

Recreation and Parks Master Plan: Executive Summary

CITY OF SASKATOON

Final Draft
For Presentation to Committee of Council

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Executive Summary

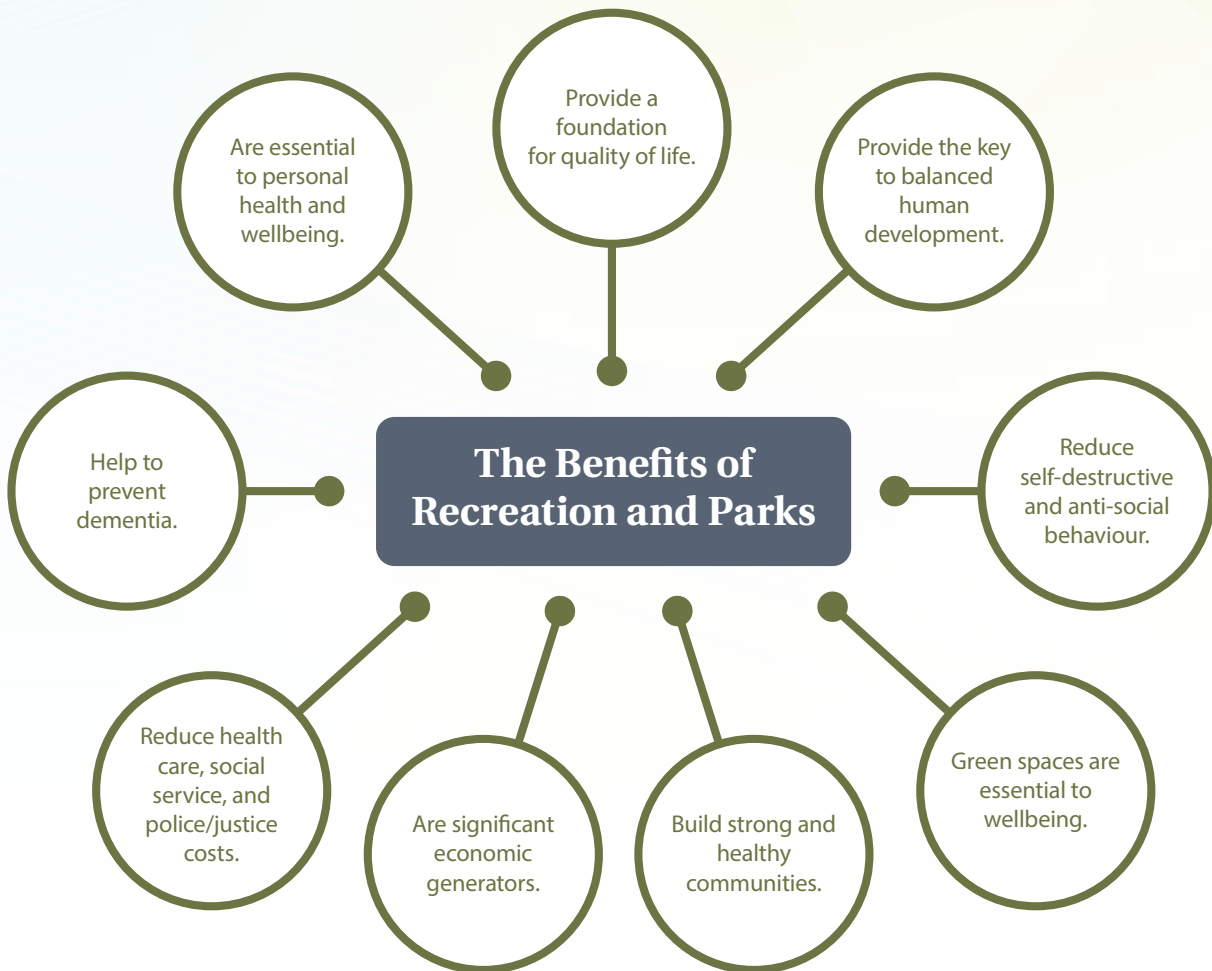
Building on What We Value Most

Saskatoon cherishes and builds upon what it values most: its people and their strong sense of community; its educational, recreational, and cultural resources; and its access to a wealth of natural resources. Arts, sports, and culture are accessible to all, and central to the city's identity and livability. It is a city of all seasons, as welcoming and active in winter as it is in summer.

