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Information Item No. 2
Community Planning and Economic Development
Standing Committee
April 21, 2022

TO: Chair and Members of Community Planning and Economic Development
Standing Committee

- Original Signed -

SUBMITTED BY:

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: March 15, 2022

SUBJECT: Rural Recreation Strategy - Public Consultation Results

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

February 7, 2017 Halifax Regional Council motion (Item No. 14.2.3)

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Deputy Mayor Craig

THAT Halifax Regional Council:

1. Approve the use of the Community Facility Master Plan 2 (CFMP2) as a framework for municipal decision-making regarding recreation facilities; and
2. Approve the categorization of the CFMP2 recommendations outlined in Attachment 1 of the staff report dated January 6, 2017, and direct staff to incorporate the recommendations in future annual Business Plans for Council's consideration

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter

Section 7A

The purposes of the Municipality are to:

...

- (b) provide services, facilities, and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality;

...

Section 79A (1)

Subject to subsections (2) to (4) the Municipality may only spend money for municipal purposes if

(a) the expenditure is included in the Municipality's operating budget or capital budget or is otherwise authorized by the Municipality;

BACKGROUND

The 2017 Community Facilities Master Plan 2 (CFMP2), is a framework for community facility planning. The CFMP2 states that a Rural Recreation Strategy (RRS) should be developed to govern the provision of community supported recreation facilities and to increase recreational opportunities in outlying areas.

The RRS will provide an analysis of current and future needs for Parks & Recreation services and assets in rural areas of Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). The strategy is to be developed through a collaborative approach that considers the needs of rural residents when it comes to Parks & Recreation, incorporating opportunities for innovative service delivery including unstructured leisure recreation, and equitable access to indoor and outdoor Parks & Recreation facilities, for lifelong participation in vibrant and healthy communities.

To develop the RRS, staff are using a combination of the following information:

- Jurisdictional scans of similar municipalities across Canada;
- Best practices research;
- Spatial and socioeconomic analysis of rural HRM to understand the existing context when it comes to rural residents' experiences and barriers with accessing recreation opportunities; and
- Public consultation.

DISCUSSION

Staff used a combination of engagement approaches to obtain feedback from the following:

- Rural residents
- Volunteer-based organizations
- Relevant municipal staff and rural Councillors
- Governmental and arms-length organizations

A public survey (Attachment 1) was open from April 1, 2021, until June 13, 2021 for all residents of rural HRM. Significant efforts were made to provide physical surveys to residents in the most rural and under-served regions of rural HRM through direct mailouts and by working with local community centres to distribute and collect surveys. A total of 2,247 surveys were completed by residents within rural HRM.

Staff created a targeted long-form questionnaire for recreation and park-based volunteer groups (Attachment 2). Staff asked 154 groups to complete the questionnaire and 41 completed questionnaires were returned.

Between May and November 2021 staff arranged and held 10 meetings with departments from other orders of government and arms-length organizations that impact rural parks and recreation. During late Fall 2021, staff held 12 pop-up engagements to share major themes arising from the feedback collected from engagements to date. The purpose of these pop-ups was to reach residents in-person, which was not permitted earlier in the year due to COVID-19 restrictions. Staff spoke to approximately 154 residents through the pop-up sessions.

The municipality's Youth Services Section was simultaneously conducting engagement for the Youth Services Plan 2 update. Youth Services staff provided additional survey results from 236 rural youth (See Attachment 3 for the Youth Services Plan Survey).

Analysis

Staff coded the survey responses, notes from interviews, and organization questionnaires for repeating topics and characteristics unique to specific rural regions.

Key Findings

Prominent themes arose from the data and are divided into the following six theme areas:

- 1) Equitable access to indoor facilities
- 2) Equitable access to outdoor recreation opportunities
- 3) Volunteer support
- 4) Programming that meets rural needs
- 5) Advertising and communications that reflect rural communities
- 6) Collaboration through partnerships

Further details are found in *What We Heard Report* (Attachment 4).

Next Steps

The major themes from this engagement will be used to inform the RRS in tandem with existing approved strategies, additional stakeholder input on unstructured recreation, best practices, jurisdiction scans, and geographic spatial analysis of assets in order to create the strategy for Council's approval.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Extensive public and stakeholder engagements have been completed, as described in the discussion section above.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 Public Survey RRS
- Attachment 2 Org Questionnaire RRS
- Attachment 3 Youth Services Plan 2 Survey RRS
- Attachment 4 RRS What We Heard Report

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Diane Levandier, Area Manager, Recreation Programming 902.490.4584
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Rural Recreation Strategy Survey

Welcome to the Rural Recreation Strategy survey. The purpose of the Rural Recreation Strategy is to provide analysis on future needs for parks and recreation services in the rural areas of the municipality. Your responses will help guide the municipality in determining effective ways of providing recreational and park opportunities.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to participate in this survey. The survey should take approximately 10–15 minutes to complete. The deadline for completing this survey is Friday, July 16, 2021. Responses will be kept strictly confidential and the results of the survey will not be used in any way that will allow anyone to identify you or your responses. Your participation is voluntary, and you can discontinue your participation at any time.

COVID-19 pandemic has had significant impact on our normal activities. When completing the survey, please think about your typical recreation activities in recent years, under normal circumstances.

Tell us about yourself (feel free to complete the survey again on behalf of other members of your household).

1. What are the first three digits of your postal code?
2. What gender do you most identify with?
 Man Woman Non-binary Prefer not to say Other
3. What age category do you fall under?
 0–4 25–54
 5–9 55–65
 10–15 66 or older
 16–24 Prefer not to say
4. Do you identify as a person with disabilities?
 Yes No Prefer not to say
5. Do you identify as Acadian or Francophone?
 Yes No Prefer not to say

6. What is your ethnic identity?

- | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian / White | <input type="checkbox"/> Filipino | <input type="checkbox"/> Korean | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> South Asian | <input type="checkbox"/> Latin American | <input type="checkbox"/> Japanese | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese | <input type="checkbox"/> Arab | <input type="checkbox"/> First Nations | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> African Nova Scotian | <input type="checkbox"/> Southeast Asian | <input type="checkbox"/> Métis | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> African Canadian | <input type="checkbox"/> South Asian | <input type="checkbox"/> Inuk (Inuit) | |

