticker to show your level of support for each **draft** strategic direction.

- Green = Support
- Yellow = Neutral
- Red = Low Support

Your Feedback






Please use the space below to provide your thoughts and perspectives on the proposed recommendations as part of the Recreation Strategic Plan. Share anything else you would like us to know on a sticky note and place below.

What do you think?

Place your sticky notes here!

Learn more about the Recreation Strategic Plan:



<https://engagingsquimalt.ca/recreation-survey-2026>

Overall Dot-Voting Observations

Across all boards, participants placed dot stickers to indicate their level of support for the draft strategic directions presented.

- Most boards displayed a visible concentration of green dots (support).
- Yellow dots (neutral) were also present on most boards.
- Red dots (low support) appeared less frequently and were scattered rather than clustered.

No numerical counts were recorded. Observations are based on visual review of dot distribution following the open house sessions.

Aquatic Services

Aquatic services received a high volume of written comments. Common topics referenced in sticky note feedback included:

- Shower water temperature (e.g., requests for hot water, concerns about cold or inconsistent water)
- Family and accessible change room size, layout, and cleanliness
- Sound levels and acoustics in pool areas, including requests for sound dampening
- Availability of lap swimming lanes
- General comments expressing appreciation for pool staff and aquatic programming

Comments were placed primarily on the Aquatic Services board, with some related comments appearing on the general feedback boards.

The Aquatic Services board displayed a predominance of green dots, with some yellow dots and few red dots.

Fitness and Wellness

Written comments related to fitness and wellness frequently referenced:

- Condition of fitness equipment, including broken or out of order machines
- Requests for repair or replacement of existing equipment
- Interest in expanded fitness space (weights and cardio areas)
- Requests for additional fitness classes outside typical morning and evening time slots
- Mentions of wellness amenities such as sauna or cold plunge

The Fitness and Wellness board showed a concentration of green dots, with some yellow dots and limited red dots.

Dry-Floor Recreation and Gymnasium Space

Feedback related to dry-floor recreation included comments referencing:

- Resurfacing or improving the outdoor lacrosse box
- Adding basketball nets or court markings
- Interest in increased access to gymnasium space
- References to partnerships with School District facilities for community sports access
- Requests for additional court-based or drop-in activities (e.g., basketball, badminton)

These comments were placed primarily on the Dry-Floor Recreation board. Dot voting showed a predominance of green dots, with some neutral responses.

Arts, Culture, and Creative Programming

Participants provided written comments related to arts and creative programming, including references to:

- Pottery and ceramic arts
- Dance programming (adult and youth)
- Creative and craft-based activities
- Theatre or performance spaces described as small or mid-sized
- Outdoor performance or theatre spaces

Arts-related comments were placed on the Arts, Culture, and Education board and the Multi-Purpose and Community Services Board.

Boards related to arts, culture, and multi-purpose programming showed mostly green dots, with some yellow dots and minimal red dots.

Community Events, Rentals, and Gathering Spaces

Written comments related to community events and gathering spaces referenced:

- Interest in continued support for community events
- Requests for flexible spaces for programs, meetings, or rentals
- Outdoor gathering amenities such as picnic tables and seating
- Covered or weather-protected outdoor areas

Written feedback was limited on the dedicated Community Events and Rentals board, with related comments appearing on general feedback boards. Dot-voting on boards related to community events and multi-purpose services indicated mostly green and yellow dots.

Seniors Services

Participants submitted comments related to seniors and active living that included references to:

- Social programming and gathering opportunities for seniors
- Requests for updated or new programming
- Mentions of dedicated or seniors-focused spaces

This board showed mostly green dots, with some neutral responses.

Youth Services

Youth-related comments referenced:

- Youth and young-adult drop-in spaces
- Safety, lighting, and comfort in existing youth spaces
- Outdoor recreation options (e.g., basketball courts, skate facilities)
- Youth programs and outreach opportunities

These comments were placed on the Youth Services board and general feedback boards. Dot-voting on the Youth Services board showed a predominance of green dots, with some yellow dots.

Appendix C: Recreation Trends

The following sections are organized to align with the trends identified in the main report and provide additional detail on the factors shaping recreation needs.

