



REIMAGINING RECREATION SERVICES CASTLEGAR & DISTRICT AREA

FINAL REPORT

FEBRUARY 2025



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SECTION 1.0

ABOUT THE PROJECT



Recreation services are key contributors to the quality of life of people living in Castlegar, Electoral Area I, and Electoral Area J. While there may be some commonly held views of what recreation opportunities should be provided in a community, there is no legislated list of services that need to be provided. Determining the service offerings reflects community desires and political will.

The Castlegar & District Recreation Commission felt that enhancements to recreation in the area may be warranted. These improvements could include recreation services delivered throughout the District as well as potential enhancements to the Castlegar & District Community Complex. Efforts had been made in the past to proceed with enhancements to the Recreation Complex but these efforts did not come to fruition. To identify any potential enhancements, the Commission initiated an engagement project to learn the opinions of residents in the Castlegar District.

Benefits of Recreation



Is essential to personal health and wellbeing



Is a significant economic generator



Provides a foundation for quality of life



Reduces health care and social service costs



Provides the key to balanced human development



Builds strong and healthy communities



Green spaces are essential to wellbeing



Supports positive mental health and social connections



1.1 CONTEXT

The context within which this engagement project was undertaken is important to acknowledge. The history of recreation planning in the Castlegar district, as well as the circumstances at the time of this project, should be recognized. This is not to suggest that the outcomes of the engagement would be different necessarily, rather it is to suggest that people's participation, and their opinions, may have been shaped to some degree by the history and circumstances in the region.

Several studies have been completed that presented a future and/ or helped define a future for recreation in Castlegar and Areas I & J. Community engagement was featured prominently in these studies. The findings from the engagement activities implemented through the following projects were considered as the engagement for this project was planned and implemented. It is important that the input provided by community members be considered across all pertinent planning projects to leverage the contributions of the community.

The following list identifies some of these studies:

- RDCK Parks, Trails, and Water Access Strategy (2024)
- Campbell Field Feasibility Study (2022)
- Pass Creek Regional Park Service Review (2021)
- Castlegar & District Community Complex Feasibility Analysis and Concept Design (2017)
- Castlegar, Area I, and Area J Recreation and Culture Master Plan (2016)

Specific plans for enhancements to the Castlegar & District Community Complex were considered at a couple of points in recent history. In each instance the public was presented with information related to the proposed enhancements to the Complex including capital cost estimates and associated taxation impacts. Referendums were implemented in both 2010 and 2018 to gain approval from the public to borrow to fund the improvements. In both instances the referendums were defeated.

Most recently and during the timing of this engagement project, the City of Castlegar announced the planned closure of the Pioneer Arena. Built in 1956, the Pioneer Arena was a "fixture" in the area. Improvements had been made to the Pioneer Arena over its years of operations and ongoing assessments (formal and informal) had been completed. Talks about the closure of the Pioneer Arena became more common after a 2009 Structural Assessment that concluded, "...the majority of the building components are currently beyond their expected lifespan and that the facility as a whole is largely exhausted." The announcement by the City of Castlegar at the time of this project (2024) may have impacted both participation in the different engagement tactics as well as the responses gathered.

Engagement undertaken in any community is a product of the times and circumstances within each community. Providing the context over the years in the Castlegar district is to acknowledge the context and consider it as the engagement findings are examined. Any impacts, direct or indirect, cannot be directly identified and tied to the findings.

SECTION 2.0

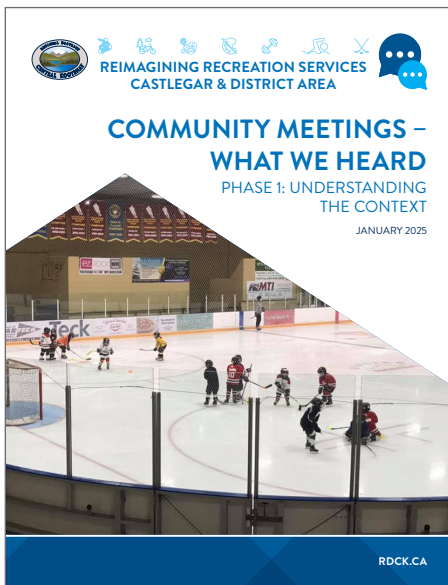
ABOUT THIS REPORT



This document is the final report for the Reimagining Recreation Services – Castlegar & District engagement project. Over the course of the project, three separate reports were developed, coinciding with the three project phases. The three reports presented the findings from the engagement tactics implemented in each of the project phases. This report is intended to serve as a synopsis of the entire project. This report will:

- Highlight some of the key findings gathered from the engagement activities.
- Identify high level conclusions drawn from the engagement.
- Offer next steps for the Castlegar & District Recreation Commission to consider as it makes decisions regarding recreation service delivery.