7. Do you volunteer with a community-based, sport or recreation organization?

- Yes No

8. What category of organization best describes where you volunteer?

- Sport Organization
 Recreation Association
 School Association
 Non-Profit Group or Association
 Other (please define category):

9. Why is recreation important to you (select all the apply)

- To exercise
 To socialize
 To connect with nature
 To relax
 To have fun
 To build skills / learn
 Other (please specify):

10. Where, and how specifically, do you engage in recreation activities?

Example 1: I walk on the St. Margarets Bay Rail to Trails Park trail

Example 2: I kayak on the Musquodoboit River

Example 3: I celebrate/gather at the Clam Harbour Sandcastle Competition/Festival

Example 4: I meet friends at the Black Point and Area Centre—Community Centre

Example 5: I swim at Lake Charlotte

Activity

Location

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 1. |
| 2. | 2. |
| 3. | 3. |
| 4. | 4. |
| 5. | 5. |
| 6. | 6. |

11. How satisfied are you with the current recreation opportunities in your community?

- Very satisfied Satisfied Neutral Unsatisfied Very Unsatisfied No Opinion

Please feel free to provide additional details regarding your answer.

12. What could the municipality do to improve your rural recreation experience? (ex. different program offerings; infrastructure improvements; assistance with forming a local recreation association)

13a. What recreation activities would you like to do but can't?

13b. Why are you unable to participate in the above activity?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Activity not offered | <input type="checkbox"/> Equipment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scheduling conflicts | <input type="checkbox"/> Affordability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessibility | <input type="checkbox"/> Other [please specify]: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | |

14a. How long are you willing to drive to your recreation activities?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Up to 15 min | <input type="checkbox"/> Between 45 – 60 min |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Between 15 – 30 min | <input type="checkbox"/> Over 60 min |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Between 30 – 45 min | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm not willing to travel |

14b. How many times per week are you willing to commute to your recreational activities?

- 1 time 2 times 3 times 4 times 5 times 6 times 7 times Never

15. How would you like to find out about recreation activities and events in your community?
Please pick your top 3 choices.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Direct mail | <input type="checkbox"/> Digital advertisements |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Municipal Councillor | <input type="checkbox"/> Facebook |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Posters in public spaces | <input type="checkbox"/> Instagram |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper or community/weekly papers | <input type="checkbox"/> Twitter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Websites of organizations offering recreation | <input type="checkbox"/> Email lists |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Radio advertisements | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): |

16. Please share any other comments or suggestions you have regarding rural recreation.

Feel free to complete the survey again on behalf of other members of your household.

Mail completed survey to:

RRS
Chocolate Lake Community Centre
1014 Purcell's Cove Road
Halifax, NS
B3N 1RZ
or drop off at your local HRM Community Centre

or

Email to:

ruralrec@halifax.ca

In accordance with Section 485 of the Municipal Government Act (MGA), any personal information collected in this survey will only be used by municipal staff and, if necessary, individuals under service contract with the Halifax Regional Municipality for purposes relating to the future needs for parks and recreation services in the rural areas of the municipality and the information will not be presented or compiled in a manner that could potentially identify any respondent. If you have any questions about the collection and use of this personal information, please contact the Access and Privacy Office at 902-943-2148 or privacy@halifax.ca.

2021



Rural Recreation Strategy Questionnaire for Community Groups

We are inviting community groups that support the delivery of recreation in rural areas to complete this questionnaire. The purpose of this questionnaire is to understand the successes, challenges, and needs of community groups that provide recreation opportunities to rural communities across HRM. Feedback from this questionnaire will be used to inform the direction of the Rural Recreation Strategy, which will provide recommendations to Regional Council on how to best meet recreation needs in rural areas.

For the purposes of this strategy, the municipality defines “rural” as those areas outside the urban transit boundary. These areas include the Musquodoboit Valley Region, Peggy’s Cove, Eastern Shore Region, St. Margaret’s Bay, Upper Sackville and Sambro.

We suggest that group members come together to fill out this questionnaire to ensure the opinions are representative of the larger group.

Your group’s answers to this questionnaire will be strictly confidential. The feedback from all community groups will be summarized into major themes.

The deadline for completing this survey is Sunday, May 23, 2021.

HRM has already released a public survey targeted at residents in rural areas. The survey can be found here: <https://www.halifax.ca/home/surveys>.

Youth Services Plan 2 Survey - Rural Recreation Strategy

We want your feedback to help shape the next Municipal Youth Services Plan (YSP). The Youth Plan will help us plan youth programs and services for the next 3 years. By completing this survey, you can help decide what the Municipality can do for youth.

The following themes and questions were identified by the YSP Youth Team and influenced by data collected from 40 workshops delivered to youth across the Municipality. Further discussion on themes not included on this survey will be discussed at another time. Stay tuned at Halifax.ca/ysp as we continue to create the next YSP.

After completing the survey, you will have an opportunity to enter a draw for the chance to win prizes, including the Grand Prize of one of two sets of Apple AirPods! The draw is open to residents of HRM, 13 to 24 years old, who have completed the survey. Some restrictions apply. Winners of the Grand Prizes (or your parents or guardians if you're under age 19) will be required to sign a Declaration and Release form.

Hello! Tell us a bit about yourself. This helps us figure out trends and issues within different groups of youth.

Age:

- 13-15
- 16-18
- 19-24

Select the area you live:

- District 1: Waverley, Fall River and Musquodobit Valley
- District 2: Preston, Chezzetcook and Eastern Shore
- District 3: Dartmouth South and Eastern Passage
- District 4: Cole Harbour, Westphal, Lake Loon and Cherry Brook
- District 5: Dartmouth Centre
- District 6: Harbourview, Burnside and Dartmouth East
- District 7: Halifax South Downtown
- District 8: Halifax Peninsula North
- District 9: Halifax West Armdale
- District 10: Halifax – Bedford Basin
- District 11: Spryfeild - Sambro Loop- Prospect Road
- District 12: Timberlea – Beechville – Clayton Park – Wedgewood
- District 13: Hammonds Plains – St. Margarets
- District 14: Middle/ Upper Sackville – Beaverbank – Lucasville
- District 15: Lower Sackville
- District 16: Harbourview – Burnside – Dartmouth East

Unsure of your district? Use [this map](#) to find where your community is!