Population, Lifestyle and Activity Preference Trends

Physical Activity & Sedentary Behaviour:

Participation data indicates that many Canadians do not meet recommended physical activity levels, while sedentary behaviour remains prevalent across all age groups. National monitoring suggests that activity levels have improved slightly following the COVID-19 pandemic but continue to fall below recommended guidelines.

The “2024 Children & Youth Report Card¹²” indicated:

- Among children and youth aged 5 to 17, 39% achieved the recommended minimum of 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily. This represents a recovery from the post-pandemic low of 28% in 2022 and returns to the same level reported in 2020 (39%).
- Participation in organized sports among children and youth also increased, with 68% reporting involvement in the previous year. This is up from 57% in 2022, although it remains below the pre-pandemic level of 77% recorded in 2020.
- Just 27% of children and youth met the guideline of limiting recreational screen time to two hours or less per day. There was a notable difference by age group, with 49% of children aged 5-11 meeting the recommendation compared with only 17% of youth aged 12 – 17. This is an improvement from 2022, when only 16.5% of children and 3% of youth met the recommended screen time limits.

The “2025 Adult Report Card”¹³ indicated:

- 46% of adults met the recommendation of completing a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) each week.
- Men were more likely than women to meet the MVPA recommendation, with rates of 53% and 39%, respectively.
- Sport participation within the past 12 months was reported by 32% of adults aged 18-64 and 13% of adults aged 65 and older.

Canadian adults spend an average of 9.3 hours per day engaged in sedentary behaviour, which are linked to a higher risk of chronic disease. Only 42% met the guideline of limiting sedentary time to no more than nine hours daily. Men were less likely to meet this recommendation than women, with compliance rates of 35% to 49% respectively.

National participation data highlights changing patterns in how Canadians engage in physical activity and recreation. Recent survey findings from Statistics Canada (2023) reported:

- The majority of participants (83%) took part in sports on a recreational basis rather than through organized clubs or leagues, although many also participated in structured programs or fitness classes.

¹² ParticipACTION. (2024). *2024 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

¹³ ParticipACTION. (2025). *2025 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Adults*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

- Swimming was identified as the most common activity (35%), followed by cycling (33%) and running (27%).
- The leading reasons for participation included improving health and fitness (82%), recreation and relaxation (70%), mental wellbeing (65%), and social interaction (54%).
- The report also indicated that participation patterns and motivations differed across demographic groups.

Changing Demographics:

Many communities across Canada are undergoing demographic change, particularly through the growth of older adult populations. According to BC Statistics:

- Residents aged 50 and older will account for 47% of the population in Esquimalt in 2045.
- Adults aged 90+ are expected to experience the greatest rate of growth from 2025 – 2045, growing 198%. This is followed by those aged between 80 and 89, at 79% growth.
- Adults between the ages of 30 and 39 are projected to represent the largest demographic group, representing 17% of the population by 2045, followed by the age group of 50 to 59, at 15% of the total population.

As people live longer and remain active later in life, demand is expected to increase for age-friendly recreation opportunities, including programs and services designed for older adults and seniors in accessible, barrier-free facilities.

Canada is also experiencing increasing diversity. With limited natural population growth from births relative to death, most recent population growth in Canada has been driven by immigration.

- International migration accounted for 98.5% of Canada's population growth (+62,401 people) in the fourth quarter of 2024 and 97.3% (+724,586 people) over the course of the year (Statistics Canada, 2025).¹⁴

Participation patterns in sport and recreation also vary across racialized and cultural groups in Canada. Statistics Canada (2021)¹⁵, identified several recreation trends:

- Swimming was the most widely participated sport overall and was most popular among non-racialized Canadians (37%), West Asians (36%), and Koreans (36%).
- Running was the leading activity among numerous racialized groups, including Chinese (40%), Japanese (35%), Southeast Asian (35%), South Asian (33%), and Black Canadians (32%), as well as people identifying with multiple racial or cultural backgrounds (37%).
- Soccer also ranked highly, particularly among Arab participants (40%) and was ranked the second most common sport among Black respondents (31%).
- Canadian-born individuals were more likely to participate in winter sports such as ice hockey, skating, skiing, and snowboarding, while immigrants more commonly participated in soccer, tennis, and basketball.

