

Research and Engagement Findings & Highlights - Executive Summary -

Study Purpose and Rationale

The following bullets provide an overview of the purpose and rationale for undertaking the Community Facilities Needs Assessment study.

- The Town and Country Centre and Nose Creek Valley Museum are long-standing and highly valued facilities; but are also aging and require capital re-investment to sustain safe and functional use.
- The City has, and continues to, grow significantly. There is a need to better understand community needs for the in-scope amenities.
- The study provides an opportunity to explore different options and provide Council with a resource that can inform future decision making.

In-Scope Amenities

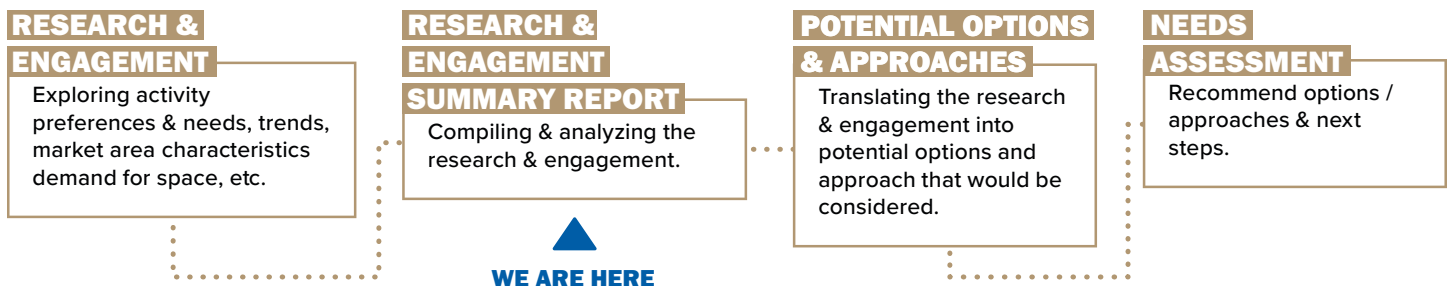
The following amenities are considered within the scope of study:

- Social gathering facilities
- Cultural event facilities
- Heritage facilities
- Older adult, leisure and activity spaces

**Note: In 2022 the City completed an Indoor and Outdoor Recreation Facility Needs Assessment that looked broadly at a wide array of recreation amenity types.*

Project Process Overview, Current Status, and Key Inputs

The following graphic illustrates the study process.



The detailed findings from the research and engagement have been compiled into a Research and Engagement Summary Report. This report will be a background document (appendices) to the final Community Facilities Needs Assessment.

The research and engagement undertaken by the project team provides a basis from which to identify potential options and recommendations. Identified as follows is an overview of the research and engagement tactics used.



Engagement Methods and Participation



**OPEN HOUSES:
20 ATTENDEES
(COMBINED OVER
TWO OPEN HOUSES)**



**CODED
HOUSEHOLD SURVEY:
1,138 RESPONSES**



**OPEN
HOUSEHOLD SURVEY:
145 RESPONSES**



**GROUP SURVEY:
12 RESPONSES**

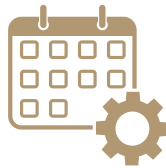


**COMMUNITY
GROUP MEETINGS:
11 MEETINGS
WITH 13 GROUPS**

Additional Research Undertaken



**REVIEW OF PREVIOUS
PLANNING AND STUDIES**



**ANALYSIS OF BOOKINGS
AND UTILIZATION**



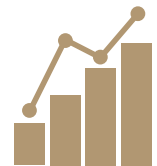
**REGIONAL AND
MARKET SCAN**



**REVIEW OF TRENDS
AND BEST PRACTICES**



**ANALYSIS OF KEY
POPULATION AND
DEMOGRAPHICS
INDICATORS**



**BENCHMARKING OF
IN-SCOPE AMENITIES
WITH COMPARATOR
COMMUNITIES**

Summary of Key Findings and Highlights

The following table summarizes key findings contained in the Research and Engagement Summary Report