Please check each one that you identify yourself as (you can choose more than one)

Indigenous: A collective name for First Nations, Metis and Inuit

African Nova Scotian- A person of African descent residing in Nova Scotia

- Persons with a disability
- Indigenous
 - First Nation
 - Status
 - Non-Status
 - Metis
 - Inuit
- African Nova Scotian
- 2SLGBTQIA+
- Newcomer/ Immigrant
- Person of Colour or Racialized Person
- Francophone
- If relevant identifying characteristic not listed above, you may identify here:
- Prefer Not to Answer

Diversity and Inclusion:

Youth Programs and Services cover a broad range of participant interests (arts, events, transportation, involvement in government, recreation and social interaction) within diverse (cultural and age) communities.

How can we make youth services more diverse and inclusive to youth? (optional)

- Text box

Youth Programs & Services

Please rank the importance of the following programs:

Youth Programs:

- Art programs
- Sport programs
- Equipment loans
- Outdoor programs
- Drop-in programs
- Library youth programs
- Tutoring/educational programs
- Life skill programs (budgeting, cooking, money management, etc.)
- Community engagement programs (Youth grant writing, youth-led community projects)
- Health and wellness programs (mental health, self-care, support groups)

Youth Services:

- Leadership development (leadership skills and experiences)
- Volunteer opportunities
- Internship/mentoring opportunities
- Job readiness opportunities (resume building/job experience)
- Library youth services (volunteering at libraries, youth events)
- Involvement in community safety

Virtual Programming

What type of Virtual Programming are you interested in? (click all that apply)

- Games
- Art activities
- Skill development workshops
- STEM or coding
- Environmental education
- How to participate in local government
- Other:

Youth Dedicated Spaces:

There are many dedicated youth spaces within the Municipality. These spaces centre youth in the design and operations of the space.

If more youth-dedicated spaces were created, what supports would you like to see offered?

- Mental health support
- Counseling
- Support accessing food
- Support finding housing
- Tutoring
- Other

Dedicated spaces for youth should be safe spaces that are inclusive to all youth. What helps make you feel safe in space? (Optional, text box)

Transportation:

How do you get around? (check top 2)

- Walking
- Biking
- Personal vehicle
- Taxi
- Bus
- Ferry
- Other or combination:

How could we encourage youth to use the bus or ferry more often? (check 1)

- Education on bus or ferry routes
- Education on how to ride the bus or ferry
- Other:

Communications:

Do you follow any of the Municipalities pages on social media? (click all that apply)

- No I don't
- Halifax Youth Twitter account
- HFX Moments Instagram
- HFX Gov twitter account
- Halifax Parks and Recreation twitter account
- Halifax Youth Live Facebook Page
- Halifax YouTube Channel
- Other:

What would be the best way for us to let you know about what we are doing for youth? (select top 3)

- Instagram
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Snapchat
- YouTube
- Email
- Posters in schools
- From other youth
- Other:

What else can the municipality do to better reach youth? (optional)

****Textbox****

Get Involved:

How would you like to get involved in municipal government?

- Increase opportunities for youth to give input on municipal projects
- More information on how government works and how decisions are made (presentations, information provided on social media, virtual workshops)
- More in-person engagement with councilors (Q&A type sessions, meetings and presentations)
- Participate on the Municipal Youth Advisory Committee
 - Yes

- If yes, please contact youth@halifax.ca or visit Halifax.ca/yac
- No
- Other:

Would you like to be entered into the draw for prizes?

- Yes
 - If yes, please [click here](#) to submit this survey and provide email address and phone number where prompted
- No
 - If no, please [click here](#) to submit this survey.

Thank you! For more information on the Youth Services Plan please visit www.halifax.ca/YSP

In accordance with Section 485 of the Municipal Government Act (MGA), the personal information collected in this survey will only be used by Halifax Regional Municipality (the municipality) staff and if necessary, individuals under service contract with the municipality for purposes relating to the development of the next Municipal Youth Services Plan and for prize selection: the information will not be presented or compiled in a manner that could potentially identify any respondent. If you have any questions about the collection and use of this information, please contact the municipality's Access and Privacy Office at 902-943-2148 or privacy@halifax.ca

Rural Recreation Strategy

What We Heard Report



Co-authored by Diane Levandier, Project Lead, & Meaghan Dalton, Community Developer

March 9, 2022

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Background

Purpose

The purpose of the Rural Recreation Strategy (RRS) is to provide analysis on the current and future needs for recreational facilities and programming and parkland development in rural areas of Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), which will inform recommendations to Regional Council for consideration. The strategy will cover the recreation needs of rural residents, the opportunities for innovative service delivery, and identify how to provide equitable access and opportunities to indoor and outdoor Parks and Recreation assets. The RRS will provide a strategy to enable lifelong participation in recreation throughout the vibrant and healthy rural communities of HRM.

Goals

The focus of the RRS is to develop key findings and recommendations including:

- a) A clear articulation of what the Parks & Recreation interests, needs, and expectations are in the municipality's rural areas.
- b) A clear articulation of what is working well and what is not working well in the municipality's existing Parks & Recreation service delivery model, as it impacts residents in the municipality's rural areas.
- c) Identification of policies and practices to govern decision making in addressing gaps and enhancing the provision of Parks & Recreation service delivery in the municipality's rural areas; and
- d) Continued implementation of a Hub & Spoke Delivery Model within the municipality's rural areas, as recommended in the Community Facility Master Plan 2 (CFMP2).

Geographic Scope

What is considered urban, suburban, and rural can be personal and lie on a spectrum, however, staff determined that the "Urban/Suburban Core" included all communities within a 20-minute drive to a major facility with an indoor pool. Everything outside of the Urban/Suburban Core is what staff determined to be rural in the recreation context. These boundaries were used to identify who to engage with, as well as to give scope to spatially analyze gaps in recreational opportunities. Staff also considered perceptions of which communities considered themselves rural and which ones did not.

