

Calgary Metropolitan Regional Board  
Recreation Servicing Technical Advisory Group

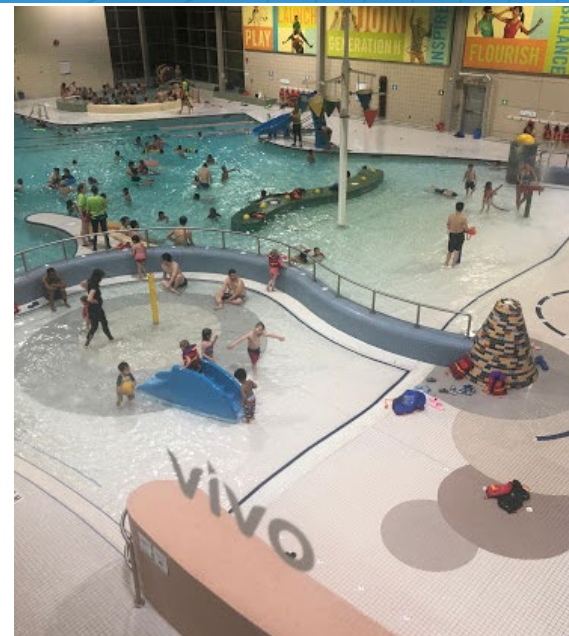
# Options for Enhancing Regional Recreation

Final

February, 2020



Ball Diamond, Okotoks



Vivo Centre, Calgary



Outdoor Field, Airdrie



Outdoor Rink, Chestermere





# Table of Contents

## Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction and Methodology</b> . . . . .	<b>1</b>
	The Report Process . . . . .	2
	Other Research. . . . .	3
	The Survey and Workshops . . . . .	3
<b>2</b>	<b>The Regional Planning Context</b> . . . . .	<b>5</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Other Regional Collaboration</b> . . . . .	<b>7</b>
	Alberta: ICF, Regional Plans, specialized municipalities . . . . .	8
	BC and Ontario: Regional governments . . . . .	9
<b>4</b>	<b>Current State Assessment</b> . . . . .	<b>11</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>A Foundation for Regional Recreation</b> . . . . .	<b>13</b>
	Defining Regional Recreation. . . . .	13
	A Rationale and Foundation for Regional Recreation . . . . .	14
	Building Upon a Common Understanding: The Evolution of Regional Collaboration on Recreation in the Calgary Metropolitan Region . . . . .	16
<b>6</b>	<b>Summary and Next Steps</b> . . . . .	<b>24</b>
	<b>Appendices</b> . . . . .	<b>25</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>Optional / Potential Approach to Defining Regional Recreation Assets / Infrastructure</b> . . . . .	<b>26</b>
	Optional / Potential Regional Recreation Asset / Infrastructure Screening Tool . . . . .	27
<b>B</b>	<b>Optional / Potential Approach to Sharing Responsibility for Regional Recreation</b> . . . . .	<b>29</b>

# Introduction and Methodology

Public recreation services provide social good in a community and the broader region in which it is situated. Public recreation not only leads to residents and visitors being more physically active and healthy; it also brings people together and positively contributes to desired outcomes in other public service areas such as education, justice and health. When people participate in recreation, they are more likely to contribute positively to their communities and less likely to participate in anti-social behaviours.

Based on the various benefits that come from it, publicly supported recreation is a service in the Province of Alberta and throughout Canada.

Municipalities throughout the Calgary Metropolitan Region Board (CMRB) all invest in recreation opportunities and do so in a variety of different ways. Recent initiatives, exploring the efficiencies and benefits that could be achieved through municipalities working together in the region have provoked discussions

around the potential for a more collaborative approach to delivering publicly supported recreation opportunities for residents and visitors. At the forefront of these discussions is the need to define regional recreation; provide guidance on how regional municipalities could work together through common goals and shared principles, developing tools to determine what should be considered “regional” in nature and what is best handled in a “local” or independent fashion, and to provide some level detail around how a more structured regional approach

Regional recreation planning involves the cooperation of communities within a given boundary in the delivery of services, whether they are facility or recreational program related services. This cooperation is considered by some to be essential to maintaining existing assets or developing new initiatives. The current situation is characterized by aging facilities, limited financial resources and an increasing demand for services. In the current study area (CMRB) the need for regional planning is a result of a changes to the Municipal Government Act requiring municipalities to discuss the potential for regional collaboration in certain service areas: recreation being one.

could look should member municipalities choose to do so. With this in mind, the CMRB Recreation Servicing Technical Advisory Group (Recreation TAG), comprised of representatives from all 10 member municipalities, embarked on a journey to attempt to define regional recreation. This work has occurred over the past year and culminated in a survey and a series of subsequent workshops facilitated in the summer and fall of 2019, and is summarized in this report.

It is important to note that defining regional recreation is inherently difficult because although it is a key element of successful population growth, it is also context-specific

as to what kinds of recreation services could or should be provided (hockey, softball, lawn bowling, walking trails, etc), to what level these recreation services should be provided, and to what degree is the member municipality able to fund recreation services in consideration of its many priorities. Due to contextual and subjective

nature of recreation servicing, there is no one standard that can be identified as a minimum or acceptable standard that each municipality must provide; however, that does not remove the advantages of working together on projects and/or initiatives that are regional in scale.

The following document is meant to provide a collective perspective and opinion as to what could be considered regional as it relates to publicly supported recreation infrastructure and opportunities, as well as a non-binding path forward for member municipalities as to how to



work together more cohesively and collaboratively so that greater benefits can be realized from publicly supported recreation. The definitions and path outlined herein are a recommendation of the Recreation TAG to political leadership at the CMRB table. It is not meant to circumvent or overrule political will; rather they are meant to provide a reference point, developed by local experts, for political decisions to be made and for administrative action going forward.

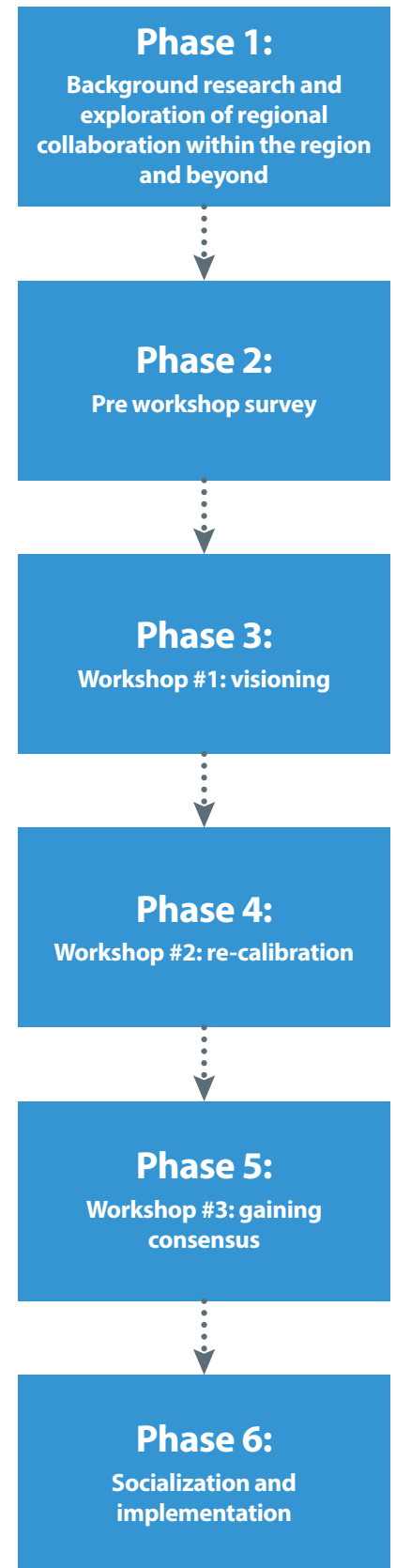
Working together throughout the region will likely be based on relationships and will be characterized by trust, accountability, and effort. Relationships take time to develop and strengthen and what is contained in this report is meant to be a foundation for regional relationships to be built upon, not necessarily a depiction of the ideal state.



Arena, Strathmore

## The Report Process

The following graphic outlines the process used to develop this summary report. This process was initiated in response to direction from the Intermunicipal Servicing Committee of the CMRB to define regional recreation. This report provides a definition of regional recreation and a framework for next steps.



## Other Research

In order to further inform a discussion around regional recreation, other research was conducted to understand the regional recreation market context and identify what is happening elsewhere in the province and beyond related to regional recreation collaboration.

Other forms of research conducted included: Review of trends and leading practices research across Canada and internationally. Government reports and academic papers were gathered and analyzed to provide support for findings in this report. In addition, examples of collaboration from other parts of the Province were gathered, although there is no current example that matches the size and uniqueness of the CMRB.