While this document can stand on its own, it is important to recognize that it is a companion to the three reports with the detailed findings from the phase specific engagement activities. Should the reader have any questions regarding the summary engagement findings (or the activities themselves) presented herein, a review of the preceding reports should be undertaken.



SECTION 3.0

ABOUT THE PROCESS

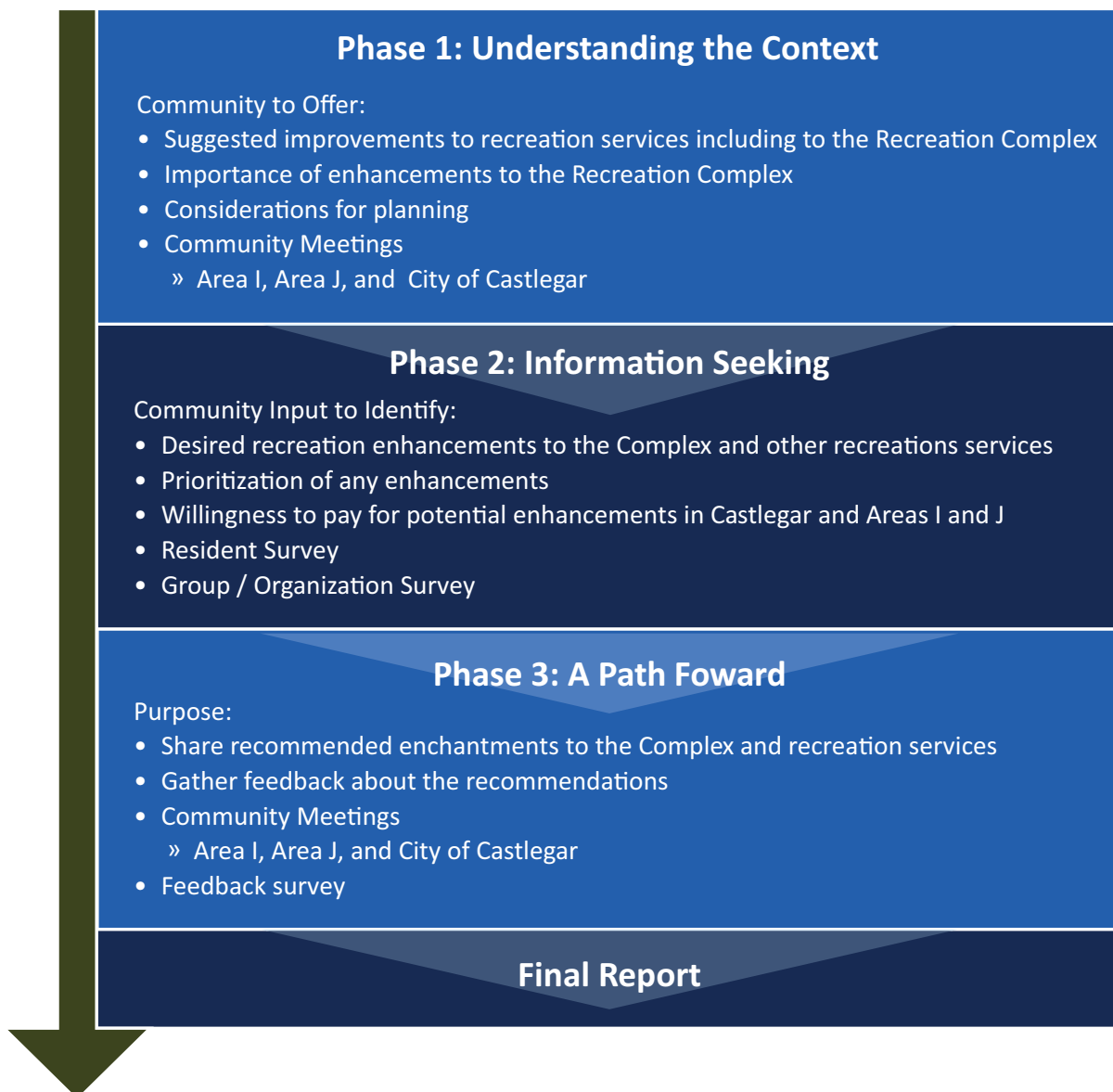


As referenced above, this project included three distinct phases each with its own program of engagement.

