BRIEFING

Subject: The Fenlands Future Engagement Findings

Presented to: Council

Date: January 10, 2022

Submitted by: Alison Gerrits, Director of Community Services and Amanda Arbuckle, Manager of Recreation Services

Item #: 9.1

This Briefing is submitted for acceptance into the Corporate Record.

BACKGROUND

Reason for Report

This briefing provides an overview of the findings of the public consultation that was launched in March of 2021 and includes the final report produced by the consultants hired to complete the work. As a reminder, this project was funded by a generous donation from the Wim and Nancy Pauw Foundation.

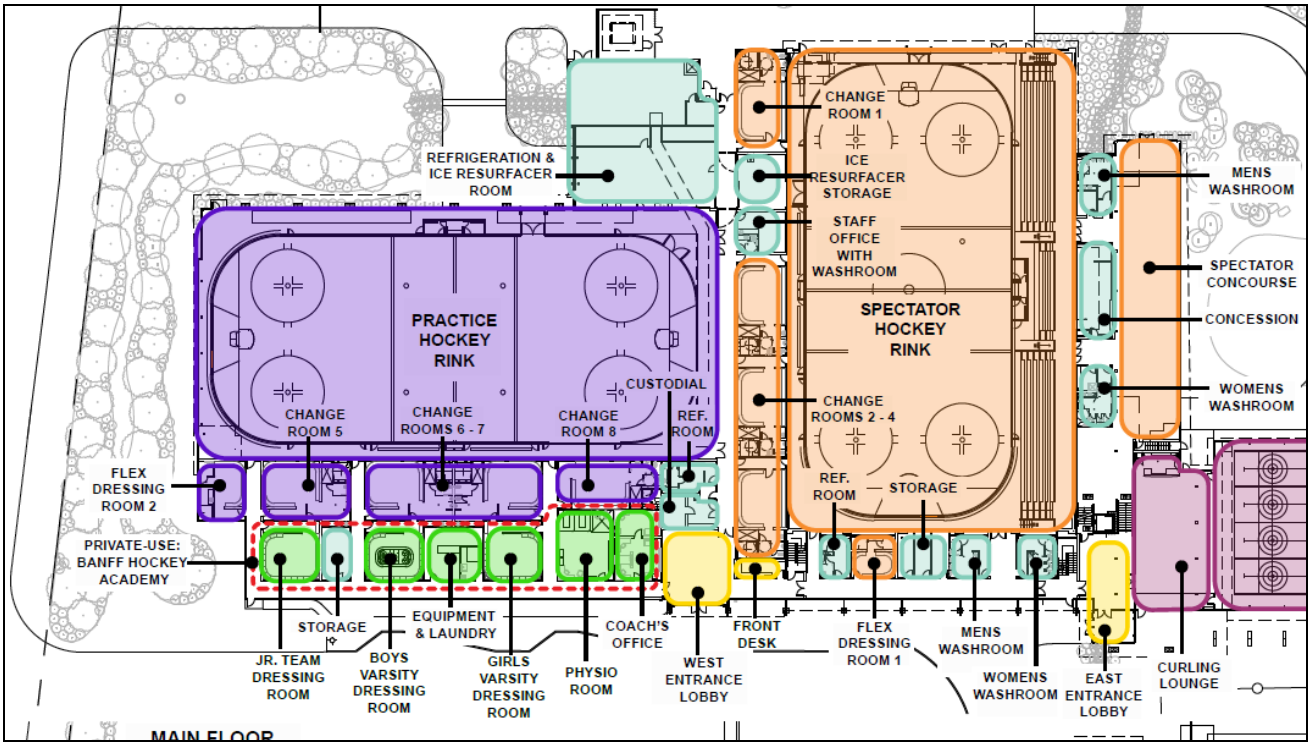
At the October 13, 2020 meeting of Governance and Finance, the following motion was tabled and carried:

> **FIN20-78 Moved by Mayor Sorensen**
>
> That with respect to Item 7.2, The Fenlands Lease Vacancy, the following be approved, after amendment: That the Governance and Finance Committee:
>
> 1. Develop options for community amenities that could be incorporated into the recently vacated and underutilised areas at The Fenlands, excluding the permanent removal of the second ice surface, seek community input that would include questions on community interest in the addition of a fieldhouse in the community as a stand-alone amenity, or a temporary installation at the Fenlands; and
>
> 2. Return to Council with the findings and potential funding opportunities.
>
> For: (6): Mayor Sorensen, Councillor Canning, Councillor DiManno, Councillor Olver, Councillor Poole, and Councillor Standish Against: (1): Councillor Christensen
>
> **MOTION CARRIED**

Summary of Issue

With the departure of The Fenlands tenant, the Banff Hockey Academy (BHA) in early 2020, the Governance and Finance Committee requested that administration seek public feedback on future use options and funding for the vacant lease area and other underutilized spaces in The Fenlands. The vacant lease area was previously used by the Banff Hockey Academy (BHA) and is depicted in green in the image below.

Revised Public Hearing and Regular Meeting of Council Agenda for 2022 January 10



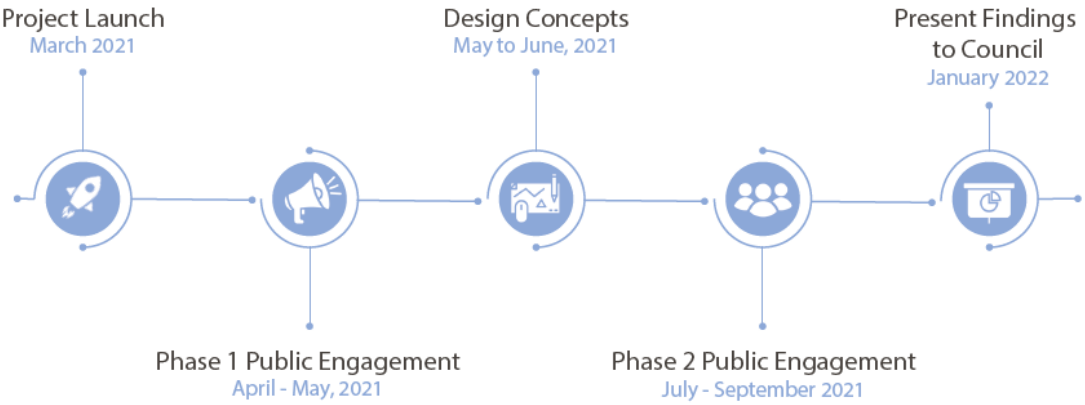
**Green – Former BHA Lease Space*

Following the committee's direction on October 13th, with funding from the Wim and Nancy Pauw Foundation, administration issued a request for proposals for a 3rd Party firm to lead the engagement. Intelligent Futures was selected and worked closely with GEC Architecture, who led The Fenlands renovations in 2010, to undertake phase 1 and 2 of the public engagement and deliver the attached *The Future of The Fenlands What We Heard* report and *Banff Recreation Centre Opinion of Probable Costs* document.

Engagement Process

The Fenlands Future public engagement was held across two phases, between March and September 2021.

The first phase of The Fenlands Future engagement asked members of the public what they presently like and do at The Fenlands now, and what they might like changed or would like to do at The Fenlands in the future. From there, GEC Architecture developed a series of high-level conceptual options for spaces that could be redeveloped in response to the feedback provided in phase 1 (*Pages 16 – 20 of The Future of The Fenlands What We Heard* report). In phase 2, the public was then tasked with providing feedback about what they liked or did not like about each of the concept options presented.