Activity Preferences:

¹⁴ Statistics Canada. (2025, March 19). *Canada's population estimates, fourth quarter 2024*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

¹⁵ Statistics Canada. (2023, October 10). *Participation in Canadian society through sport and work*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

Participation patterns are shifting towards more informal activities. Between individuals who were involved in a sport over the previous year, the following sports were identified as the most common¹⁶:

- Swimming, reported by 35% of individuals
- Cycling, reported by 33% of individuals
- Running, reported by 27% of individuals

Participating in individualized and informal activities provide more flexibility and autonomy. These activities are typically self-directed, do not require formal organization, and can be undertaken independently or in small, informal groups. This trend reflects broader changes in how residents choose to participate in recreation, with a growing preference for adaptable, low-barrier activities that can be integrated into daily routines.

Participation Barriers:

Numerous factors influence participation in sport and recreation activities. According to the 2021 national census¹⁷, the most common reasons Canadians reported for not participating in sports were:

- Lack of interest (35%)
- Lack of time (33%)
- Age-related factors (24%)

Differences in participation levels may reflect personal interests, as well as cultural attitudes toward sport and leisure, and competing priorities such as work, education, and family responsibilities. Older adults' participation may also be affected by declining physical ability, limited access to age-appropriate programs and facilities, or reduced interest in more physically demanding activities.

Financial barriers are also a significant limitation to participation in sport and recreation. Expenses related to equipment, registration fees, facility access, rentals, and transportation can limit involvement for many households. Findings from the 2021 national census¹⁸ identified financial barriers as a significant factor limiting participation:

- 11% of non-participants identified cost as a barrier to participation.
- Financial barriers were more commonly reported among certain racialized groups, including Koreans (20%), West Asians (20%), and Latin Americans (17%), compared with non-racialized Canadians.

Participation rates also tend to increase with household income. According to the ParticipACTION 2021 Adult and 2024 Children & Youth Report Cards:

- Individuals from higher-income households consistently report higher levels of sport participation.¹⁹

The increasing prevalence of households with multiple working adults has also altered recreation participation patterns, with many families having limited flexibility in their daily schedules and concentrating recreation participation into evenings and weekends. This increased demand during

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ ParticipACTION. (2024). *ParticipACTION 2024 Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

peak periods can be a barrier to participating, due to overcrowded facilities, limited program availability, waitlists, and difficulty securing convenient program times.

Infrastructure and Modern Facility Trends

Aging Infrastructure:

Approximately one third of recreational and cultural facilities are expected to require significant capital investment within the next decade²⁰.

- 12.7% of ice arenas and pools across Canada are in poor or very poor condition
- 8.6% of arts and culture facilities across Canada are in poor or very poor condition
- 8.6% of other recreation facilities in Canada are in poor or very poor condition.

Beyond physical infrastructure needs, many of these facilities may also face programmatic and functional limitations that could reduce their ability to remain relevant, adaptable and responsive to evolving community needs.

By 2030, a significant number of recreation and sport facilities across British Columbia are expected to reach or exceed their anticipated service life. With an average age of approximately 45 years, many facilities are already approaching the upper end of the typical lifespan range of 35 to 53 years.²¹

Accessibility Upgrades:

Access to physical activity and sport opportunities is generally positive among Canadians. Surveys indicate:

- 62% of Canadians have reported that they perceive physical activity and sport opportunities to be accessible to a moderate or great extent.²²

Despite this, many older recreation facilities were built according to outdated design standards and often do not provide full-barrier accessibility, creating participation and access challenges for some users. Key challenges include:

- Facilities lacking full-barrier accessibility
- Limited provision of adapted or accessible equipment
- Physical spaces that are not universally navigable

British Columbia updated its accessibility requirements for public buildings to reinforce this direction by establishing minimum accessibility expectations for features such as power-operated doors, elevators in two or three-storey buildings, and full-sized changing space in universal washrooms.²³

In practice, accessibility upgrades in recreation settings commonly include improvements to barrier-free facility entry, washrooms and change rooms, and the provision of adapted or accessible equipment. For example, the City of Burnaby (Parks, Recreation and Culture) explicitly notes that it is prioritizing upgrades such as “barrier free entries to our facilities, accessible washrooms and change

²⁰ Association of Consulting Engineering Companies Canada et al. (2019). *2019 Canadian Infrastructure Report Card*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

²¹ British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association. (2026). *Social Infrastructure*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

²² Recreation North. (2024). *Framework for Recreation in Canada Update 2024*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

²³ Government of British Columbia (2024). *2024 BC Codes: Accessibility*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

rooms or adapted equipment), describing these as a priority area for improving recreational experiences²⁴.