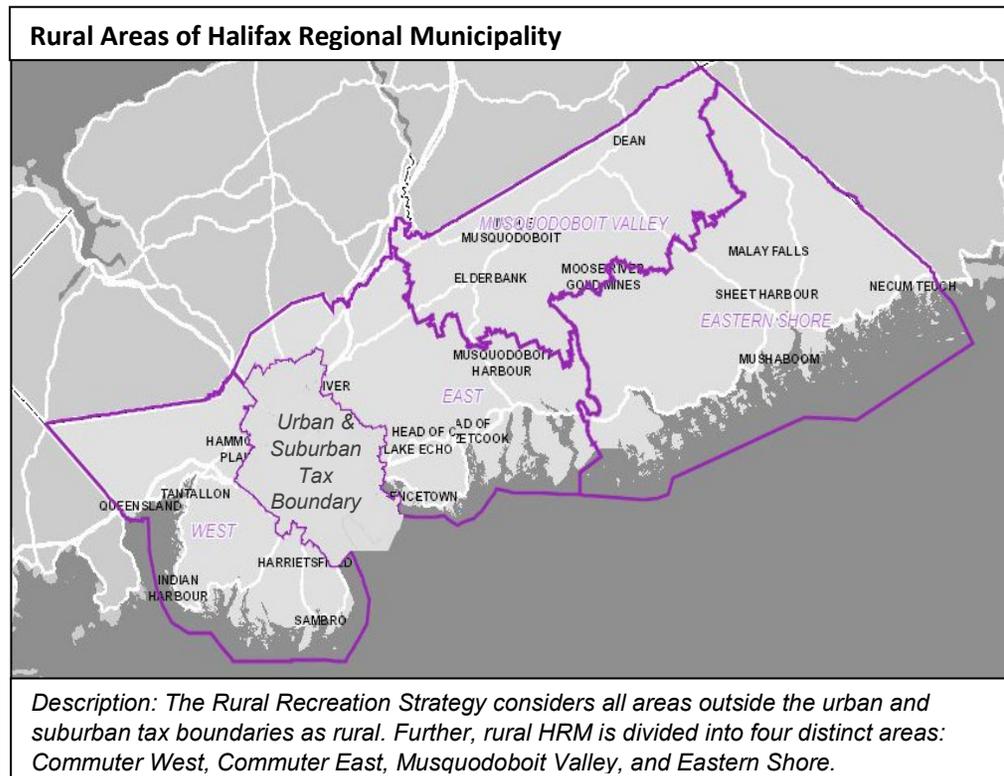
For analytical purposes, staff divided the rural area into four sub-areas to isolate distinct rural communities:

- 1) Commuter West: Tantallon, Hubbards, Peggy's Cove, Sambro
- 2) Commuter East: Middle Beaver Bank, Grand Lake, Goffs, Oldham, Devon, Dutch Settlement, East Preston, Porters Lake, Lake Echo, Musquodoboit Harbour, Oyster Pond
- 3) Musquodoboit Valley: Meagher's Grant, Carroll's Corner, Middle Musquodoboit, Upper Musquodoboit, Dean
- 4) Eastern Shore: East Jeddore, Lake Charlotte, Sheet Harbour, Malay Falls, Ecum Secum

Engagement Scope

The goals for engagement, which included consultation with rural residents, stakeholders, Regional Councillors in rural communities, and municipal staff, was to determine:

1. The meaning of recreation in rural areas.
2. The unique strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges for Parks & Recreation service delivery in the municipality's rural areas.
3. The expectations for Parks & Recreation assets and services, including equity of access, in the municipality's rural areas.
4. Effective communication strategies for the promotion of Parks & Recreation opportunities, as well as the benefits to residents in the municipality's rural areas.



Who we engaged and how

Interviews with staff and Councillors

During the winter months of 2020-2021, HRM staff were interviewed from: P&R (including: Recreation Programming, Regional Recreation Services, Strategic Planning & Design), and Transportation & Public Works (Active Transportation Planning); as well as Diversity & Inclusion, and Planning & Development.

Councillors from Districts 1, 2, 11, 13, and 14 were interviewed. They provided insight on issues in the communities they represent and helped to identify important stakeholders in their districts. Councillors were also made aware of the events and locations where public engagements were to be held in order to have the greatest impact.

Public survey

Staff intended to have in-person meetings throughout the municipality, however due to COVID-19, the approach to public engagement was modified to align with public health requirements. A public survey was created in consultation with Parks & Recreation and Rural Planning staff and was launched April 1, 2021 and remained open until June 13, 2021. The survey was targeted to residents outside the urban/suburban core. Residents were asked to provide the first three digits of their postal codes for staff to differentiate between communities.

Significant investment was made in direct mailing surveys to individual households in the most rural areas of the municipality, due to unreliable or unavailable internet access (Musquodoboit Valley, the most eastern region of the Eastern Shore, and Indian Harbour to Duncan's Cove).

Although East Preston lies just outside of the Urban/Suburban Core, its history of being underrepresented in governmental decision-making prompted staff to commit resources into obtaining feedback from this area. Staff worked with the East Preston Community Center to promote the survey and to provide physical copies to residents. Staff received an additional 18 surveys from the East Preston community that may not have been received had these extra steps not been taken.

Information about the RRS and the survey were promoted using traditional and social media platforms. With a wide reach, Parks and Recreation staff and Councillors e-mailed and contacted community groups and residents to request that they share the survey. Councillors also promoted the survey through their monthly newsletters. A total of 2,247 surveys were completed by residents outside the urban/suburban core. As the data shows (page 6), the most rural parts of the municipality had the highest participation rates.

Survey Respondents Demographic Summary

Table 1	
Postal Code	Number of Respondents
B0J	698
B3Z	397
B3T	268
B4B	141
B3V	137
B3E	116
B0N	107
B2Z	87
B4E	84
B2T	81
B2S	30
B3R	26
B2X	19
B3G	12
B4G	10
B2R	10