With Saskatoon entering a new stage of growth, planning must consider how to best respond to future program and infrastructure needs, not just for today's citizens, but for the generations to come. These and other factors have led the City to develop a comprehensive Recreation and Parks Master Plan.

THE MANY BENEFITS OF RECREATION AND PARKS

Recreation and parks are an essential public service. The benefits are proven and impact the overall community, the individuals living within it, and the natural environment.



Master Plan Purpose and Background

The Recreation and Parks Master Plan is intended to guide future decision-making. It provides an overall framework for the development, delivery, and continuous improvement of recreation and parks programs, services, and facilities.

The Plan will:

- Create supportive environments for recreation and parks activity to occur in;
- Build capacity in the recreation and parks delivery system throughout Saskatoon; and
- Enhance inclusion in and access to recreation and parks opportunities provided by the City and stakeholders.



The Recreation and Parks Master Plan is based on diligent research and broad public consultation.

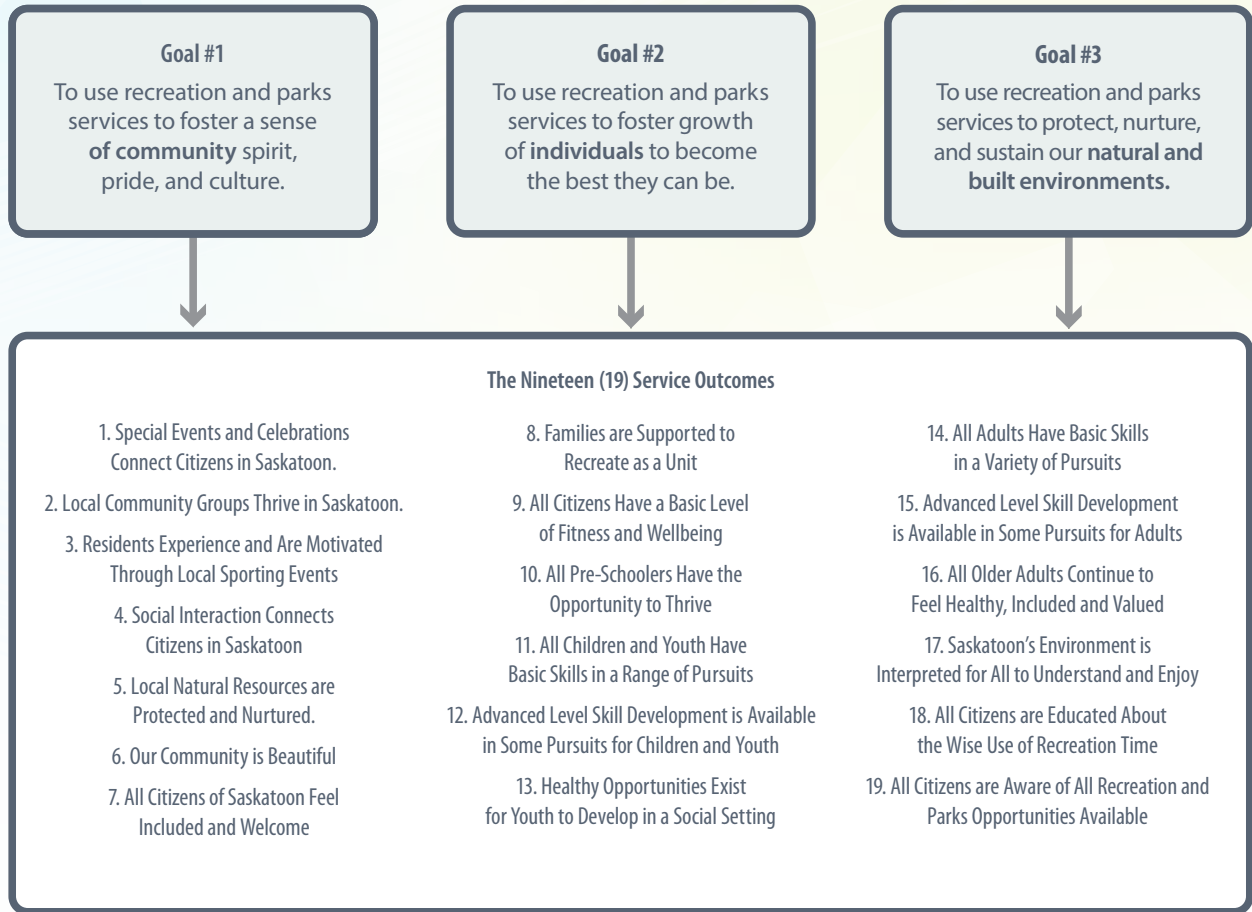
The Vision

The Plan is founded on the following vision for recreation and parks services.

We envision a city in which everyone is engaged in meaningful, accessible recreation experiences that enhance quality of life and foster:

- Individual wellbeing;
- Community wellbeing; and
- The wellbeing of our natural and built environments.

In the delivery of recreation and parks services, the City will direct its efforts toward achieving the greatest “public good” in return for investment of limited public resources. The Plan includes three overarching goals and 19 Service Outcomes.