Municipal recreation facility examples also demonstrate the specific types of accessibility features being implemented or provided, including accessible change facilities, pool entry solutions (e.g., lifts and gradual entry approaches), accessible washrooms, and accessible fitness equipment.

Placemaking Destinations:

Recreation facilities are increasingly being designed and positioned as community gathering places and public destinations, supporting placemaking objectives. For the recreation sector, this presents an opportunity to expand beyond the traditional role of providing facilities and programs toward actively supporting public initiatives that promote healthy, connected communities. When designed and programmed effectively, these spaces can encourage informal recreation, strengthen community interaction, improve comfort within urban areas, and support overall physical and mental wellbeing.²⁵

Increasing social Role of Recreation Facilities:

A Framework for Recreation in Canada defines recreation in the City as “the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing”.²⁶

Recreation spaces are no longer limited to workout areas and swimming facilities. There is an increasing social role of recreation facilities as they are being seen as social spaces where community members connect and engage in informal activities²⁷. Today’s recreation centers are designed to strengthen social connections and improve quality of life by focusing on several key areas including:

- Supporting mental and emotional wellness initiatives
- Hosting local programs, events, and social activities
- Creating opportunities for interaction between different age groups and cultures

Recreation Campuses:

As a result of an increased social role of recreation facilities, the layout and design of recreation centers are increasingly intended to help people connect naturally and build stronger relationships within the community. Features often include:

- Flexible multipurpose gathering areas
- Comfortable indoor lounge-style spaces
- Outdoor seating and shared public areas
- Community kitchens and collaborative spaces

These elements help encourage casual interaction and strengthen social ties between residents. They also help accommodate to various different activities and respond to changing demand.

²⁴ City of Burnaby. *Improving Accessibility*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

²⁵ Canadian Parks and Recreation Association. (2024). *Framework for Recreation and Parks in Canada*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

²⁶ City of North Vancouver. (2020). *Community Recreation Strategy: A Health City for All – The Role of Community Recreation*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

²⁷ National Recreation and Park Association. (2024). *The Vital Role of Parks and Recreation in Enhancing Family Health & Well-Being*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

Recreation Activity and Sport Participation Trends

Aquatics:

Swim lesson demand remains exceptionally strong throughout British Columbia. Accessing swim lessons, particularly for children, is a common challenge. Many families on Vancouver Island²⁸ and in the Greater Victoria Region²⁹ experience frustration due to lengthy waitlists.

According to the Vancouver Sun³⁰, several municipalities across Metro Vancouver are facing significant pressure on aquatic programming capacity:

- Applications for Vancouver's Leisure Access Program exceeded available capacity, with more than 3,000 families competing for fewer than 1,000 subsidized swim lesson spots.
- Municipal data from Burnaby show that over 70% of families seeking aquatic programming are placed on waitlists.
- Swim lessons offerings in Richmond, remain about 25% below pre-2020 levels as a result of staffing constraints and ongoing maintenance issues.
- Langley Township has implemented registration priority to residents for swim lessons and applies a 35% fee increase to non-residents enrolling in certain high demand programs, including aquatics.

Aquatic facilities continue to play a central role in supporting recreation, fitness, and wellness across Canadian communities. Traditionally, aquatic centres were designed primarily to support instructional swimming and organized sport; however, this role has expanded to include a broader range of wellness-oriented and informal activities. Modern aquatic facility planning increasingly emphasizes flexibility, accessibility, and the integration of aquatic amenities within larger recreation and wellness environments.

Participation data indicates that swimming remains the most commonly reported sport in Canada, with 35% of participants identifying it as an activity they engaged in over the previous year³¹. This sustained popularity highlights the continued importance of aquatic infrastructure; however, broader participation trends show that the majority of sport and recreation activity is occurring in informal, self-directed formats rather than organized programming. As a result, there is increasing demand for leisure and drop-in aquatic opportunities that allow users to participate at their own pace and according to personal schedules.

There is also growing interest in aquatic-based exercise and wellness activities. Aquatic environments provide a low-impact, naturally resistant setting that supports a wide range of users, including older adults, individuals recovering from injury, and those seeking alternatives to traditional fitness environments. The benefits of aquatic exercise for mobility, rehabilitation, and general wellness have contributed to increasing demand for programming such as water fitness, therapy-based programs, and informal activities like lane swimming and water walking.

