

Understanding Community Investment in Recreation Spaces: Follow-up Findings from Focus Groups in the City of Spruce Grove, Town of Stony Plain, and Parkland County



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Introduction

Researchers from the Centre for Health Promotion Studies, School of Public Health at the University of Alberta worked with the community members in the City of Spruce Grove, Town of Stony Plain, and Parkland County (herein referred to as Tri-Region) to explore resident participation in recreation activities at local recreation facilities and open spaces. As part of this project, a two part telephone survey of Tri-Region residents was conducted. The pre-test was conducted in the Fall of 2011¹ and the post-test was completed in the Fall of 2013². Results from Tri-Region are being compared to the results of the telephone survey (one pre-test and one post-test survey) carried out in Strathcona County.

In addition to the telephone surveys, focus groups were conducted with community members in November 2011 and 2013 to gain a deeper understanding of the use of indoor recreation facilities and outdoor spaces within both Tri-Region and Strathcona County. In November of 2011, five focus groups were conducted: two Adult Regular User groups, two Adult Non-Regular User groups, and one Youth group³. In November of 2013 and February of 2014, a total of six focus groups were held with: two Adult Regular User groups, two Adult Non-Regular User groups, and two Youth groups. This report summarizes the major findings from the focus groups conducted in 2013/2014 with Tri-Region residents about their use of indoor facilities and outdoor spaces.

¹ Nykiforuk, C.I.J., Berry, T., Vallianatos, H., & Nieuwendyk, L.M. (2011). Understanding Community Investment in Recreation Spaces: City of Spruce Grove, Parkland County and Town of Stony Plain Baseline Survey Results (General). Edmonton, AB: School of Public Health, University of Alberta.

² Nykiforuk, C.I.J., Berry, T., Vallianatos, H., Nieuwendyk, L.M., & McGetrick, J.A. (2014). Understanding Community Investment in Recreation Spaces: City of Spruce Grove, Parkland County and Town of Stony Plain Follow-up Survey Results (General). Edmonton, AB: School of Public Health, University of Alberta.

³ Nykiforuk, C.I.J., Vallianatos, H., Berry, T., Nieuwendyk, L., Somerville, C., Montemurro, G. & McLeod, N. (2012). Understanding Community Investment in Recreation Spaces: Baseline Findings from Focus Groups in the City of Spruce Grove, Town of Stony Plain, and Parkland County (Fall 2011). Edmonton, AB: School of Public Health, University of Alberta.

Methods

Recruitment of Participants

Focus group participants were selected from a list of telephone survey² respondents who indicated a willingness to be involved in future projects related to this study. Trained members of the research team contacted these individuals by telephone to recruit participants for the focus groups (approximately 7-23 weeks after they had participated in the survey). Potential participants were called up to a total of 3 times, at which point 'no-answers' were removed from the list. Our aim was to obtain a representative sample from the population, so tracking sheets were maintained during the recruitment process to track socio-demographic variables (i.e., age, gender, income level, and facility usage). Individuals who agreed to participate in one of the focus group sessions were contacted a few days before their scheduled session as a reminder. Messages and voicemails were left for those who were not available at the time of our reminder calls.

Data Collection

Two focus groups were conducted with adult participants categorized as *Adult Regular Users* (i.e., those who personally use indoor recreation facilities and/or outdoor spaces in Tri-Region one or more time(s) per week). Two additional focus groups were conducted with adult participants categorized as *Adult Non-Regular Users* (i.e., those who personally use public recreation facilities and/or outdoor spaces in Tri-Region fewer than once per week). Two focus groups were also conducted with youth, aged 13-17; this group was comprised of both *Regular* and *Non-Regular Users*. **Table 1** displays the number of participants recruited for each focus group session and the number of participants who attended.

Table 1. Focus Group Attendance

Focus Group	Number of Participants Recruited n	Number of Participants in Attendance n (%)
Adult Regular Users (Group A)	12	3 (25%)
Adult Regular Users (Group B)	11	4 (36%)
Adult Non-Regular Users (Group A)	13	5 (38%)
Adult Non-Regular Users (Group B)	13	3 (23%)
Youth (Regular and Non-Regular Users – Group A)	6	1 (17%)
Youth (Regular and Non-Regular Users – Group B)	4	3 (75%)

Focus groups took place in meeting rooms in the Spruce Grove Pioneer Centre and the TransAlta Tri Leisure Centre. Participants filled out a brief 8-item questionnaire to provide basic socio-demographic information (e.g., age, income, and ethnicity). The focus group discussions were led by a member of the University of Alberta research team and two research assistants were present to take notes. Refreshments and light snacks were provided to participants at each session. The focus group facilitator followed a semi-structured question guide to lead each session. A single use drop-in pass for use at the TransAlta Tri Leisure Centre was given to each participant as compensation for his/her time.