The Service Outcomes outline a desired end state that can be achieved through provision of and participation in recreation and parks activities. The outcomes lead to the three overarching goals and explain what the City (as well as other service providers) expects out of its investment in recreation and parks services. Everything the City does should further one or more of the Service Outcomes. The desired end states may never be completely achieved, but each warrants continued public support and investment.

Master Plan Recommendations

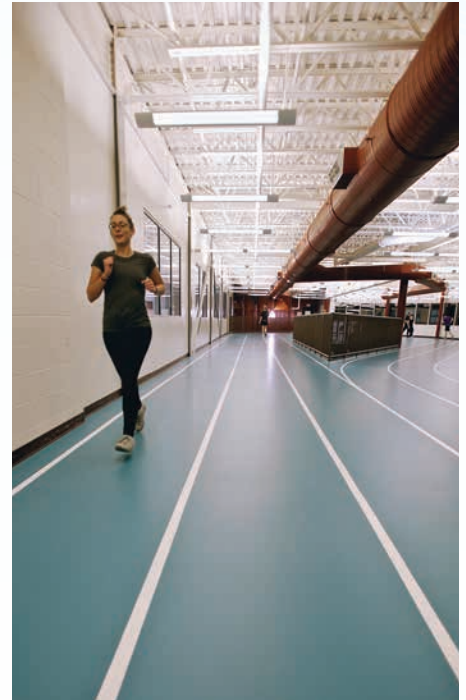
The Recreation and Parks Master Plan outlines how the City can enhance recreation and parks benefits through adjustments to existing service delivery, programming, and infrastructure. The recommendations build upon the strong core of recreation and parks services currently provided by the City and other delivery agencies. Recommendations are presented in four categories:

1. **Service Delivery:** how the City and other service providers offer recreation and parks facilities, spaces, and programs directly and in partnership with others.
2. **Programming:** how the City and other program providers deliver programs and focus efforts where needed.
3. **Infrastructure:** how the City and other providers plan and manage indoor and outdoor facilities and spaces.
4. **Financing:** how the City and other providers can leverage funding along the investment spectrum.

SERVICE DELIVERY RECOMMENDATIONS

Key themes related to service delivery include creating recreation capacity, facilitating supportive environments, and ensuring inclusion and access.

Recommendations focus on building knowledge and capacity through professional development and consistent information gathering, as well as continuing to partner with allied sectors (e.g. justice, education, health) on recreation and parks opportunities. The Plan outlines a framework for engaging in partnerships with non-profit, private, and municipal organizations. The concept of regional collaboration has been presented and supported by stakeholders as worthy of consideration for future service provision.



