

FEES AND CHARGES BYLAW AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

PREPARED BY RC STRATEGIES

July 2021



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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Public parks, recreation and culture (PRC) services in the City of Abbotsford are paid for by a combination of user fees and tax support. Finding an appropriate balance between the two requires a comprehensive understanding of how much it costs to provide each unit of service coupled with a clear and consistent rationale for setting fees and subsidy levels.

In 2019, the City retained RC Strategies, an independent consulting firm, to review and recommend updates to its Fees and Charges Bylaw and Policy. The purpose of the update was to ensure a practical, transparent, consistent, and fair approach to setting fees and charges for parks and recreation facilities, programs and services. Ensuring alignment with recent City planning initiatives such as Council’s Strategic Plan and the 2018 PRC Master Plan was also an important aspect of the project.

The Benefits Based Approach to setting fees and charges was originally endorsed by City Council in 2003 and will remain as the overarching method for setting fees. This report is intended to reaffirm the approach as well as to provide supplementary recommendations to support the ongoing implementation and monitoring of its application.

IMPORTANCE OF A STRUCTURED APPROACH TO SETTING FEES

Unfortunately, many municipalities are unable to succinctly explain the reasoning behind their price points for parks, recreation and culture services. If a municipality is able to justify their rates, common explanations include “we just raise prices by 2% each year” or “we look at the rates charged by neighbouring municipalities and we set ours somewhere in the middle.” These practices aren’t necessarily bad; however, they do not provide enough rigor to ensure that fees are appropriate.

Experimental or makeshift approaches, like the examples provided above, become habitual practices that get repeated year after year. They become so ingrained that they are believed to be adequate, are rarely questioned, and are difficult to change. “This is the way we’ve always done it.” Many practices conducted within the public PRC sector are based on tradition like this. However, as services become more complex and as municipalities become more sophisticated, parks, recreation and culture departments need to examine and rethink their practices.



Defining and implementing a structured approach to setting fees and charges for parks, recreation and culture is a great way to ensure that PRC user fees are set upon a solid foundation, are logical and equitable, and can be justifiably explained. It also provides guidance on how to monitor operating costs, utilization rates, and ability to pay.

To ensure that all residents have access to parks, recreation, and culture services, regardless of their ability to pay, it is imperative to continue and build upon other programs and initiatives that the City supports to ensure that costs are not a barrier to participation. Ongoing communication with stakeholders and community groups is also critical to successful implementation; the recommendations herein provide guidance on how to educate users about the reasoning and logic behind determining fees.

A structured approach enables a municipality to get the most out of its investment in public services and facilities, treats community groups and users equitably, and is transparent, defensible and understandable to all involved.

STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS

The following chart outlines the key tasks and stakeholders involved in the update process. Results from the engagement are referred to throughout the report where appropriate; please refer to the appendix to view the complete results.



Task	Purpose
Staff Workshops	To understand the current context, including operating costs and utilization of facilities and spaces.
Council Workshops	To reaffirm a commitment to the Benefits Based Approach. To review the report document (to be completed).
Public Engagement	To gather the thoughts and perspectives of local residents. In total, 142 household responses were received via an online survey conducted on the City's Let's Talk platform, representing 452 Abbotsford residents.
User Group Engagement	To inform user groups about the update process and to provide an opportunity for facility/space users to provide input. Seven responses were submitted to the online survey and twelve groups attended an in-person discussion session.

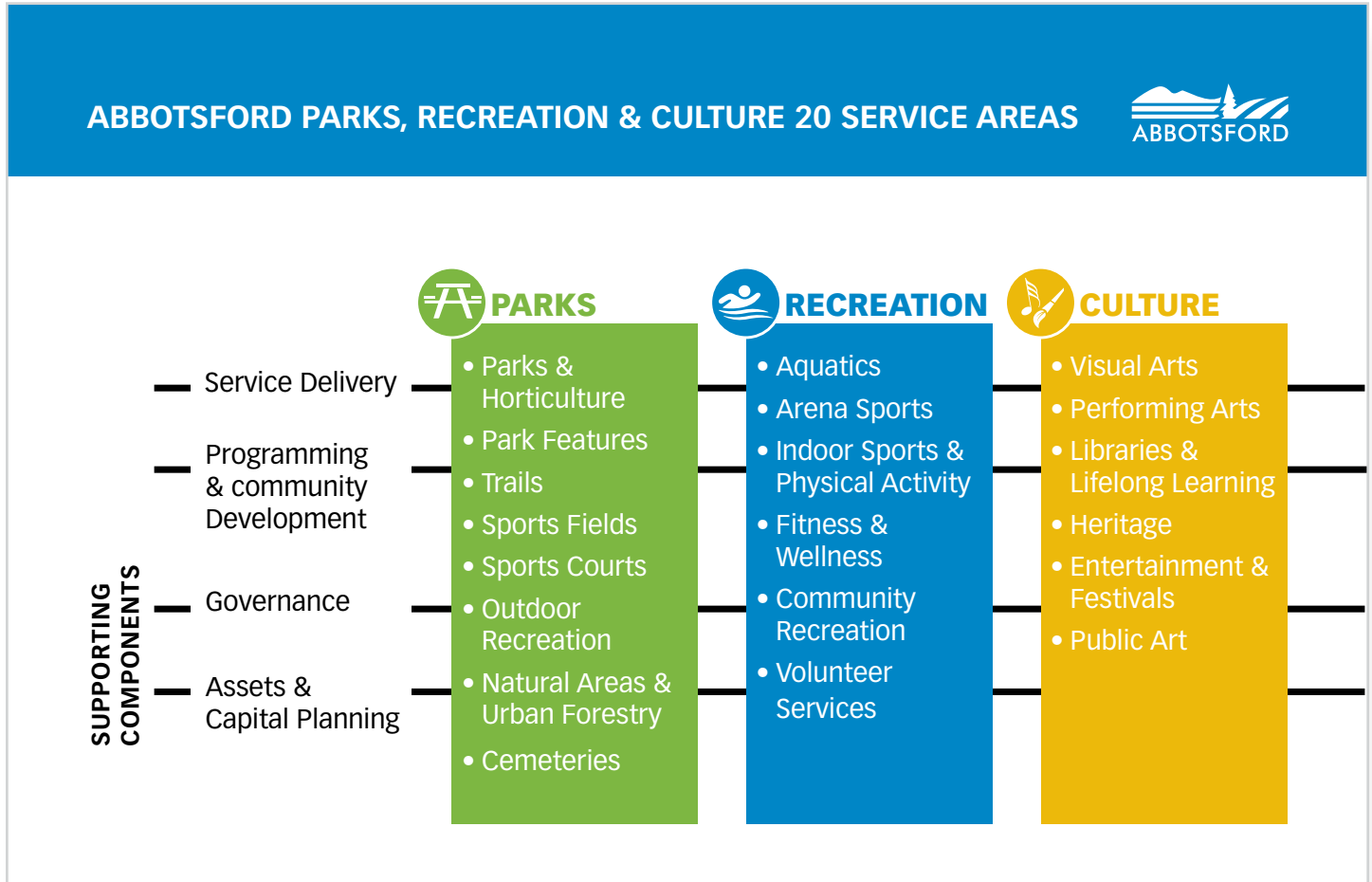
OUTLINE OF THIS DOCUMENT

Section	Brief Description
Context	This section highlights a variety of background materials and research inputs that helped inform the development of the report.
Benefits Based Approach to Setting Fees and Charges	This section describes the Benefits Based Approach, including definitions and explanations of related concepts.
Process of Setting Fees and Charges	This sections explains how to apply the Benefits Based Approach to set fees. The process is outlined utilizing a series of steps.
Recommendations	To supplement the process of setting fees and charges, a series of recommendations from the consulting team are provided to help administration with implementation and monitoring.
Appendix	The appendix includes complete results of the public and stakeholder surveys. Description of the 22 benefits of parks, recreation, and culture services are also included.



CONTEXT

The following excerpts from key background materials summarize the context for this update. The Fees and Charges Bylaw and Program Pricing Policy are foundational governance documents that support the following twenty PRC services areas.





CENSUS STATISTICS (2016)

141,397 residents: 5th most in BC

5.9% growth since 2011: Growing city

Land mass of 376 km²:

Largest City in BC

PLANNING FOR 200K

The City's population is expected to reach beyond 200k within the next 30 years. Extensive master planning occurred across the City in 2018.



2018 PRC MASTER PLAN

Parks, facilities, programs, and services are implemented in a strategic and fiscally responsible manner.

PRC PUBLIC SERVICE FUNDAMENTALS

1. Citizen/individual building
2. Community building



Sport for Life

User fees and subsidies need to reflect community taxpayer support, and the rationale should be shared with sport organizations.

NATIONAL RECREATION FRAMEWORK

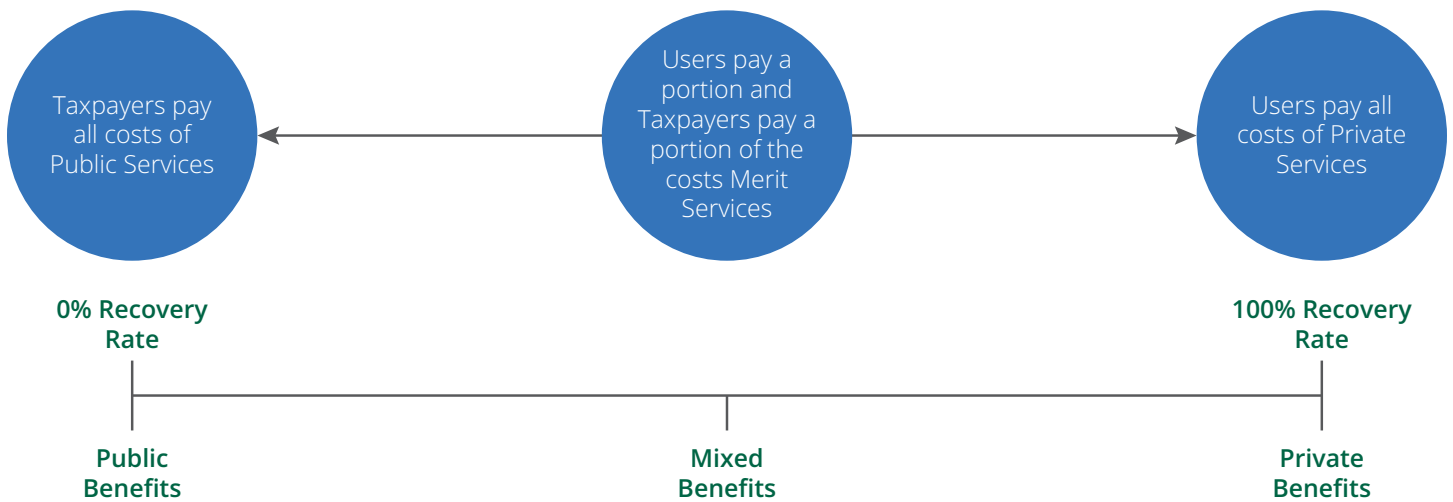
Approved by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, this framework supports the development and implementation of strategies and policies to ensure that no families or individuals in Canada are denied access to public recreation opportunities as a result of economic disadvantage.



THE BENEFITS CONTINUUM

Endorsed by Council in 2003, the City adopted “The Benefits Continuum” as an underlying philosophy for setting PRC fees and charges.

The Benefits Continuum



SUBSIDY PROGRAM

A subsidy program is available for residents who are in financial need that grants access to indoor City recreation facilities as well as opportunities for discounts on specific recreation programs.

PUBLIC SURVEY

Over two-thirds (69%) of respondents agree to some extent that City fees are fair. Thirty percent (30%) of respondents indicated that they do not know how much facilities and spaces are subsidized by taxes.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Four of the seven responding organizations somewhat agree that the City sets its fees in a transparent manner that is communicated to its user groups; the remaining three neither agree nor disagree.

COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN

We strive to continually improve the quality of life within our community by delivering key services for current and future generations.



Community Benefits

1. *Special Events*
2. *Support to Local Groups*
3. *Exposure to Sporting Events*
4. *Exposure to Culture*
5. *Social Functions*
6. *Protecting Community Natural Resources*
7. *Beautify the Community*
8. *Family Oriented Leisure Services*
9. *Integrating Generations and Sub Groups*

Individual Benefits

10. *Physical Activity*
11. *Pre-School Leisure Opportunities*
12. *Basic Leisure Skill Development for School Aged Children*
13. *Advanced Leisure Skill Development for School Aged Children*
14. *Social Opportunities for Youth*
15. *Basic Leisure Skill Development for Adults*
16. *Advanced Leisure Skill Development for Adults*
17. *Opportunities for Seniors*
18. *Interpreting the Environment*
19. *Reflection/Escape*
20. *Leisure Education*
21. *Communication System*
22. *Connecting with Nature*

BENEFITS BASED APPROACH TO SETTING FEES AND CHARGES

The Benefits Based Approach to setting fees and charges sets the underlying philosophy that “those who benefit from a good or service should pay in proportion to the benefit they receive.” For example, if the activity only benefits the user, then the user should pay for the service. Alternatively, if the activity also benefits the community, then justification exists to invest in the service to some extent with tax support.

The City of Abbotsford originally adopted this approach via Council endorsement in 2003. This section describes the approach along with related concepts to enhance understanding. A step-by-step process to implement the approach is described in the following section.

BENEFITS OF PARKS, RECREATION, AND CULTURE

Parks, recreation, and culture (PRC) opportunities provide many benefits. The delivery of public PRC services fosters the health and wellness of the community as well as individuals. At an individual level, such activities contribute to the social, emotional, moral, academic, and physical growth of each member of the community. Building upon this, the community as a whole also benefits first through establishing a broadly felt community identity and then developing a widely held community spirit and, finally, to the evolution of a community culture.

The accompanying 22 specific benefits are an attempt to articulate and categorize the many benefits that can be accrued through PRC services. These benefits can be referred to when applying ideal subsidy levels to PRC services (explained in the following section). Please refer to the appendix for descriptions of each of these 22 benefits.

PUBLIC GOOD

A “public good” can be defined as a **product or service that provides indirect benefit to all citizens from which they cannot escape.** Through this lens, a rationale is created to collect and utilize tax support for municipal services that benefit everyone in community; even if not everybody uses the service directly.



USER PAY AND TAX SUPPORT

PRC services are often paid for through a combination of user fees and tax subsidies. It could be argued that PRC services in general are a public good and therefore should be completely paid for through taxes; however, demand exists for more specialized facilities and activities in which individuals are willing to pay for in addition to their property taxes. Residents don't pay user fees to access local park spaces but if someone wants exclusive access to a particular park space, then a user fee is justified.

The extent of user fees covering the cost of a given service should depend on the amount of benefit to the individual user (user pay) versus indirect benefit to the community (tax support).

UNIT COSTS

Unit costs are the expenses required to provide a given service (e.g. the cost to provide an hour of arena ice; the cost to provide a drop-in swim). Unit costs also depend on level of use; if a facility receives an increasing amount of use, then the cost per each use decreases and vice versa. Unit costs are calculated by dividing annual expenses by the number of uses. $\text{Expenses} / \text{utilization} = \text{unit cost}$. For example, if it costs \$100,000 to provide a space and it is used for 500 hours, then the unit cost is \$200 per hour. Unit costs must first be understood in order to determine fees and charges based on cost recovery and subsidy level.

COST RECOVERY AND SUBSIDY LEVELS

Once unit costs are known, subsidy levels and cost recovery rates can be assigned to help determine fees.

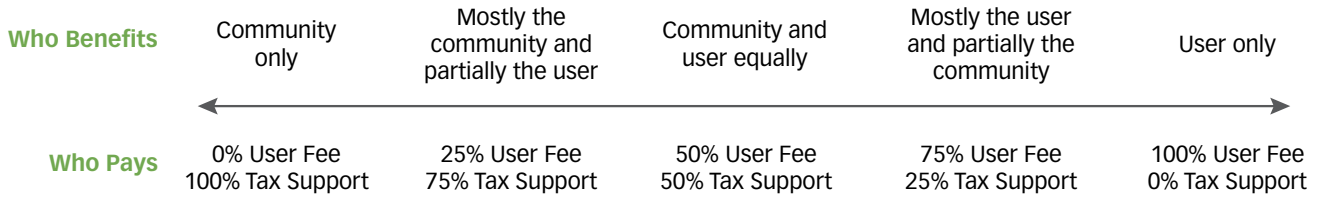
Subsidy levels are the amounts to which a service is paid for by taxes whereas, inversely, cost recovery is the amount to which a service is paid for by user fees. Something that is paid for completely by taxes is 100% subsidized and has 0% cost recovery. Alternately, if something is paid for completely by user fees then it has 0% subsidy and 100% cost recovery.



BENEFITS CONTINUUM

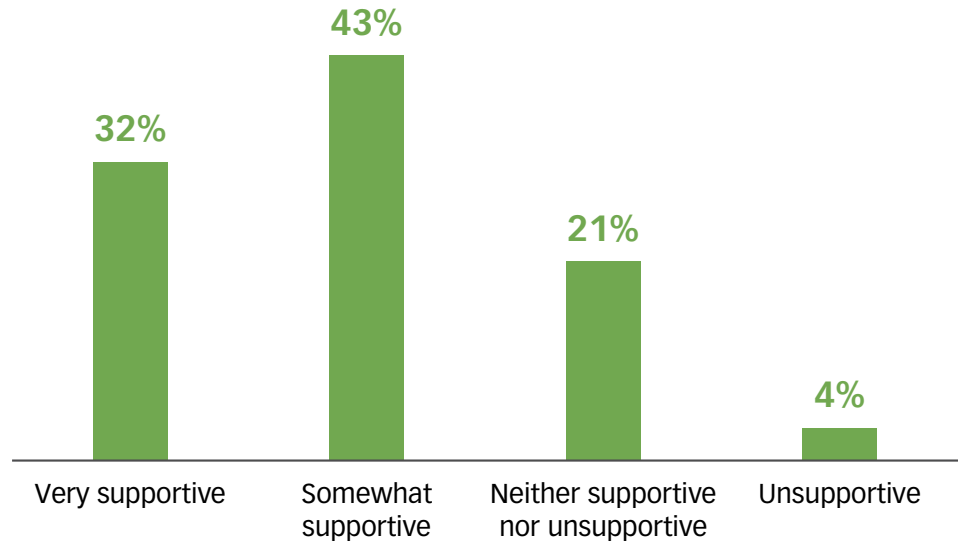
The Benefits Continuum provides a framework for categorizing PRC services by the amount of community benefit they provide. **Those who benefit from a good or service should pay in proportion to the benefit they receive.** If a user only benefits, then the user should pay 100% of the costs. If the community receives most of the benefits, then the service can be subsidized to the extent justified.

Benefits Continuum



The Benefits Based Approach to setting fees and charges was briefly explained to respondents of the public survey. One-third (32%) indicated that they were very supportive of this approach as a philosophical foundation and 43% were somewhat supportive.

To what level do you support the Benefits Based Approach to setting fees and charges as a philosophical foundation to setting user fees in the City of Abbotsford?



ASSIGNING SUBSIDY LEVELS

Before fees are determined, each service should be discussed and appropriately placed somewhere along the benefits continuum. The 22 benefits previously described can be used to help inform and guide the assignments. To ensure a consistent approach among the different types of activities and services, subsidy levels can be assigned to types of users and uses as described next.

TYPES OF USES

Fees often vary for a given service depending on the type of user (e.g. youth, adult) or use (e.g. public, commercial); the variations should be justified and consistent across different types of services.

There are three modes of facility/space use that will be considered when assigning thresholds of cost recovery and subsidy. Each mode typically has its own series of subcategories in which varying levels of subsidy can be applied.

Mode of Facility/Space Use

1. **Individual:** A use characterized by a person or group of persons deciding on a use by use basis to attend a public session where the public or a subset of the public is welcome to attend. Subcategories are typically structured by age, such as preschool, children, youth, adults, and seniors.
2. **Program:** Uses where an individual or group of individuals pre-commits to a series of uses through a registration process. The program is typically characterized by having an instructor who teaches participants skills so that knowledge and abilities are built on from session to session. These programs are offered to the general public and seek to meet the needs of the community (e.g. swim lessons). Subcategories typically extend from the drop-in age groups; however, the type of program needs to be considered as well. For example, beginner-level programs could warrant a greater subsidy than advanced-level programs.
3. **Rental:** A group rents a space through a rental contract and then controls the uses and the users of that space during the period of rental. There are several subcategories of rental uses and each may have its own recovery rate, such as non-profit adult organizations, non-profit minor organizations, and for-profit commercial users.

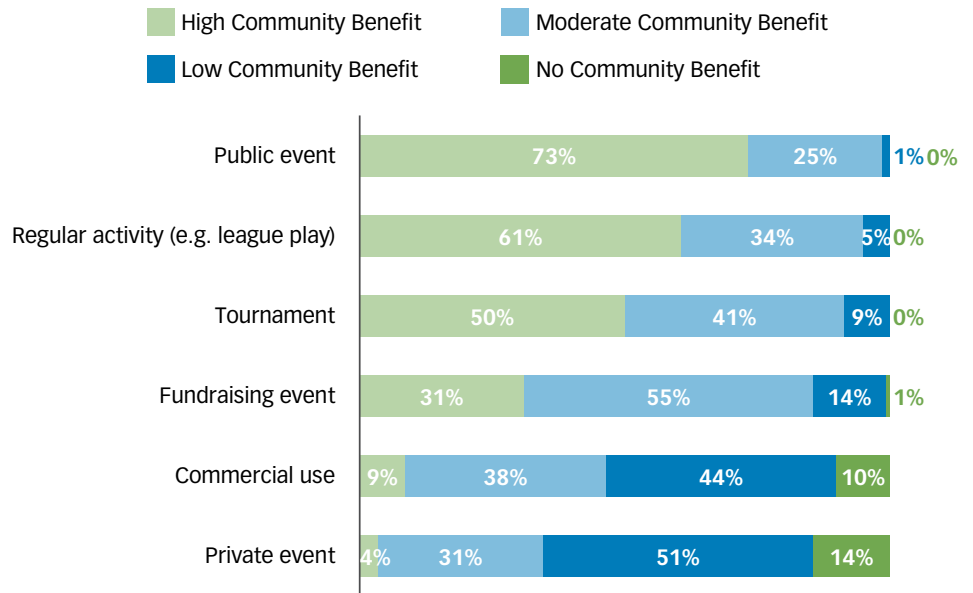


Types of Activity Use

Subcategories for assigning subsidy levels can be created or adjusted considering the type of use as well as the type of user. In the public survey, six types of uses were presented and respondents were asked to indicate the level of community benefit they believe such uses provide. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of respondents believe that public events provide a high amount of community benefit and 61% perceive regular activity such as league play provide a high amount of community benefit. Those two types of uses, as confirmed through the survey, warrant higher amounts of subsidy than commercial use or private events.