The focus groups were scheduled to last a maximum of an hour and a half, and varied in duration (68 minutes on average). The focus group discussions were digitally recorded and transcribed *verbatim*.

Data Analysis

Using a thematic analysis approach, the research team analyzed transcripts of focus group discussions separately for (1) *Adult Regular Users*, (2) *Adult Non-Regular Users*, and (3) *Youth*. The emergent themes for each group were then organized into (a) facilitators, (b) barriers, and (c) recommendations for improving the use of both indoor recreation facilities and outdoor spaces.

Demographics of Participants

The following figures display demographic information about the *Adult Regular User* (**Figure 1**) and *Adult Non-Regular User* (**Figure 2**) focus group participants, including age, gender, family income, as well as area of the community where they reside. Four *Youth* participated in the focus group. Two were female and two were male and ranged in age from 14 to 16. Two participants resided in the City of Spruce Grove and two resided in Parkland County.

Figure 1. Demographic Profile of *Adult Regular User* Focus Group Participants.

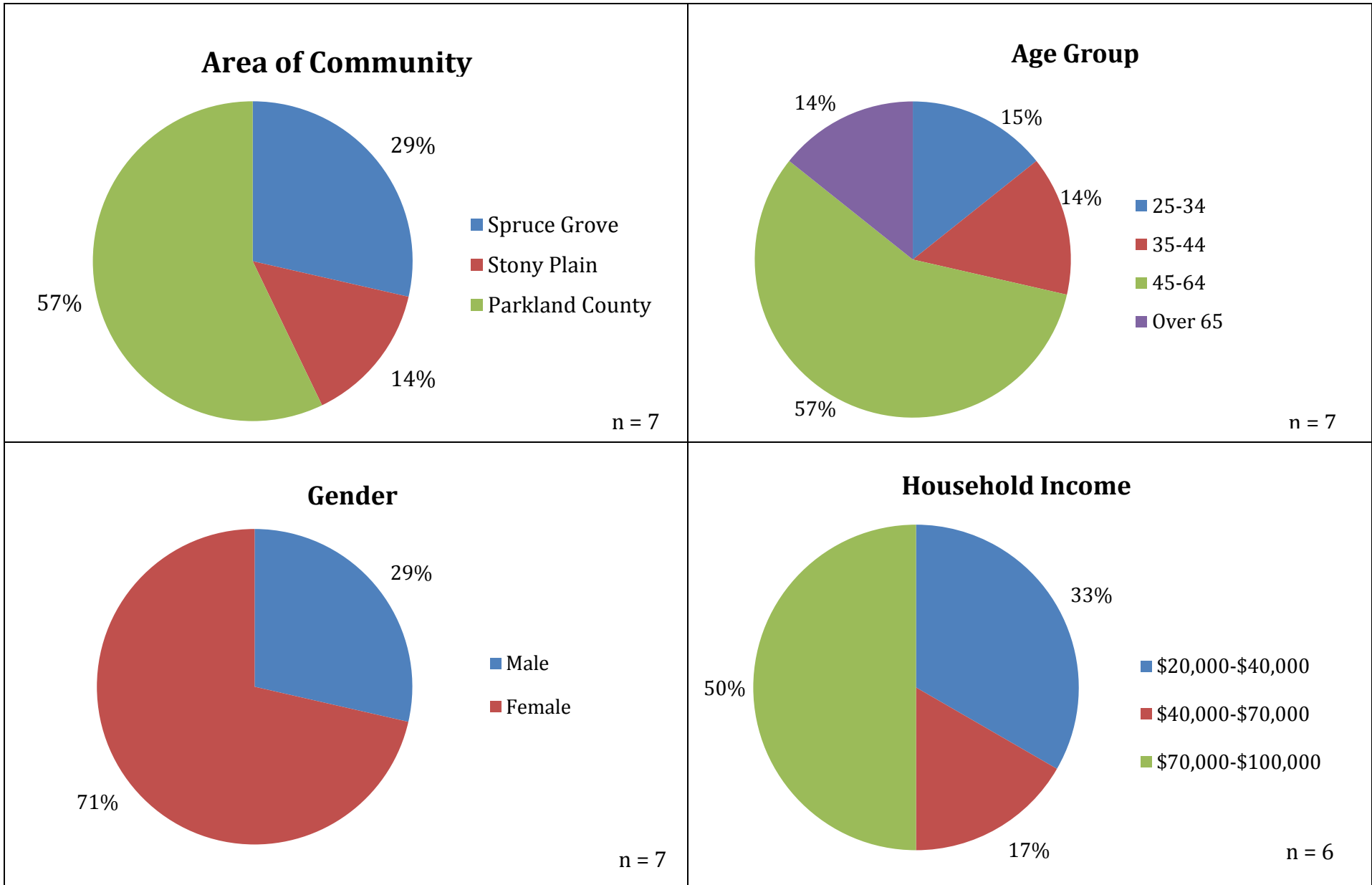
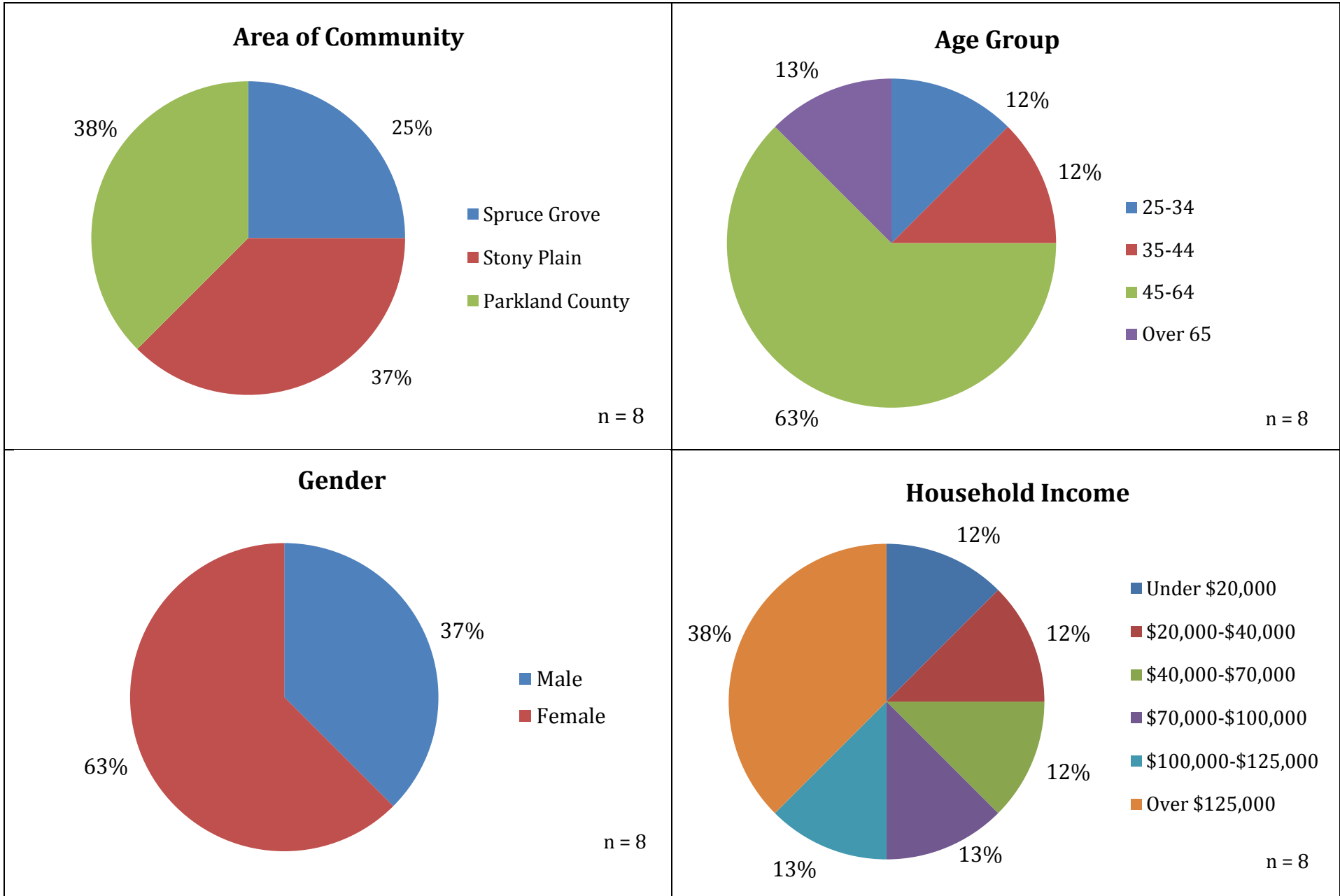


Figure 2. Demographic Profile of Adult Non-Regular User Focus Group Participants.



Findings

To begin the conversation regarding the use of indoor facilities and outdoor spaces within the community, participants were asked the question: “What does being physically active mean to you?” Example responses to this question were shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Responses to “What does being physically active mean to you?”