## The Survey and Workshops

A pre-workshop survey was conducted with the Recreation Servicing TAG representing all ten (10) municipalities in the CMRB. The purpose of the survey was to understand how regional partners are currently operating and how they understand, value, and perceive regional recreation. The survey results were used as a basis for the initial workshop and drove the creation of questions and discussions conducted in person. Results from the pre-workshop survey are also used throughout this report.

The first regional workshop was held on June 7th, 2019 at the Cochrane Ranchehouse. The main purpose of the workshop was to bring all Recreation TAG partners together to discuss what regional recreation is, what it means to each partner, how regional recreation or cross boundary partnerships are currently functioning (or not), and to develop an approach to defining regional recreation within the context of the CMRB. The workshop provided an opportunity to understand current barriers, successes and processes in the region. It also helped define recreation service levels and work towards a plan in which all CMRB partners are serving community members in the best possible manner; avoiding competition or duplication where at all possible.

Within the first workshop, a presentation was given by the consulting team, discussions were facilitated, and dotmocracies were conducted based on pre-workshop survey results and input gathered. Dotmocracy is a simple method for group prioritization or decision-making, it is a method to use in processes where prioritization or decision-making is the aim. The method supports a group to quickly see which options are most popular or relevant. The results of this method are discussed in the report. Ultimately, the survey and in person workshop have informed the findings and recommendations of this report so that the CMRB may develop a common definition/understanding of regional recreation, vision for the future, and a methodology for developing regional recreation facilities, events, and programs.



Shane Homes YMCA at Rocky Ridge, Calgary

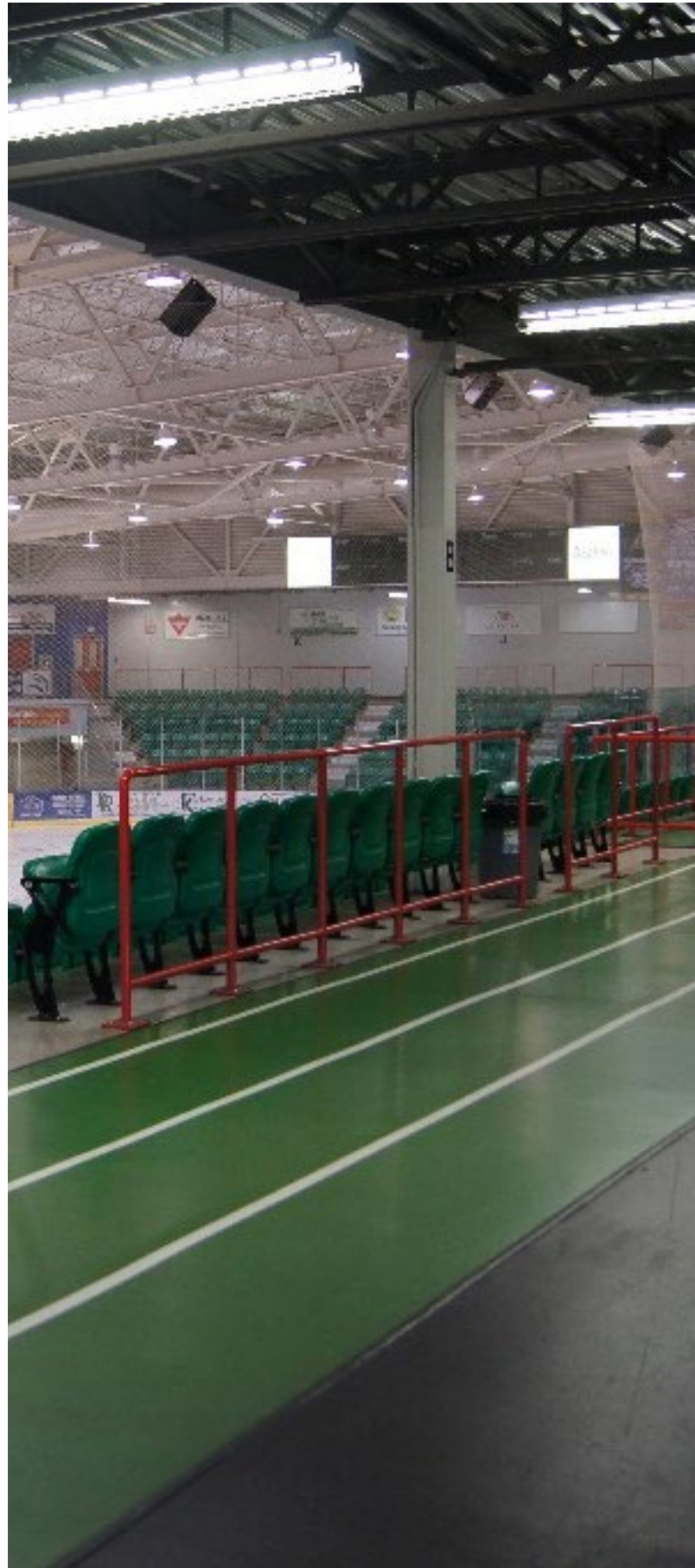


During the second workshop, held on October 28, 2019 at the Civic Centre in Strathmore, the group shared their reactions to a draft recommendation for how to proceed with a more regional approach to recreation. The information presented to the group included a definition of regional recreation, principles for moving forward, detailed descriptions as to how to define regional recreation facilities, and programs. The report provided some early options for sharing in the responsibility and cost of regional services and facilities. The merits of a regional recreation committee or formalized group were also discussed. It was determined after the second workshop that regional events and programs could not be fully contemplated in the timing of the current mandate of creating a growth and servicing plan for the CMR. Consequently, regional events and programs are not part of the recommendations of this report. The report focuses on greenfield development and planning tools for intermunicipal collaboration going forward.

Although the information presented at the second workshop was based upon the input and insight of the Recreation TAG group, there was agreement around the table that the initial recommended course of action did not reflect what the group thought was best at that stage in time. Although there was agreement on some aspects of the initial recommendation (definition of regional recreation, principles, etc.) and also a sentiment that some of the more detailed approach to defining regional assets and cost sharing approaches may be useful at a later date.

Taking a step back, without losing the insight and input gathered, and setting the stage for a relationship to be built was seen as more important than providing a perfect model for regional collaboration to occur. Based on the feedback of the Recreation TAG group, refinements were made and a more complete, but less prescriptive path forward was developed. It was clear to Recreation TAG members that more time would be required to understand the current state of recreation in the region and build enhanced regional relationships.

The third and final workshop was held on December 17th at the Rocky View County administrative office. The path forward was presented. It included much of what is found in this document and considered all of the insight and input gathered throughout the entire process. The Recreation TAG was comfortable with the information provided and that it might provide value to future regional conversations about recreation, either in whole or in part. From the process, the Recreation TAG felt that this path could lead to enhanced coordination, satisfaction with and intermunicipal collaboration on recreation in the Calgary Metropolitan Region.