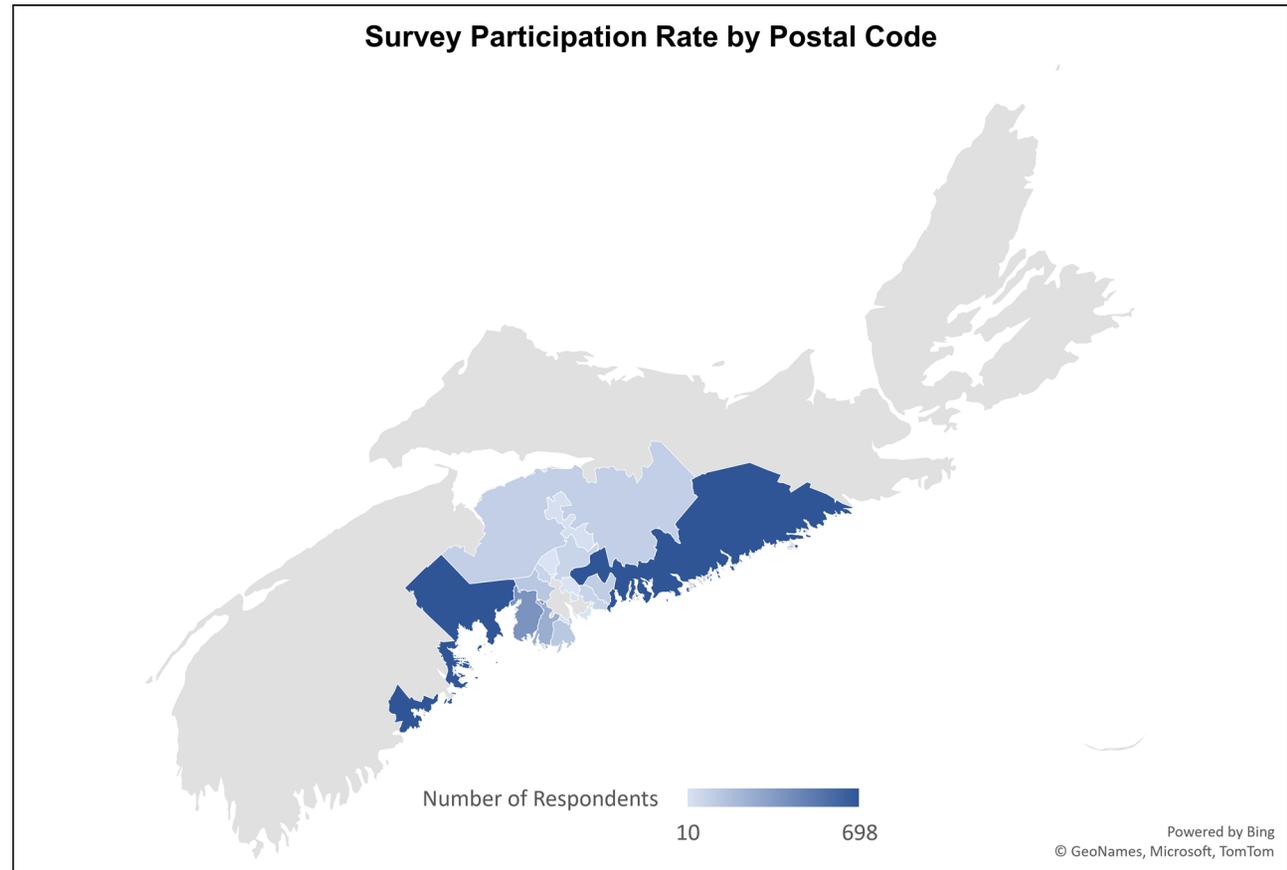


Figure 1 Response Rate by Postal Code

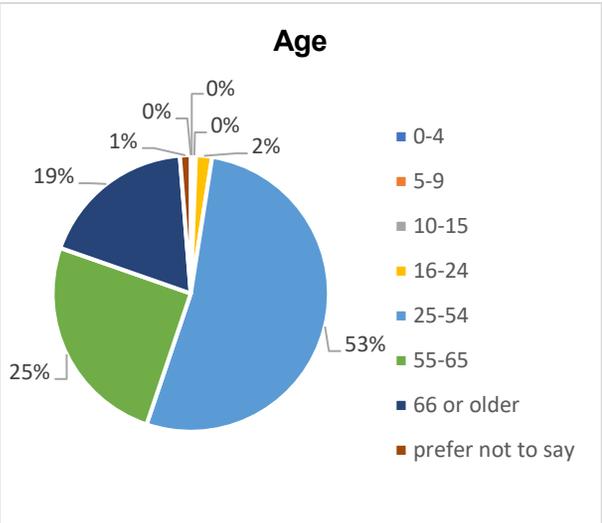
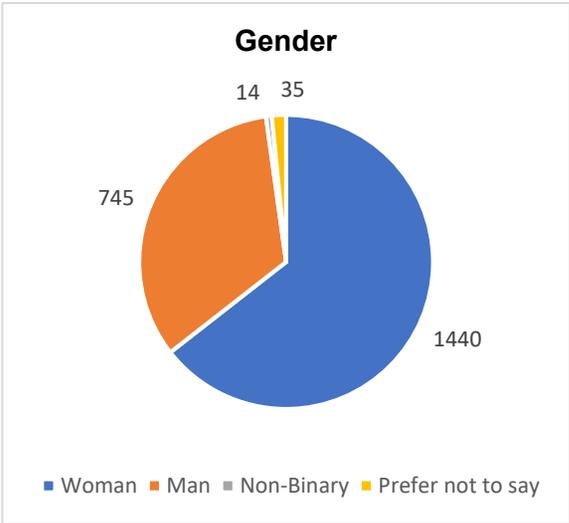
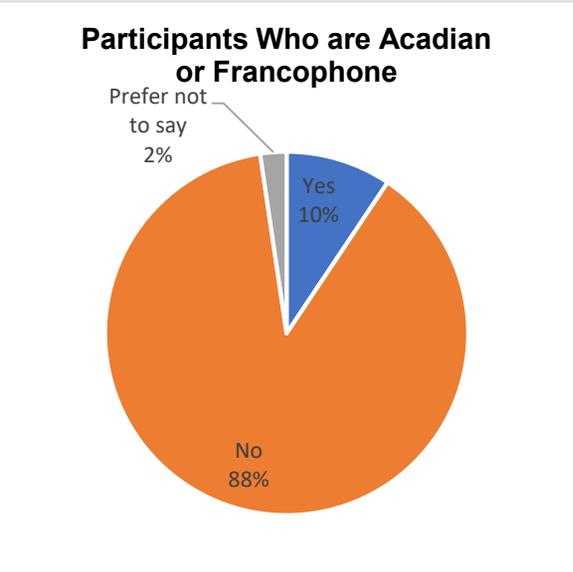
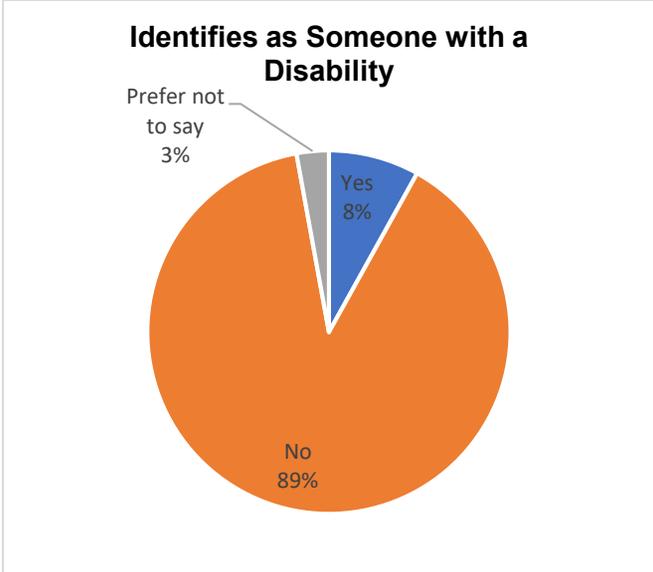