Adult Regular Users	Adult Non-Regular Users	Youth
<p>“More than just sitting on a couch; being vertical instead of horizontal.” (female, 52 years old)</p> <p>“I interpret physical activity to be more activity, i.e. sports related. Be it skating or hockey, or horseback riding, or skiing, or any of those things... When I think of physical activity it’s about a conscious – not like necessarily vacuuming, although that probably is physical as it can get to sometimes.” (female, 54 years old)</p>	<p>“Just staying healthy and feeling good, and for me setting an example for my kids. It’s a good thing to eat right and exercise.” (female, 34 years old)</p> <p>“Moving, just keep moving. Um, and as you get older, things change as to how much you move, and what you do.” (female, 54 years old)</p> <p>“It’s a matter of keeping mind and body healthy.” (female, 52 years)</p>	<p>“It means like having – going through a strenuous activity. So like you’re, I would be heavy breathing or like feel – like walking away feeling a bit better.” (male, 16 years old)</p> <p>“I find it more ... keeping control of your body and making sure that it’s always like in shape. And so you, you take care of it... watch your diet, and keep up a physical activity, just you know, so you can keep up with like sports and all those other things that your body kind of requires of you.” (male, 15 years old)</p>

The focus groups continued with the facilitator encouraging participants to reflect and discuss issues regarding access to and use of indoor facilities and outdoor spaces within their community. The following section outlines the key themes that emerged from focus group discussions.

Indoor recreational facilities

Participants mentioned a number of factors that influence their use of indoor facilities, which were organized into facilitators, barriers, and recommendations. The following sections present the major themes for *Adult Regular User*, *Adult Non-Regular User*, and *Youth*.

Adult Regular Users

Key themes related to the use of indoor facilities accompanied by representative quotes are presented in **Table 3a**, **Table 3b**, and **Table 3c**.

Table 3a. Illustrative quotes for the major thematic findings related to “facilitators to use” for indoor recreational facilities. *Adult Regular Users*.

Theme	Quotes
Facilitators to Use	
Diversity of recreational opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Monday night is the drop in [volleyball] in Spruce Grove, but I don’t know if it’s geared for age levels. I know there’s a very competitive league, as well.” (female, 52 years old)
Diversity of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “I do like the – like the Tri is so very versatile. So when my children were younger, it – it was almost not an option to go somewhere else, ‘cause they had childcare. So then, and that’s the only facility around here that has childcare.” (female, 37 years old)
Membership benefits and cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “It’s great, the membership definitely pays for itself, ‘cause the user fees, the individual user fees are quite expensive.” (female, 37 years old)

Table 3b. Illustrative quotes for the major thematic findings related to “barriers to use” for indoor recreational facilities. *Adult Regular Users.*

Theme	Quotes
Barriers to Use	
Crowded facilities/limited infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Cause at the Tri, because it’s so very busy... At some points in time, like it’s very limited to get on the equipment that you want... So I go to the Fitness Centre in Stony.” (female, 37 years old) • “Depending on what time of day you’re there, and then you’re waiting for a machine... Sometimes you have to stand in line to check in and by the time you actually get to your locker and get ready to work out, you’ve been there for 20 minutes or half an hour.” (female, 54 years old)
High costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “There is a cost involved [with using the recreational facilities]. So you’d have to be able to find out and decide if you can afford the cost. Probably a lot people can, some people can’t.” (male, 59 years old) • “And I know in Strathcona County, like at the Millennium Place, like their facility... it’s comparable anyway [to the Tri Leisure Centre]. But their user fees are cheaper over there, than they are here in Spruce Grove.” (female, 37 years old)
Cleanliness issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I don’t even like going there [Tri Leisure Centre] in the evening. The gym stinks... That’s why I don’t go there in the evening.” (female, 37 years old)

Table 3c. Illustrative quotes for the major thematic findings related to “recommendations” for indoor recreational facilities. *Adult Regular Users.*

