

## CITY-OWNED RECREATION SPACES FOR YOUTH FREE ADMISSION DROP-IN ACTIVITIES

### RECOMMENDATION

That the May 30, 2022, Community Services report CS00940, be received for information.

#### Report Purpose

##### Information only.

This report informs Council about current and future opportunities to offer after school programming to youth at City of Edmonton recreation centres during specific times on a weekday, with considerations around partnership opportunities, accessibility, budget and GBA+.

### Previous Council/Committee Action

At the November 30, 2021, City Council meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Administration provides a report on options to activate City-owned recreation spaces for youth free admission drop-in activities from 3-6pm every weekday. This report is to include the following:

- Partnership opportunities with non-profit organizations.
- Budget requirements and sponsorship opportunities to offer free admission during those times.
- Ways to help youth across the city access those programs (ex: transportation solutions).
- Options to implement this program (ex: phased approach or full implementation city-wide).
- A GBA+ analysis to ensure no youth are left without access to recreational opportunities.

### Executive Summary

- The City of Edmonton's recreation centres play a critical role in achieving the strategic goal of a healthy city cited within ConnectEdmonton and The City Plan's focus of providing

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healthy and active living to all Edmontonians through equitable opportunities that contribute to personal and community wellness.

- This report provides an overview of the current state of Recreation and Leisure Centre use during weekdays from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m.
- Starting in September 2022, a planned continuum of enhanced after school drop-in opportunities for youth at City of Edmonton Recreation and Leisure Centres will be implemented.
- The enhanced youth opportunities, aimed primarily at ages 8 to 17, will include a balance of drop-in recreation centre opportunities in major amenities including pools, gyms and rooms as well as additional staff/leader led programs delivered through external partnerships.
- There is a desire by Administration to evolve the weekday after school time period into one of the busiest times slots of the week, matching other peak time slots as far as attendance and providing more opportunities for youth to be physically active and healthy overall.
- The three primary categories of after school programming enhancement are:
  - New and expanded no cost youth programming, including physical activity and social programs, delivered by organizations/agencies with strong experience delivering well rounded youth programming.
  - Enhanced, targeted communication and promotion of current City of Edmonton youth options in recreation centres.
  - Launch of a new youth school year membership pass that is deeply discounted and for the 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. time frame. The school year pass will complement the existing yearly summer months (July/August) youth pass. A discounted after school specific single admission price will also be started for youth.

## REPORT

City of Edmonton Recreation and Leisure Centres offer a wide variety of activities for their members and Edmontonians of all ages to take part in both staff led programming and drop-in opportunities within the major amenities of these facilities including, but not limited to gymnasiums, fieldhouses, fitness centres, swimming pools, arenas and rooms.

Generally the peak times in recreation centres are Saturday late morning, Saturday/Sunday afternoons and weekday evenings (Monday to Thursday between 5:30 and 8:00 p.m.). Peak times include attendance by all ages, while some time periods are led by significant adult age group use, including the weekday evening time slot.

Historically, the after school hours in recreation centre amenities have shown high attendance and are in full demand starting around 5:00 p.m. There are options to create capacity at some facilities, primarily within the 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. time period if current amenity schedules are adjusted.

While there are many different activities that take place during the after school time period, they can generally be summarized into four main categories.

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### CURRENT STATE: Use of recreation centres between 3:00 and 6:00 p.m. on weekdays

#### 1. Recreation centre single admission and membership program/opportunities

Admission/membership activities and opportunities in recreation centres include drop-in access to amenities like fitness centres, arenas and indoor playgrounds. Access is also available for staff-led drop in programs like group fitness classes, fitness centre orientations and aqua-fit classes.

Children and youth living in low-income families are eligible to obtain a Leisure Access Program membership, which provides unlimited, free admission to recreation centres and a 75 per cent discount for up to four registered programs each year.

#### 2. User group space bookings for activities/programs

Activities provided directly by user groups (i.e. community, sport based) who receive time/space through the yearly and seasonal facility allocation processes. Many amenities are booked by organizations to provide after school training time or practice time.

#### 3. City of Edmonton registered programs

Staff-led programming options for all ages that require patron registration and program fee such as swimming lessons, preschool programs, youth fitness training, and personal training/nutrition.