Recommendations related to supporting volunteers, communicating with residents and stakeholders, and reducing barriers to participation are intended to help service providers understand, and better serve, the Saskatoon market. Promoting recreation and educating the public on why they should participate are essential to increasing participation and benefits.

Ensuring accessibility of recreation and parks opportunities involves not only promoting the opportunities but also reducing barriers to participation. Revisiting financial cost recovery expectations is required, as is ensuring facilities are designed with physical accessibility in mind.

Partnership Framework

A partnership framework has been developed to increase clarity on how and why the City manages its relationships. The framework:

- Allows agencies to better structure future proposals and manage their relationship with the City;
- Provides for increased accountability and transparency by clarifying the outcomes of each relationship and how they are measured; and
- Reduces management time by providing a more consistent policy framework for managing relationship.



Highlights

CREATING RECREATION CAPACITY

- **Partnerships:** leveraging a variety of partnerships will optimize public investment and services.
- **Cross-Sectoral Collaboration:** working with allied sectors such as education, health, justice, and social services will ensure benefits are far-reaching and efforts are aligned.
- **Regional Collaboration:** collaborating with regional partners wherever possible will improve overall service delivery.
- **Group and Volunteer Support:** supporting community-based groups and partners will help to sustain existing service levels.

FACILITATING SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

- **Promotions and Marketing:** enhancing existing efforts to promote opportunities and motivate non-participants through benefits messaging will continue to be a focus.
- **Community Liaison:** ongoing discussions with the general public and other stakeholders is key in ensuring services are meeting needs.
- **Data Collection and Research:** collecting reliable data on facility and space usage will help measure performance and clarify service utilization.

ENSURING INCLUSION AND ACCESS

- **Social Inclusion through Recreation and Parks:** recreation and parks programming will be planned through a social inclusion lens.
- **Financial Assistance:** the City will continue to offer financial assistance programs and to promote these and other low cost/no-cost opportunities to those in need.