Theme	Quotes
Recommendations Recreational programming and drop-in time improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I think from some of your comments too about the drop in classes, is maybe evaluate whether you know you want, a few more evening type activities. Because there are a lot of retirees in this region. So it makes sense to have during the day stuff, which is great, but not everybody, you know, is retired yet. So it’s nice to have that opportunity for a little bit of drop in.” (female, 54 years old) • “They’re [recreational sports programs] not like a month thing or two week thing, or some you can join and just do that for two weeks. It’d be better that way, so then a guy could join up for some of the two week things.” (male, 61 years old)
Awareness and communication improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I think the internet’s a great forum, but you know what? People our age aren’t able to access that... So they’re advertising stuff, it’s good on the internet, because a lot of people can use it... But there’s a lot of other people out there that can’t use it. So they’d have to find a forum of informing [them].” (male, 59 years old) • “If you go to the Stony Plain, say, website, to the Town of Stony Plain, you’ll probably find different things in there, but you’re not going to find, like the Brightbank. You’re not going to find the – the Muir Lake... then you have to go to a different website to find out all the things that are in Spruce Grove... Well, like it’s something that would encompass it all, would be great.” (female, 37 years old)
Senior programming improvements and expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “She’s [senior mother] very active... But, that’s probably one of her biggest complaints is – is that a lot of these activities need to be geared past five o’clock.” (female, 52 years old) • “I wish that they would, in the winter time, at least allow seniors to use the track [at the Tri Leisure Centre] free of charge. That’s silly, ‘cause it’s silly for them to be outside walking. We want to encourage, you know, everybody to be physically active, and seniors should not be walking out there.” (female, 37 years old)
Security and safety improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Theft is a problem. Like they [Tri Leisure staff] try to alert you to that, without necessarily doing more than just putting a sign up saying, you know, maybe they need a little more walkabout security type people.” (female, 54 years old)

Adult Non-Regular Users

Table 4a, Table 4b, and Table 4c show the main themes followed by illustrative quotes that emerged from the focus groups with adult non-regular users.

Table 4a. Illustrative quotes for the major thematic findings related to “facilitators to use” for indoor recreational facilities. Adult Non-Regular Users.

Theme	Quotes
Facilitators to Use	
Diversity of recreational opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “At our Golden Age Club [community hall], apparently there is a jamb-, a monthly jamboree... it’s like a people come and bring their music instruments, and they come to dance.” (female, 62 years old)
Availability / Diversity of private services*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “[The Tri Leisure Centre has the] best physio[therapy] facility ever... They do IMS [intra-muscular stimulation] treatment and acupuncture. They now have a massage therapist, there as well, I believe. And the physio people are fantastic... I highly recommend them.” (female, 52 years old)

* Participants referred to the physiotherapy service at Tri Leisure Centre.

Table 4b. Illustrative quotes for the major thematic findings related to “barriers to use” for indoor recreational facilities. Adult Non-Regular Users (Continued on next page).

Theme	Quotes
Barriers to Use	
Limited availability of recreational programming and drop-in times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The Tri Leisure there, there’s no real open gym or open field really... It’s very tightly scheduled. And people can’t just feel free that they can go out and there and kick a soccer ball or something, there’s no invitation there.” (female, 47 years old) “They do have the drop-ins at the Tri, where you can go play basketball, but the hours aren’t ideal, I think it’s like 8 to 9 on a Tuesday evening, and volleyball is Wednesday, but the hours are 8 to 9. So even for me, I don’t want to go out at that time.” (female, 34 years old)
Crowded facilities/limited infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “[It is a] great facility [Tri Leisure Centre] but the lockers are like nine inches wide... I mean there’s not enough space. Especially if you’re a parent or something with kids... the lockers are horrible.” (male, 41 years old) “I realize there’s a space issue there [Tri Leisure Centre] because of the volume of people that are now using that place compared to what was – when it was built... They’ve got so much going on the sides now that the people that are working on the sides are squeezing onto the track. So then they’re taking up the track space... I think it’s just a mess.” (female, 47 years old)
Security and safety issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The security for the lockers and stuff, is – is not good enough [at the Tri Leisure Centre]. I hear almost weekly, of somebody getting something stolen out of a locker, whether it’s a phone or – and I know you should probably leave those in your vehicle but I don’t, I wouldn’t feel any safer with that.” (female, 54 years old)

Table 4b. Illustrative quotes for the major thematic findings related to “barriers to use” for indoor recreational facilities. *Adult Non-Regular Users* (Continued from previous page).