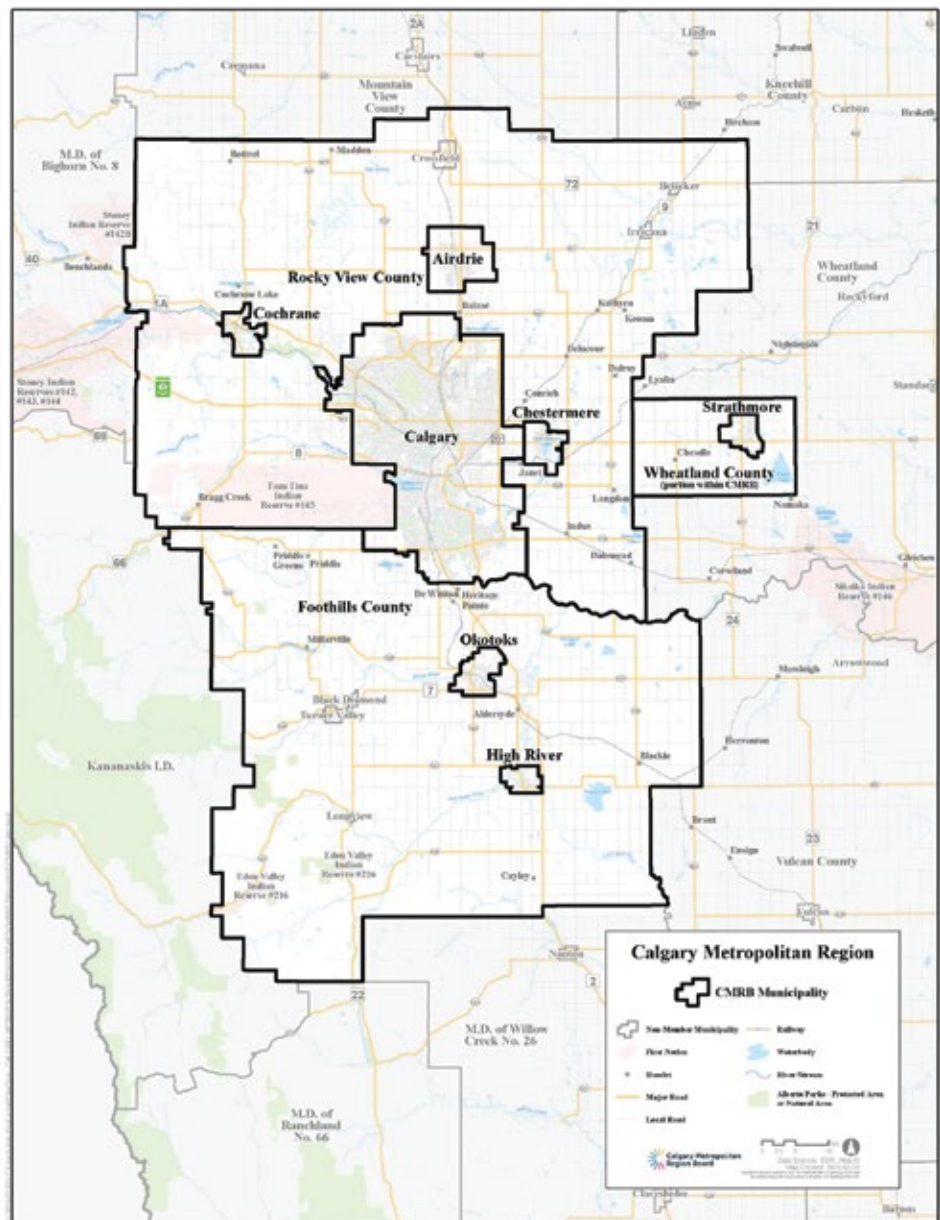
Indoor Walking Track, Okotoks

# The Regional Planning Context

The Calgary Metropolitan Region Board (CMRB) has a mandate to complete a Growth Plan and Servicing Plan for the Calgary Metropolitan Region (CMR) by December 2020. The CMRB Regulation AR190/2017 sets out the objectives for the CMRB Servicing Plan, which includes facilitating the orderly, economical and environmentally responsible growth in the region. Once approved, the long-term Growth and Servicing Plans will guide regional land-use decision-making in the CMR. The objectives of the Servicing Plan include optimization of shared services to enhance use of ratepayer dollars in the CMR. As part of the Servicing Plan development, the CMRB has identified recreation as a key area for collaboration on service provision.

The CMRB Regional Evaluation Framework is the tool by which statutory plans and stat plan amendments are measured against the policies outlined in the Growth and Servicing Plan agreed to by the 10 member municipalities.

Historically, tension exists in some areas of the CMR with respect to new greenfield developments (Area Structure Plans) within a potential recreation service benefitting area, without consideration related to compensation for recreation services delivered by an adjacent or nearby municipality. Due to the high capital costs of recreation facilities, increasing operation and maintenance costs and the public's increasing demand for servicing, municipalities are finding it increasingly difficult to meet their budgets. Provincial and federal funding trends suggest a





decrease in capital and operations funding of recreation in the future. For these reasons, paired with a sincere interest for municipalities to provide residents a high quality of life, a more collaborative approach is being explored to ease aforementioned tensions. There are some areas of the CMR where collaboration is thriving currently, but areas where improvements can be made. The CMRB gave clear direction that the framework provided herein is entirely non-binding and may be used to facilitate collaboration, where warranted.

The Interim Growth Plan (IGP) was approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs in December 2018. The IGP identifies 'processes' and 'instruments' (tools) in the development of ASP, MDP and IDPs and other stat plans to demonstrate collaboration on recreation services. Of note is that the IGP does not make 'consensus' the goal outcome of collaboration. As we have seen, consensus can be elusive. Region-wide Policy 3.2.2 states that:

Municipalities should collaborate to coordinate planning for land-use, infrastructure, and service provision with other member municipalities, where appropriate. As a minimum requirement, new Area Structure Plans (ASPs) or amendments to existing ASPs, within 1.6 km of a neighbouring municipal boundary or an agreed upon notification area between the member municipalities, shall demonstrate collaboration to coordinate through:

- a. processes that may include;
  - a structured engagement process,
  - circulation and review of technical studies,
  - joint planning,
  - participation in mediation or other dispute resolution protocols, and/or
- b. instruments that may include;
  - a joint Area Structure Plan,
  - a memorandum of understanding,
  - a statement of non-concern,
  - applicable statutory plan policies,
  - statutory plan amendments, or
  - applicable intermunicipal agreement(s).

Region-wide Policy 3.2.3 states that:

All statutory plans shall:

- d. provide mitigation measures and policies to address identified adverse impacts on existing or planned community services and facilities (which includes recreation facilities)

The 10 member municipalities include:

- City of Airdrie
- City of Calgary
- City of Chestermere
- Town of Cochrane
- Foothills County
- Town of High River
- Town of Okotoks
- Rocky View County
- Town of Strathmore
- Wheatland County (portion as described in the regulation)

In order to support the CMRB, a Recreation TAG was formed. The Recreation TAG consists of administration from each of the 10 member municipalities. It operates under a terms of reference (under separate cover) and meets periodically to discuss matters related to recreation and the CMRB.

# Other Regional Collaboration

In order to inform the discussion around possibilities for regional collaboration related to recreation, a review was conducted of what happens elsewhere in the Province of Alberta, in two other provinces that have entrenched regional governance and service delivery, and in other

international markets. It is important to note that these other practices are not identified as “leading” or “best”. The term “other” has been chosen as they are just that; there is no confirmed perfect approach to regional collaboration related to recreation.





## Alberta: ICF, Regional Plans, specialized municipalities

The province of Alberta introduced new legislation in 2016 to the Modernized Municipal Government Act which included Inter-municipal Collaboration Frameworks (ICF). These frameworks are legislatively required to be in place for all municipalities that share a common boundary by March 31, 2020. The ICF's must focus on the following public services: transportation, water and wastewater, solid waste, emergency services, recreation, and any other services that benefit residents in more than one of the municipalities that are parties to the framework. Frameworks are intended to provide for integrated and strategic planning, delivery and funding of intermunicipal services, allocate scarce resources efficiently in the providing local services, and ensure municipalities contribute funding to services that benefit their residents. Although the CMRB including recreation in its purview means that ICF's do not have to be completed for member municipalities, the general premise of the ICF for recreation holds true for the work of the CMRB and the Recreation Servicing TAG.

Although many municipalities are currently undertaking ICF related discussions, there are no definitive examples of completed ICF arrangements that would bear any light on the CMRB situation.

Further to the ICF process, a number of regions within the province have conducted, or are currently conducting regional recreation master plans. Currently, these processes are underway in the Grande Prairie, St. Paul-Elk Point, Vegreville-Mundare-Minburn, and Camrose regions. Although funding contributions are part of the scope of these regional plans, funding is less of a focus compared to ICF discussions and negotiations. Regional recreation enables partners to define future infrastructure and service planning together with a collective goal of getting more benefit from current and future investment in recreation.

Of note is that the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board, whose regulation mirrors that of CMRB, has not focused on recreation in their scope. Instead, those member municipalities are dealing bilaterally on recreation under ICFs.

In addition to the regional plans in Alberta there are unique examples of regional collaborations and governance structures, in that they combine both urban and rural dynamics, such as Strathcona County and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. In these examples regional recreation is a direct result of regional governance and built into the services of these specialized municipalities.

### Some of the key takeaways from other practices in Alberta include:

- The creation of regional recreation advisory boards,
- The hiring of regional staff to coordinate regional recreation,
- Defining a benefitting market area for recreation services,
- Attributing cost and responsibility based on both population served and ability to pay, and
- Developing regional policies such as use allocations, fees etc. that are consistent across the region.

## BC and Ontario: Regional governments

Within the Province of British Columbia 27 regional districts exist. They arose out of a need for greater regional cooperation and equitable cost-sharing between municipal areas and rural areas. Regional Districts are modeled as a federation composed of municipalities, electoral areas, and in some cases, Treaty First Nations, each of which have representation on the regional district board. The boundaries of the regional districts span nearly the entire geographic area of the province. Each regional district is divided into smaller areas called electoral areas (mostly rural). Typically, recreation is managed by a sub-regional board or commission that is comprised of elected officials from each electoral area and municipality in a given region. The tax base of the entire regional district contributes to a recreation service within their given geographic boundary and therefore some regional districts have more than one recreation department and area. In this example both rural and urban elected officials have influence over recreation services and make decisions on both operating and capital costs.