Table 2	
Ethnicity	Total
Caucasian	1930
Prefer not to say	124
Métis	33
First Nations (North American Indian; includes Status and Non-Status Indians)	28
African Nova Scotian	26
Other	22
African Canadian	6
South Asian	5
Chinese	4
Inuk (Inuit)	4
Latin American	4
Arab	2
Japanese	2
Southeast Asian	2
Filipino	1
Korean	1



Organization Questionnaire

There are 50 indoor public recreation facilities outside of the urban/suburban core, with only three of these being municipally owned and managed. While not regularly programmed, there are 12 municipally owned fire halls with community space that groups may rent. There are 15 municipally owned facilities that are operated through Facility Operating Agreements, meaning they are managed by volunteer-run boards. The remaining 20 recreation centres and community halls have no affiliation to the municipality and are run by not-for-profit societies.

Type of Facility	# in the Rural Area	% of Total Facilities
HRM owned and operated	3	6%
HRM owned, board operated	15	30%
Community owned and operated	20	67%
Fire halls with rental space	12	24%

Staff engaged 154 not-for-profit recreation-based groups using current staff databases, however, it is possible that there are many more community groups who were not identified through this engagement. These groups provide recreation programs, events, exhibits, and outdoor amenities to residents in rural communities across the municipality. Volunteer-based community groups are critical to the existence of recreation opportunities in rural communities throughout the municipality; therefore, understanding their challenges, successes, and needs is necessary in order to understand where the municipality could leverage support for rural recreation.

To receive information from community-based recreation groups, a targeted, long-form questionnaire was created. A team of Parks & Recreation staff reached out to groups via phone and email to request that they complete the questionnaire. with 41 questionnaires being completed by recreation organizations across rural HRM.

Types of Group who Responded	Number
Culture and Heritage	7
Agriculture	1
Trails	6
Parks	1
Community Halls	6
Community/Recreation Centres	6
Service Clubs/Foundations	3
Religious Organizations that offer recreation	1
Outdoor Recreation Clubs	4
Organized Sports	2
Residents Association	2
Seniors	1
Environmental Protection	1

Partner Meetings

A team of Parks & Recreation staff met with ten different partner organizations between May 25 and June 18, 2021. These organizations were chosen because they play a role in decision-making that impacts rural recreation. The intent of these interviews was to understand opportunities for improved relationships with partnership and collaboration, as well as to learn from their relevant experiences.

These partner organizations were as follows:

- Halifax Public Libraries
- Department of Natural Resources and Renewables

- Natural Resources Education Centre
- Provincial Community Health Boards and Community Health Teams representing rural HRM
- Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage (CCTH)
- Develop Nova Scotia
- Municipal Physical Activity Leadership Program
- Recreation Nova Scotia
- Discover Halifax
- East Hants Aquatic Centre

Staff presented a summary of the purpose of the project, background research, and preliminary results from the surveys and questionnaires. A semi-structured interview format was used where open-ended questions were prepared, however, staff allowed for natural relevant topics of conversation to arise.

Youth Services Plan Survey

The Municipality's Youth Services Section was simultaneously conducting engagement for the Youth Services Plan 2 (YSP2) update. YSP2 identifies relevant issues and opportunities for youth, which will be used to support decision-making around the delivery of programs and services. It will also identify ways of working collectively with community partners. Youth Services staff provided the survey results from 236 rural youth for the Municipal Youth Services Plan Survey.



Community Pop-Up Engagements

Staff held twelve in-person pop-up engagements, in late Fall 2021, to give residents another opportunity to provide input. Staff summarized initial findings from the 2,247 surveys, 43 questionnaires, and 10 partner meetings and asked residents if the initial findings matched their perceptions of recreation in their communities. Staff spoke to approximately 154 residents. Pop-up engagement sessions were held at the following locations:

- Upper Musquodoboit outside Upper Musquodoboit Mini Mart & Pizzeria
- Middle Musquodoboit outside Reid's Bakery & Diner, Haverstock's Pharmasave, and Musquodoboit Rural High School
- Carroll's Corner at the Carroll's Corner Community Centre
- Port Dufferin at SR Balcom Centre
- Sheet Harbour at the Recreation Office and Public Library

- Musquodoboit Harbour at the Musquodoboit Harbour Recreation Centre & Library
- Upper Tantallon at St. Margaret's Centre and outside the Bike & Bean Café
- Hubbards at the JD Shatford Memorial Public Library
- Spryfield at the Spryfield Lions Rink (to reach those recreating from the Commuter West area)

Pop-up engagement sessions were planned for Meagher's Grant and Black Point, however, were cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions. The sessions planned for Captain William Spry Centre was cancelled due to a power outage.

Analysis

Staff coded the survey responses, notes from interviews, and organization questionnaires for repeating topics and characteristics unique to specific rural regions.