Key Finding Statement	Supporting Research and Engagement (data contained in this report that supports the key findings statement)	Potential Impacts and Considerations for the Community Facilities Needs Assessment
<p>Utilization of the Town and Country Centre and Museum over the last several years reflects a broader need for flexible and affordable multi-purpose community space in Airdrie.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2021 and 2022, Alberta Health Services accounted for between 22-41% of Town and Country Centre space bookings. However, over the last two years private bookings have trended back towards community events and private bookings. In 2023, the Curling Club lounge was booked for 1,246 hours during the non-curling season. 64 different groups / organizations use the Museum. Notably, these groups reflect a wide array of faith, youth, public sector, and private sector organization types. Affordability of this space appears to be a key driver of demand and use. 	<p>The new library and multi-use facility will add approximately 73,000 sq. ft. of new community space inventory, including a mix of program rooms. The longer-term build-out of the SW Recreation Centre will additionally add incremental multi-use space in Airdrie. Space planning and options prioritization will need to differentiate community needs for general multi-use program space and event/social gathering space.</p>
<p>Market analysis and benchmarking suggests that Airdrie is likely deficient in large span social gathering / event venues relative to comparably sized communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The majority of comparably sized communities in Alberta provide a social gathering / event / conference capable facility with a capacity >500. The Town and Country Centre currently provides approximately 11,740 square feet of hall (and hall type) space. This level of hall space provision is lower than most comparably sized communities when looking at venues with a capacity of 150+ people (average of 22,141 square feet among the comparators). While numerous social and event hosting venues exist in the Calgary region, areas north of Calgary (with Airdrie as a centre-point) are less well served with these venues. 	<p>The identification of options will need to further explore opportunities and options to enhance the existing Town and Country Centre vs a potential new build (and the viability of the various options).</p>
<p>The community engagement validated that residents and groups value heritage, social, event, and activity spaces – however demand exists in the community for a multitude of recreation, culture, and leisure spaces and priorities need to be set.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 92% of Resident Survey respondents agreed (strongly or somewhat) that it is important that there are facilities in Airdrie that can be used to hold social gatherings and events. 86% of Resident Survey respondents agreed (strongly or somewhat) that it is important that people are able to learn about Airdrie’s history. Museum visitation has rebounded to near pre-pandemic levels. Group representatives engaged through discussion sessions frequently alluded to the perception that community services infrastructure has not kept pace with population growth. Approximately two thirds (66%) of Resident Survey respondents believe that enhancements are needed for Indoor Leisure, Social Gathering and Cultural and Heritage Facilities (15% do not believe enhancements are needed and 19% were unsure). 	<p>Previous studies undertaken by the City, including the Indoor and Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment study (2021), identify numerous needs and demands for recreation and related infrastructure. Future City planning will be required to prioritize the amenities included within the scope of the Community Facilities Needs Assessment (social, gathering, cultural, heritage, and related spaces) with these broader community demands.</p>

Key Finding Statement	Supporting Research and Engagement (data contained in this report that supports the key findings statement)	Potential Impacts and Considerations for the Community Facilities Needs Assessment
<p>Community demand for social, gathering and event space is likely to increase in lockstep with population growth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City staff track bookings that can't be fulfilled at the Town and Country Centre; on average there are 25 bookings per month that can't be fulfilled due to lack of availability (existing bookings) and facility size / amenities. • Over the past 10 years Airdrie has grown by approximately 30,000 residents (equivalent to the size of a city like Okotoks or Cochrane) with additional growth of 30,000 – 40,000 residents anticipated over the next decade. • Trends suggest an increased demand for aesthetically appealing and accessible large span event and gathering space that can accommodate a variety of private and public functions. • Resident Survey respondents identified a Community Hall as the highest priority amongst the in-scope amenity types. 	<p>Without incremental supply (enhanced or new space) it is probable that resident frustration with a lack of social, gathering and event space will increase. The identification and analysis of potential options in the final Community Facilities Needs Assessment will need to use the research and engagement in this document to further explore the cost-benefit equation of various options.</p>
<p>The ability and desire of the market (private sector and not for profit groups) to invest in event and social gathering infrastructure in Airdrie is uncertain.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of current hotels in Airdrie do not have large conference or event hosting spaces and future provision in new hotels or other private sector developments is unknown. • Groups and organizations engaged in discussion sessions cited affordability of space as both a current challenge and important move forward need (and a key driver of current use of spaces like those at the Museum). 	<p>The identification and analysis of options will need to strongly consider accessibility and affordability. Potential financial impacts on the City and its ratepayers (e.g. ability of different venue types to recover expenditures) will also need to be analyzed as options are explored.</p>
<p>Trends and demand for heritage, leisure, and social gathering opportunities (and their associated spaces) are dynamic and continually evolving.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trends in museum and related heritage space provision / services reflects the importance of providing accessible and visually pleasing spaces that advance place-making in the community and appeal to a wide array of ages and interests. • Older adults activity preferences are evolving, with a shift towards more multi-generational and physically active pursuits among many younger cohorts of seniors. 	<p>The identification and further analysis of short, medium, and long-term options for renewing or replacing the Museum will need to identify how to best position the space as a key hub for celebrating Airdrie's history and place-making, while also providing the flexibility to adapt in the future as interests change.</p> <p>Likewise, the future social and leisure needs of older adults in Airdrie will need to explore options for both dedicated and integrated spaces/facilities with the ability to adapt over time.</p>