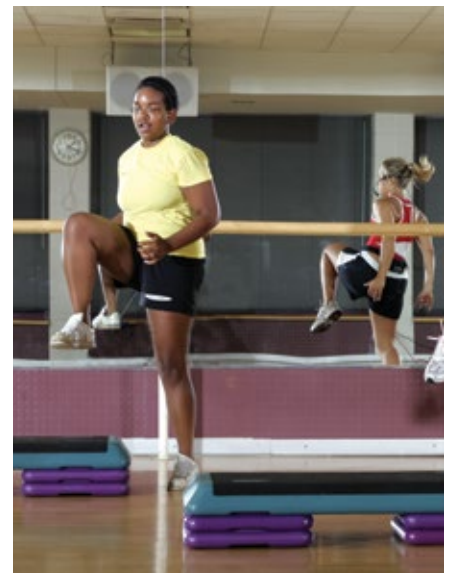
1. **Public Event:** A public special event can be considered one that is local, provincial, national, or international and/or provides significant athletic, social, cultural, and/or economic benefits to the community. Anyone in the community can attend and participate (e.g. fair, carnival, social event).
2. **Regular Activity:** Usual or normal regular use occurring at fixed intervals and confirmed in a seasonal contract (e.g. sport group renting space for league games and practices).
3. **Tournament:** Community level events such as tournaments and competitions.
4. **Fundraising Event:** A fundraising event for the benefit of a local non-profit community organization.

Public Survey Results: Types of Uses with Benefits Based Approach Applied



5. **Commercial Use:** An organization engaged in the trade of goods and/ or services for the sole purpose of making a profit to benefit their owners and shareholders.
6. **Private Event:** A private special event can be considered one that is by invitation only (e.g. wedding reception).

Reduced fees such as non-prime time and matinee rates do not need to be considered as a category of use at this time; such discounts can be applied at a later stage of the fee setting process as outlined in the next section.



TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS

In addition to types of uses, there are also types of participants to consider while determining subcategories for applying subsidy levels. In the public survey, 82% of respondents regarded that youth being active in PRC activities results in high amounts of community benefit. Non-profit organizations are perceived to provide much more community benefit compared to for-profit organizations. The following are proposed subcategories for the Abbotsford context.

Individual Subcategories

- Preschool (0-4 years)
- Children, Youth, Young Adults (5-24 years)
- Adults (25-64 years)
- Seniors (65-74 years)
- Super Seniors (75+ years)

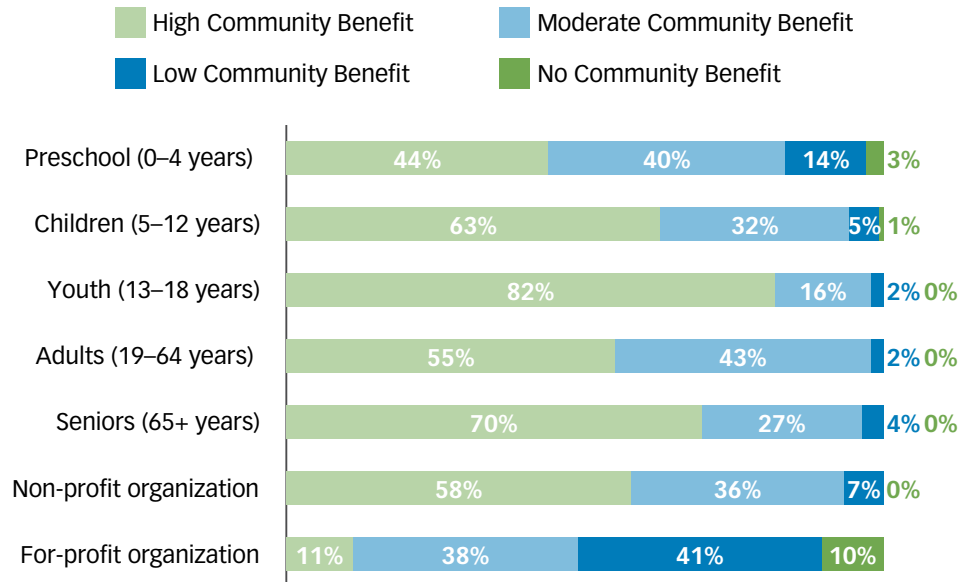
Participant Subcategories

- Beginner skill and social development (Active Start; FUNDamental)
- Intermediate skill and social development (Learning to Train)
- General fitness and mental wellbeing (Active for Life)
- Advanced skill development (Training to Train)
- Specialized (Case by case basis)

Rental Subcategories

- Minor/Senior Non-Profit Organizations
- Adult Non-Profit Organizations
- Commercial/Private Use
- Events with admission fees
- Events with no admission fees

Public Survey Results: Types of Participants with Benefits Based Approach Applied



IMPLEMENTATIONS STRATEGIES

Once unit costs are known and subsidy levels are applied, then preliminary fees can be calculated. To ensure successful implementation of new fees, a variety of implementation strategies can be used instead of just setting fees based on the initial calculation.

SAFETY NET STRATEGIES

It is important to ensure that everyone in the community has access to PRC services regardless of their ability to pay. Safety net strategies can be employed to ensure that affordable and accessible opportunities are available for all residents, especially for those who may face participation barriers. The PRC Subsidy Program is an example of a safety net strategy provided directly by the City. Partner-provided programs are promoted and supported by the City as well; examples include KidSport and Jumpstart.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting financial stressors of many residents, a review of the PRC Subsidy Program is recommended.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This approach to setting fees is supplemented (in a later section) by a series of recommendations provided by the consulting team to help with implementation and to ensure ongoing monitoring and adaptability to community needs.



PROCESS OF SETTING FEES AND CHARGES

This section walks through the following 6-step process of setting fees and charges.

1

Calculate Unit Costs

Gather all associated costs and utilization data to calculate the cost per unit required to provide each service.

2

Assign Subsidy Levels

Assign subsidy levels to each type of use and user based on identified benefits.

3

Calculate Preliminary Fees

Calculate preliminary fees based on the unit costs and assigned subsidy levels.

4

Apply Implementation Strategies

Compare preliminary fees to existing fees. Determine appropriate implementation strategies based on the comparison.

5

Adjust for Practicality

Adjust further if necessary for practical reasons. This allows flexibility in the process; however, any changes must be explained and justified.

6

Ensure Safety Net

Review, and enhance if necessary, existing "safety net" initiatives to ensure that all residents can access services regardless of income.

Hypothetical Example - Arenas

**Expenses / utilization =
unit cost**

Per hour unit cost:

- Annual expenses: \$1.5M
- Annual utilization:
7,500 hours
- $\$1.5M / 7,500 \text{ hours} =$
\$200 per hour
- Unit cost: \$200 per hour

Per visit unit cost:

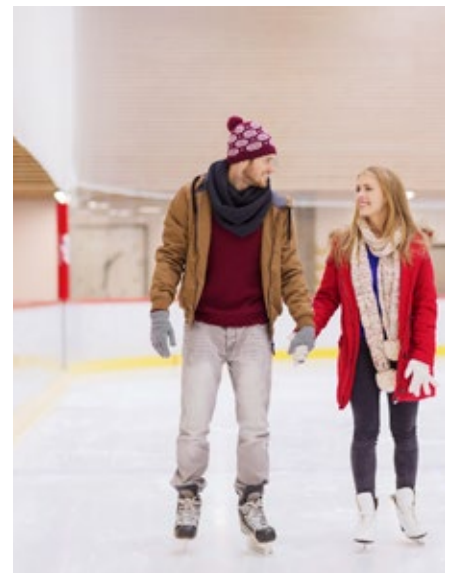
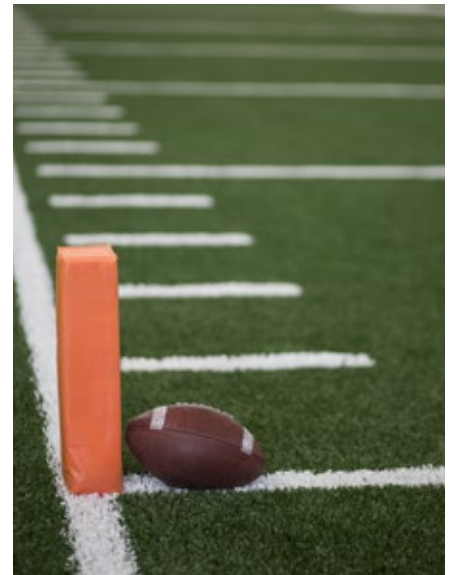
- Let's say that 500 of
those hours were for
drop-in programs and
there were 8,000 visits
(16 people per hour)
- Annual expenses: 500
hours x \$200 per hour =
\$100k
- $\$100k / 8,000 \text{ visits} =$
\$12.50
- Unit cost: \$12.50 per
visit

1. CALCULATE UNIT COSTS

Unit costs are the expenses required to provide a given service. For example, the cost to provide an hour of arena ice or the cost to provide a drop-in swim. The unit cost for an hourly ice arena rental would be calculated by dividing the total annual expenses required to operate ice arenas by the total number of hours they are used in a year.

The following steps are required to calculate unit costs.

- Determine which recreation space(s) unit costs need to be calculated for.
- Gather all annual operating expenses relating to each of the space(s).
- If a space is part of a larger recreation facility, gather costs for the whole facility and then assign and apportion annual expense figures to the specific space (assumptions may have to be made).
- Collect utilization data for the space(s) (how many visits or hours was the space used for?).
- Where gaps in utilization data exist, consider the number of operation hours to develop informed utilization.
- Divide annual expense figures for each amenity by the utilization figures such as hours used to determine unit costs.



2. ASSIGN SUBSIDY LEVELS

Before fees can be calculated, subsidy levels must first be assigned based on where a specific type of use or user falls on the Benefits Continuum. The adjacent charts can be used as a template. The consultants have provided an initial starting point by inserting subsidy levels suggested in part by the engagement process as well as best practices.

Categories of users are listed along the left-side column and the types of uses are shown across the top row for drop-ins and program uses as well as rentals. Based on identified proportion of benefits, each type of user and use is assigned a subsidy level based on the benefits continuum (e.g. 0%, 25%, 50%, 75%, 100%).



Proposed Individual Subsidy Levels

Individual Subcategories	Current Subsidy Level	Proposed Subsidy Level
Preschool (0-4 years)	100%	100%
Children, Youth, Young Adults (5-24 years)	84%	80%
Adults (25-64 years)	69%	50%
Seniors (65-74 years)	79%	75%
Super Seniors (75+ years)	79%	100%

Program Subcategories	Proposed Subsidy Level
Beginner skill and social development (Active Start; FUNdamentals)	75 to 100%
Intermediate skill and social development (Learning to Train)	50 to 75%
General fitness and mental wellbeing (Active for Life)	25 to 50%
Advanced skill development (Training to Train)	0 to 25%
Specialized (Case by case basis)	0 to 100%

Note: Expenses for each program may vary; additional costs such as specialized equipment or transportation may be charged to the user if deemed appropriate.

Proposed Rental Subsidy Levels

Rental Subcategories	Minor/Senior Non-Profit Organization	Adult Non-Profit Organization	Commercial/Private
Regular Activity	50%	25%	0%
Event: Public, No Admission Fee	50%	50%	0%
Event: Admission Fee, Private, Fundraising	0%	0%	0%

Hypothetical Example - Arenas

Per hour unit cost: \$200

- *Minor non-profit preliminary fee: \$100*
- *Adult non-profit preliminary fee: \$150*
- *For-profit preliminary fee: \$200*

Per visit unit cost: \$12.50

- *Preschool preliminary fee: \$0*
- *Children, youth and young adult preliminary fee: \$3.13*
- *Adult preliminary fee: \$9.38*
- *Senior preliminary fee: \$6.25*

3. CALCULATE PRELIMINARY FEES

Based on the unit costs and assigned subsidy levels, preliminary fees can be calculated. In theory, a fee would simply be calculated by multiplying the unit cost of a given amenity with the recovery rate (opposite of subsidy level). The Benefits Continuum provides a philosophical justification for these initial or preliminary fees.