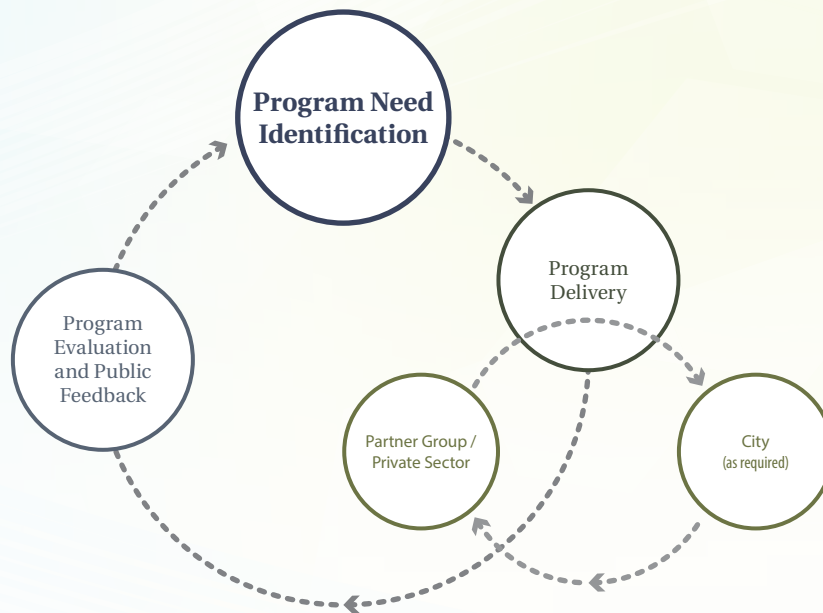
Recommendations

1. The City will develop a partnership policy based on the framework.
2. The City will use the partnership framework to explore partnership opportunities for all recreation and parks service provision and infrastructure development.
3. The City will consider formalizing existing and future partnership arrangements to include performance measurement of Service Outcomes and quality control.
4. The City will continue to work with cross-sectoral partners to design and implement programs and provide environments where positive recreation and parks activity can occur.
5. The City will consider regional collaboration, utilizing the resources provided by SUMA and SPRA as a guide when planning and siting new facilities and offering programs that could have regional value and appeal.
6. The City will continue to support Community Associations and Organized Interest Groups equitably and transparently, based on ongoing communication to identify group support needs.
7. The City will consider getting involved with other sectors in the development of a city-wide volunteer strategy.
8. The City will continue to promote and market City recreation and parks opportunities with an enhanced focus on benefits and motivating participation.
9. The City will continue to employ an ongoing community liaison strategy that considers the general public (including but not limited to the City of Saskatoon Leisure Activity Study), partner groups, and cross-sector allies.
10. The City will develop utilization measures and collect relative data for structured and spontaneous use of recreation and parks services, programming, and infrastructure.
11. The City will design recreation and parks programs and opportunities to facilitate social inclusion and encourage/require its partners to do the same.
12. The City will continue to offer its Leisure Access and Youth Sports Subsidy Program, and grants to community-based groups in the most efficient and respectful manner possible.

PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS

Recreation and parks programs in Saskatoon help motivate and focus the participation of city and regional residents in healthy activities. The City of Saskatoon directly provides programs at its facilities and in its open spaces. It also helps facilitate programs that are offered by community-based groups, private sector organizations, and allied stakeholders.

From a recreation and parks programming perspective, the City is the only program provider with a mandate to oversee the needs of the entire community. Thus, the City has a role in determining overall program needs and disseminating information to service providers capable of filling identified gaps. This is not to suggest that the City is responsible for providing all needed programs, but that it can work collaboratively with other providers to optimize program efforts and channel resources where they are most needed.



Highlights

Getting more people active increasing exposure to nature and the outdoors, creating opportunities for winter-based recreation, and continuing to enable access to the river valley are key programming themes. Ensuring trail connections are established and maintained, preserving the ease of “moving around” align with the City’s upcoming Active Transportation Plan. Moving forward, City programs must be affordable and residents must be aware of available opportunities. Increased capacities will be required in some instances.

FOCUS OF FUTURE RECREATION AND PARKS PROGRAMMING:

- Getting more people, more active, more often.
- Getting more people outdoors, embracing all seasons.
- Using recreation opportunities to facilitate social inclusion.
- Creating enhanced connections with nature.
- Developing physical literacy and fundamental movement skills throughout life.
- Creating afterschool (3:00 – 6:00 p.m.) opportunities for children and youth.

Recommendations

13. The City will continue to include information about financial assistance for programs in its promotion and marketing efforts.
14. The City will take a lead role in identifying recreation and parks program needs in the community (including program performance assessment).
15. The City will work with other program providers to reduce redundancy and optimize investment wherever possible.
16. The City will use the Desired Program Focus Areas to guide collaborative recreation and park programming efforts.
17. The City will act to reduce barriers and increase participation wherever possible.
18. The City will review its Fees and Charges Schedule to determine admission fees that encourage greater use while also generating revenues, including potential use of a tiered system with differential fees based on facility type and capacity.
19. The City will look to engage the Community Feedback Committee (or similar group) in implementation of the Plan.

INFRASTRUCTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

As the primary provider of public sector recreation and parks services, the City currently owns and operates a significant array of recreation and parks facilities and spaces. Operating and maintaining these facilities is a major responsibility. Residents and local groups show high levels of satisfaction with these facilities, yet there is an appetite in the community for investment in new and/or enhanced infrastructure. Meeting future needs will understandably involve partnerships with other service providers and regional municipalities.

The Plan outlines leading practices in recreation and parks infrastructure, such as ensuring adequate lifecycle budgets are in place to sustain facilities, considering geographic balance when building new facilities, and ensuring sufficient lands are acquired for future infrastructure development. Reinvestment in existing facilities is an important consideration. Some of the City's recreation facilities warrant revitalization to sustain existing service levels and meet new and emerging needs.