Theme	Quotes
Barriers to Use	
High costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I haven’t been going [to the Tri Leisure Centre] as much now that it’s ten dollars to go.” (male, 41 years old) • “And the other thing with it too, is um, the membership we’ll say is \$500, give or take. If you pay it outright, but if you don’t pay it outright for a year, there’s administrative cost tacked on it too.” (female, 52 years old)
Cleanliness issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Yeah especially the family one [change room], it gets pretty nasty in there. We just started splitting up boys and girls, and sending my husband to go to one and we go to the other, ‘cause the family one’s just gross.” (female, 34 years old)
Unwelcoming atmosphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “And I just think the whole place [Tri Leisure Centre] is kind of fascist, with the signs – ‘Smile You’re on Camera’, and just signs everywhere. I just think it could be just a little bit more welcoming.” (male, 41 years old) • “The lost and found at the – at the Tri Leisure Centre, I think it’s a customer service thing. Uh they take everything, they throw it like on a baker’s rack down the hallway. And it’s wet, it’s dirty, and they just, they just heap it on there. And it just doesn’t speak – speak too well of what, how they view their – their clientele.” (male, 41 years old)
Inconvenient facility location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The further you are out away, the harder it is to – to utilize these facilities... Even for myself, Spruce Grove is probably 30, 35 minutes from where I am. I find to drive in to go swimming, say for half an hour, isn’t worth it.” (female, 52 years old) • “And honestly, I feel being from Stony, I feel that the Tri Leisure is actually for Spruce Grove.” (female, 54 years old)
Business focus; not health and wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The biggest problem with this Tri Leisure Center in here, is, it’s managed basically by the City of Spruce Grove. They do the biggest management of it. I mean yeah the County and Stony Plain Town has a little bit of input into it. But it’s designed to be an income position. So they rent that place to hockey clubs from Edmonton. The local are not involved in it. The rinks are for cash income. Occasionally yes the locals get to use them, but I mean that’s not what it was originally designed for.” (male, 67 years old) • “To me, I know it’s a business, but to me it’s not about health and wellness. It’s about money... it’s one more thing to turn me off of using the indoor facilities.” (female, 54 years old)

Table 4c. Illustrative quotes for the major thematic findings related to “recommendations” for indoor recreational facilities. *Adult Non-Regular Users.*

Theme	Quotes
Recommendations	
Awareness and communication improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Maybe they could [make a] quarterly, or something like, put in a little newsletter, facilities, their addresses, or how to find them [recreational opportunities]. Or you know, or showcase one a month, or something.” (female, 52 years old)
Senior programming improvements and expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I kind of laughed at the swimming pool at the Tri Leisure. It is free to senior citizens, but do you know what age that senior citizen is? They have to be I think it’s 80, before that facility is a free use.” (female, 52 years old)
Youth programming improvements and expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “But I’m just thinking if we were to go in line with what the children are utilizing, and I mean they’re using all their DS Games. But why not get them physical, you see the Xbox where they’re jumping and doing the dance. Why not utilize some of that? That equipment isn’t that expensive.” (female, 52 years old)
County support of community-based initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We’re so spread out, but I would like to see like you say, more of the community clubs.” (female, 52 years old) • “If you have a good community developer out there, you know, closer to you. They can find those kinds of people. And organize club, classes, or whatever.” (female, 62 years old)

Youth

Main themes and representative quotes that emerged from the youth focus groups were presented in **Table 5a**, **Table 5b**, and **Table 5c**.

Table 5a. Illustrative quotes for the major thematic findings related to “facilitators to use” for indoor recreational facilities. Youth.

Theme	Quotes
Facilitators to Use	
Diversity of recreational opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “[There are] a lot of – a lot of areas you can go [in the Tri Leisure Centre]... depends what you want to work on, right, cause it’s kind of like if you wanted to do cardio, I mean you got a full track there that you can just do laps on.” (youth, 15 years old) • “Up on the track, kind of like off to the side of the track, they just have little like stations kind of everywhere of stuff you can do... So they’ve got like a couple bikes, and a couple ellipticals, and then like bars and weights up there, a little bit.” (youth, 15 years old)
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It’s really easy to get to the Tri, actually they just built a road. It’s not quite done yet, so sometimes I cut across when they’re not doing construction, but they just paved a road that goes straight through.” (youth, 16 years old)

Table 5b. Illustrative quotes for the major thematic findings related to “barriers to use” for indoor recreational facilities. Youth.

Theme	Quotes
Barriers to Use	
High costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Having a [registered] program can sometimes be like a lot of money [at the Tri Leisure Centre].” (youth, 16 years old)
Inconvenient facility location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “For people who live further on [in Parkland County], like there’s really no facility similar to this further down in Spruce Grove, that people have, like immediate access to, that’s indoors.” (youth, 15 years old) • “There’s a girl on my team, and she’s always late, and sometimes she doesn’t even come and then she’ll just tell us, ‘well my mom was at work’, or ‘my mom’s not home’, or, so she can’t really get around, because she has no one.” (youth, 14 years old)

Table 5c. Illustrative quotes for the major thematic findings related to “recommendations” for indoor recreational facilities. *Youth.*

Theme	Quotes
Recommendations	
Youth programming improvements and expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I think if we had like an introductory [recreational physical activity] class every month or so, so that people could just, could look it up on line, and check it out... I think that’d be useful.” (youth, 16 years old)

Summary of Main Thematic Findings

Table 6 summarizes the major thematic findings related to indoor recreational facilities that emerged through the focus groups with *Adult Regular Users*, *Adult Non-Regular Users*, and *Youth* in Tri-Region (Note: this is not an exhaustive list).