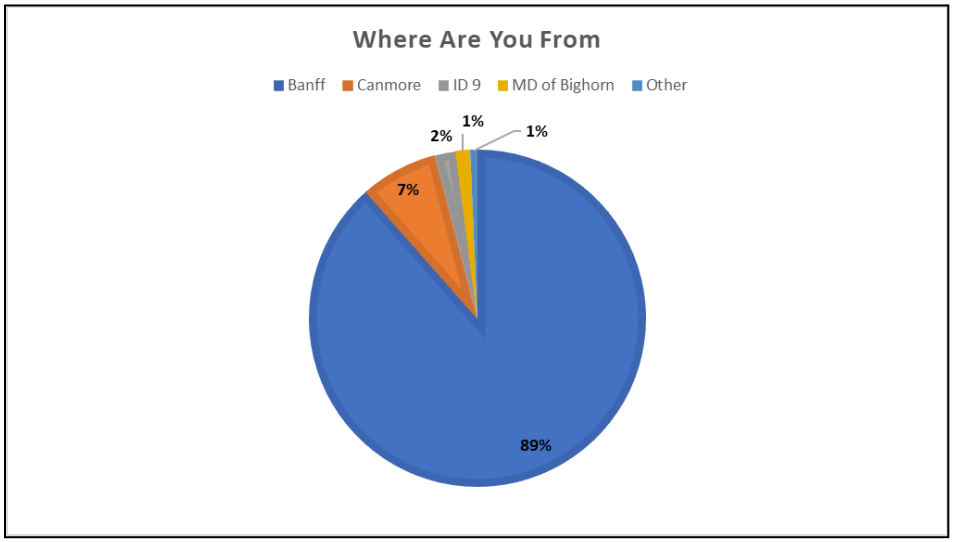
The Fenlands Future Project Timeline

Various tools were used in both phase 1 and 2 of the engagement including surveys, focus groups, interviews and facilitated sessions. Over the course of the engagement process 675 responses were received.

The phase 1 online survey included questions about participant's demographics including the following:

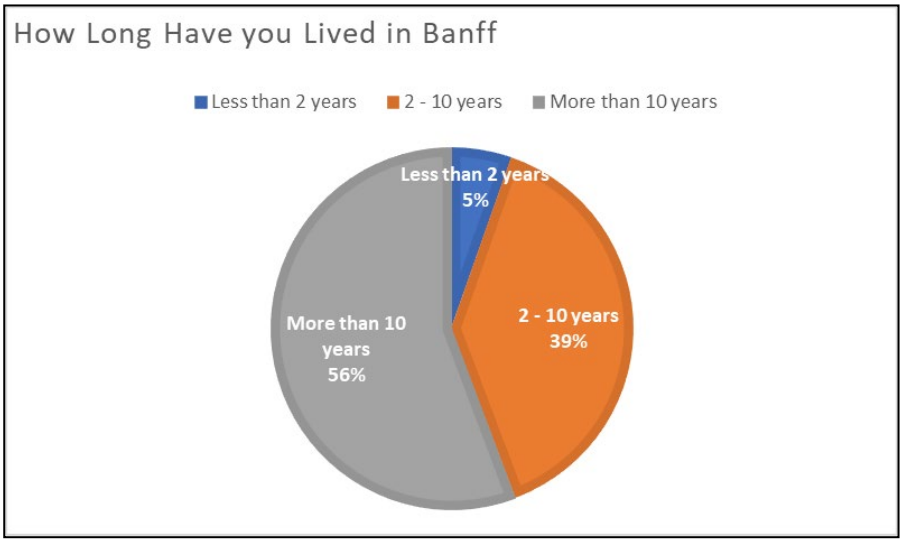
- 33% of participants were between the ages of 25 – 34, 25% between 35 – 44, 21% between 45 – 54 and 12% 55 – 64.
- 61% of participants had lived in the Bow Valley for more than 10 years and 19% between 6 – 10 years.
- 87% were Canadian Citizens, 9% permanent residents and 3% holding a study or work permit.

In phase 2 participants were asked in both the survey and at the in-person sessions where they were from, and the results were as follows:



Phase 2 Online Survey Participants (148 responses)

Banff residents who responded in phase 2, were also asked how long they have lived in Banff and those results were as follows:



Phase 2 Online Survey (131 responses)

Various avenues were used to promote The Fenlands Future including, a Banff Viewpoints webpage (www.banffviewpoints.ca/fenlands), medial relations, direct invitations, signage and social media, print and radio ads. Over the course of the engagement The Fenlands Future Banff Viewpoints webpage had 2,200 unique visitors and 513 unique responses to the online surveys.