#### 4. Current partnership based programs

Currently, there are five youth focused partnership based programs being offered by not-for-profit organizations in and outside of the after school time period at City of Edmonton Recreation Centres. The current program partnerships include:

**C5 North East Community Hub** (Clareview Community Community Recreation Centre) - Provides extensive integrated support and programs such as youth resilience and Indigenous programming - Monday through Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

**Africa Centre** (Clareview Community Recreation Centre) -The main focus of the basketball program is to provide youth a positive space to hangout and be physically active - using gym and outdoor space on Sunday from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. and Thursday 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

**Free Play for Kids** (Eastglen Leisure Centre and Commonwealth Community Recreation Centre) - Free inclusive sport programs for youth with a focus on learning, social and physical development outcomes. Administration is working with Free Play to provide additional spaces to expand their after school programming.

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- Eastglen - Thursdays from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.
- Commonwealth - Monday to Friday from 4:00 to 5:45 p.m.

**Youth Unlimited** (Millwoods Recreation Centre) - An outreach program for younger youth (8-16) where outreach staff share information and connect youth to existing resources and supports. The program is available Monday to Friday between 3:00 and 6:00 p.m.

**Riverbend Rocks** Riverbend Reaching Out to Community and Kids Society (Terwillegar Community Recreation Centre) - Partnered to reach mutual goals of increasing diversity and inclusion by engaging with older youth in a positive way on Tuesday evenings from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

## UPCOMING: Enhanced Youth After School Programming

The goal of enhancing after school programming for youth is to provide more opportunities to better meet the physical, mental and social needs of the youth age group in after school time as well as evolving the 3:00 to 5:30 p.m. time period into a peak slot for attendance at City recreation centres.

Enhanced youth programming on days when schools are closed like teachers convention, spring break and any new inclusive holidays will be part of the program planning and partner assessment process to ensure that opportunities exist while school is out.

This After School Youth Programming initiative aligns with The City Plan's intentions and directions to encourage healthy and active living by supporting community focused recreational, leisure and social and cultural programs by reducing barriers through equitable access to services.

The enhanced youth opportunity/programming continuum categories are:

- 1. New and expanded leader-led physical activity and social programs** in partnership and delivered by organizations/agencies with strong experience delivering holistic youth programming.

It is expected that new and expanded programming will be offered at recreation centres that currently offer these partner based after school programs starting in September 2022. Additionally, new locations and new programs are intended to be offered through partner organizations. A principled process will be used to identify and develop September 2022 and beyond partnerships that meet the needs of Edmonton youth and the capacity of the partner organizations to deliver programming content resulting in free youth programming in the after school time period.

Administration will set aside additional space in major amenities between 3:00 and 5:30 p.m. in recreation centres across the city. Youth that attend these programs will have the opportunity to stay in the facility after the staff-led program has ended. Partner organizations will be responsible for delivering program content, staffing, youth engagement and recruitment roles, and co-promotion of the program(s).

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The process will also determine all costs for these programs and potential cost share options between partner organizations and the City of Edmonton for aspects of program delivery. The City's contribution of space and daily wristbands will not present a significant direct cost impact although there will be some revenue loss/foregone if space/time is used for these programs that would have been rented to User Groups at regular rental fees.

Once partners, locations, costs and program content is confirmed it is expected that discussion topics with Administration and the program partners will include ideas on how to enhance the free programming experience. Anticipated topics are transportation strategies (potential busing for program participants) and available grants/sponsorship opportunities (like Jumpstart Funding).

- 2. Enhanced and targeted promotion** to youth of opportunities in City of Edmonton Recreation and Leisure Centres. This will include utilizing focused communication channels to engage schools, school boards and current and future programming partners. It will highlight all the opportunities for children and youth in recreation centres and include detail on the Leisure Access Program and all current discount options as a whole. To complement this enhanced youth specific communication strategy, Recreation Centre web pages will begin to have the transit links and active transportation links to the facilities highlighted to facilitate better access.
- 3. Launch of new after school time-specific City of Edmonton Recreation Centre membership pass for youth (ages 8-17)**

With the success of the Summer Youth Pass introduced in recent years, a new youth pass will be introduced with a similar discount level. It will be launched in September 2022 for the school year. While the Leisure Access Program would still be made available for those who qualify and provides no cost access at all times, the After School Youth Pass would be implemented with the following facility access parameters:

- Facility access from 1:00 to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday during the school year.
- The earlier afternoon access would help support early Thursday dismissal for the Edmonton Catholic School District and the student population with afternoon spares and/or flexible schedules.
- Ability to stay beyond 5:30 p.m. (up to facility closing time) with assigned wristband upon check in.
- Daytime access during the three major Edmonton School Boards Professional Development (PD) days and any approved inclusive holidays by the three major School Boards.
- A new significantly discounted child/youth single admission fee option off of the regular rate will also be provided as another option to this pass. The new fee will be in the 75 per cent discount range.