Highlights

The Plan outlines strategies for specific indoor and outdoor infrastructure amenities provided by the City. Ice arenas, aquatics facilities, and dry-land areas are some of the indoor environments discussed. Outdoor strategies related to the City's parks classification system as well as specific park amenities like spray parks, skateboard parks, sports fields, and ball diamonds are presented.

The river valley is a valued resource, and continued support of the Meewasin Valley Authority is important. Preserving and protecting natural areas and trails within the city allows residents to connect to nature, while also providing opportunities for recreational and active transportation.

In an ideal scenario, these infrastructure strategies would all be achieved. Given limited resources, however, prioritization is necessary. The Plan includes a prioritization framework to provide a transparent basis for decision-making. Criteria for prioritization include community demand, service outcomes,

existing provision level, cost savings through partnerships/grants, cost/benefit, regional partnership appeal and economic impact.

Using the prioritization framework, the following indoor and outdoor facility priorities have been identified to guide short and mid-term investment decisions. The priorities are meant to assist decision-makers as opposed to being prescriptive.

Indoor Recreation Facility Spaces—PRIORITY RANKING

Amenity type	Rank
Ice Surfaces (Leisure) ¹	1
Walking/Running Track	2
Indoor Child Playgrounds	3
Arena Facilities	4
Multi-purpose Gymnasium/Social Spaces	4
Fitness/ Wellness Facilities	6
Before and After School Care Facilities	6
Child Minding Space	6
Aboriginal Cultural/Ceremonial Room	9
Gymnasium Type Space	10
Leisure Swimming Pools	10
Skateboard Facility	12
50m Competition Swimming Pools	13
Tennis	14
Climbing Wall	14
Gymnastics Studio	14
Youth Centres	17
Support Facilities	17
Social/Banquet Facilities	17
Seniors Centre	20
25m Competition Swimming Pools	20
Multi-Purpose Program/Meeting Rooms	22
Curling Rinks	22
Dance Studio	22

Outdoor Recreation Facility Spaces—PRIORITY RANKING

Amenity type	Rank
Shared Use Trail Network/System	1
Festival Venue/Amphitheatre	2
Passive Park (Including Natural Areas)	2
Child Playgrounds	4
Track and Field Spaces	4
Community Gardens	6
Water Spray Parks	6
Bike Parks (BMX, Mountain Bike)	6
Boating Facilities—Non-motorized	6
Boating Facilities—Motorized	6
Hiking Amenities	11
Sports Fields—Artificial Turf	12
Sports Fields—Grass	13
Dog Off Leash Parks	13
Swimming Pools	13
Tennis Courts	16
Ball Diamonds	16
Skateboard Parks	16
Picnic Areas	16
Sand/Beach Volleyball Courts	16
Basketball Courts/Sport Courts	21
Fitness Equipment	21
Cross Country Ski Trails	21