Table 6. Summary of main themes related to the indoor recreational facilities discussed in the focus groups.

Theme	Adult Regular Users	Adult Non-Regular Users	Youth
Facilitators to Use			
Diversity of recreational opportunities	✓	✓	✓
Diversity of services	✓	✓	
Membership benefits and cost	✓		
Accessibility			✓
Barriers to Use			
Limited availability of recreational programming and drop-in times		✓	
Crowded facilities/limited infrastructure	✓	✓	
Security and safety issues		✓	
High costs	✓	✓	✓
Cleanliness issues	✓	✓	
Unwelcoming atmosphere		✓	
Inconvenient facility location		✓	✓
Business focus; not health and wellness		✓	
Recommendations			
Recreational programming and drop-in time improvements	✓		
Awareness and communication improvements	✓	✓	
Senior programming improvements and expansion	✓	✓	
Youth programming improvements and expansion		✓	✓
County support of community-based initiatives		✓	
Security and safety improvements	✓		

Outdoor Spaces

With respect to outdoor spaces, participants indicated a number of facilitators, barriers, and recommendations to improve the use of these areas within the Tri-Region area. These themes are presented in the following sections, along with quotations shared by *Adult Regular User*, *Adult Non-Regular User*, and *Youth*.

Adult Regular Users

Quotes representing the main themes that emerged from the focus groups with adult regular users were shown in **Table 7a**, **Table 7b**, and **Table 7c**.

Table 7a. Illustrative quotes for the major thematic findings related to “facilitators of use” for outdoor spaces. *Adult Regular Users*.

Theme	Quotes
Facilitators of Use	
Diversity of recreational opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We are fortunate we do have a lot of outdoor stuff.” (female, 37 years old) • “Jubilee Park which is new park facility in Spruce Grove, where you can air golf and it’s connecting through the trail systems... it’s phenomenal as well, and I mean you will see the trail systems between Spruce and Stony Plain open up, very shortly too.” (female, 52 years old)
Maintenance and cleanliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The walking trails [in Chickakoo] are actually cleared in the winter too... So you can go cross country skiing there, snowshoeing, regular walking, they’re very well maintained.” (female, 25 years old) • “Stony Plain has an incredible BMX, and... it’s a phenomenal facility and I hear nothing but great things about it, and it’s busy, and well organized. And it’s beautiful.” (female, 52 years old) • “I know the Dog Run Creek in Stony is maintained. They go around and clean their rinks, every other day.” (female, 37 years old)

Table 7b. Illustrative quotes for the major thematic findings related to “barriers of use” for outdoor spaces. *Adult Regular Users*.

Theme	Quotes
Barriers to Use	
Security and safety issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “There is a BMX track in Stony and there’s a skate park. The skate park here [Spruce Grove], I’ve heard, is just a big drug fest.” (female, 37 years old) • “My kids all grew up on acreages, and they used to have that skateboard in Stony Plain there, and I wouldn’t let my kids go there. ‘Cause you knew all the 18 and 17 year olds there, and onward there at night, there was always drugs involved. Fighting, they were out beating up the small kids, and if you weren’t there to chaperone, forget it. And then when you were there, they bullied them, so we just stayed away.” (male, 61 years old)
Lack of awareness and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I think a lot of people don’t even know that the Stony Plain outdoor pool even exists... because it is um, well it’s over by the high school, and you actually have to physically drive over there to even see it. It’s like right on the corner edge of town.” (female, 37 years old)

Table 7c. Illustrative quotes for the major thematic findings related to “recommendations” for outdoor spaces. *Adult Regular Users*.

Theme	Quotes
Recommendations	
Awareness and communication improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “And you read your paper, but a lot of them say ‘community this, community that’. But you don’t know what they’re going to be doing...So unless you got out and check it out, I guess, but would be nice if there was a website a guy could go on, saying this community there is lawn bowling, this or that.” (male, 61 years old)
Infrastructure improvements and expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I think the parents have to drive their kids too far to go to work and participate in whatever sport they’re doing like ringette or hockey. Ringette isn’t done in Stony, because they don’t have the ice time and stuff, they have to come to Spruce Grove... But then for hockey, for minor hockey there’s no – they don’t have nothing there. And so, I think an extra covered surface rink would be good.” (male, 59 years old)

Adult Non-Regular Users

Table 8a, Table 8b, and **Table 8c** summarize the main themes shared by participants who do not frequently use the recreation spaces in the Tri-Region area. Selected quotes represent participants' opinions.