Phase 1: Understanding the Context sought to gain an understanding of district residents’ opinions regarding current recreation service provision and suggestions for desired enhancements. This phase involved a series of community meetings along with “post-it” boards, an online survey, and a hard copy questionnaire (workbook). The information gathered through this phase helped shape the questionnaires used in Phase 2 and provided context to offer insight into the community’s perspective.

Phase 2: Information Seeking built upon the information gathered in the previous phase. The tactics employed in Phase 2 included a resident survey and a survey of organized groups and organizations that provide recreation services or have a vested interest in their provision. The resident survey served as the primary data collection tactic in this project.

The final phase – **Phase 3: A Path Forward** – included the sharing of findings with the community and their response to those findings. Two community meetings were convened with a hard copy feedback form. An online survey was also utilized.



SECTION 4.0

ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS



PHASE 1: UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

The information presented below represent a sampling of findings gathered from this phase of engagement. Refer to the separate Phase 1 report for all findings.

COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Location
Glade Hall
Pass Creek Hall
Shoreacres Community Hall
Brilliant Cultural Centre
Castlegar & District Community Complex
Robson Community Hall
Tarrys and District Community Hall

SURVEY / WORKBOOK

1. 270 responses

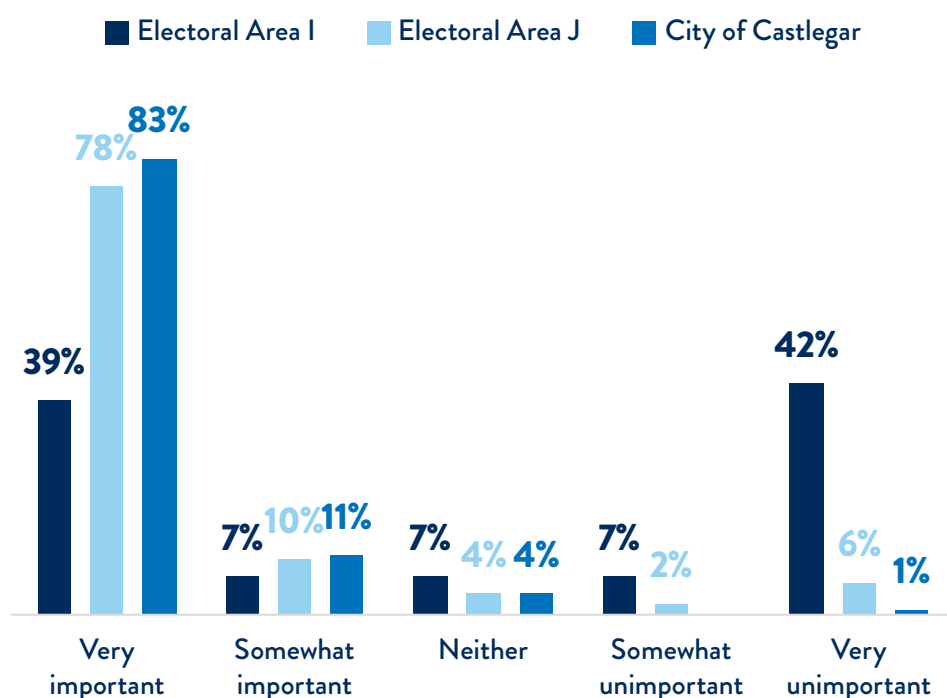
SERVICE ENHANCEMENTS

1. A second ice sheet is needed
2. Aquatic enhancements and improvements to the fitness centre, addition of an indoor walking track
3. Enhanced service delivery in the rural areas including programs and trail development
4. Support existing recreation committees

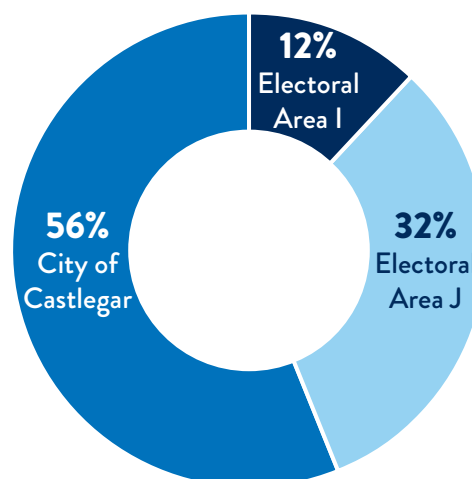
OTHER COMMENTS

1. Concerns expressed about taxation levels and costs for services
2. Focus on maintaining what exists rather than expanding infrastructure
3. Investment in recreation is important to the retention of existing residents and attraction of new ones.