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This September-June school year pass will compliment the existing summer month (July/August) youth pass and provide individuals of this age group a time period specific year round membership opportunity with significant discount. The 2021 monthly summer all facility pass was \$32 instead of \$63, a 49 per cent discount. Administration intends to offer a similar discounted rate in 2022. This will compliment the regular youth membership which provides access during all hours particular facilities are open.

### NEXT STEPS: Initiative Implementation for September 2022 and beyond

#### 1. New and Enhanced Staff Led Program Partnerships

By mid-July 2022, Administration plans to have determined all aspects of the planned programs for fall of 2022 and into 2023, including specific recreation centres that would host no cost programs, specific programs and program content. The partner organizations who will be delivering these programs will also be confirmed through an intake and assessment/scoring process. Plans to jointly promote these programs and engage youth about these opportunities will be developed with the partner organizations. All financial impacts and budget aspects of the September 2022 - June 2023 initiative will be determined outlining any potential additional direct costs to the City of Edmonton. It is anticipated that the program volume will grow throughout the school year beyond what is initiated in September 2022.

#### 2. Membership Opportunities

By mid June 2022, Administration will have necessary details prepared for the two membership based initiatives, including the launch of the new youth specific discounted after school membership and single admission opportunities. At that time, the enhanced and targeted communication tactics will be implemented to promote all recreation centre membership and child/youth activity opportunities, including the Leisure Access Program.

## COMMUNITY INSIGHT

As part of its next steps for this initiative, Administration plans to engage with key organizations/agencies as potential future partners who have experience in working with the youth age group and who have the skill sets to offer holistic and well rounded youth based programs (physical, social, education based). The first step will include engaging current partners about continuing and/or expanding the current programming and locations and the second step will be meeting with potential new/additional partners for additional after school programming and locations.

Going forward, partnerships will be determined through an intake and scoring process where a number of identified agencies will be invited to submit a proposal that outlines:

- Alignment with current City priorities
- Demonstrated commitment to physical activity, wellness, academic support and social development of youth
- Experience in collaboration and innovation

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- Demonstrated awareness of the needs of local youth
- A focus on inclusion and accessibility

Proposals will be reviewed to determine the best partner-based service delivery, with programs starting in the fall of 2022. Requested information will include program content, location/facility interest, major amenity interest, youth engagement and recruitment plan, program evaluation and outcomes plan and program delivery cost sharing model proposal.

### GBA+

Using the GBA+ analysis, Administration has reflected upon various biases and completed a review of existing research on the barriers youth encounter as a result of various socio-economic factors, immigration status, education, gender identity, trauma and/or adversity.

Findings indicate that:

- An overall approach to recreation accessibility based on need (rather than ability to pay) is more likely to have the effect of 'social inclusion'. Reducing access barriers to participation plays a pivotal role in ensuring equity for youth of all backgrounds.
- Some of the most pertinent barriers include: transportation, cost, time, location, physical accessibility, and registration options.
- Meeting the needs of youth from all socio-economic and diverse ethnic backgrounds is imperative. Participants should feel included and respected, encouraged to self-advocate, and brought into the activity decision-making process when possible.
- Youth who identify with marginalized groups are often at higher risk of developing mental health challenges.
- Anecdotally, a disproportionate number of male versus females are participating in City drop-in programs and more males are purchasing recreation memberships than females.
- Children exposed to family violence can experience long-term emotional, behavioural, physical, social, and educational issues as well as higher rates of suicide.

As part of assessing the proposals from current and potential partner groups for youth after school programming opportunities, Administration will emphasize equity and GBA+ measures. Focus will be on creating safe spaces, promoting mental health and developing skills, including programs led by Indigenous communities and those based on healing and strengths-building to create better long-term outcomes.