However, practical issues and strategies to phase in changes may adjust these fees or require they be phased in.

4. APPLY IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The preliminary fees are then compared to existing fees. Based on the comparison, one of the following implementation strategies could be assigned if deemed appropriate. If a given fee is to be raised, it could be gradually phased in over a few years to help users get acclimated with the increase. Alternatively, if a preliminary fee is only slightly lower than the existing fee, it could be maintained as is since expenses tend to increase annually with inflation.

Circumstance	Potential Implementation Strategy
If preliminary fee is slightly higher than or equal to existing fee.	Apply preliminary fee.
If preliminary fee is moderately higher than existing fee.	Phase in the preliminary fee over a planned timeframe (e.g. 4 years). Work with community groups to ensure affordability.
If preliminary fee is significantly higher than existing fee.	Strive to increase utilization. Keep existing fees until higher utilization rates are achieved and then re-evaluate.
If preliminary fee is lower than existing fee.	Keep existing fee fixed until the unit cost increases.

5. ADJUST FOR PRACTICALITY

Further adjustments can be made if necessary for practical reasons. While this allows flexibility in the process, it is not meant to circumvent the integrity of it; there must be justification for any adjustment at this point. This is where non-prime rates could be reduced to encourage use during under-utilized times of the day. If a fee is really low, perhaps the fee might be waived due to the impractical staffing costs of collecting fees. Adjustments can also be made to encourage participation and positively impact health behaviours (e.g. single drop-in versus membership).

6. ENSURE SAFETY NET

Safety net strategies will be required to ensure that all residents can access public recreation services; especially those who face financial barriers. The safety net strategies may include any or all of the following elements which represent industry “best practices”:

- Allowing low income families to access discounted membership rates such as the Subsidy Program that is currently provided. This helps ensure that if fees are increased, low-income residents still have the opportunity to access services.
- Working with local community organizations that rent space from the City to ensure they each have policies for including potential participants that have an interest and/or ability to participate but no financial means to do so. For example, for a sports group to have subsidized access to a public space to run its league, it may be required to show how it waves a membership fee for families in financial hardship. The overall provision of recreation services is a collaborative effort with all stakeholders such as community groups and non-profit organizations contributing to the end goal of universal access. Encouraging all stakeholders to provide their own subsidy initiatives can help ensure that a variety of people access the activities they enjoy even if cost is a barrier to them.
- Another way of reducing participation fees through community groups is by supporting groups with grant opportunities. This line of thinking allows the City to invest in local organizations and initiatives that support participation in recreational opportunities. This funding could potentially have an overall greater benefit because of the organization’s ability to match through sponsorships, donations, and other grants.

- Adding more free opportunities for basic services such as swimming and skating and then measuring the impact of those sessions to ensure they result in increased access by those who cannot afford full fees rather than displacement by those who are already paying for them. If utilization increases, it is important to understand whether the increase is mostly due to current users coming more often or completely new users gaining some access. More emphasis should be placed on attracting new users than increasing use by existing users.
- Developing a specific program to assist and support seniors for whom their financial situation is a barrier to participation. This could include free access to facilities and programs during under-utilized hours such as early afternoon on weekdays (matinee).
- Work with schools to increase student access which is often a significant “equalizer” when it comes to ability to pay. If school transportation costs are charged to parents then this might not be practical, but some initiatives might still warrant consideration such as swimming lessons and other critical life skills development. The City might consider working with the school authorities to ensure it has ways of encouraging students who can’t afford the transportation costs for school use.
- Increase the number of free community events and free drop-in opportunities which are also often seen as barrier-free services, bringing together all segments of a community.
- Work with the business community to pursue sponsorships that directly correlate to free or reduced-cost services.



RECOMMENDATIONS

A series of recommendations were developed by the consulting team. These recommendations are intended to enhance the process and to help the City of Abbotsford meet its objective of providing a practical, transparent, and fair approach to setting fees and charges.

1. BENEFITS BASED APPROACH

Endorse the Benefits Based Approach to setting fees and charges.

2. PROCESS TO SETTING FEES

Follow the process outlined herein to set fees and charges.

1. Calculate units costs
2. Assign subsidy levels
3. Calculate preliminary fees
4. Apply implementation strategies
5. Adjust for practicality
6. Ensure safety net

3. IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINES

Implement significant changes over a four-year timeframe to reduce the stress of change. More static fees can be adjusted annually at the rate of the Municipal Price Index.

4. UNIT COSTS

Monitor unit costs and adjust every four years.

5. SUBSIDY LEVELS

Review and Adjust the cost subsidy levels every four years.

6. INTRODUCE FEES

Develop fees for services and spaces that are currently missing from the Fees and Charges Bylaw and Program Price Policy.

7. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Continue to engage stakeholders during the implementation of fee changes.

8. STAKEHOLDERS' REGISTRATION FEES

Work in partnership with community organizations that use subsidized spaces to ensure that participant fees are appropriate and reflect the level of subsidy provided.

9. STAKEHOLDER EDUCATION

Educate community organizations on the costs to provide facilities and services.

10. SAFETY NET STRATEGIES

Review the current PRC Financial Assistance Program.

Explore safety net strategies for programs and amenities targeting underserved demographics or underutilized spaces.



APPENDIX

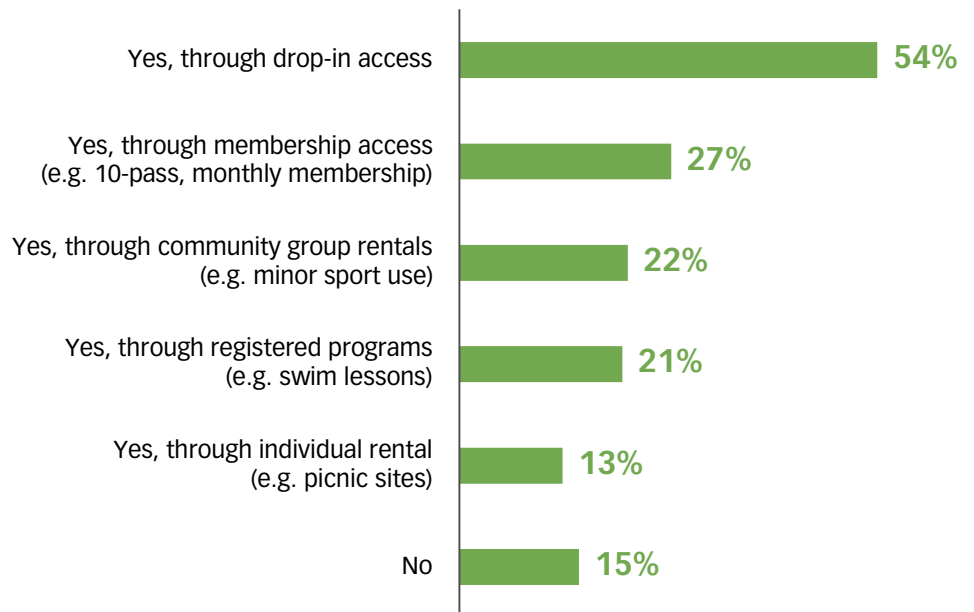
A. Public Survey

A public survey was hosted on the City's Let's Talk public engagement platform to gather the thoughts and perspectives of local residents. The survey was promoted through the City's social media channels and was posted on the City's website. Respondents were asked to answer the questions on behalf of all members of their household. In total, 142 responses were gathered representing 452 people.

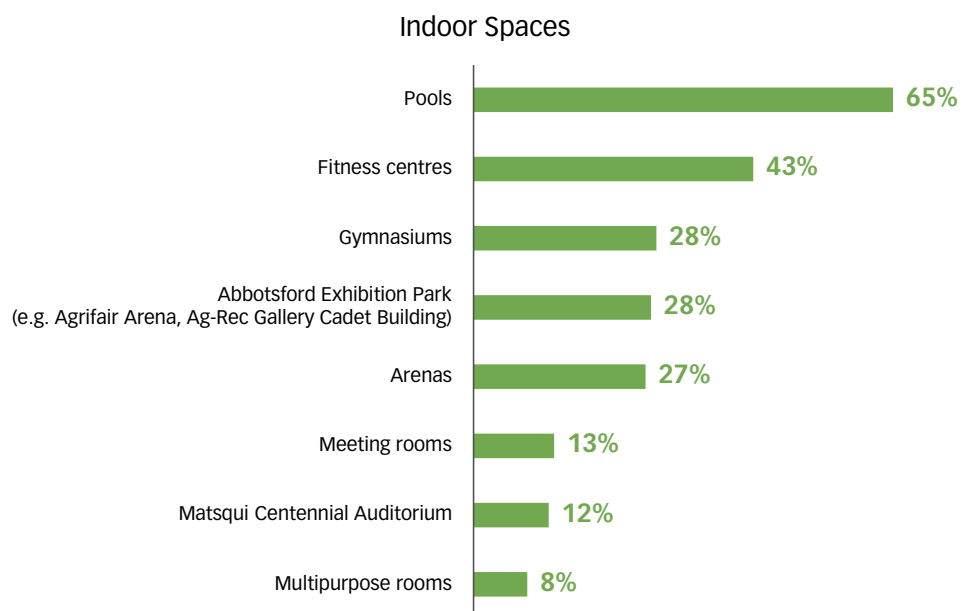
Respondents were asked if they (or anyone in your household) paid to use City of Abbotsford parks, recreation, or cultural spaces in the past year. Over half (54%) have paid to access City spaces through drop-in access and over a quarter (27%) have via memberships.

Of the respondents who have had a household member pay to access City spaces, approximately two-thirds (65%) used the pools and 43% used fitness centres.

Have you (or anyone in your household) paid to use City of Abbotsford parks, recreation, or cultural spaces in the past year?

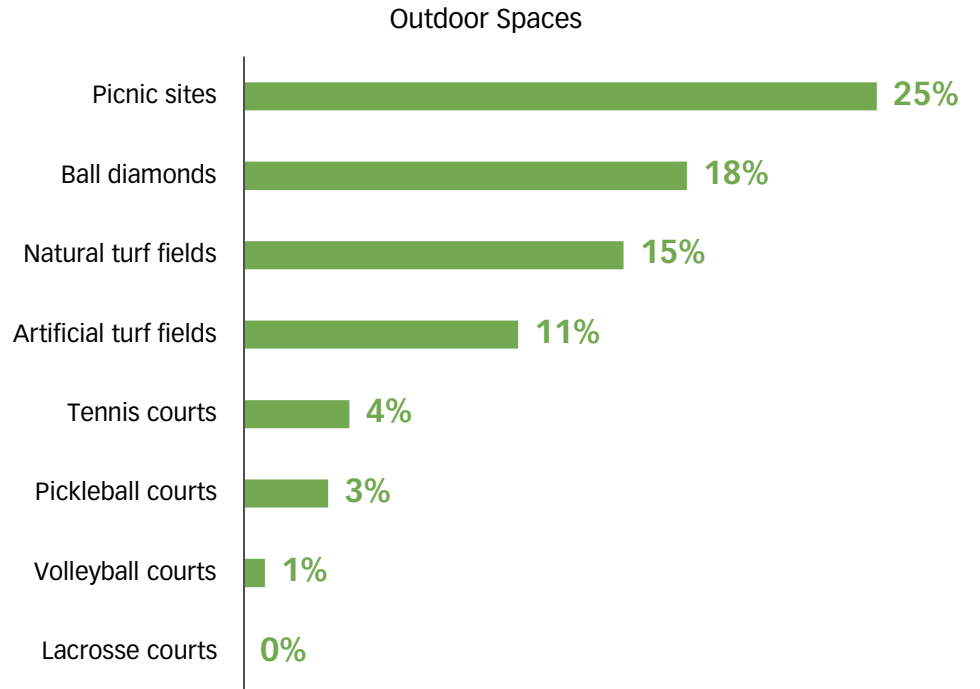


If yes, please identify which facilities or spaces your household has used in the past year.