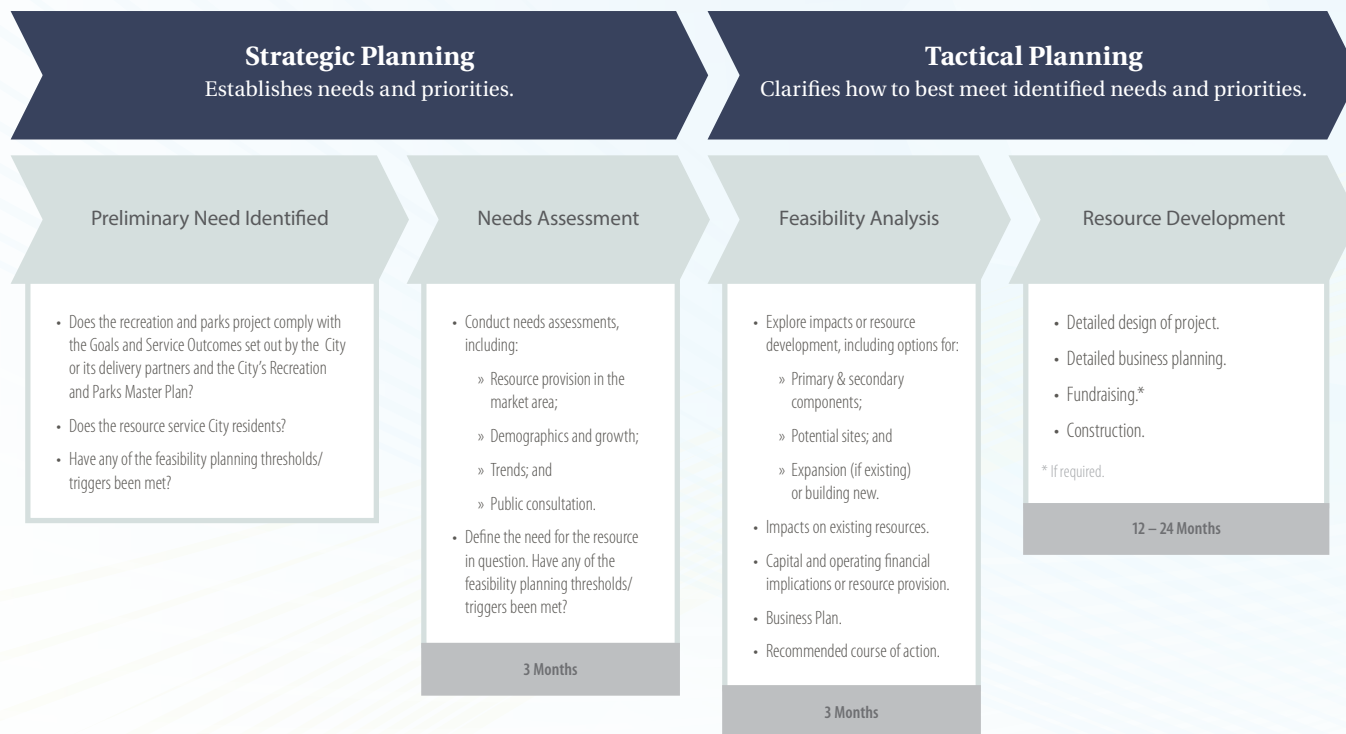
The priority amenities listed represent broad community interests and developing new or enhanced infrastructure to address these is not the sole responsibility of the City. Addressing these priorities will need to be a collective effort across all recreation and parks stakeholders in Saskatoon.

It is important to note that the definition of indoor and outdoor priorities is dynamic and expected to change as new information and partnerships emerge. The framework can be reviewed and updated by Administration whenever necessary. The priorities are meant to assist decision-makers as opposed to being prescriptive.

¹ Leisure ice facilities are non-boarded, indoor ice spaces typically found adjacent to traditional ice arenas that allow for unstructured public skating opportunities and do not accommodate ice sports such as hockey and ringette.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

City Council and Administration are tasked with making decisions about recreation and parks infrastructure in the best interests of the community. The project development framework provides a process for decision-making based on due diligence.



Several upcoming projects could be assessed using the project development framework. These include the potential development of a City Centre recreation facility through partnerships, development of a new facility in the city's northeast quadrant, reinvestment in existing civic recreation facilities and parks, and potential partnerships in the development of indoor ice facilities.

Recommendations

20. City recreation and parks professionals will continue to work with other divisions in planning future recreation and parks infrastructure.
21. The City will revisit, update, and enhance its Parks and Open Space classification system.
22. The City will revisit, update, and enhance its current Park Development Guidelines policy and formalize its Landscape Design Standards.
23. The City will use a recreation facilities classification system to help guide future development of new or enhanced facilities.
24. The City will consider providing both spontaneous and structured recreation, culture, and parks spaces in the expansion/enhancement of existing or the development of new infrastructure.
25. The City will explore opportunities to develop integrated facilities when contemplating the development of new or enhanced recreation and parks infrastructure.