²⁸ CTV News. (2023). *Lifeguard shortage causing waitlists for swim lessons shorter pool hours on Vancouver Island*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

²⁹ Times Colonist. (2025). *Prospect of long closure prompts calls for new Crystal Pool to be built next to existing site*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

³⁰ Vancouver Sun. (2025). *Metro Vancouver's swim-lesson shortage: Why parents are turning to private programs*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

³¹ Statistics Canada. (2023, October 10). *Participation in Canadian society through sport and work*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

Contemporary facility development reflects these evolving user preferences, with increasing emphasis on integrating wellness-focused aquatic amenities alongside traditional pools. Features such as warm-water therapy pools, cold plunges, saunas, and steam rooms are becoming more common and are often co-located with fitness centres and multi-purpose recreation spaces to support holistic well-being. For example, Richmond’s Minoru Centre for Active Living includes an integrated aquatic wellness area featuring hot pools, cold plunge pools, and both social and quiet sauna spaces located adjacent to the fitness centre.

Indoor Recreation:

There is increasing demand for low-barrier, dry-floor recreation activities such as pickleball, badminton, volleyball, and basketball. These activities are accessible to a wide range of users, require minimal specialized equipment, and can be easily adapted for both structured and informal play. At the same time, broader participation patterns indicate a shift toward self-directed activities that can be undertaken at convenient times, without the need for league or program registration³².

National participation data indicates that the majority of sport activity in Canada occurs on a recreational basis rather than through organized clubs or leagues, reflecting a growing preference for flexible and informal participation formats³³. There is increasing emphasis on developing flexible, multi-use indoor spaces that can accommodate a variety of activities throughout the day.

Gymnasiums are increasingly expected to support multiple uses and user groups, requiring adaptable layouts, movable equipment, and program scheduling approaches that balance structured and unstructured use.

Arena & Curling Services:

Participation in traditional organized ice sports has stabilized or declined in many jurisdictions, influenced by factors such as cost, scheduling demands, and shifting demographic preferences. An important exception is women’s ice hockey³⁴, which has experienced continued growth and increased visibility in recent years.

As a result of these shifts, arena facilities are increasingly being repositioned within communities. Rather than serving solely as single-purpose sport venues, arenas are evolving into multi-functional community spaces that support a wider range of activities and experiences. This includes increased provision of casual ice time, integration of non-ice uses, and enhanced community access.

These changes reflect a broader trend toward positioning arenas as community hubs that support social interaction, casual recreation, and multi-generational engagement, in addition to organized sport.

With respect to curling participation, the Curl BC Vision 2026 Strategic Plan reported anticipated growth between 2023 and 2026 with participation projected to increase. Member facility curlers are projected to grow from 23,431 to 25,850 (10% increase) and visitor participants increasing from 33,625 to 40,350 (20% increase)³⁵.

³² Statistics Canada (2023, November 10). *Diving into the Data: Sports Participation in Canada*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

³³ Statistics Canada. (2023, October 10). *Participation in Canadian society through sport and work*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

³⁴ Hockey Canada. 2020. *2019-20 Annual Report*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

³⁵ Curl BC. *Vision 2026 Strategic Plan: Framework of END Statements and Key Performance Indicators*. Updated April 2026. Retrieved from: [link](#)

In 2020, individuals aged 50–64 comprised the largest demographic of curlers in Canada (26.14%), suggesting that the sport maintains significant engagement among older adults³⁶.

Public curling rinks in Canada are aging with ~90% of the rinks built between 1940 and 1999 according to the 2019 Canadian Infrastructure Report³⁷. With many of these facilities approaching or exceeding their expected lifespan, significant investment is required to maintain operations and provide curling services.

Fitness & Wellness:

Health and fitness remain the primary motivation for participation in sport and recreation, with national data indicating that a significant majority of participants (82%) engage in these activities to improve overall health and well-being.³⁸ At the same time, there is growing demand for flexible formats such as small-group training, short-duration classes, and hybrid programming that can accommodate varying schedules and preferences.