And, one-quarter (25%) used picnic sites and 18% indicated their use of ball diamonds.

If yes, please identify which facilities or spaces your household has used in the past year.

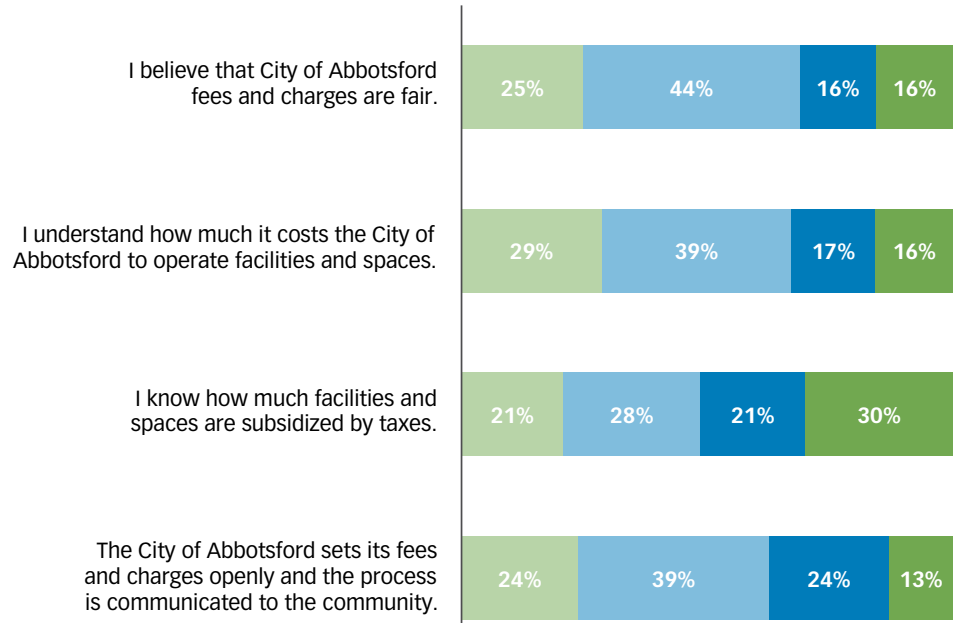
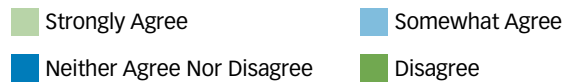


A series of statements were presented on the questionnaire and respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement. Over two-thirds (69%) of respondents agree to some extent that City fees are fair. Thirty percent (30%) of respondents indicated that they do not know how much facilities and spaces are subsidized by taxes.

Respondents were asked to share any comments they may have about the City's current fees and charges. Over sixty comments were provided. A summary of common themes are presented as follows:

- Twelve respondents noted that they believe current fees are fair.
- Six respondents provided comments saying that City fees are higher than other communities.
- A few comments suggested that user fees should be kept as low as possible so that affordability does not become a barrier to participation.
- It was suggested that the actual cost to operate spaces could be shared so that residents can see what the subsidy levels are for the services they access.
- Ensuring affordability for seniors and families were common themes expressed in the comments.
- One respondent mentioned that people with disabilities could be living in a household with other people but are responsible for their own finances; therefore, the City should consider individual income levels in addition to household income.

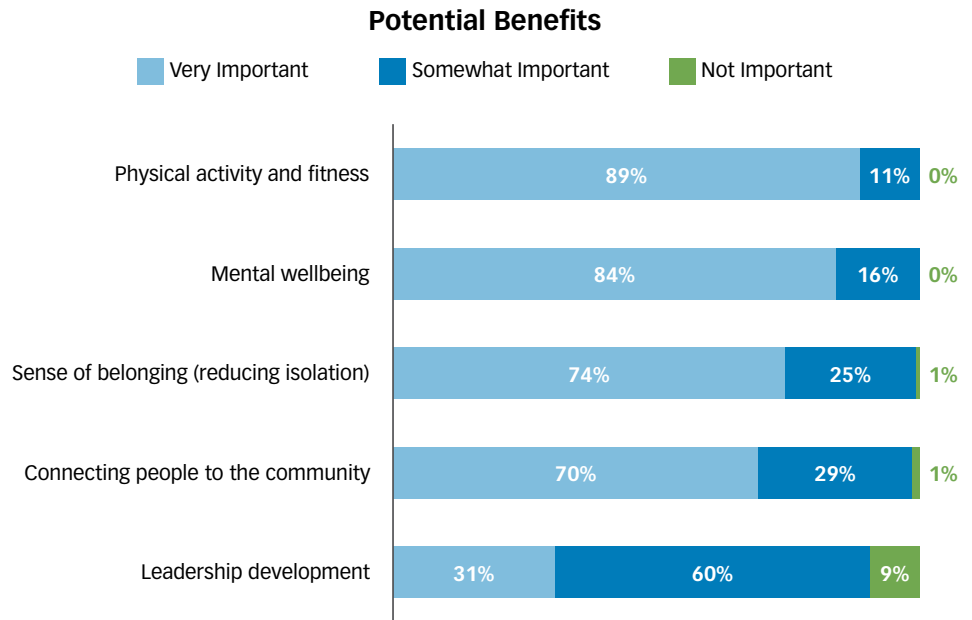
Level of Agreement Statements



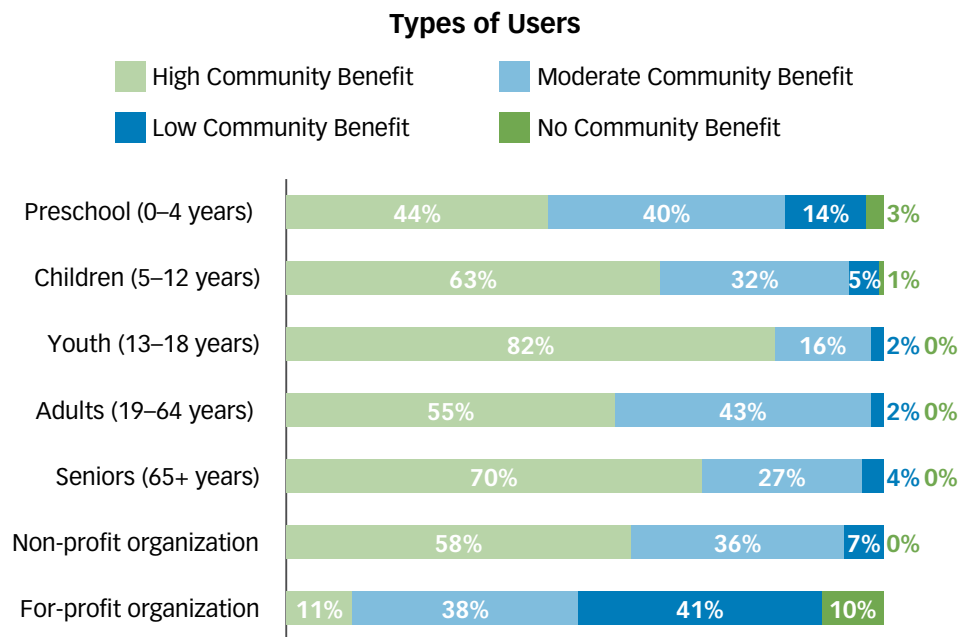
- One comment provided a reminder to not overlook arts and culture activities and groups; that they should be subsidized equitably compared to sports.
- A couple of comments suggested that the City should consider having higher fees for non-City residents.
- One suggestion was offered to have free introductory memberships, such as a free two-week trial, to try to get people more active and engaged.
- It was noted that some user groups use the track at Rotary Stadium without paying.
- A couple respondents would not mind paying higher fees if the services and facilities were to be enhanced.



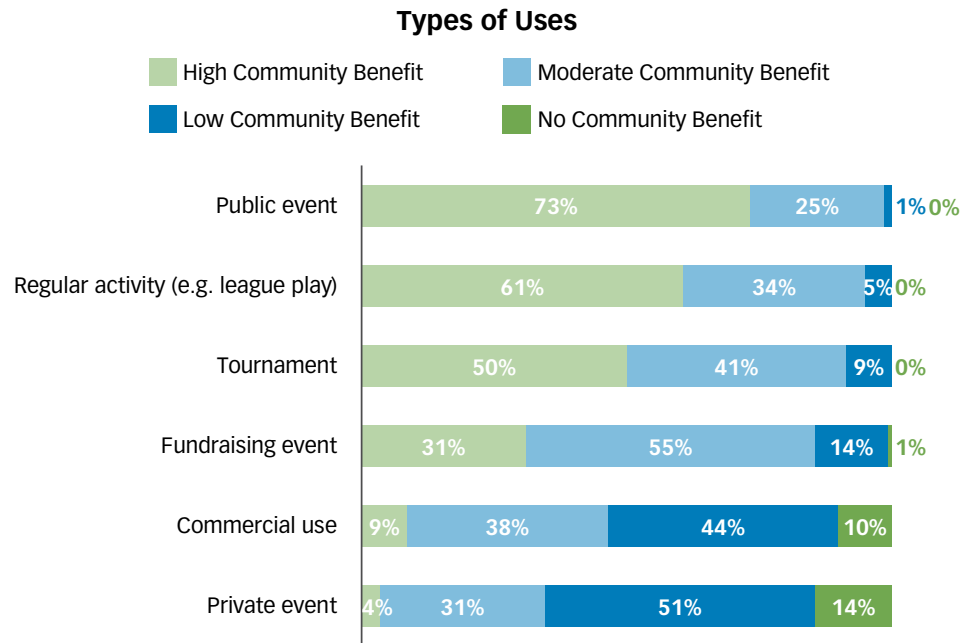
The following is a brief list of potential benefits that recreation users can provide to the community through its use of City facilities and spaces. For each potential benefit, respondents were asked to rank its importance. Eighty-nine percent (89%) of respondents believe that physical activity and fitness is a very important benefit while 84% feel that mental wellbeing is a very important benefit.



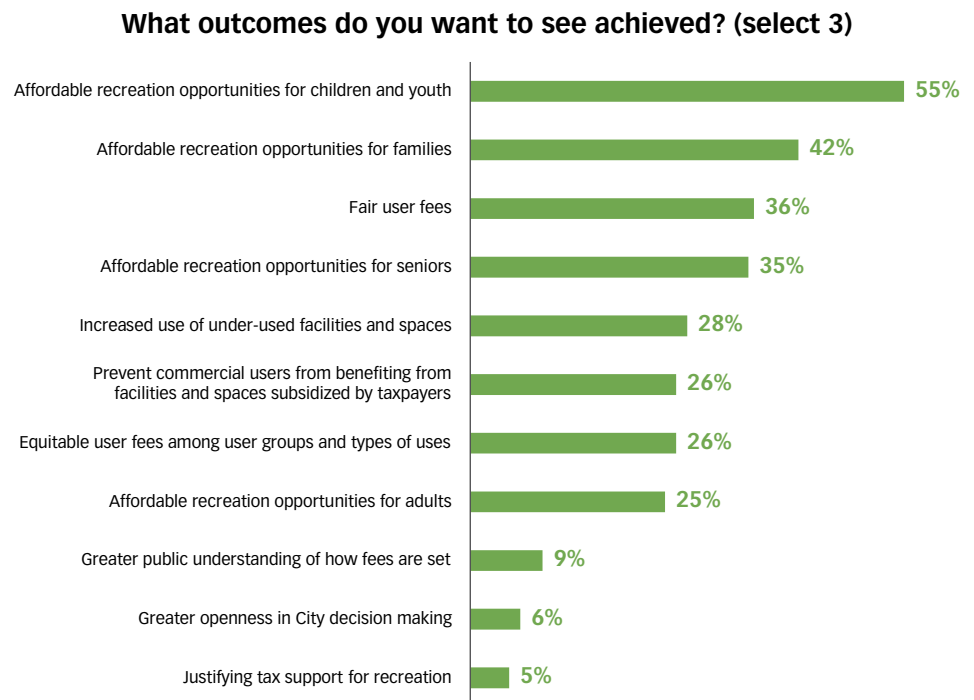
The following is a list of potential categories of users. For each category of user, respondents were asked to indicate the amount of community benefit they believe would be achieved if such a user type rented time at a facility or space. The top three user types, in regard to high community benefit, were youth, seniors, and children.