GRAPH 1: How important is it that enhancements are made to the Castlegar & District Recreation Complex?



GRAPH 2: Where Do You Live?



PHASE 2: INFORMATION SEEKING

The information presented below represent a sampling of findings gathered from this phase of engagement. Refer to the separate Phase 2 report for all findings.

RESIDENT SURVEY

998 respondents

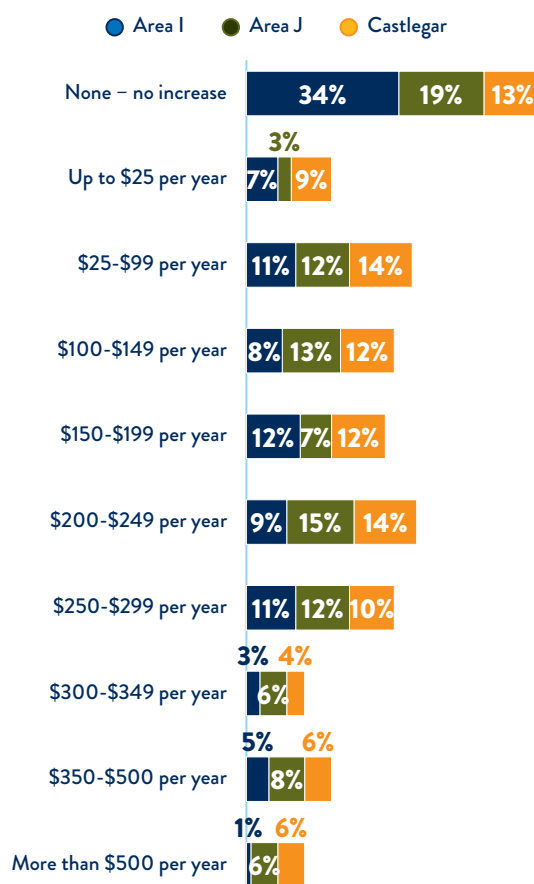
Where do you live?	
Castlegar	61%
Electoral Area J	23%
Electoral Area I	13%
Other	3%

Do you think enhancements / improvements are needed to facilities, parks and recreation in the Castlegar & District Area?			
	Area I	Area J	Castlegar
Yes	52%	69%	77%
No	31%	19%	11%
Unsure	17%	12%	13%

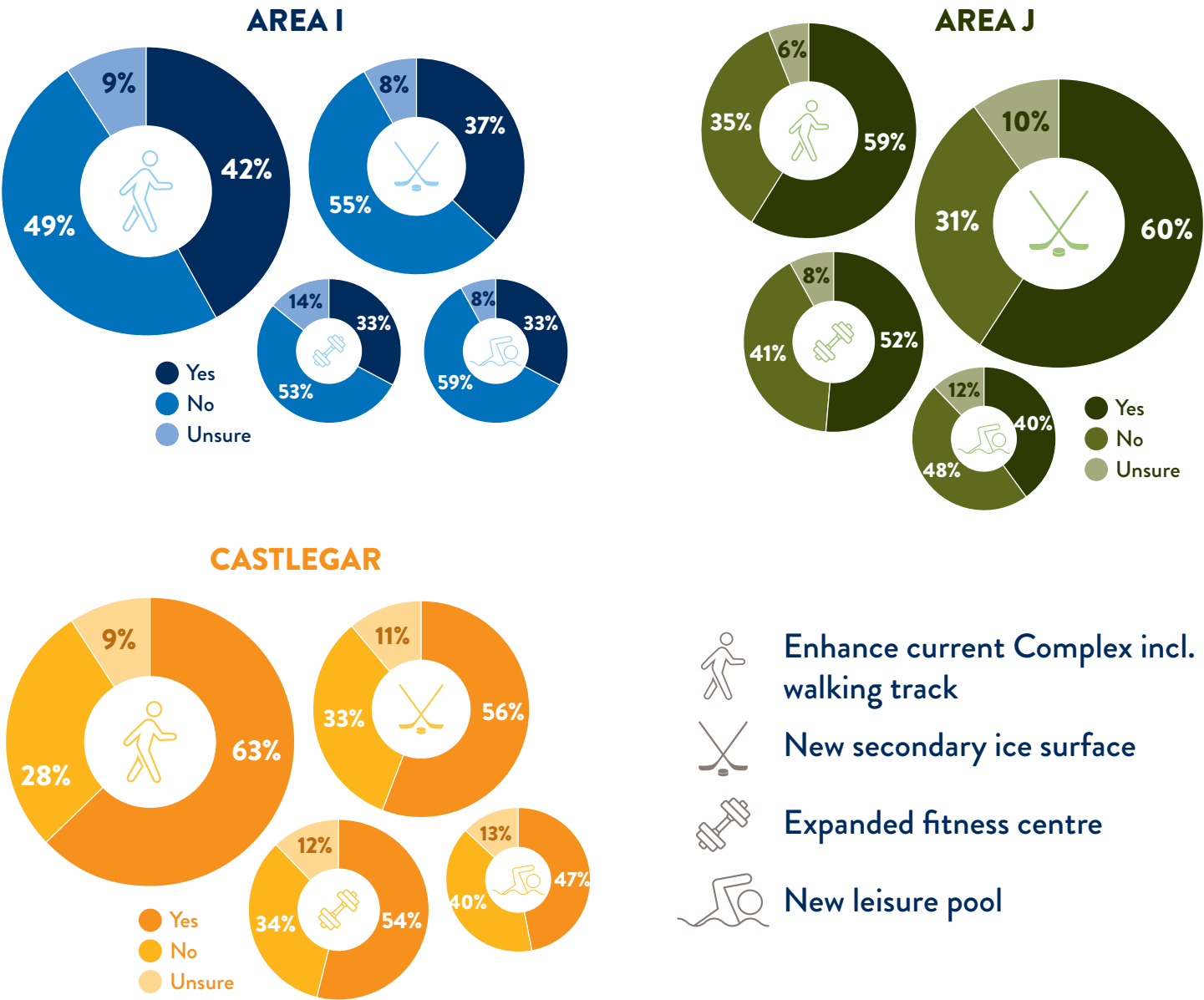
GRAPH 3: Ranking of Priority of Importance for Potential Enhancements