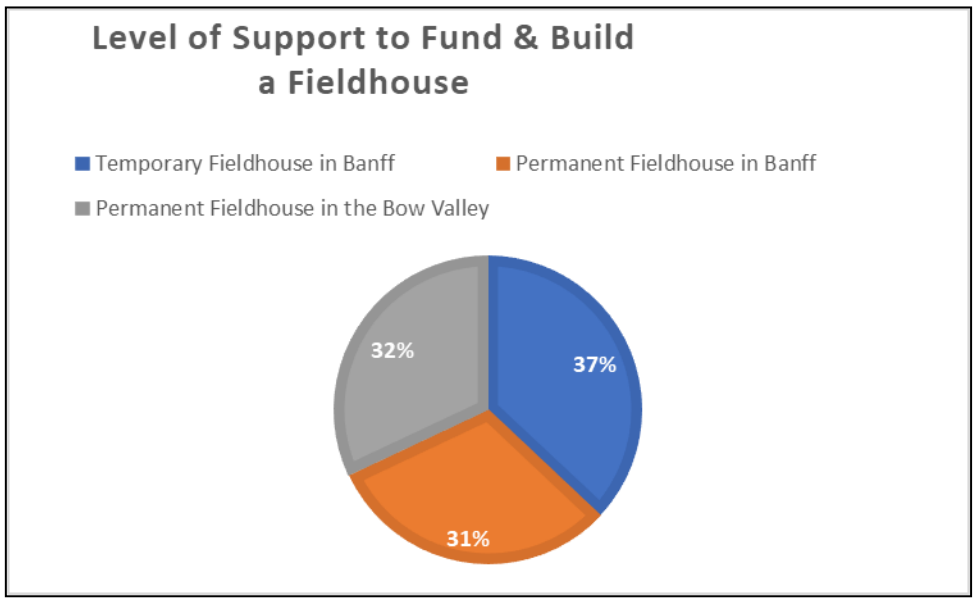
Key Findings

Priority Activities and Space Utilization

Key priorities emerged during phase 1 and 2 with respect to potential use and activities in low-use and vacant spaces at The Fenlands. Year-round activity preferences for the vacant and low use spaces included the following:

- Fitness Centre (cardio machines, free weights, stationary equipment, dryland training)
- Indoor Climbing/Bouldering Space
- Flexible Arts and Culture Space
- Meeting Space

The public was also asked about their level of support for an indoor fieldhouse that would support activities such as soccer and lacrosse. Participants in phase 1 indicated the following in response to that question.



**Q20 Fenlands Future Phase 1 Survey (390 respondents)*

A turf field and bicycle/skateboard pump track were also recognized as preferences on the arena(s) dry-floor in the non-ice season. The other temporary amenity that was highly supported in phase 1 was climbing and bouldering. However, during the development of the phase 2 concept designs with the architectural and engineering firm, it was identified that a seasonal climbing/bouldering wall was most likely not feasible on the dry-floor. This was due to surface requirements, ceiling heights, and storage constraints. Therefore, in phase 2, the climbing/bouldering option was presented as a small building expansion off the former BHA leasehold area.