Ontario operates regional governments as a two-tier system. In a two-tier system of municipal government, there are lower-tier municipalities (local) and an upper-tier municipality (a county or region). In this type of system, some services are delivered by the upper-tier municipality. Upper-tier municipalities often coordinate service delivery between municipalities in their area or provide area-wide services. The rationale for a consolidated government is that a more unified administration will relieve financial pressure, allow for improved service delivery and offer more effective and efficient government through streamlined decision-making and clearer accountability. An example of how this structure works is as follows:



Outdoor Courts, Airdrie



The County of Lambton is a municipal corporation known as an “upper tier” municipality. “Lower tier” municipalities, also known as “local” municipalities within the County include:

- The Municipality of Brooke-Alvinston
- The Township of Dawn-Euphemia
- The Township of Enniskillen
- The Municipality of Lambton Shores
- The Village of Oil Springs
- The Town of Petrolia
- The Town of Plympton-Wyoming
- The Village of Point Edward
- The City of Sarnia
- The Township of St. Clair
- The Township of Warwick

The County is governed by County Council, which is made up of 17 representatives from the 11 local municipalities. The local municipalities’ Mayors, along with additional Councillor Appointees when more than one County Council seat exists, come together to represent the entire County. County Council elects a Warden and Deputy Warden from amongst the Councillors every two years in December. The Warden chairs County Council meetings and represents the County at a wide range of functions and activities. Each County Councillor sits on one of two standing committees that meet monthly, this could include recreation, cultural, social services etc. However, each municipality is responsible for delivering recreation services in their own communities and therefore also incurs the costs (but collects and keeps a portion of property taxes to do so). This is unlike the regional district government in British Columbia – who do in fact deliver some recreation services to the region.

**Some of the key takeaways from other practices in B.C and Ontario include:**

- **Even in a formal regional governance structure, there is no formal definitions of what is regional and what isn’t; most jurisdictions approach regional recreation differently, and**
- **There is a need for flexibility in formal regional governance structures.**

# Current State Assessment

The following current state assessment is based primarily on the input received from the ten Recreation TAG representatives. Although some other research was conducted it is important to note that the following is not meant to define the current state of recreation facilities, spaces, programs and preferences throughout the region; it is meant to provide the current state of the recreation delivery model and agreed to planning already in place as it relates to regional collaboration.

Recreation planning, partnerships, and management across the CMRB, functions slightly differently and are unique in each community. Currently, within the 10 municipalities in the CMRB, 6 municipalities have recreation master plans / strategies (City of Calgary, Town of Cochrane, City of Chestermere, Town of High River, Town of Okotoks, and Foothills County). However, two are identified as outdated and no longer reflective of the current market context. The other four partners have documents such as needs assessments and are either currently working on a master plan / strategy or would like to work on one in the future. There are no regional recreation plans within the CMRB, however, there are partnerships and collaborations such as Town of Cochrane and Rocky View County (joint facility ownership), Wheatland County and Town of Strathmore (cost sharing), and the Town of Okotoks with Foothills County (shared services and joint facility ownership).

Typically, these existing collaborations or partnerships incorporate cost sharing and depend largely on percentage of population use and/or data gathered through attendance and registration. More than 50% of CMRB Recreation TAG members felt that it would be worthwhile to collaborate on strategic planning, greenfield development, and the setting of user fees. This further highlights the need and interest in regional recreation planning.

Within the CMRB, recreation facilities are managed by either the municipality, a partnership, or third party and ownership of facilities varies. The complexity and diversity of recreation in the CMRB highlights the need for effective needs assessment, long term planning, collaboration, and teamwork. It is also clear that operational partnerships already exist in many places in the Region and therefore provide a solid foundation for development of a framework for regional recreation.



## A Framework for Recreation in Canada: Pathways to Wellbeing (2015)

A Framework for Recreation in Canada is a guiding document for publicly supported recreation providers in Canada. The Framework was developed by the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association and the Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council with input from various stakeholders across Canada.

In 2015, it was endorsed by Federal and Provincial/Territorial Ministers. The Framework provides a philosophical foundation for the recreation sector and confirms recreation as an essential public service.

The Framework provides a vision and five goals for the delivery of recreation in Canada. While it is understood that recreation is a broad term and that local interests, priorities, and needs differ in each community, **the Framework is a great starting point for regional recreation planning as it is a common reference for all partners, regardless of the extent to which local planning is in place.** In addition, aligning the recreation sector across the country can help build a stronger case for investment from the provincial and federal levels. Furthermore the Framework outlines a renewed definition of recreation and also outlines a collective vision and has both a principle of operation (partnerships and collaboration) and a priority action item that pertain directly to regional partnerships and collaboration.

### A Renewed Definition of Recreation

*Recreation is the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative, and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing.*

### Vision

*We envision a Canada in which everyone is engaged in meaningful, accessible recreation experiences that foster individual wellbeing, community wellbeing, and the wellbeing of our natural and built environments.*

*5.1 Increase collaborative efforts among provincial/territorial governments, local governments, voluntary organizations, Aboriginal communities, the private sector and recreation associations to support and nurture a vibrant recreation system that serves as the primary means for achieving the vision and goals in this Framework.*

### Key takeaways from the current state:

- Each municipality is unique as it relates to the complement of recreation assets and the approach to service delivery,
- Some examples of collaboration exist in the region related to recreation but none involving more than two municipalities,
- There is an administrative appetite for enhanced regional collaboration as it relates to recreation, and
- The level to which strategic planning for recreation exists in each partner municipality varies; the Framework for Recreation in Canada could act as a common reference point to begin collaborative strategic thinking.

# A Foundation for Regional Recreation

## Defining Regional Recreation

In order to determine relevance and responsibility of recreation assets between municipalities, it is important to first start with determine what elevates some aspects of recreation to be regional (or sub-regional). It is assumed that the definition of recreation from the Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015 holds true for the purposes of this exercise as the Province of Alberta was a signatory to the Framework for Recreation in Canada. Furthering this broader definition of recreation to relate to regional or sub regional relationships, the following definition of regional recreation is proposed based on research and input received. It is important to note that this definition is meant to act as a starting point for further deliberation and discussion amongst one or more regional municipalities. Final agreement of an existing or future recreation asset being regional will be subject to negotiation and approvals between two or more regional municipalities.

**A regional recreation facility, space, program or service has a realistic potential of use by, and broader benefits to, residents from outside the municipal boundaries in which it is provided.**

Once a facility, program or service is defined as regional, *areas for collaboration and coordination may include planning capital investment, operations, and maintenance or facility planning.* This general definition of regional recreation is important to contextualize more specific or detailed review of facilities and services however it is not meant to be all inclusive. Recreation assets that fall under this broader definition might warrant regional collaboration or responsibility sharing but final decision making will be based on more refined criteria as well as political and administrative will throughout the region.

### A Renewed Definition of Recreation

“Recreation is the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing.”

– A Framework for Recreation in Canada  
2015: Pathways to Wellbeing

# A Rationale and Foundation for Regional Recreation

Regional recreation requires teamwork, communication, and collaboration. Ultimately, all parties have needs that must be met and regional collaboration provides an opportunity for all, or some CMRB municipalities, to do so in a more efficient and/or effective manner. Residents and visitors don't see municipal boundaries when it comes to accessing publicly supported recreation opportunities; they see leisure pools and ice arenas; or, good fries or bad fries. They will also access facilities on a complementary, as-needed basis, going to leisure pools with waterslides when they want that experience and going somewhere else to lap swim if the user experience is more appropriate. Regional collaboration can provide greater ability to provide market driven, relevant, complementary and coordinated recreation opportunities and services as opposed to independent provision by member municipalities.

In general, based on the input of the Recreation TAG group and other insights gathered from research, some aspects of publicly funded recreation can and should be delivered regionally. As a group it was discussed that recreation is in fact a service that aims to provide benefits to communities that are both direct (to those who participate in recreation) and indirect (to the wider community at large, regardless of their participation in recreation). When asked what elements of recreation could or should be considered regional the majority of Recreation TAG members felt that some recreation facilities and spaces, both indoor and outdoor, currently provided in their municipalities could be considered regional (depending on definitions and scale developed for categorizing). With this in mind, the Recreation TAG concluded that there is, and could be, value in working together regionally to provide recreation for the following reasons.

- It would provide the ability to **leverage more support and resources from each other and other sources** and therefore better meet the needs of residents and community members. More recreation opportunities contribute to happier, healthier societies.

- It would enable the **sharing of costs, risks, and also rewards**. Having impactful community spaces and/or world class recreation facilities can be better achieved by working together but infrastructure and development can be expensive and risky. By working in collaboration with regional partners, member municipalities can achieve greater success with lower risk to each independent partner.
- It would lead to **less duplication, competition and heightened coordination** of recreation service.
- It would provide a **forum for regional recreation planning that will allow all municipalities to work towards a shared vision** that would be defined collectively.