GRAPH 4: How much would you support paying annually to fund borrowing for enhancements or new amenities?



GRAPH 5: Consider the potential residential tax increase, what enhancements would you support?



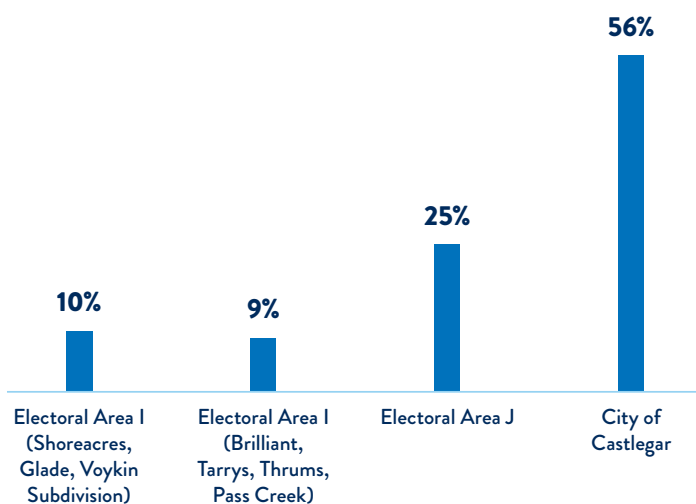
PHASE 3: A PATH FORWARD

The information presented below represent a sampling of findings gathered from this phase of engagement. Refer to the separate Phase 3 report for all findings.