26. The City will continue to consider including multiple types of spaces in a facility and/or at a site when planning for investment in recreation and parks infrastructure.
27. The City will consider geographic balance in the provision of existing and the development of new programs and services, especially for facilities and spaces provided at the district level.
28. The City will employ principles of environmentally sound design wherever possible when contemplating new facilities/sites or when investing in existing infrastructure.
29. The City will explore the application of synthetic playing surfaces when contemplating major outdoor recreation and park facilities.
30. The City will continue to plan for facility and parks lifecycle replacement and amenity refreshment through an annual lifecycle budget approach.
31. The City will consider crime prevention through environmental design, multi-use, physical accessibility, age-friendly design, sponsorship exposure, and event hosting capability when designing and constructing new and/or enhanced recreation facility or developing open spaces.
32. The City will ensure that healthy food and beverage options are provided in recreation facilities and parks where possible.
33. The City will consider additional Municipal Reserve allocation and budgeting for land acquisition for the creation of larger multi-district and/or district park and recreation facility sites.
34. The City will consider revitalization, enhancement, and potential expansion of existing facilities, including but not limited to playground structures, recreation units, and leisure centres when contemplating future recreation and parks infrastructure development.
35. The City will use the reinvestment/repurpose or decommission decision-making framework when contemplating the future of existing recreation and parks assets requiring substantial lifecycle investment.
36. The City will strive to achieve the park amenity strategies as well as the desired outcomes outlined in the Plan related to natural areas, trails, and the river valley.
37. The City will strive to achieve the recreation facility (e.g. arenas, indoor aquatics, dry-land, fitness/wellness, etc.) strategies outlined in the Plan.
38. The City will use the project development framework when contemplating significant recreation and parks infrastructure development requiring public funding.
39. The City will use and periodically revisit the recreation and parks facility space prioritization model to help guide future infrastructure investment decision making.

FINANCING RECOMMENDATIONS

As the primary delivery agent of public recreation and parks services in Saskatoon, the City makes a significant investment in infrastructure, programming, and other supports. Although there is some cost-recovery, recreation and parks services are generally subsidized by local taxes. The philosophy behind public investment in these essential services is explained in the investment spectrum.

The investment spectrum suggests that facilities accessible by the entire community and within the City's base level of service (e.g. walking trails, park furniture) be funded solely through public taxes. As infrastructure becomes more specialized and less accessible by the general public (e.g. major sports field facilities, ice arenas), the spectrum suggests that funding come from a combination of public taxes, user fees, fundraising, and private/non-profit investment.

Investment Spectrum



Recommendations

40. The City will enhance its existing sponsorship policy to focus on recreation and parks and administer an associated campaign to garner external funding to support of programming and/or infrastructure.
41. The City will explore non-traditional fee-based services and amenities, on a break even or profit basis, that are complementary to existing facility or park space.
42. Where applicable, the City will pursue grants from external sources to leverage public investment in recreation and parks services.
43. The City will allocate sustained internal resources (either reallocated or incremental) to implement the Plan in the spirit of continuous improvement.
44. Where possible, the City will continue to provide staff professional development opportunities to continually enhance internal capacity.

Implementation: A Joint Effort

Implementation of the Recreation and Parks Master Plan will require commitment, resources (financial and human), and adjustment of existing policies and protocols. The Plan is dynamic, and the frameworks and systems outlined allow recreation and parks stakeholders to adapt as Saskatoon grows and evolves.

The Plan's underlying theme is that the delivery of recreation and parks services, programming, and infrastructure is dependent upon a collaborative effort led by the City and involving a variety of dedicated partners and service providers. Although the majority of recommendations focus on the City, they impact services and facilities that are a product of the dedication and perseverance of all stakeholders, including the volunteer sector, other levels of government, and the private sector.

Financing recreation and parks is expected to come through a combination of public taxes, user fees, and external sources, such as grants and sponsorship. The financial implications and associated timing will enable the City and other stakeholders to plan for future resource allocation. Although estimates may have higher margins of error, the fact that they will be proactively considered is invaluable.

The recommendations in the Plan will provide a key reference point in future decision-making regarding recreation and parks services, programming, and infrastructure. As the Plan is implemented, it will create strength and capacity in the recreation and parks delivery system and lead to improved resident quality of life.