These reasons provide a strong basis for the following vision and shared principles for regional recreation.

## Recommended Vision

The following vision is recommended to guide regional recreation efforts in all ten municipalities in the CMRB.

*Regional recreation assets and services enhance coordination, optimize public investment, and leverage resources from within and outside the region; these regional assets and services generate benefits across municipal borders and provide enhanced opportunities for residents and visitors to be healthier and more connected to the communities and region in which they live.*



In order to achieve the highest levels of success possible, regional partners must make decisions and act in a way that benefits both local municipalities and the broader region. Regional partnerships and collaborations require a set of shared values and principles through which relationships can develop. When it comes to regional recreation planning, common principles from other jurisdictions include having a common understanding of what recreation is and the benefits that come from it, trust, respect of individuality and autonomy of municipalities within the region, and benefit to all municipalities and communities involved. Based on the results of the Recreation Servicing TAG survey and the workshop, along with our other research, the following principles are recommended to help guide regional recreation efforts (presented in order of importance):

### Principles for Regional Recreation

- **Trust between partners is built by acting with integrity and honesty**
- **Respect for the individuality and autonomy of partners**
- **Evidence based decision making**
- **Common understanding of recreation and the benefits that come from it**
- **Grounded in collective, equitable regional interests**

These shared principles will serve as a reference and guide for future decision making and action as it relates to regional recreation in the CMR.

“In order for us to get the most out of a regional recreation relationship, there can be no “score keeping”.

– Recreation Servicing TAG member



Repsol Sport Centre, Calgary

# Building Upon a Common Understanding: The Evolution of Regional Collaboration on Recreation in the Calgary Metropolitan Region

**Integration:**  
Consolidating regional recreation

**Collective Action:**  
Creating a more formal regional presence and sharing responsibility for regional recreation together

**Collaborating and Coordinating:**  
Tackling common areas of interest together

**A Common Understanding:**  
Assessing and monitoring the current state of recreation in the region and planning together to address it

**A Common Foundation:**  
Endorsement of the definition, vision and principles for regional recreation and creating a forum for regional discussion

A common definition of, and vision for, regional recreation along with a set of principles for how to realize the vision sets a strong foundation for regional relationships and collaboration to occur. Based on the feedback from Recreation TAG members, there are a number of enhancements that regional collaboration can lead to in the CMR, some of which require stronger and more formal ties between municipalities (all 10 or subsets thereof) as well as some that can be realized through enhanced communication between parties and common approaches to common aspects of planning for recreation services.

The following section outlines a potential range of options for a regional discussion to evolve and flourish. It is presented as a series of options that the region could use as a guideline for regional relationships between all ten CMR member municipalities or sub-regional relationships between 2 or more. Each option is meant to be scalable, in that the conclusion of each option can be either an arrival at a desired state of regional collaboration or the logical point at which the next step can be taken. The graphic to the left outlines the steps; explanation of each step follows. It is understood that throughout the CMR there are various examples of sub-

regional collaboration related to recreation. The intent of the following is to strengthen existing relationships and provide a starting point for areas where no relationship currently exists.

The following options are meant to help guide regional recreation actions of all 10 member municipalities, either all together or as sub-regional arrangements involving 2 or more. There is no recommended option for the region; this is meant to be a regional playbook that all municipalities can refer to when dealing with their neighbors and others. Having a consistent vision, principles and approach will prove valuable and ensure that, although not all relationships are not expected to be the same throughout the CMR, a standardized approach to partnership will create stronger regional cohesion.

## A Common Foundation: Endorsement of the definition, vision and principles and creating a forum for regional discussion

In order for a regional recreation discussion to continue, each potential partner in the region should agree to (in principle or accept as information) the definition, vision, and principles outlined in this document.

### Definition

A regional recreation facility, space, program or service has a realistic potential of use by, and broader benefits to, residents from outside the municipal boundaries in which it is provided.

### Vision

Municipalities enhance coordination, optimize public investment, and leverage resources from within and outside the region to support regional recreation facilities, programs and services. These regional recreation assets and services enhance coordination, optimize public investment, and leverage resources from within and outside the region; these regional assets and services generate benefits across municipal borders and provide enhanced opportunities for residents and visitors to be healthier and more connected to the communities and region in which they live.

### Principles

- Trust between partners
- Respect for the individuality and autonomy of partners
- Evidence based decision making
- Common understanding of recreation and the benefits that come from it
- Grounded in collective, equitable regional interests

Acceptance of these elements of the regional discussion will provide the platform for collaboration to occur in whatever way is desired by regional partners.

### How can we build a common foundation?

CMRB Intermunicipal Servicing Committee endorsement of a regional definition, vision and principles from each municipality.

Formation of an administrative and elected official level regional body, defined through a terms of reference and meeting on a regular, scheduled basis.

#### Integration:

Consolidating regional recreation

#### Collective Action:

Creating a more formal regional presence and sharing responsibility for regional recreation together

#### Collaborating and Coordinating:

Tackling common areas of interest together

#### A Common Understanding:

Assessing and monitoring the current state of recreation in the region and planning together to address it

#### A Common Foundation:

Endorsement of the definition, vision and principles for regional recreation and creating a forum for regional discussion



Furthermore, In order to begin to realize the benefits of a more regional approach to public recreation a forum for regional discussion needs to be developed. The CMRB (at the political level) and Recreation TAG (at the administrative level) is an example of a forum for regional discussion to occur and was developed as part of the CMRB mandate. Should the CMRB mandate change, so too could this Recreation TAG. **It is important to create a forum for regional discussion that is based on the merits of collaboration and not tied to broader prevailing policies or legislation.**

It is also important to note that the Recreation TAG is comprised of administrative recreation experts from each of 10 municipalities. These members have the expertise and knowledge necessary for regional discussion to occur but they lack the decision making authority that may be required in order to achieve certain levels of collaboration. For this reason, **both an administrative and elected official forum for regional recreation discussion to occur should be considered.**

Based on the current mandate and organization of the CMRB, the CMRB and associated Committees may be an appropriate forum for elected officials to discuss, contemplate and endorse CMR. Should the mandate of the CMRB change, an alternative forum may be identified. A common foundation involves simple information sharing, where regional partners can talk about common issues, discuss projects on the horizon and share information and best practices. This will help reduce duplication of services and facilities and provide value to partners without commitment of funding or other resources to more involved regional collaboration.



Vivo Centre, Calgary

## A Common Understanding: Assessing and monitoring the current state of recreation in the region

Building upon a common foundation, the next evolution of a regional relationship is to come to a common understanding of the current state of recreation in the region and ensure that how we all react to the current state independently, through prudent planning, is coordinated and informed by a regional perspective. This could entail common approaches for all partners in assessing utilization and life cycle of facilities and spaces, gathering input and insight from the general public and interest groups, and determining needs, wants and gaps in services and infrastructure an addressing challenges to recreation from a regional and independent perspective. Creating a common understanding would require region-wide data gathering, assessment, study and summary. This has been identified as an important gap by the Recreation TAG.

A common understanding lays the foundation for regional collaboration to occur and any benefits that can be realized. It can also start to help define agreed to service levels and associated catchment areas.

Creating a common, shared process and protocol for regional needs assessment and monitoring will require resources, for some municipalities this may have already been accounted for and for others it would require a commitment to understanding their own recreation market.

Once a current state of regional recreation is defined, and monitored on a regular basis, areas of mutual interest between partners may emerge. These could take the form of new or existing recreation facilities, programs and services, capacity building ventures, or related areas of policy. The regional conversation could evolve to this point and provide information for regional partnership to occur or simply to improve the coordination and effectiveness of individual municipality efforts.

### How can we create a common understanding?

Formal, robust planning process undertaken by all 10 municipalities simultaneously (or periodically on an ad hoc basis) including thorough regional research, engagement and analysis and under the guidance of the regional forum (A Common Foundation).

#### Integration:

Consolidating regional recreation

#### Collective Action:

Creating a more formal regional presence and sharing responsibility for regional recreation together

#### Collaborating and Coordinating:

Tackling common areas of interest together

#### A Common Understanding:

Assessing and monitoring the current state of recreation in the region and planning together to address it

#### A Common Foundation:

Endorsement of the definition, vision and principles for regional recreation and creating a forum for regional discussion

## Collaborating and Coordinating: Tackling common areas of interest together

Defining the current state of recreation in the region will likely render areas of focus such as sustaining existing service levels, enhancing levels in areas where warranted and introducing new facilities, services, and capacity building or policy initiatives. As areas of focus are identified, they may be more relevant to certain partners, due to characteristics such as size, geographic location, method of service delivery or others. Partners will start to look around the table to define common interests and strike relationships to tackle them, where proximity allows.