Similarly, a list of potential categories of uses was presented. At least half of respondents indicated that public events, regular activity, and tournaments are types of uses that provide high amounts of community benefit.



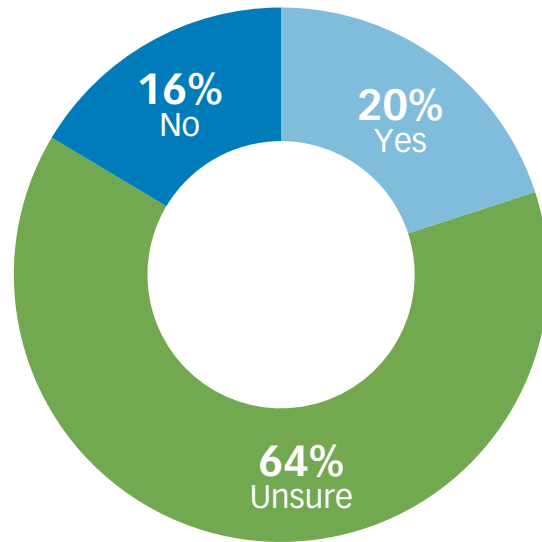
A list of potential outcomes of the updated Fees and Charges Policy was presented and respondents were asked to select their three most important outcomes that they want to see achieved in this process. Affordable recreation opportunities for children and youth (55%) was the most selected outcome followed by affordable recreation opportunities for families (42%). Over a third of respondents selected fair user fees (36%) and affordable recreation opportunities for seniors (35%).



Twenty percent (20%) of respondents think there is an existing service that has a fee attached that should be provided free to the public while 64% were unsure. Examples mentioned for free opportunities included:

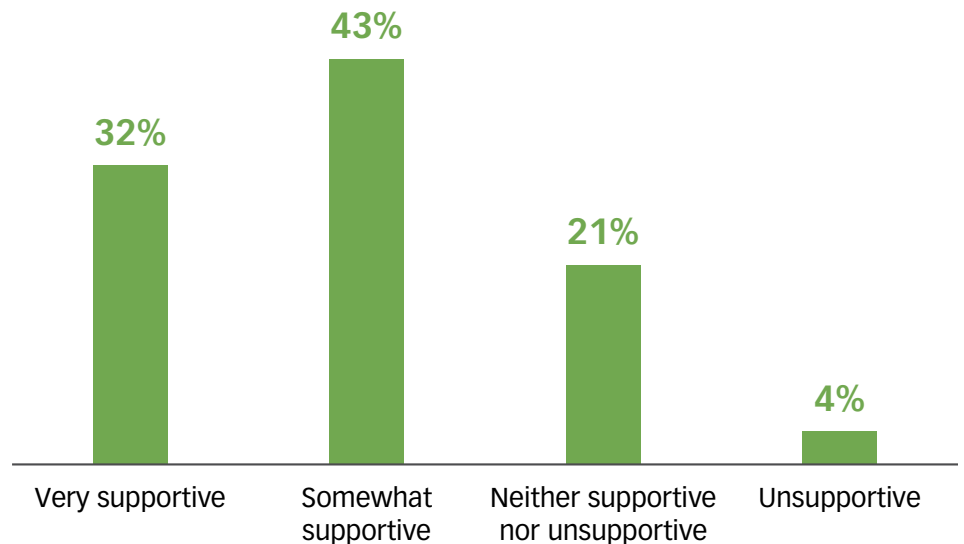
- Fitness for seniors over 75 years
- More free or low cost child drop in activities
- Picnic shelters
- Exercise programs
- Pool access
- Free access for persons with disabilities
- Drop-in gymnasium use
- Community meeting spaces
- Skating rinks
- Free swimming lessons for those who cannot afford it
- Youth programs
- Childminding

Are there any existing services that have a fee attached that should be provided free to the public?



Respondents were provided with a brief explanation of the Benefits Based Approach to setting fees and charges and they were asked to indicate their level of support for it as a philosophical foundation to setting user fees in the City of Abbotsford. Three-quarters (75%) of respondents indicated their support to some extent while 4% are unsupportive.

To what level do you support the Benefits Based Approach to setting fees and charges as a philosophical foundation to setting user fees in the City of Abbotsford?



Space was provided to share any comments the respondents might have about the proposed approach to setting fees and charges. Relevant comments are paraphrased and shared as follows.

- Low income individuals and families need to be addressed in the process of setting fees.
- I'd like to learn more about how recreation facilities are funded.
- Leisure activities are not compulsory in the same way as schools and healthcare are. However they have been universally recognized as an important way of fostering personal development in a population and a way for citizens to be connected to others in their community in positive ways.
- I'm against the benefits approach to setting user fees because I don't know who determines what is 'beneficial' and what is not beneficial.
- It is important for the youth and young people to be able to afford access to our facilities.
- I think that people with a disability should only have to pay half the fees for lessons sets. It can take much longer for a person with a disability to learn a skill.
- Recreational spaces should be 100% supported by the community through taxes because fees and other charges create a barrier to entry for the most marginalized in our communities.
- I think this is a good approach, but it also needs communication as to the breakdown of the costs of running facilities.
- Setting fees based on community benefit is a good method. It is important to identify a target parameter or criteria to ensure a non-biased approach. Even though it may not be the perfect approach at least it is transparent and can be used and modified as time goes on.
- The ability to pay should be an important factor to consider.
- Having affordable fees for recreation facilities is important and having these facilities available is very important to the community, both for health and livability reasons.
- There needs to be an appropriate balance of user fees and tax support; public good needs to be taken into account.

Respondent Profile: Age of Household Members

Please describe your household by identifying the number of members in each of the following age groups. (Please include yourself!)	Respondents	2016 Census
Age 0 – 4 Years	4%	6%
Age 5 – 9 Years	9%	6%
Age 10 – 14 Years	10%	6%
Age 15 – 19 Years	11%	6%
Age 20 – 29 Years	7%	13%
Age 30 - 39 Years	9%	13%
Age 40 – 49 Years	18%	13%
Age 50 – 59 Years	11%	13%
Age 60 – 69 Years	11%	11%
Age 70 – 79 Years	8%	7%
Age 80+ Years	1%	5%

B. Stakeholder Group Survey

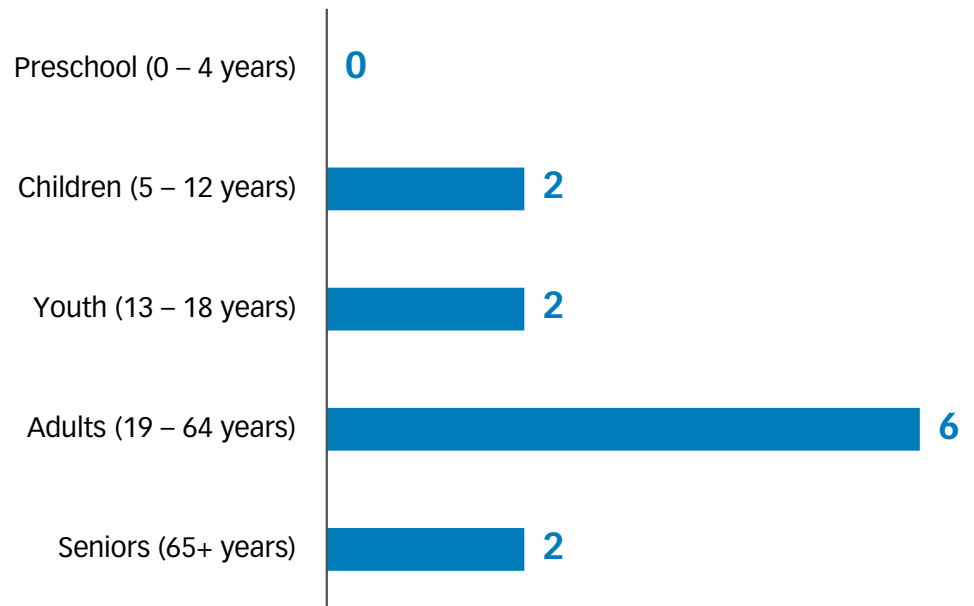
An email with a link to an online survey was sent to local community groups. Only one response per group was requested. The following seven community organizations provided a response to the stakeholder group survey.

- Abbotsford Mixed Slo-Pitch
- Thursday Night Hockey
- Abbotsford Learning Plus Society
- Abbotsford Olympians Swim Club
- Women's Christian Soccer League
- New Horizons Friendship Society
- Next Level Goaltending Development Inc.

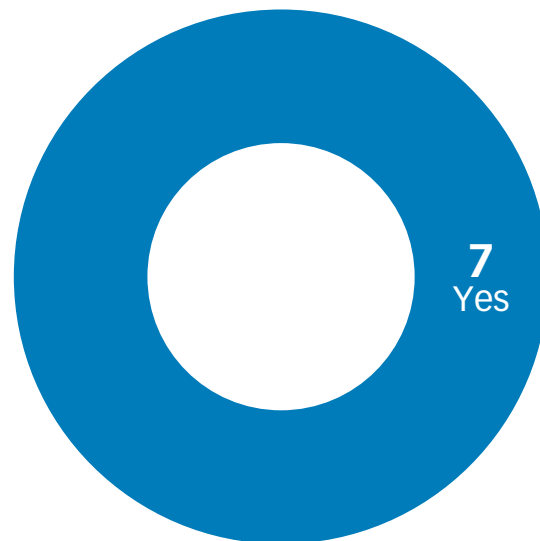
Six of the seven groups provide programming for adults and there are two that work with children, youth, and seniors. Groups that provide recreation for preschoolers are not represented in the results.

All seven responding groups use City of Abbotsford facilities or spaces.

Please indicate which age groups your organization provides programming for.

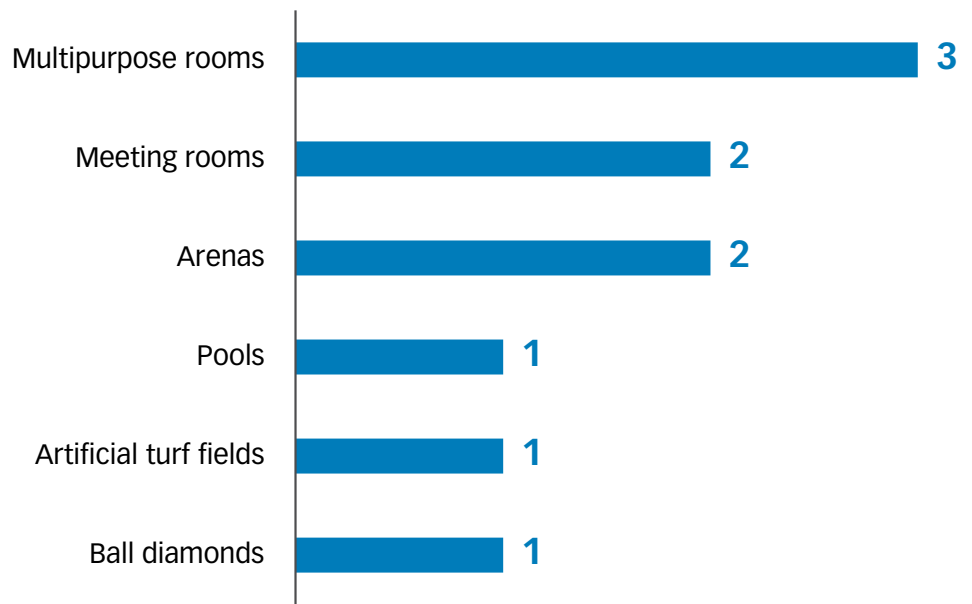


Does your organization use City of Abbotsford facilities or spaces?