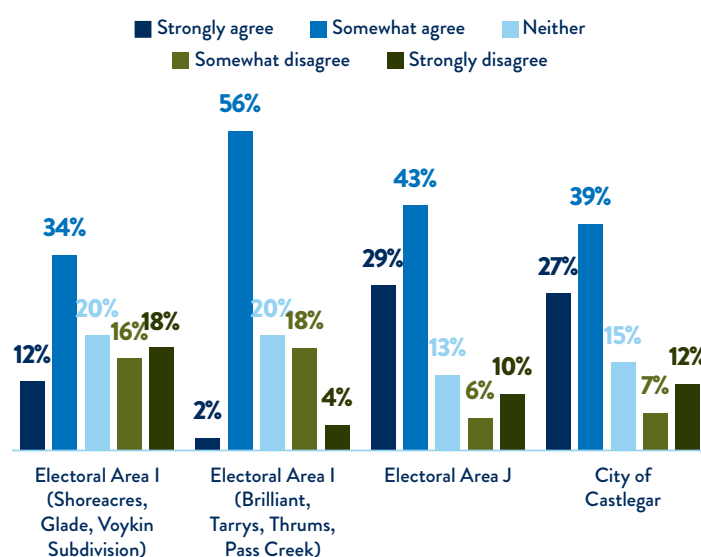
RESIDENT SURVEY

496 respondents

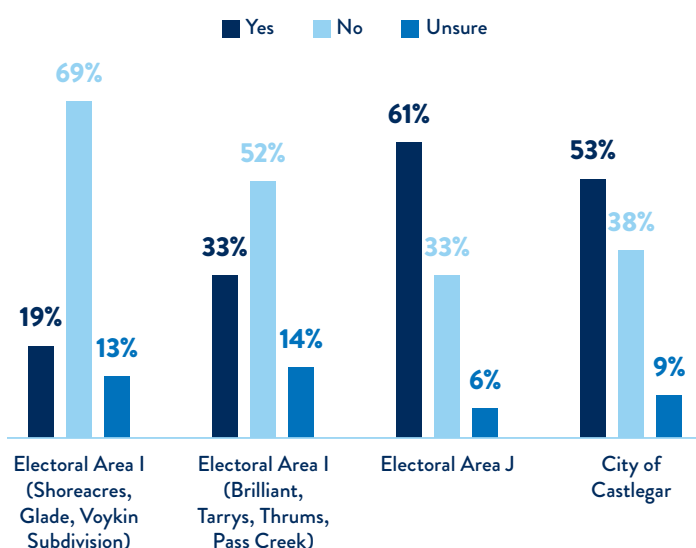
GRAPH 6: Residency of Respondents



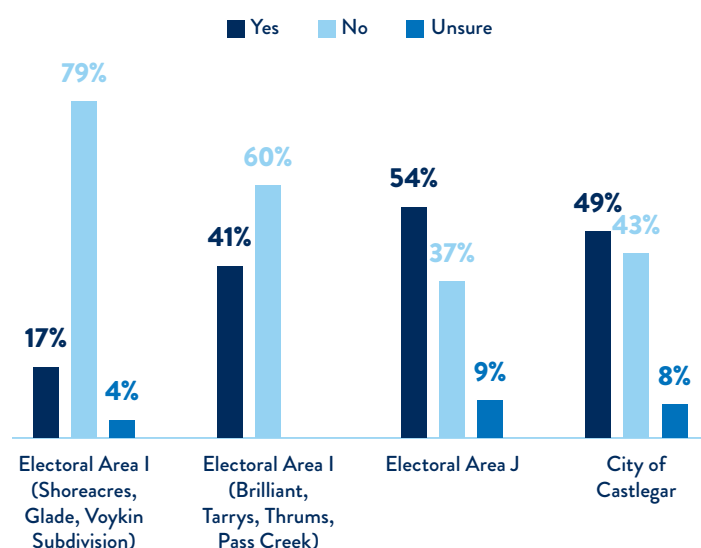
GRAPH 7: Extent of Agreement That the Survey Findings Reflect Your Community (where you live)?



GRAPH 8: Do You Believe a Secondary Indoor Ice Sheet is the Highest Priority for Your Community



GRAPH 9: Do You Support an Increase in Taxation by \$200-250 to Support the Development of a Secondary Indoor Ice Sheet?



SECTION 5.0

CONCLUSIONS



The conclusions presented below are based on the findings from all engagement activities undertaken throughout all phases of this project¹. The resident survey findings held the most weight as these conclusions were developed but the information gathered across the three phases has also been considered.