This type of interaction does not need to materialize as formal, legal agreements that the entire region or parts of it (sub-region) needs to agree to, nor do they need to even occur under a “regional banner”. They may simply be regional or sub-regional relationships that occur to address common areas of interest and, at a broad level, work to achieve the vision and principles agreed to by the CMRB. Some examples of collaborating and coordinating that currently occur in the CMR or beyond include:

- Consistent policy development related to user fees for, and allocations of, recreation facilities and spaces
- Coordinated promotions and marketing related to all regional recreation assets available to residents (not just those within municipal borders)
- Coordination of information sharing and offering capacity building supports to all recreation stakeholder groups (not just those within municipal borders)

### How can collaborating and coordinating occur?

Formation of bi-lateral or multi-lateral agreements or collaborations related to a common issues or initiatives. This could include joint grant funding applications, common promotions and marketing efforts or could simply influence the planning of independent municipalities.

#### Integration:

Consolidating regional recreation

#### Collective Action:

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## Collective Action: Creating a more formal regional presence and sharing responsibility for recreation together

Collective action entails a more formal arrangement between two or more municipalities that could include having staff and other supports dedicated to regional matters (either within each partner municipality or through jointly funded shared staff) and/or jointly funding recreation facilities, spaces and services. Staff and resource allocation sharing may take the regional discussion from a “corner of the desk initiative” to something more formal. Aside from the resources put into supporting a regional “office” this would not require further cost or responsibility sharing for existing or new facilities and spaces. This type of relationship between two or more regional municipalities could include public-facing “branding” of regional collaboration (i.e. this facility brought to your by the regional recreation body) to demonstrate to the public how the municipalities are working together to deliver services and would also require dedicated and ongoing funding related to recreation services delivered beyond municipal boundaries.

An example of collective action would be cost sharing agreements for facilities and services; this already occurs between some CMR member municipalities although the mechanics and structures through which cost sharing occurs throughout the region are not consistent.

### How can we engage with each other in a more fulsome way?

Jointly funding staff or regional initiatives, branding them as such, and using joint resources to achieve regional priorities (as defined in A Common Understanding).

Creation of formal responsibility sharing agreements between all regional municipalities in a standardized and logical fashion (possibly related to the logic presented herein or other).

Coordinated and collaborative planning for regional, sub-regional and potentially even local recreation.

#### Integration:

Consolidating regional recreation

#### Collective Action:

Creating a more formal regional presence and sharing responsibility for regional recreation together

#### Collaborating and Coordinating:

Tackling common areas of interest together

#### A Common Understanding:

Assessing and monitoring the current state of recreation in the region and planning together to address it

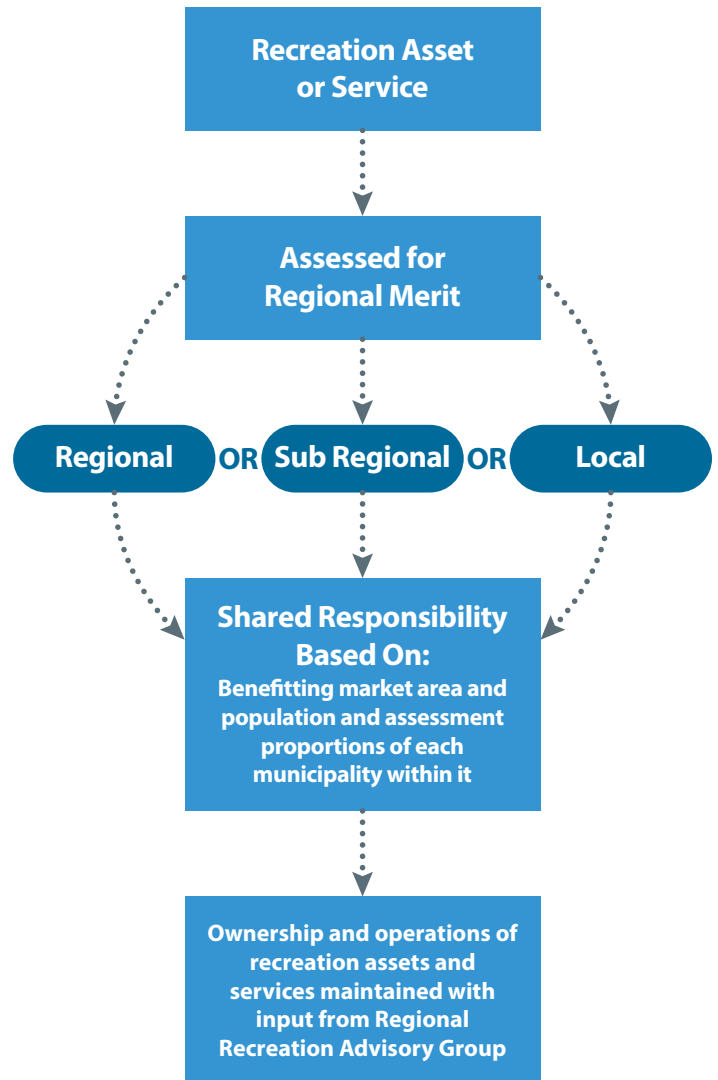
#### A Common Foundation:

Endorsement of the definition, vision and principles for regional recreation and creating a forum for regional discussion

Collective action entails the creation of mechanisms for partners to agree on common definitions of regional facilities / spaces and programs / services / events and then share the responsibility and costs of regional assets in an equitable and region-wide and/or sub-regional fashion. It is important to note that this will require further analysis and negotiation.

During this process, the Recreation TAG group organized some preliminary ideas about regional asset definition and cost sharing which are included in the appendix of this study. A number of things would need to occur prior to these ideas (or variants of) coming to fruition. There are also a number of other stakeholders that would need to be consulted. Recreation TAG members value data-driven sharing agreements, and sufficient data to support asset definition and cost sharing models currently represents a gap in the current state.

Collective action would entail a regional recreation system that is defined by all partners but still owned, operated and managed independently. Although ownership and operations remains with the independent municipality, those partners who are contributing funding should also be offered a chance to influence service provision (proportionate to the amount of support they provide).



## Integration: Consolidating regional recreation

Integration is the most intense form of regional collaboration that could occur for recreation in the CMRB. It would entail some or all regional facilities / spaces and programs / services / events being owned, operated and managed by a new regional or sub-regional partnership entity. Although there are some examples of jointly owned and operated facilities in the region (Okotoks, Cochrane) this could implicate all partners from the entire region through an agreed-to model. This could also lead to individual municipalities surrendering ownership and operations of regional assets to a regional body (such as a commission or municipal corporation similar to what occurs under the regional district model in British Columbia). Deciding to take this step would necessitate significant change to the status quo and would require intense analysis prior to final decision making.

### How can integration happen?

Formation of a new entity, comprised of representation from each of the regional municipalities, that owns and operates all agreed to regional facilities, spaces, programs, services, and / or events.

#### **Integration:** Consolidating regional recreation

**Collective Action:**  
Creating a more formal regional presence and sharing responsibility for regional recreation together

**Collaborating and Coordinating:**  
Tackling common areas of interest together

**A Common Understanding:**  
Assessing and monitoring the current state of recreation in the region and planning together to address it

**A Common Foundation:**  
Endorsement of the definition, vision and principles for regional recreation and creating a forum for regional discussion



# Summary and Next Steps

Recreation is an important public service in the Calgary Metropolitan Region Board (CMRB) area. The benefits of recreation are varied and significant; recreation assets and services provide direct benefit to some (users) and indirect benefit to all (the general public including users and non-users). CMRB members realize these benefits and all invest in publicly supported recreation assets and services in different yet crucial ways.

The potential to work together more collaboratively throughout the CMRB region as it relates to publicly supported recreation assets and services is apparent. Existing investment in recreation by regional partners could be leveraged and its reach extended. Opportunities for residents and visitors would be enhanced through increased coordination and the region could gain interest and investment from outside of its borders.

The Recreation Servicing TAG have demonstrated a willingness to collaborate further at this early stage and this document is meant to provide a stepping stone to be able to do so.

The document outlines a definition of and a vision and shared principles for regional recreation. It outlines a logical approach to enhancing regional collaboration, developed by recreation experts from the region, with choices as to the level of integration ultimately achieved. As the discussion about regional recreation evolves, it is also expected that these experts, through the Recreation Servicing TAG, will also look to create useful tools, such as but not limited to, a Statutory Plan Toolkit or a Leading Practice Catalogue, which will formalize some of the ideas introduced in this document.

The CMRB and the Recreation Servicing Technical Advisory Group now have a potential path forward, complete with options for how much to collaborate, to react to and act upon. It is now up to the political and administrative will within the region to decide how and if to move forward together.