Contemporary recreation facilities are responding to these trends by expanding and diversifying fitness environments. This includes the provision of dedicated spaces for strength training, cardio exercise, stretching, and functional movement, as well as the integration of wellness amenities such as saunas, steam rooms, and recovery areas. For example, Richmond’s Minoru Centre for Active Living features a wellness-oriented aquatic component (hot pools, cold plunges, and sauna spaces) integrated with a comprehensive fitness centre.

Arts, Culture, & Education:

Participation in arts and cultural activities is becoming increasingly informal, social, and participatory in nature. Rather than solely engaging in structured classes or performances, individuals are seeking opportunities to participate in creative activities in flexible and collaborative ways.

National recreation frameworks recognize that recreation encompasses not only physical activity, but also social, intellectual, and creative pursuits that contribute to individual and community wellbeing². In this context, there is an increasing emphasis on creating supportive environments that encourage participation, listing arts and crafts as a strong factor for this.³⁹ As a result, municipalities are increasingly incorporating arts and culture programming into recreation services. These activities can also occur in multipurpose rooms and flexible gathering spaces.

Seniors Services:

Demographic shifts are significantly influencing recreation demand across Canada, particularly the growth of older adult populations. As individuals live longer and remain active later in life, there is increasing demand for recreation opportunities that support healthy aging, social connection, and overall wellbeing.

³⁶ Allain, Kristi A., and Simon J. Barrick. (2025). *Centre of the House: Youthful Dominance and the Creation of Curling’s Age Order*. *Sport in Society* 28 (8): 1113–30. Retrieved from: [link](#)

³⁷ Association of Consulting Engineering Companies Canada et al. (2019). *2019 Canadian Infrastructure Report Card*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

³⁸ Statistics Canada. (2023, October 10). *Participation in Canadian society through sport and work*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

³⁹ Canadian Parks and Recreation Association. (2024). *Framework for Recreation and Parks in Canada*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

Older adults are seeking programming that balances physical activity with opportunities for social interaction and community engagement. At the same time, participation is often influenced by accessibility considerations, including mobility limitations, transportation, and proximity to facilities⁴⁰. Recreation systems are responding by expanding the availability of low-impact and progressive activity options, including gentle fitness programs, aquatic exercise, and social recreation activities.

Youth Services:

Youth inactivity levels remain high nationally, supporting continued need for accessible and more welcoming youth recreation opportunities.⁴¹

Youth participation in recreation continues to evolve in response to changing social, technological, and lifestyle factors. While participation in organized sport has rebounded following the COVID-19 pandemic, national data indicates that overall physical activity levels among youth remain below recommended guidelines.⁴²

The importance of creating spaces that support not only physical activity, but also social development, identity, and belonging is increasingly being recognized. This includes opportunities for unstructured recreation, as well as leadership, mentorship, and skill-building programs.

Multi-purpose and Community Services:

Recreation facilities are increasingly serving as multi-functional community assets that support a wide range of civic, social, and organizational needs. Beyond traditional recreation programming, facilities used by community groups, and service organizations for meetings, programming, and community-building activities.

There is growing demand for low-cost, accessible multi-purpose spaces that can accommodate a variety of uses. This demand is driven by increasing population, limited availability of affordable space, and the growing role of community-based services.

Multi-purpose rooms, shared spaces, and modular design elements are being incorporated and allow spaces to be reconfigured as needed.

Community Events & Rentals:

Community events and gatherings are an important component of recreation systems, providing opportunities for social connection, cultural expression, and community engagement. Demand for community events has increased as municipalities seek to foster inclusive, vibrant, and connected communities.⁴³ At the same time, volunteer capacity, which has traditionally supported many community events, is declining, influenced by factors such as time constraints and increasing cost of living⁴⁴.

⁴⁰ Government of British Columbia. (2021). *Accessibility Research Report*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

⁴¹ CFLRI and CPRA. (2023). *The Price of Inactivity: Measuring the Powerful Impact of Sport, Physical Activity, and Recreation in Canada*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

⁴² Statistics Canada. (2023). *Health Reports*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

⁴³ Canadian Parks and Recreation Association. (2024). *Framework for Recreation and Parks in Canada*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

⁴⁴ Statistics Canada. (2025). *Volunteering and charitable giving in Canada*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

Recreation facilities are responding to these trends by expanding their role as venues for events, meetings, and gatherings. There is increasing demand for flexible, rentable spaces that can accommodate a range of uses, from small meetings to large community events. This has led to a growing focus on incorporating revenue-generating spaces within recreation facilities, including event rooms, multipurpose halls, and outdoor gathering areas⁴⁵. These spaces are designed to support both community use and cost recovery, helping to offset rising operating costs while maintaining accessibility.