1. The participation level in the Phase 2 resident survey exceeded the participation rates observed (by the consultant) in recreation surveys fielded in other communities. Participation rates for Areas I & J and the City of Castlegar ranged between 6%-9%. If a random sample fielding methodology had been used to collect the same number of responses, the margins of error would have ranged from +/- 8.3% (Area I) to +/- 6.3% (Area J) to +/- 3.8% (Castlegar)². **The information gathered does provide important insight** into the perspectives of the residents such that, when coupled with the knowledge of the Recreation Commission, decisions can be made to advance recreation planning.
2. A **sizeable proportion** (41%) of resident survey respondents are **active members or volunteers in a recreation** club or organized group. While it is not known what this proportion is of the entire population, it is expected that the engagement facilitated through this project may have enticed active recreation participants to engage in greater proportions than that of the less active (or affiliated) members of the community. Having said that, the majority of respondents (52%) to the resident survey said they are not an active member (7% were unsure).
3. The **understanding of recreation service delivery** in the Castlegar District **is not fully understood by residents**. Through the engagement tactics, particularly in the community meetings, it was clear that many people were unaware of the differences in responsibilities between the City of Castlegar, the RDCK, and the Castlegar & District Recreation Commission. Residential taxation and its contribution to the different services was another area for which some residents required clarity.
4. There is broad **recognition of the value of recreation** across the Castlegar & District region. Respondents spoke of the contributions recreation services make to developing community, enhancing the health and wellness of individuals, and of retaining and attracting residents. Respondents in the study area specifically commented on valuing the current amenities at the Castlegar & District Community Complex. (74% Area I; 88% Area J; 90% Castlegar respondents value the current amenities.) Regarding outdoor amenities, trail networks were highly valued by District respondents.
 - i. The **aquatic areas and the arena** were identified respectively as the two **most important amenities** offered at the Castlegar & District Community Complex. Respondents with children in the home were more likely to identify the aquatic areas (61% vs 44%) and arena (55% vs 41%) as very important than respondents without children in the home.
 - ii. Respondents with children in the home were more likely to say that programming delivered at the Community Complex is important than respondents without children (78% vs 60%).
5. Some sizeable **discrepancies appear amongst the respondents regarding the need for improvements or enhancements** to recreation services. While approximately half (52%) of Area I respondents think enhancements are needed, the proportion is sizeably higher for Area J respondents (69%) and Castlegar respondents (77%). This general difference (Area I respondents being less supportive of recreation enhancements / investments than respondents from Area J and Castlegar) is generally apparent throughout the study.

1 The information gathered through this engagement project is valuable and provides significant insight regarding the perspectives of residents of Electoral Areas I and J as well as the City of Castlegar. The sample size from the resident survey is sufficient to consider it as decisions are made related to recreation in the Castlegar district. It does reflect the perspectives of the respondents at a point in time and may be influenced by the context described in a section 1.1 of this report.

2 Margins of error means that the findings would be within that range (within +/-3.8% for Castlegar) on 19 occasions if the survey was fielded randomly 20 times.

6. **Recreation services** delivered to Castlegar & District residents **is more than those offered in Castlegar and at the Complex**. Recognition of the programs, events, and amenities offered by community organizations outside of the City is important. Some concern was expressed that the importance and value of locally delivered services was not as recognized or supported as it should be by the Recreation Commission. There were suggestions to enhance the delivery of recreation services outside of Castlegar. This could be manifested in a number of ways including the satellite delivery of programs, the enhancement of rural trail networks, or considering some amenity development (playgrounds, bike parks) in the rural communities of Area J and I.
7. There were **no enhancement projects** to the Castlegar & District Community Complex that **were supported by a majority of respondents** across all areas. Knowing the potential costs of enhancements to the Community Complex, a majority of respondents from both Area J and Castlegar supported: enhancements to the Complex including a walking track (59% and 63% respectively); a new secondary ice surface (60% and 56% respectively); and an expanded fitness centre (52% and 54% respectively). This support however was not very strong with levels of support topping out at 63%. Considering Area I respondents, none of the potential enhancements were supported by a majority of respondents although the enhancement receiving the greatest amount of support was enhancements to the current Complex including the addition of a walking track (42% support).
 - i. Comparing all respondents who are affiliated with ice user groups from other affiliations, **ice users are generally in greater support of all enhancements** to the Complex even considering tax impacts compared to non-ice users. The differences are particularly true for a secondary ice sheet (91% vs 51%), field house (42% vs 20%); and enhancements to the Complex including a walking track (74% vs 58%).
 - ii. Knowing the potential tax increases, **lower income respondents more likely to support enhancements to the existing Complex with a walking track** (54% would support it) **than anything else**. Less than half of lower income respondents supported a second indoor ice surface (42%) and fitness centre expansion (42%). A majority of higher income respondents supported a second indoor ice surface (68%), enhancement to the complex with walking track (65%), and fitness centre expansion (60%). (Note: respondents with a household income of less than \$100,000 before taxes were considered lower income versus those with a household income of at least \$100,000.)
 - iii. Knowing the potential tax increases, **a majority of respondents with children in the home would support enhancements to the current Complex** including adding a walking track (61% vs 59%); a second indoor ice surface (61% vs 49%); a new leisure pool (58% vs 29%); and a fitness centre expansion (54% vs 29%) than would respondents without children in the home.
 - iv. Generally, **enhancements to the current Complex including the addition of a walking track received the higher level of support** across all segments. This speaks to the interest of respondents in enhancing the vibrancy of the Complex.