Outdoor Court, Chestermere

# Appendices

**It is important to note that the information contained in the following appendix is meant to provide some options as to how regional assets could be defined as well as how responsibility and cost could be shared. This information is meant to be a reference for when, or if, more focused regional recreation conversations occur.**

# Optional / Potential Approach to Defining Regional Recreation Assets / Infrastructure

What defines recreation infrastructure? Is it the tax base that supports it or the people who use it, is it both? What about tourists, elite athletes, specialized populations, and other user types? Who benefits from recreation - everyone! Recreation infrastructure does much more than offer the immediate and local community a place to recreate, but rather offers a place for people to gather, enjoy, use, and improve quality of life. Recreation is truly a public good and its' benefits are seen much wider than those who might play pickleball in a school gym or skate on a local ice surface. Support for certain assets (facilities and spaces) being regional was felt by 80% of the CMRB/TAG group in the survey and during the workshop was supported by 100% of the partners represented.

The first step in defining regional recreation assets / infrastructure is the recognition that "one size does not fit all". Therefore, multiple categories are required to classify the regional merit of different types of facilities and spaces. That said, the following categories are proposed.

## Regional

Regional assets are recreation facilities and or spaces that draw people from and provide benefit to residents throughout the designated region.

## Sub Regional

Sub Regional assets are recreation facilities and or spaces that draw people from and provide benefit to residents beyond the neighborhood and/or municipal boundaries in which they are located but not throughout the designated region.

## Local

Local assets are recreation facilities and or spaces that draw people from and provide benefit to residents within the neighborhood and/or municipal boundaries in which they are located only.

Further to understanding that one size does not fit all and the agreement that there are varying degrees to which recreation assets / infrastructure have regional merit.

The specific attributes that help to define whether or not an asset is regional or not and if so, to what degree, are presented as follows. These attributes and the associated weighting were identified and agreed to by survey respondents and workshop attendees. It is important to note that although there are only ten municipalities (n=10 member municipalities) that were represented at the workshop and through the survey, the compilation of both the pre-survey results (n=9 surveys completed) and input received at the workshop (n=9 members municipalities attended workshop #1) have been compiled and accounted for (n=up to 13).

- Very important
  - » Market willingness to travel and usage patterns (4 votes pre-survey + 9 votes workshop = 13)
  - » Capital costs of the asset (5 votes pre-survey + 8 votes workshop = 13)
- Somewhat important
  - » Demonstrated regional need or identified regional priority (12 votes workshop)
  - » Benefit provided to users (8 votes pre-survey + 2 votes workshop = 10)
  - » Uniqueness of the space (9 votes pre-survey + 1 vote workshop = 10)
- Least important
  - » Context and location factors (9 votes workshop)
  - » Recreation versus elite sport usage (4 votes pre-survey + 5 votes workshop = 9)

It is also important to note that whether an asset is multi-use or not, its ability to host large scale events and the uniqueness of the asset within the region were also seen as important consideration in determining whether an asset is regional or not. It is also important to note that these attributes are meant to determine whether or not an asset is regional; they are not meant to determine whether the asset is a viable, sustainable, justified, or warranted use of public recreation resources.



# Optional / Potential Regional Recreation Asset / Infrastructure Screening Tool

**Step 1:** Apply criteria and score to the recreation asset.

Criteria	3 points	2 points	1 point	0 points	Weight
<b>Regional Need / Priority</b>	Asset is an agreed to, top 10 regional priority as defined through joint planning exercises	Asset is an agreed to regional priority (not top 10) as defined through joint planning exercises	Asset is a priority in more than 1 regional municipality	Asset is not identified as a priority in more than one regional municipality	<b>5</b>
<b>Capital Cost</b>	Asset has capital costs of over \$50M	Asset has capital costs between \$25M to \$50M	Asset has capital costs between \$1M to \$25M	Asset has capital costs below \$1M	<b>4</b>
<b>Regional Benefit</b>	Asset has a significant impact on regional quality of life and competitiveness	Asset has a moderate impact on regional quality of life and competitiveness	Asset has a low impact on regional quality of life and competitiveness	Asset has no impact on regional quality of life and competitiveness	<b>4</b>
<b>Uniqueness</b>	Asset is unique to the region	There are less than 3 of assets in the region	The asset is not offered in every municipality in the region	The asset is abundant in the region	<b>4</b>
<b>Location</b>	Asset is central to the region and accessible by a number of residents	Asset may not be central to the region but is accessible to some regional residents and is an integral part of the local community and region	Asset is not central to the region and is not accessible to regional residents but is an integral part of the local community and region	Asset is not central to the region and is not accessible to regional residents and is not an integral part of the local community and region	<b>3</b>
<b>Level of Specialization</b>	Asset meets the requirements of a specific interest or skill level where critical market mass of the entire region is key to viability	Asset meets the requirements of a specific interest or skill level where critical market mass of more than two regional municipalities is key to viability	Asset meets the requirements of a specific interest or skill level where critical market mass of two regional municipalities is key to viability	Asset meets the requirements of a specific interest or skill level where critical market mass of only the host municipality is key to viability	<b>3</b>

If the recreation asset scores over 28, then move to Step 2 and apply Market Draw Filter

# Optional / Potential Regional Recreation Asset / Infrastructure Screening Tool

## Step 2: Apply market draw filter

To be determined through known user market travel patterns (demonstrated through user point of origin statistics) and observed travel time thresholds (defined through market indications of when travel time becomes a barrier).

If use and benefit observed in more than 2 regional municipalities: Consider as Regional

If use and benefit confined to 2 regional municipalities: Consider as Sub Regional

If use and benefit is confined to 1 regional municipality: Consider as Local

## Step 3: Recommended category

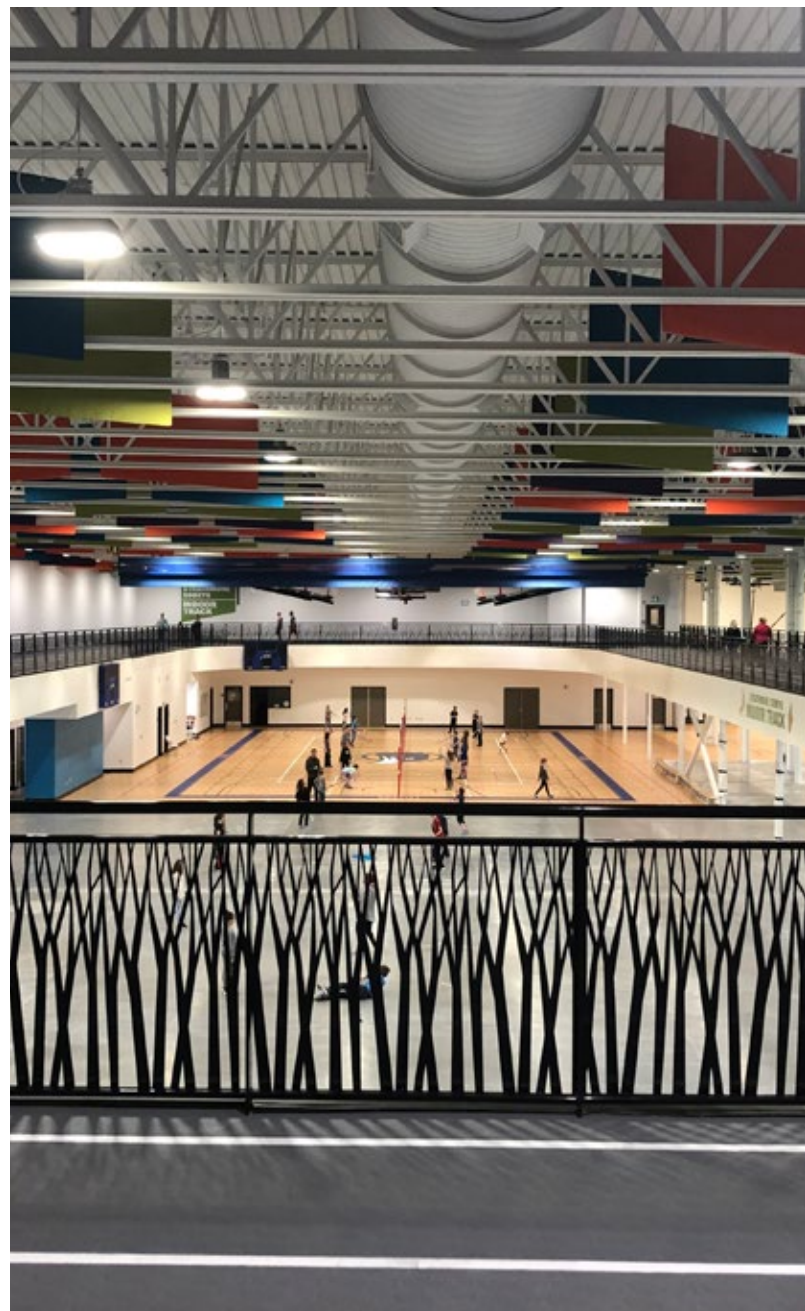
Recreation asset is **assigned category xx** to be debated and/or confirmed by regional decision makers.