⁴⁵ University of Northern British Columbia. *Local Government Service Delivery and Governance in British Columbia*. Retrieved from: [link](#)

Appendix D: Utilization Methodologies and Assumptions

Esquimalt Recreation Centre

The hours of operation for the Esquimalt Recreation Centre are assumed the same for every room: daily 5.30am -10.30pm⁴⁶. Of the 17 daily available hours, we account for 85% room efficiency: a room is only actually available 14.5 hours a day (not a full 17), given turnaround times. To account for closures and holidays, we assume 2 weeks (14 days) of annual downtime, leading to 351 open days per year. This amounts to a total of ~5,072 hours of available booking time per year. The seasonal utilization analysis is based on 6 years of data (2020-2025 inclusive), the average and maximum annual utilization is based on 4 years of data (2022-2025), and the fitness centre monthly visit analysis is based on 3.5 years of data (January 2023 – May 2026).

The following spaces were removed from the analysis:

- Parking Lots and equipment (TV 1, TV 2, Picture Rails)
- Physiotherapy clinic, as this space is leased full time and utilization is not a useful analysis.
- Offices (Child, Youth, and Family Services, and Rec Centre Admin)
- The Weight Room, as this room was double-booked for both Drop-In and Personal Training daily (17 hours each daily) and was also booked for classes over top. Utilization for this room therefore showed over 100%.

Bookings attributed to Pioneer A&B were duplicated into Pioneers A and B separately, in order to account for the smaller spaces individually.

Archie Browning Sports Centre

The hours of operation for Archie Browning Sports Centre are the same for every room: daily 5.30am - 10.30pm. The same assumptions apply to this facility as for the Recreation Centre: of the 17 daily available hours, we allocate an 85% room efficiency. For closures and holidays, we assume 2 weeks (14 days) of annual downtime, leading to 351 open days per year. This is ~5,072 hours of available booking time, every year for every space. The analysis is based on 4 years of data (2022-2025 inclusive).

The following data categories were removed from the analysis:

- Auxiliary spaces: Dressing Room, Parking Stalls, Storage Lockers
- Equipment: Cargo Van, Beer Cooler, Speed Skating Pads
- Spaces that under normal operation are non-bookable (which may be booked on special occasion): Arena Lobby, Arena Concession, Front Lobby, and Front Plaza.

Note that the Curling Arena represents all Curling Sheets at once. These booked hours were duplicated into each sheet to account for the time. The Pickleball Courts 1-4 were similarly duplicated

⁴⁶ Esquimalt Bylaw states that this facility has 24-hour operation, but functionally, the facility operates between 5.30am-10.30pm.

into Sheet bookings, as they represent dry floor activity for this space (note, the map of sheets to courts was not known; the courts have similar utilization hours each year and therefore a maximum was used to duplicate into each Sheet's schedule).

Note: Bookings include maintenance time such as ice in/out and ice cleaning.

Note: Meeting Rooms A and B are also known as the Ladies and Men's Curling Lounges, respectively.

Gorge Park Pavilion

The hours of operation for the Pavilion are more complex, differing by weekday/weekend, and by season. Two weeks of total downtime are assumed (split evenly between spring/summer and fall/winter); note that statutory holidays are included within the booked hours. As for the other facilities, an 85% efficiency has been applied. The total annual hours available per room at the Pavilion are approximately 3,055, varying by season. The analysis is based on 4 years of data (2022-2025 inclusive).

The Facility is often booked as a whole. When this was the case, the booking time was copied into every room to account for the hours at a room level. The same applies to bookings for the whole Lower Hall (across A, B, and C) and permutations (B/C and A/B). Therefore, the Pavilion utilization is reported under 7 different spaces: Boardroom, Lower Halls A, B, and C, the Lower Servery, Upper Hall, and Upper Servery.

Please note, the following were removed from the analysis:

- Spaces with very low booked hours (average < 20/year): Pavilion Garden, Gorge Willow Tree.
- Support spaces: Loading Dock and Parking Lot.