8. There were some **inconsistencies in the resident survey data**.
 - i. While respondents for Area I showed greater support for enhancements to the Complex including a walking track than they did for a new secondary ice surface, when asked to rank their preferences, the secondary ice surface was their top priority.
 - ii. Respondents from Area J showed greatest support for a secondary ice surface, Complex enhancements including a walking track, and an expanded fitness centre (in that order). But when identifying their priorities for potential enhancements the new ice surface was the top priority and a new leisure pool was the second priority.
 - iii. Respondents from Castlegar showed support (in order) for Complex improvements including a walking track, a new secondary ice surface, and expanded fitness. However they ranked a new secondary indoor ice surface as the most important when asked to prioritize improvements.
9. Respondents from **Area J (81%)** and **Castlegar (87%)** were **more supportive of paying additional taxes** to fund borrow for enhancements or new amenities than respondents from Area I (66%).
 - i. Considering support for an annual tax increase, 50% of respondents from Area I would pay at least \$100 annually. Considering Area J and Castlegar the amounts were \$150 annually.
10. Based on their stated priorities and willingness to pay, the **enhancement to the current Complex**, including the addition of a walking track, is the **only project that connects** a higher **priority** from all respondents **with** the level of **taxation increase** needed to fund it. This is based on the required funding level that was shared through this project.
11. While a majority of respondents indicated a willingness to support additional taxation increases for improvements or enhancements to recreation, there was a strong **concern expressed about increasing costs**. Some spoke about unfairness in having to pay additionally for services they may not use while others commented on the high cost of living generally and the burden that any additional costs would have on them. These sentiments were particularly pronounced when it came to facility enhancements or new development. There was significant support that the City and RDCK should focus on ensuring that existing **facilities were properly maintained**.

SECTION 6.0

RECOMMENDATIONS



1. Implement a **program of communications** to inform the residents of Electoral Areas I & J and the City of Castlegar of the **recreation services provided by the Recreation Commission and the City of Castlegar**. Include in the communications, a description of the two different Services including the recreation opportunities provided within each. The residential taxation support for each Service should be presented (ensuring the distinctions in Area I are noted).
2. **Communicate** the importance of recreation broadly and the **opportunities available** to residents whether provided by the Recreation Commission, City, or others. This will recognize the contributions of various community organizations and volunteers to enhancing the recreation landscape.
3. The potential project **“enhancements to the Complex including the addition of a walking track” needs to be defined** in greater detail. A specific understanding of what these enhancements are and how they would be incorporated into the existing facility needs to be delineated. The costs accompanying this project, along with the impact on taxation assessments, needs to be articulated. This potential project was initially put forward during the CDCC Feasibility Analysis and Concept Design (2017). At that point the project referred to improvements to enhance the community gathering aspects of the Complex. This addressed improvements to the welcoming nature of the facility, particularly in the foyer area related to seating, traffic flow, and aesthetics. To some residents, these enhancements simply referred to improvements to facility maintenance including aesthetics but may not have included any structural changes. Arriving at a shared definition of the enhancements is important.
 - i. Using the information gathered, **survey residents using a controlled process** to ensure the findings are representative of each Electoral Area (differentiating between the two portions of Area I) and the City of Castlegar. A comprehensive program of promotions is needed to ensure residents are aware of the survey.
4. Complete an analysis to **determine the ability of the arena** at the Community Complex to **accommodate the usage** that occurred at the Pioneer Arena. **Review the allocation process** to ensure that priority users are accommodated and develop a proposed schedule for ice users. Present the findings to all ice users.
5. **Use the prioritization framework to score the top projects** to determine a prioritized list. Include in the scoring, the enhancement of the Complex with track, a secondary indoor ice arena, a new leisure pool, and an enhanced fitness centre. The prioritization framework is a tool used to determine priorities amongst multiple potential projects. It brings a number of factors into play when setting priorities beyond solely community demand. While community demand is the most important criteria in the framework, there are several other criteria that need to be considered when selecting one potential project over another including: social good and public accessibility, cost savings through partnership / grants; economic impact; current provision; and cost.
6. **Identify** potential **improvements** in recreation services **beyond enhancements at the Community Complex** (e.g. rural programming, rural trail expansion). Scope out the enhancements, including specifics such as time, place, and costs. **Describe the potential steps to implementation and engage with residents** in Electoral Areas I and J to get their reaction to the proposal. Demonstrate how the proposal addresses the needs identified through this engagement for additional services outside of Castlegar.