# Optional / Potential Approach to Sharing Responsibility for Regional Recreation

Once regional recreation assets and services have been agreed to by partners within the CMRB (all or sub regional groups), it is necessary to determine an agreed upon way to share responsibility (financial and other) for their provision. Based on the results of the survey and workshop, **the most appropriate way to do so may be based on population served and ability to pay within a geographic benefitting market area.**

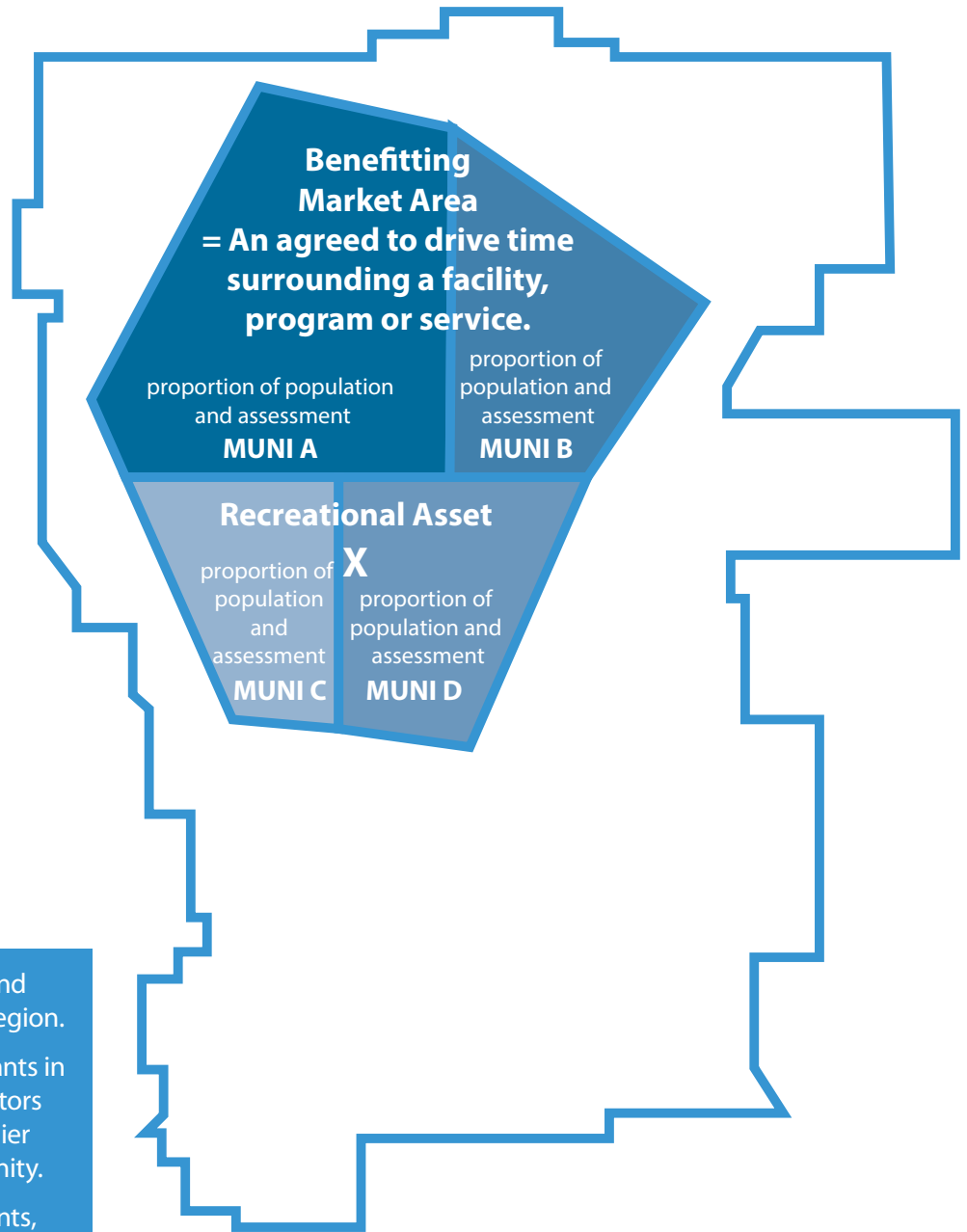
**In order to determine geographic benefitting market areas** for regional recreation assets and services, the Recreation Servicing TAG group and other practices suggest that **known user market travel patterns (demonstrated through user point of origin statistics) and/or observed travel time threshold (defined through market indications of when travel time becomes a barrier) may be considered.** Within a benefitting area, it is also recognized that the host community for a recreation asset or service derives more intense benefit than others with a benefitting catchment. For this reason, **a local premium may be applied for host municipalities when it comes to the sharing of responsibility and cost from a regional perspective.** For example, if recreation amenity x costs \$100,000 per year to operate, the first 50% (the local premium) should be covered by the local municipality and the remaining 50% should be shared based on an agreed to model.



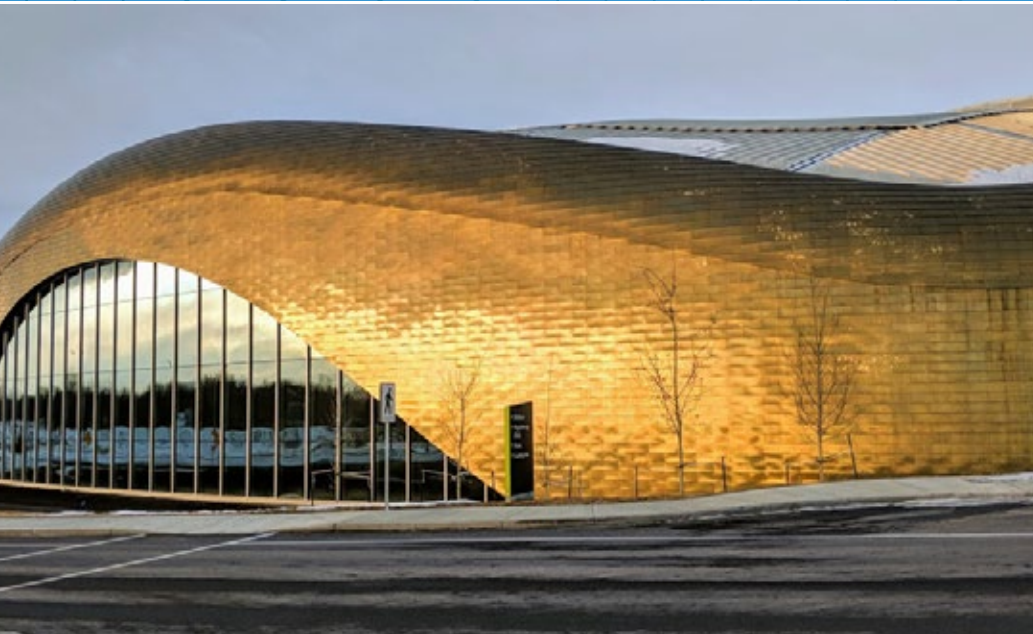
Indoor Walking Track, Strathmore



From other practices reviewed and input from the Recreation TAG group, **the best way in which ability to pay may be measured within a geographic area is based on tax assessment (including linear).** Furthermore **the most appropriate way to represent population may be based on overall population within a benefiting area** as opposed to observed user statistics. This is because recreation provides indirect benefit to all (overall population including users and non-users) and direct benefit to some (users). If responsibility was based on users, it is based on smaller subset of the benefiting population; as well, users already pay for the direct benefit they receive through user fees. It is important to note that user statistics, future growth, and available levies and partnerships with developers were also seen as important alternative ways to share responsibility for regional assets and services.



Public recreation leads to both direct and indirect benefits in a community and region. Direct benefits are realized by participants in recreation activities. Residents and visitors that participate in recreation are healthier and able to connect with their community. Beyond the direct benefits to participants, there are also indirect benefits that are realized by all residents and visitors, even if they do not directly participate. These indirect benefits “cannot be escaped” and, although harder to measure, are important to consider when contemplating investment and effort related to public recreation. Indirect benefits include, but are not limited to, enhanced reduced health care and justice costs, enhanced economic activity, increases in adjacent property values and improved regional attractiveness for both residents and businesses.



Shane Homes YMCA at Rocky Ridge, Calgary



Pool, Strathmore



Skating Rink, Okotoks



Vivo Centre, Calgary