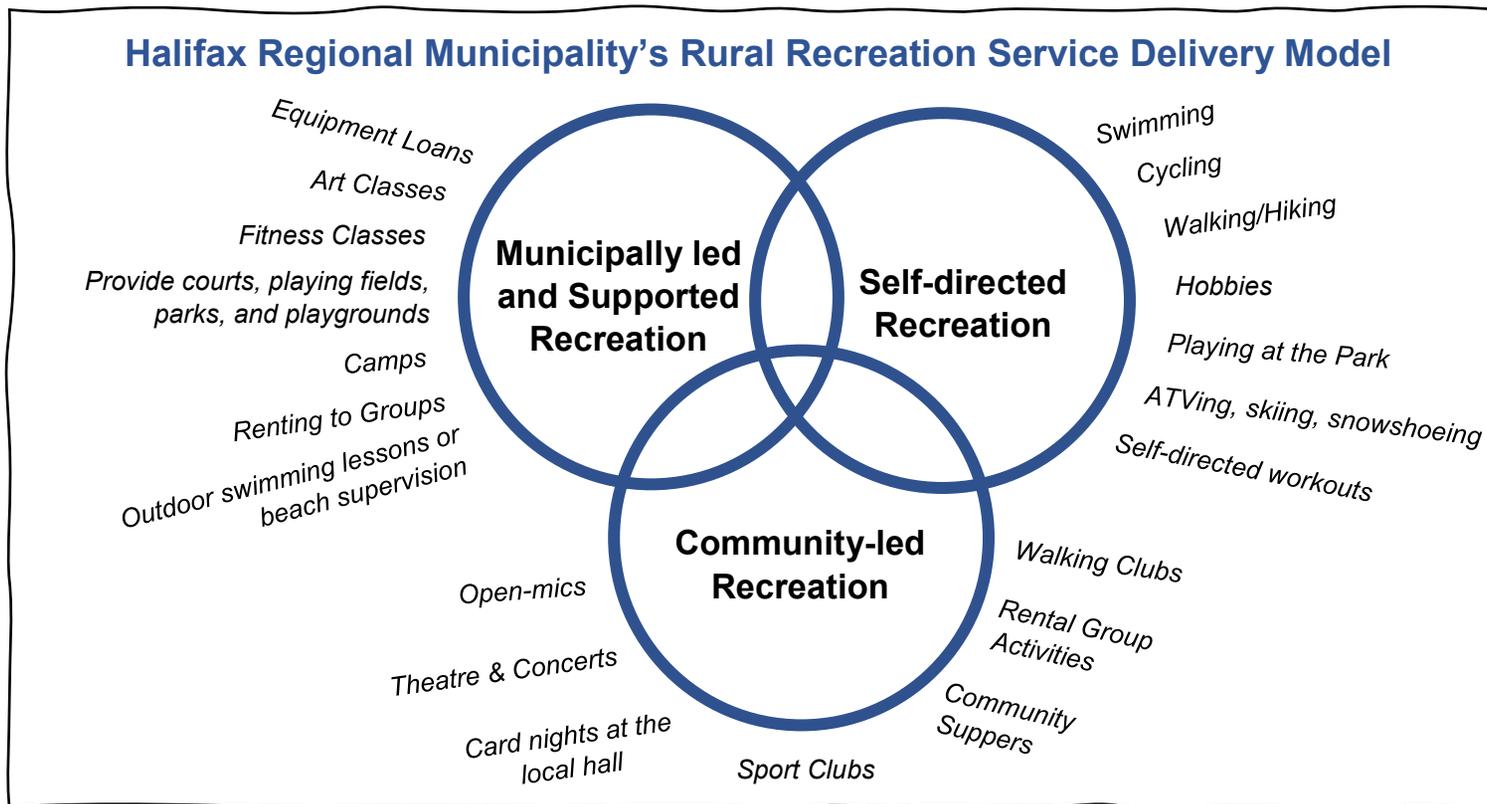


Pop-up outside Reid's Bakery & Diner, Middle Musquodoboit

What We Heard

The Meaning of Recreation in Rural Halifax Regional Municipality

Residents of rural HRM participate in physical, social, and cultural activities to engage and connect with their communities. Rural residents view rural recreation as a hybrid of organized municipally operated activities, self-directed outdoor and indoor activities, and community-led events and activities. This diagram illustrates the three methods of recreation used by residents in rural HRM and demonstrates that they often overlap.



Strengths, Weakness, Challenges, Opportunities, and Expectations for Rural Recreation

Prominent themes arose from the data and are divided into the following six theme areas:

- 1) Equitable access to indoor facilities
- 2) Equitable access to outdoor recreation opportunities
- 3) Volunteer support
- 4) Programming that meets rural needs
- 5) Advertising and communications that reflect rural communities
- 6) Collaboration through partnerships

The following tables demonstrate the weaknesses, challenges, opportunities, and expectations regarding each of the six themes areas.

1) Equitable access to indoor facilities	
Weaknesses & Challenges	Opportunities & Expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 416 survey respondents, across rural parts of the municipality, want to be able to swim year-round in a pool, however, feel is not possible due to travel time. • 58 survey respondents feel they must travel too far for rink space. • 44 survey respondents believe they cannot access a weight room/fitness space easily. • 831 of survey respondents are not willing to drive more than 15-30 minutes to their recreation activity followed by 696 of respondents who are not willing to drive more than 15 minutes. • Respondents from the Musquodoboit Valley and Eastern Shore regions feel neglected by the municipality. They repeatedly expressed great frustration and dissatisfaction with the lack of facilities in their communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-run recreation centres and halls are interested in providing recreation programming and events but need support to make facility improvements, including accessibility, energy, and modern retrofits. • Staff continue to work with Halifax Regional Centre for Education (HRCE) to access public recreation space during after-hours, but access could be improved. • Municipal Physical Activity Leaders from across Nova Scotia use innovative transportation models to bring rural residents to major facilities.

2) Equitable access to outdoor recreation opportunities	
Weaknesses & Challenges	Opportunities & Expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2056 survey respondents walk for recreation and 752 cycle for recreation. Two hundred residents stated that they are too afraid to walk in their communities and 152 survey respondents are too afraid to cycle in their communities due to the increase in, and speed, of traffic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents identified ample parks, trails, beaches, lakes, and rivers used for recreation along coastal HRM. • 34 survey respondents suggested that equipment rental opportunities for snow sports, water sports, and court/field sports would be valuable.

2) Equitable access to outdoor recreation opportunities	
Weaknesses & Challenges	Opportunities & Expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 757 survey respondents explained that they enjoy informal recreation at the municipality's many lakes, rivers, and ocean beaches through various boating activities and another 738 respondents enjoy HRM's bodies of water through swimming. Many residents noted that access to the municipality's waterways can sometimes be unclear, private, or lack amenities needed to support users and 115 survey respondents and many pop-up engagement participants would like to canoe, kayak, and paddle board in lakes, rivers, and the ocean, however purchasing small boats is too expensive. • 250 survey respondents explained that they do not take part in recreation activities due difficulty accessing equipment. • Musquodoboit Valley residents engaged during pop-up engagements explained that they find many hikers and campers trespassing on private property due to a lack of public trails. Additionally, 22 survey respondents explained that they use or witness the use of private lands for recreation or are unsure if they are permitted to use Crown Lands for recreation. • 81 survey respondents noted that certain fields, playgrounds, and courts require maintenance. • 61 survey respondents noted issues of increased litter and 82 survey respondents lacking parking facilities at local provincial parks (most of these respondents are from the southwest coastal areas of HRM) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some residents and staff noted untapped wilderness areas (Crown Lands and private properties) in Musquodoboit Valley. • 107 survey respondents would like to see more formalized trails. • 69 respondents would like to see improved public water access. • 140 survey respondents and 12 community groups also explained that simple amenities like providing portable toilets in the summer months, picnic tables or benches, and storage would make the outdoor assets more usable for the public.