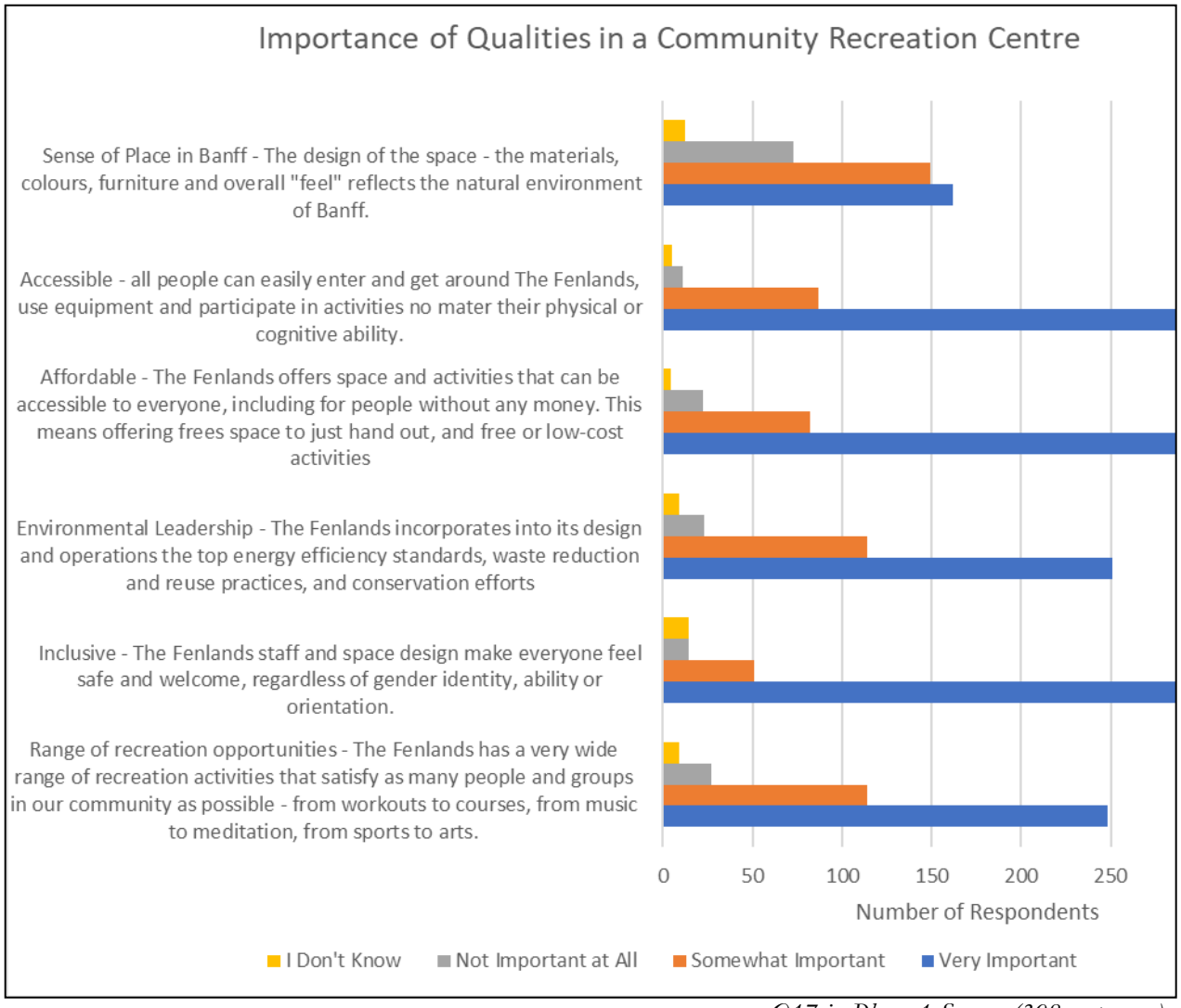
Although the public was informed that due to space limitations some amenity options would not be feasible in the vacant and underutilized spaces, some feedback was still received on the desire for a gymnastics facility, an indoor running/walking track, swimming pool and permanent pickleball/tennis facilities. Some of the engagement participants also noted that there was a lack of indoor gymnasium spaces for activities like soccer, basketball and pickleball however, it is anticipated that this was due in part to COVID-19 restrictions resulting in the Town not being able

to use the Banff Elementary School gymnasium where these activities are typically held on evenings and weekends.