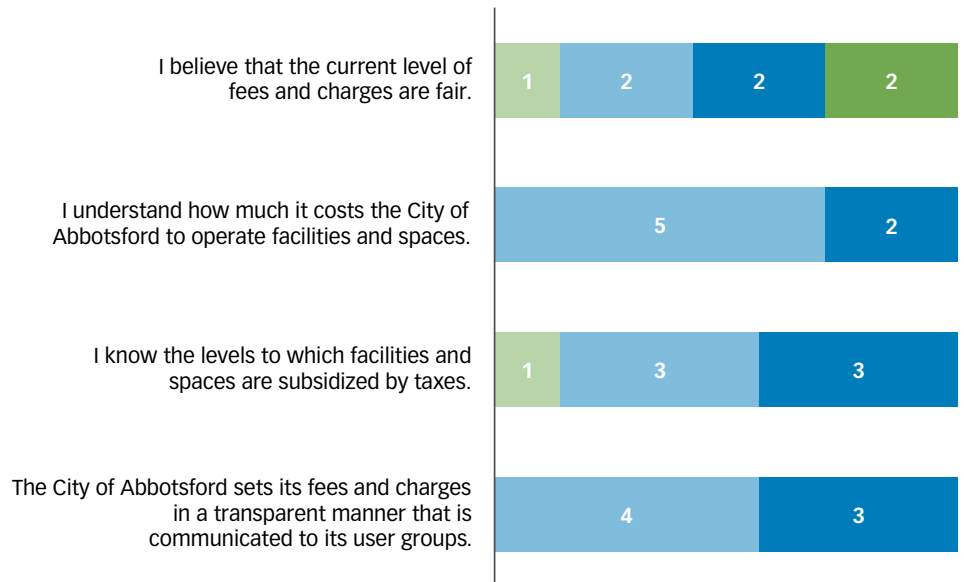
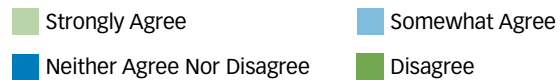
Of the responding organizations, two are arena users and one uses the pools. A ball diamond user group as well as an artificial turf user group are represented in the results.

If yes, please identify which spaces your organization uses.



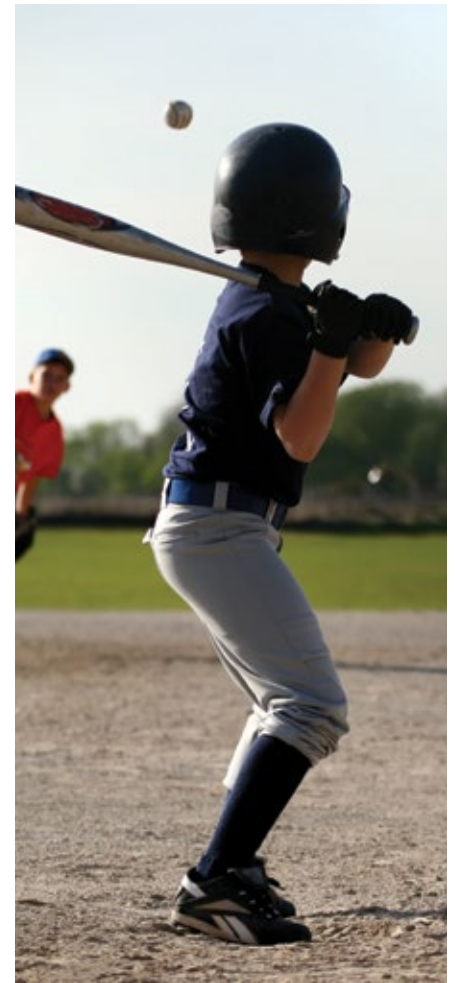
A series of statements were presented and respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement. None of the groups strongly agree that they understand how much it costs the City to operated facilities and spaces, however five somewhat agree.

Level of Agreement Statements



Groups were asked to share any comments they have about the current level of City of Abbotsford fees and charges. Comments were paraphrased for summary purposes and are presented as follows.

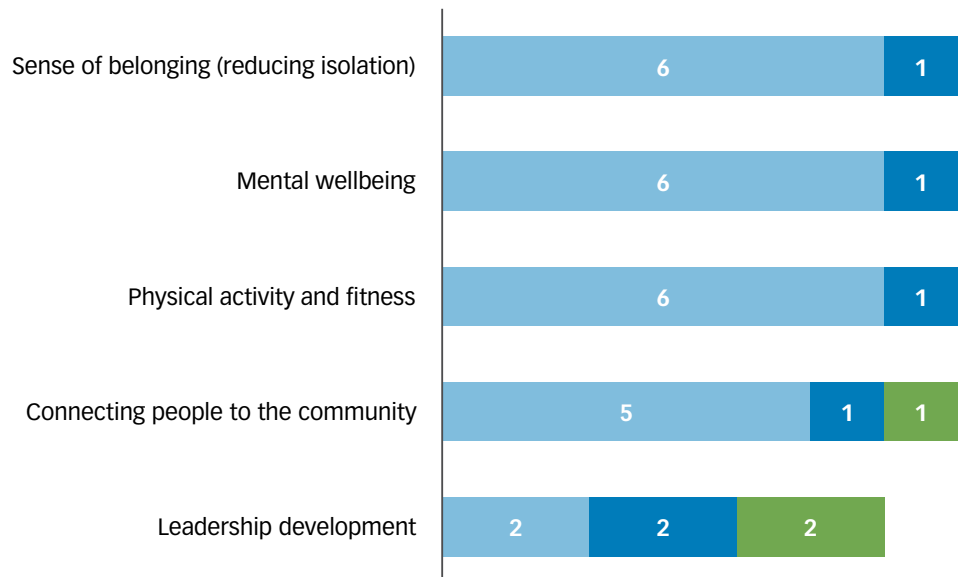
- The City’s park fees are comparable to other municipalities’ however, the condition of our spaces are declining.
- The City’s pool fees are higher than the average cost for user groups around the lower mainland; the level of service is not reflected in the higher fees.
- Fees should be consistent across the board regardless of user type.
- For our senior age demographic, it is important to keep the fees at a relatively low rate, especially since most seniors are on fixed incomes.
- Ensure that seniors are not overlooked. Groups shouldn’t be prioritized based on the ability to pay higher fees.
- We feel that the City’s fees are fair.



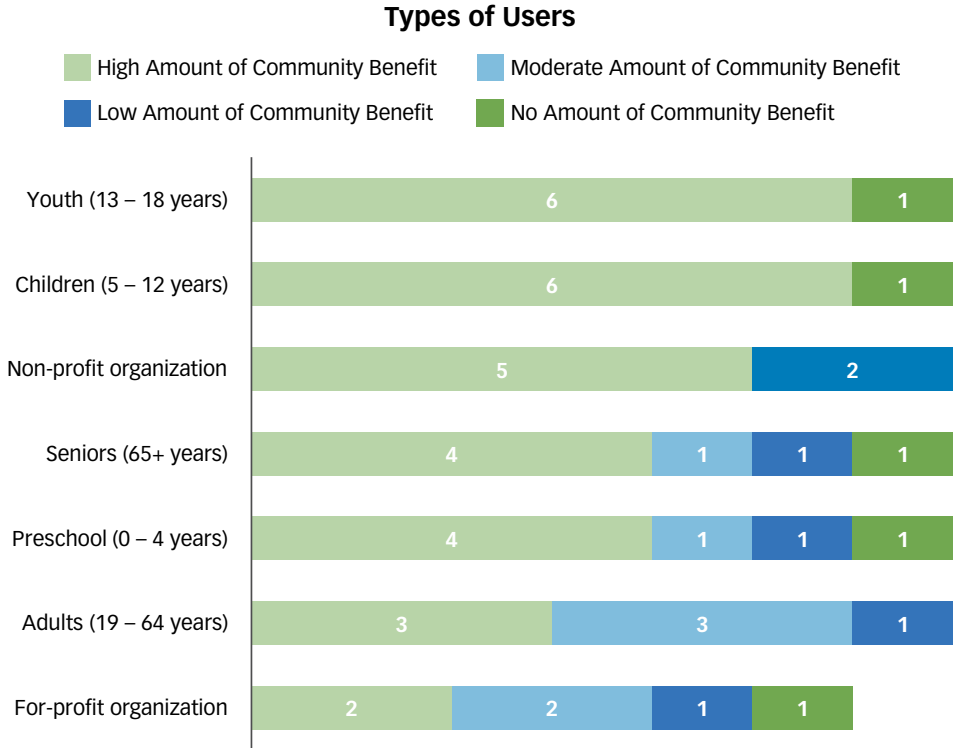
The following are potential benefits a group could provide to the community by using City spaces. For each potential benefit, respondents were asked to indicate its level of importance. While all benefits could be argued as being important, sense of belonging, mental wellbeing, and physical activity and fitness surfaced as the top three.

For each potential benefit, please indicate its importance.

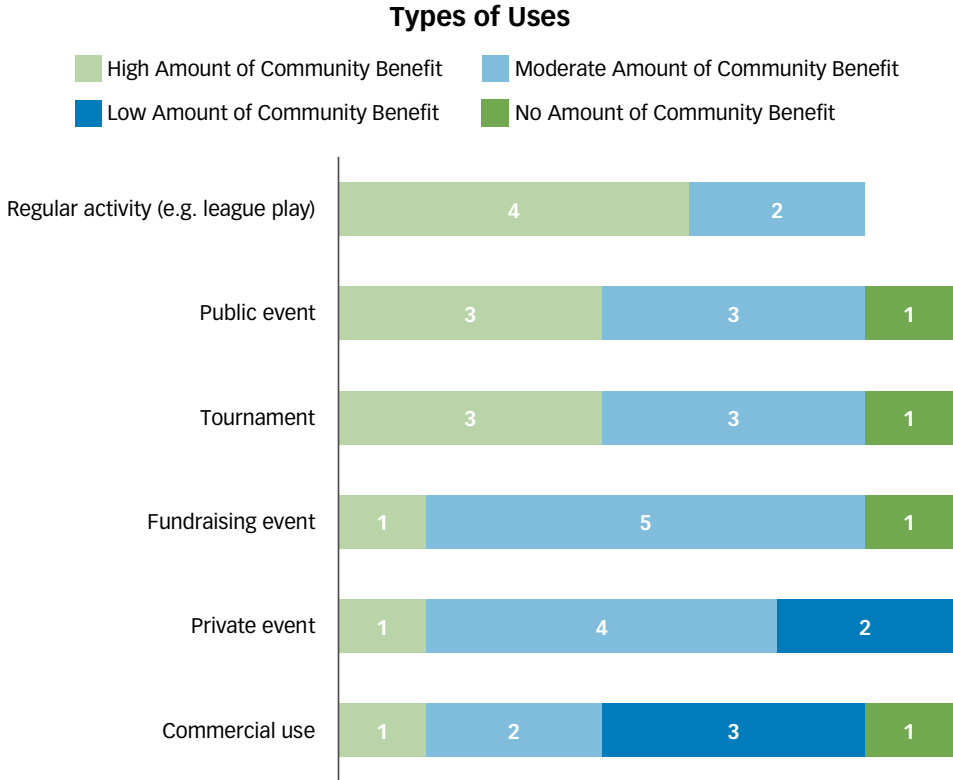
Very Important Somewhat Important Not Important



A list of potential users types were presented and groups were asked to indicate the amount of community benefit they believe is achieved by these groups using City spaces for activities. Six of the seven groups noted that children and youth activities provide high amounts of community benefit.