3) Volunteer support	
Weaknesses & Challenges	Opportunities & Expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All 41 organizations who completed a questionnaire explained they are struggling with recovering from the impacts of COVID-19. • 29 organizations explained they have insufficient finances. • 20 organizations spoke about the constant challenge of volunteer burnout and recruitment. • 11 organizations explained they struggle to promote their programs. • 10 organizations with indoor facilities explained they want to work on building maintenance, accessibility redesigns, green retrofitting, and modernizing, but cannot afford to do so. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 survey respondents volunteer with parks and recreation-based organizations. These groups keep community halls, cultural centres, and outdoor spaces open and maintained, and host community programs and events. • 35 organizations said they use partnerships with other organizations to collaborate, trade services, and share physical space. • 25 organizations said support with training on topics such as First Aid, High Five, board development, strategic planning, volunteer recruitment and retention, grant writing, technology, diversity and inclusion, and recreation skills would be beneficial.

3) Volunteer support	
Weaknesses & Challenges	Opportunities & Expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four volunteer organizations expressed that the municipality's requirements for insurance and legal contracts is a barrier to working with municipal staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Five organizations noted they are seeing more residents moving to their communities who could be potential volunteers. Rural youth are looking for opportunities to build leadership, volunteer, and job-readiness skills.

4) Programming that meets rural needs	
Weaknesses & Challenges	Opportunities & Expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff struggle to recruit instructors for programs. Survey respondents from the most rural communities perceive a lack of programs in their communities while commuter-rural regions have trouble accessing programs because they fill quickly. Programming demands are not necessarily the same as urban-centric demands. Residents seem to prefer impromptu events, drop-ins, and outdoor activities. Staff need flexibility to accommodate this trend. Due to low populations in the rural areas, staff face the constant challenge of low registration for their programs, however, they see the value in offering the programs despite low numbers. Staff working in rural areas must drive long distances to support residents and groups. Long travel times also make it difficult to recruit and retain staff and participants. With limited or no municipally owned space to offer programs, staff rely on booking schools and community halls. Agreements with these spaces can change and access to them can be unpredictable. Staff are often asked to partner with local groups to run unique programming, however, the current agreement process is often difficult for the groups and staff to navigate. This negatively impacts the opportunities for these partnerships to be achieved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer organizations would like to receive training from HRM Recreation Staff regarding instructor recruitment, First Aid, and HIGH FIVE® so they can more successfully offer programs in the most rural areas. There are existing programs that support residents to get trained in leading recreation groups, such as hiking and walk leader training. Residents would like more opportunities to access recreation equipment. Staff piloted recreation equipment lending programs and intend to expand on this. Staff would like promotions support to recruit participants and instructors in the most rural areas. Several rural communities have municipally owned and board operated facilities in their communities. Recreation Support Services and Recreation Programming can work together to define the relationship and program delivery model for these rural recreation and community centres. <p>306 survey respondents would like to have more organized programs, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swimming lessons closer to their communities and more opportunities for lessons where they already exist, as lessons fill quickly (47 respondents) Fitness classes (89 respondents) Arts and crafts (38 respondents) Separate programming specifically for seniors (30 respondents). Seniors are looking for:

4) Programming that meets rural needs	
Weaknesses & Challenges	Opportunities & Expectations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Opportunities to socialize and be physically active, in a safe way, near their homes. • Separate programming specifically for youth (51 respondents). In order of popularity, rural youth are looking for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Youth leadership ○ Youth-dedicated spaces to support them with mental health and tutoring ○ Life skills programs ○ Health and wellness programs ○ Sport programs ○ Tutoring and educational programs ○ Outdoor programs ○ Art programs.

5) Advertising and communications that reflect rural communities	
Weaknesses & Challenges	Opportunities & Expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants from across all engagement methods believed existing corporate advertising is too urban and suburban-centric. • 40 survey respondents explained that they are unaware of the what the recreation opportunities exist in their communities and that better communications would be beneficial. • Many survey respondents perceive there are no programs in their communities even though there are, showing marketing needs to be improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In order of popularity, survey respondents prefer to find out about recreation opportunities through local Facebook pages, email lists, and direct mailouts. • Youth prefer to find out about recreation through Instagram and posters in school.

6) Collaboration through partnerships	
Weaknesses & Challenges	Opportunities & Expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No regular or formalized communication between other relevant orders of government or arms-length organizations also delivering or supporting recreation. • Missed opportunities to coordinate projects, plans, and programs. • May be repeating recreation programs and services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All governmental and arms-length organizations interviewed agreed that regular planning meetings would be beneficial. • Many of the organizations provide recreation opportunities to rural residents. • Nova Scotia Health Teams would be interested in using municipal facilities to offer their programs.

6) Collaboration through partnerships	
Weaknesses & Challenges	Opportunities & Expectations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Libraries suggested they may have more capacity to share their facilities and resources. • CCTH and Recreation Nova Scotia would like to see the municipality use NovaScotiaConnect.ca (a community recreation database for all of Nova Scotia).

Final Thoughts

Overall, residents were highly engaged when asked to provide input for this strategy. There is strong support from organizations and partners to work collaboratively in support of the enhancement of rural recreation. Rural residents are keen for the municipality to invest time and resources into their respective communities.

This engagement showed there are many shared challenges to providing recreation in rural communities, however, not all rural communities are alike. Each area faces barriers but also has unique assets for creative recreation delivery. Residents want a rural recreation strategy that better reflects the local context and uses a more equitable approach to the provision of Parks and Recreation amenities and services.

The major themes from this engagement will be used to inform the Rural Recreation Strategy in tandem with existing approved strategies, best practices, jurisdiction scans, and geographic spatial analysis of assets.