Non-Activity Based Themes

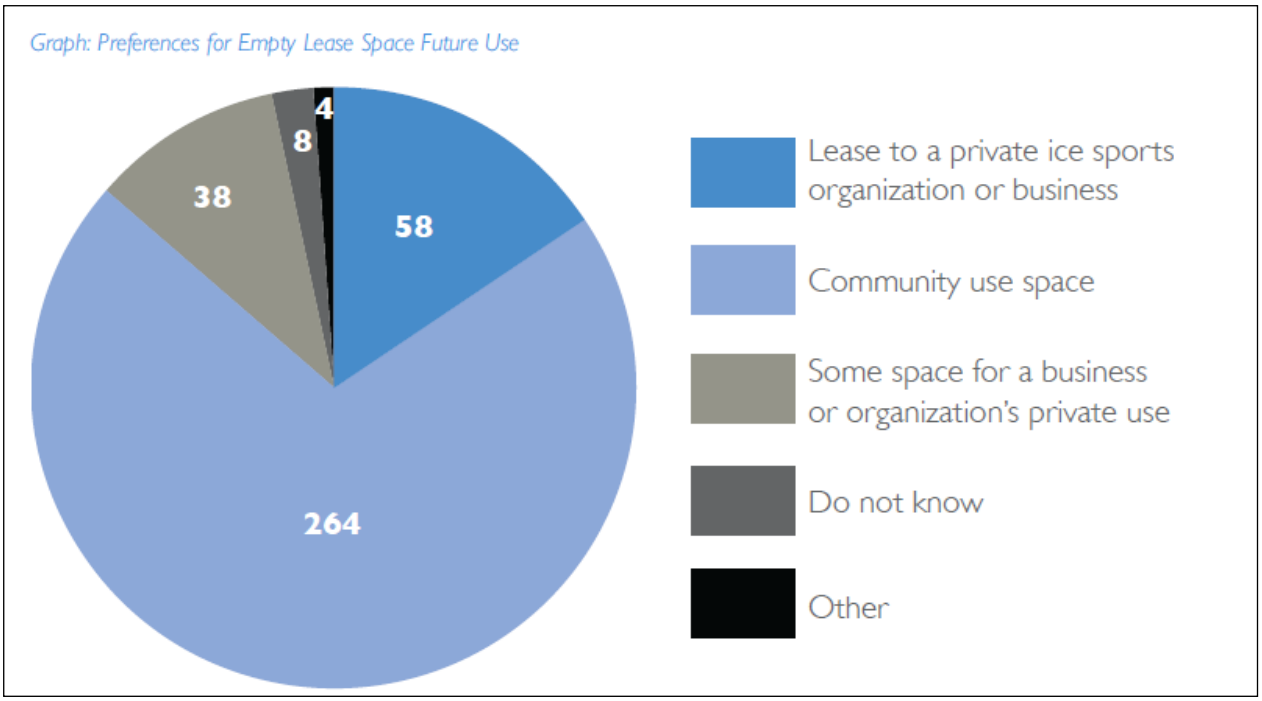
There was a high level of feedback received from participants in phase 1 of the engagement regarding the lack of non-ice program offerings at The Fenlands. At the same time, some respondents felt that there should be ice year-round, that locals should have a higher level of priority in ice allocation and/or that the Town could do more to promote ice sport tourism. Administration has clear direction with respect to ice and non-ice space allocation as set out in the *Policy C7003 – Public Use of Municipal Facilities* which was reviewed by council in early 2021. The policy prioritizes community and local use, and aims to maximize facility usage and meet the cost-recovery targets set during the annual budget process.

Throughout phase 1 and 2 of the engagement process, participants also noted the importance of inclusive, affordable and accessible recreation opportunities at The Fenlands and in the townsite as depicted in the responses below:



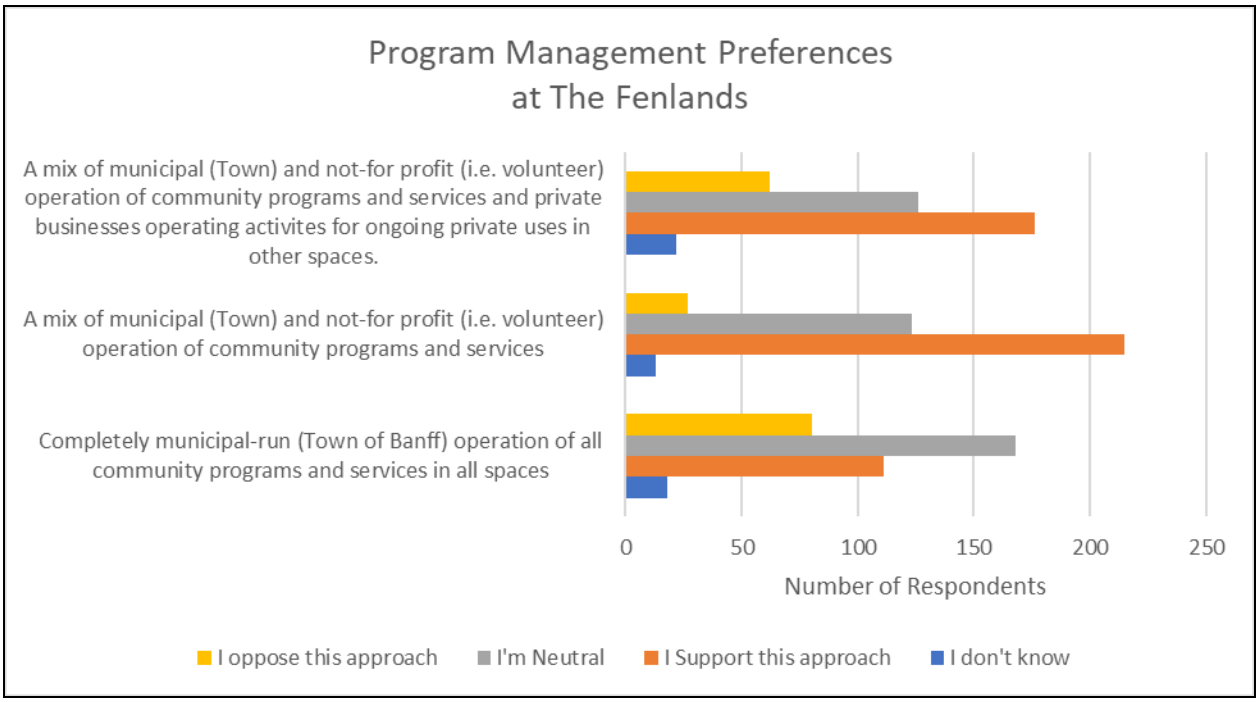
Q17 in Phase 1 Survey (398 responses)

Overwhelmingly, the public indicated that they would like the former BHA lease space to be used entirely or in part for community programs and services (81%).



Q15 Phase 1 Survey (397 responses)

In addition to private and public use of spaces in The Fenlands, participants were asked in the phase 1 survey how they thought programs and services would be best managed and operated at The Fenlands. A model that would see non-profit and municipally operated programs and services appeared to be the most supported by respondents.



Q19 Phase 1 Survey (396 responses)

Overall, the findings of The Fenlands Future What We Heard report substantiated previous feedback heard from residents at various times over the last several years including the following information summarized during a SWOT analysis about The Fenlands in the Recreation Facilities Master Plan (2013):

THE FENLANDS BANFF RECREATION CENTRE			
STRENGTHS	**WEAKNESSES**	**OPPORTUNITY**	**THREATS**
• Newly constructed/good condition • Adequate provision for ice sport demand and visitor tournament events	• Current space configuration geared towards winter sports, rinks and curling and limited summer use as a result • Low percentage of multifunctional spaces • Poor pedestrian/bike access and lighting • Not performing as a central, complete community centre • Not located in a central location: located away from town and across the railway tracks	• The facility has operated for 2 to 3 years and Town staff have a good idea of which spaces are underutilized • There is potential to improve cost recovery for underutilized spaces • There are opportunities for revenue generation to support operating costs • There are opportunities to add informal gathering areas and boost casual use of the facility as a community centre • Conceptual plans exist for future additions: gymnasium, weight room, community program space, community kitchen, leisure pool • Future transit service	• Land constraints make expansion costly • To accommodate new and different users, displacement or reduction in services or amenities would be likely • Adding some new uses would require additional capital investment

Taken from Pg 14 of Recreation Facilities Master Plan (2013)

Recommendations specific to The Fenlands in the 2013 Recreation Facilities Master Plan that are ongoing, have been completed, or that are further supported through The Fenlands Future (FF) engagement are also highlighted below:

Overall facility recommendations:

- Undertake a detailed analysis of fees and charges, programming, cost recovery issues and potential strategies for increasing use, particularly dry floor and summertime uses. Review and adjust fees and charges on an annual basis, if necessary. (ongoing, FF)
- Work with facility management to improve access for non-ice users by minimizing conversion times between ice and dry floor conditions. (ongoing)

- Work with concessionaire to better serve Arena 2 and other areas of the building, as necessary. (ongoing, FF)
- Develop the Mezzanine. Potential uses include exercise machines or a children's play area. (ongoing, FF)
- Consider the creation of an outdoor play area to enhance The Fenlands as a multipurpose recreation centre. (FF)

Concourse recommendations:

- Enhance the area through the addition of comfortable seating and tables. (complete, FF)
- Add window coverings and displace space to allow for presentations and displays (complete)

Ice arenas and curling (dry floor) recommendations:

- Expand the dry floor uses, in both summer and shoulder seasons. Programs could include **ball hockey, roller derby**, indoor soccer, box lacrosse, badminton, gymnastics, dodgeball, dance, wrestling, concerts, garage sale, youth dances, dog training, **bicycle training and safety, summer markets**, **inflatable playgrounds, and summer camps** (**ongoing,** FF)
- Search for opportunities to generate more revenue (ongoing, FF)

Meetings rooms and offices recommendations:

- Retrofit at least one meeting room to accommodate fitness programs, dance or martial arts on a more athletic/versatile floor (complete, FF)
- Other options include adding amenities for arts and crafts activities or children's play (FF).
- Evaluate the potential to covert other existing single-use rooms, including BHA rooms, to multipurpose rooms if there are program gaps that could be filled through the process (FF).

Conclusion

The public engagement process undertaken has provided clear direction on the types of amenities that residents would like to see incorporated at The Fenlands as a replacement to the Banff Hockey Academy leasehold area. In addition, further amenities and improvements for other areas within the facility have also been articulated by the community throughout this process. The feedback heard supports previous engagement processes including feedback garnered from the 2013 Recreation Facility Master Plan process, and the 2019 Community Social Assessment. Based on the results of this engagement process, a plan for The Fenlands Future can now be pursued knowing that it reflects the voices of both current and future users of this facility.

Next Steps

Administration will present a follow-up Request for Decision report to council on both short-term and long-term options that could respond to the feedback provided by the public during The Fenlands Future engagement processes. These options will also include the estimated operational revenues and expenses and capital costs and funding options for potential implementation.

OTHER INFORMATION

Budget

Funding for The Fenlands Future What We Heard Engagement process and Conceptual Drawings was provided by the Wim and Nancy Pauw Foundation. A cash donation of $50,000 was provided by the Pauw for this undertaking.

Internal Resources
Community Services, Corporate Services and The Fenlands Facilities teams are working collaboratively together to develop options for the vacant lease area at the recreation centre.

Communication
Information and opportunities to provide feedback about The Fenlands Future was shared on social media, the Banff Viewpoints website and directly with stakeholders including seasonal ice users between May and September 2021.

Banff Community Plan

Social

- Improve the quality, quantity and access to social programs, recreation, education and cultural facilities.
- Offer a wide range of quality recreation and active living programs.

Council Strategic Priorities
Enhancing Quality of Life – Addressing Cost of Living Goal (provision of affordable offerings for residents through the provision of accessible recreational amenities)

Legislation/Policy
Policy C7003 – Public Use of Municipal Facilities

Other
Banff Community Social Assessment (2019) – Cost of Living, Community Wellness
Recreation Programs and Services Master Plan (2015)
Banff Recreation Facilities Master Plan (2013)

ATTACHMENTS

1) The Fenlands Future What We Heard Report
2) Verbatim Appendices Links:
   https://banff.ca/FenlandsVerbatimA
   https://banff.ca/FenlandsVerbatimB

Circulation date: December 20, 2021

Submitted By: Amanda Arbuckle, Manager of Recreation Services

Reviewed By: On original
Kelly Gibson, Town Manager