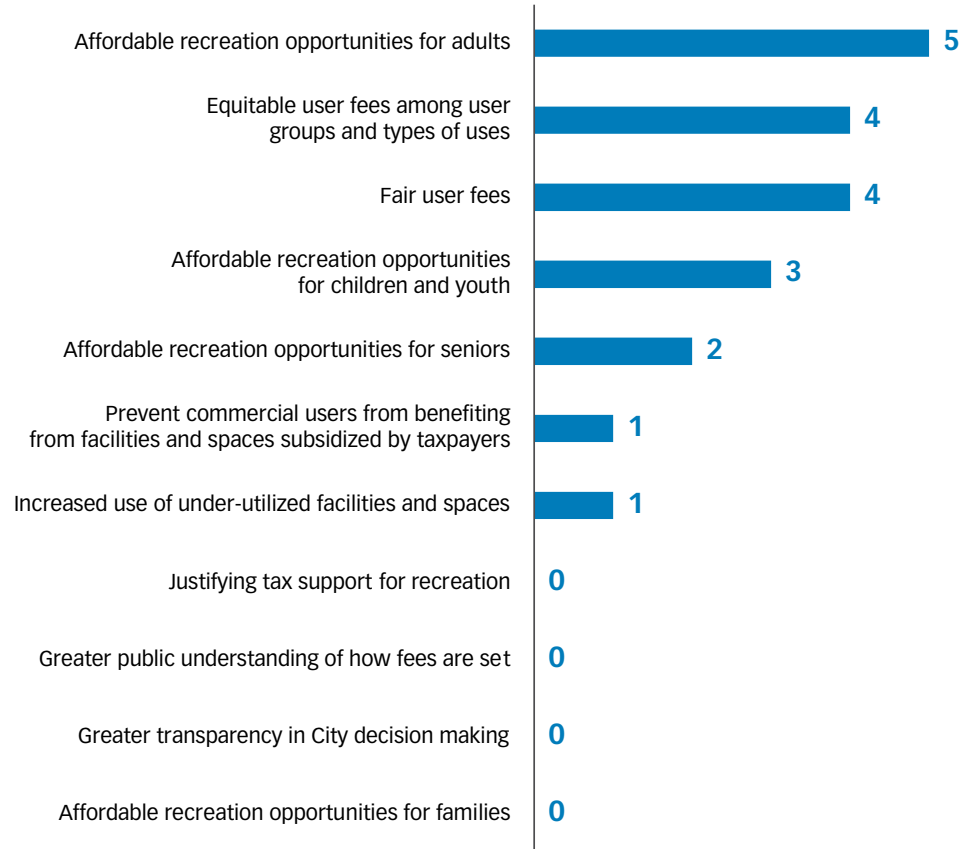


Public spaces are used for many reasons, such as the ones listed below. Four of the seven groups believe that regular activity (e.g. league play) provide high amounts of community benefit and two think that it provides a moderate amount of community benefit.



The following are potential outcomes of the updated Fees and Charges Policy. Groups were asked to select their three most important outcomes they want to see achieved in this process. Five of the seven groups selected affordability for adults (6 of the 7 groups provide adult recreation programming). Fair user fees and equitable user fees among user groups and types of uses were selected by more than half of the groups (4 of 7 groups).

Potential Outcomes of an updated Fees and Charges Policy (Select your 3 most important outcomes)

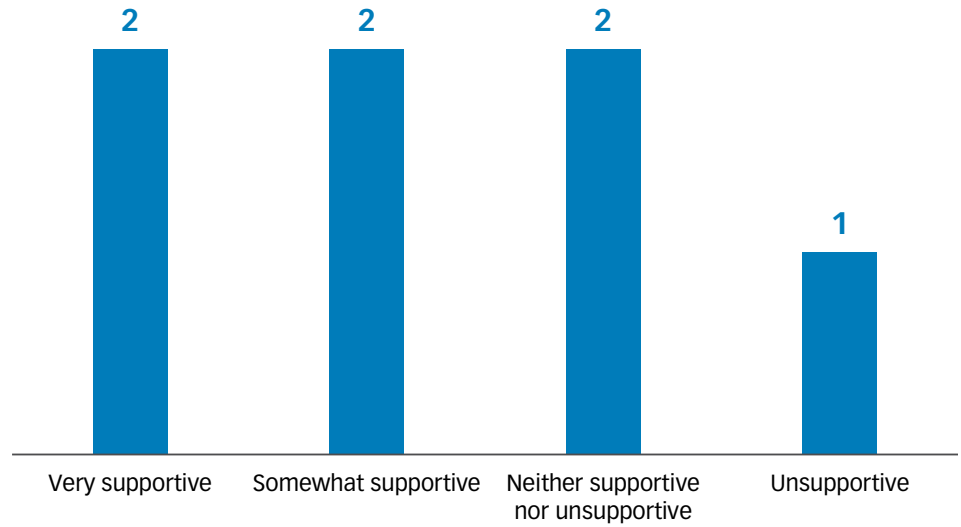


The questionnaire provided a brief introduction on the Benefits Based Approach to setting fees and charges. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of support for the Benefits Based Approach to setting fees and charges as a philosophical foundation to setting user fees in the City of Abbotsford. Four of the groups support the approach to some degree, two are neither supportive nor unsupportive, and one group indicated that they are unsupportive.

Finally, respondents were asked to share any comments they may have about the proposed approach to setting fees and charges. Two comments were provided as paraphrased below.

- To prevent block bookings, higher fees should be charged if user groups do not use all their time booked.
- Pay per use seems appropriate. We're not totally in agreeance that tax payers need to pay for the operation of the facilities.

To what level do you support the Benefits Based Approach to setting fees and charges as a philosophical foundation to setting user fees in the City of Abbotsford?



C. Benefits of Parks, Recreation and Culture

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

1. Special Events

Special events (e.g. carnivals, markets, fairs, etc.) can contribute to a feeling of community identity and spirit. Therefore, the local authority should be involved in sponsoring special events to the extent necessary to ensure promotion of this objective.

2. Support to Local Groups

Local clubs, groups and agencies are and will be organizing and sponsoring leisure opportunities. The “people doing things for themselves” aspect of such groups is socially worthwhile and desirable. The community recreation agency should support such groups in their efforts. Support may occur in a number of ways, including subsidized access to facilities, assistance in leadership training, provision of specialized equipment or the provision of operating grants.

3. Exposure to Sporting Events

Community identity, spirit and culture can be fostered through the environment generated by spectators at athletic events. In such events, sport can be closely linked with community identity and pride. Because of this, opportunities should be provided for spectator experiences at athletic events.

4. Exposure to Culture

Artistic endeavors (both performing and visual) represent one of the most significant aspects of developing a culture in any community. Through exposure to the arts, local residents should develop a better understanding and appreciation of the cultural aspects of a community.

5. Social Functions

Because social functions are a valuable vehicle to use in developing community cohesion and identity, the public sector should ensure that such opportunities exist.

6. Protecting Community Natural Resources

The protection of natural aesthetic features, vistas, natural phenomenon and features of historic significance and the provision of public access to such features will contribute to a greater understanding of and pride in the community and, therefore, contribute to community growth.

7. Beautify the Community

The extent to which a community is seen by its residents as being visually pleasing is directly related to the potential for creating community identity, spirit and culture. Therefore, to make a community more beautiful is a worthwhile social objective worthy of tax support.

8. Family Oriented Leisure Services

The family unit is an integral building block of community growth. Opportunities should be provided for families to pursue recreation activities as a family unit.

9. Integrating Generations and Sub Groups

Community growth can be fostered through increased contact between people of varying age groups within the community. The more contact and interchange between seniors and younger adults and children, the greater the potential for community growth. Therefore, in the provision of leisure services, attempts should be made to provide such contact and interchange between seniors and younger residents with a view toward transmitting cultural heritage across the generations.

Community growth can further be fostered through an integrative mixing of various ethnic groups so that each better understands and appreciates the differences and strengths of the other. Multicultural recreation services can be used as a vehicle in making the community more cohesive.

Community growth can also be fostered by integrating various groups of people with special needs into mainstream programming. Whether individuals have physical, emotional or mental special needs, recreation can be used as a leveling and integrative force.

INDIVIDUAL BENEFITS

10. Fitness and Wellbeing

Fitness, in this context, is used broadly as a synonym for wellness, and refers to social, mental, emotional, as well as physical fitness. The fitness level of every resident of the community should be increased at least to a pre-determined minimum level with opportunities available for progress beyond this point.

11. Pre-School Leisure Opportunities

An opportunity should exist for every pre-school aged child to participate with other children in a variety of leisure experiences, in order to:

- a) Expose the child to social settings
- b) Foster gross motor development
- c) Provide a generally happy and satisfying atmosphere where growth can occur
- d) Teach basic safety skills and attitudes.

12. Basic Leisure Skill Development for School Aged Children

A wide variety of leisure pursuits in such areas as sport, performing arts, visual arts, outdoor nature-oriented skills, and hobbies, should be identified, and basic skill level instruction in each should be provided for school aged children in order to:

- a) Provide exposure to skills which may form the basis for enjoying lifetime leisure activities
- b) Contribute to gross motor and fine motor physical development
- c) Provide social settings in which social, moral and emotional growth can be fostered
- d) Provide the basis for leisure education (i.e. the teachings of the benefits of and wise use of leisure time).

13. Advanced Leisure Skill Development for School Aged Children

Opportunities should be provided for those children who wish to further develop their interest and skills in a wide variety of leisure pursuits beyond the basic level. Programs and facilities may be priced differently for "elite" activities.

14. Social Opportunities for Youth

The maturing from youth to adult which occurs during teenage years is often a critical time in the life of an individual. It is also a time when individual difficulties may result in severe social problems. Hence, opportunities should be provided for teens to:

- a) Learn about themselves and how they will react to various social settings and pressures
- b) Develop positive social/emotional/moral skills, principles and convictions
- c) Develop positive leisure lifestyle patterns which will remain with them through adulthood.

15. Basic Leisure Skill Development for Adults

Opportunities should be provided in a wide range of leisure endeavors and hobbies for adults who wish to be exposed to such endeavors and learn some basic skills in each.

16. Advanced Leisure Skill Development for Adults

Opportunities should be provided for those adults who wish to further develop their interests or abilities in a wide variety of leisure pursuits. Programs and facilities may be priced differently for "elite" activities.

17. Opportunities for Seniors

Opportunities should be provided for senior citizens to participate in the leisure activities in order to:

- a) Maintain overall fitness levels
- b) Maintain social contacts and continue to be involved in social environments
- c) Provide a continuing sense of worth and meaning of life through continuing personal growth.

18. Interpreting the Environment

Opportunities should be provided for every local resident to learn about, understand, relate to and experience all aspects of his/her environment.

19. Reflection/Escape

Often growth can occur through escape, reflection, contact with nature and relaxation in a serene natural environment. Because of this, opportunities should be provided for residents to experience nature.

20. Leisure Education

All residents should be generally educated as to the best use of free time and the benefits (e.g. growth and fulfillment) of participation.

21. Communication System

A communication/information system should be established and maintained whereby all residents are made aware of the availability of access to all leisure opportunities in the community.

22. Connecting with Nature

Enhancing opportunities to connect people with nature can result in both environmental and individual benefits. Connecting with nature is associated with improved cognitive, mental, and physical health, enhanced creativity and positive social behaviours.



**City of Abbotsford
Parks, Recreation & Culture**

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