Table 8a. Illustrative quotes for the major thematic findings related to “facilitators of use” for outdoor spaces. Adult Non-Regular Users.

Theme	Quotes
Facilitators of Use	
Diversity of recreational opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The rinks are awesome... the rinks are really good... like Brookwood is amazing, like where the kids will go play pick up hockey, and throw their sticks in a pile and just start.” (male, 41 years old) • “And there’s some trails back there [in Spruce Grove] that are quite nice. So if I lived in those areas, I – I would definitely make use of them.” (female, 52 years old)
Infrastructure expansions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I’m appreciating the off leash parks that they’re finally building out here, because they was none here when we first came out here. But you know it’s getting better.” (female, 47 years old) • “Actually they’ve just put in some trails here in the fall, so I’m really excited about using those.” (male, 41 years old)

Table 8b. Illustrative quotes for the major thematic findings related to “barriers to use” for outdoor spaces. Adult Non-Regular Users.

Theme	Quotes
Barriers to Use	
Security and safety issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I think the walking paths, like in Stony, um, even at the school, it’s not as well lit as it could be. The lights go out, um, and I don’t feel comfortable walking there ... after supper now, I mean it’s dark... and there’s been moose in the park. There’s been coyotes, there’s fox ... you want to be able to – to feel a little bit safer out there. The darn lights keep going out, and you get within ten feet the light goes out. And so you know, I go off and go around the block instead of going through.” (female, 54 years old) • “And it’s [the skate park] right across from the woods, like in Stony, right across from the wooded area park... So it’s – it’s not a good scene... It’s because of a lot of drug activity.” (male, 41 years old)
Lack of awareness and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Advertising is everything... You know if you don’t know about it, what’s the point?” (female, 54 years old) • “But it is hard to find it [the Chickakoo park entrance] if you don’t know where you’re going.” (male, 67 years old)

Table 8c. Illustrative quotes for the major thematic findings related to “recommendations” for outdoor spaces. *Adult Non-Regular Users.*

Theme	Quotes
Recommendations	
Awareness and communication improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “And so the marketing, you know, is – is a big deal for any kind of recreational space. So we don’t know what’s happening with the Parkland County facilities, we don’t know what’s happening in the private facilities. If it could be coordinated.” (female, 62 years old) • “I think part of the problem too is the lack of knowledge of what facilities are out here ... I don’t know where half these places are. My neighbour actually mentioned something about a water park for kids in Stony Plain, and I have no idea where it is. And I think maybe that’s something for a lot of people in the country, they don’t even know what’s out here. Signs aren’t up, there’s no markage. Maybe something that could go out with the communities.” (female, 52 years old)
Infrastructure improvements and expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I think maybe some more cover in the open area parks, maybe more covered structures... For rain or the sun, too. You’re really bright, it would be nice to have a nice piece of shade to, you know, sit, a lot of young kids and stuff like that.” (male, 41 years old) • “Something that I would like to see recreational wise... [is] something to do with canoeing, because we’ve got – we’ve got the river. Um, but there isn’t really anywhere that you could safely...Safely get on and off. And I think that’s something that could really be facilitated here.” (female, 52 years old)
Community meet-ups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It would be kind of nice if there were some walking groups in the summer time... to get with a group, a sign up group even you know, volunteered through the town or whatever. You meet at a certain place and walk for an hour. It’s always nicer to walk with – with other people and I think you’re more inclined to go further.” (female, 54 years old)
Child and youth recreational opportunity improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I think they need better rinks on the side for – for kids, because sometimes the guys come and they’re playing hockey, it’s just too dangerous and you got to get your kids off the – you get to get your kids off the ice. They should have like another skating area for kids.” (male, 41 years old) • “The parks are built for grade, probably two to six. I know there’s equipment out there that you create and install for kindergarten aged kids, it’s smaller. And I also know that there is equipment you can build for teenagers, because every teenager I’ve ever been around in the park, is climbing on the equipment. But they don’t make structures for them, for their size, for their abilities to challenge them.” (female, 47 years old)

Youth

The main themes discussed in the focus groups with youth were presented in **Table 9a**, **Table 9b**, and **Table 9c**. Examples of their thoughts were illustrated with representative quotes.

Table 9a. Illustrative quotes for the major thematic findings related to “facilitators of use” for outdoor spaces. Youth.

Theme	Quotes
Facilitators of Use	
Diversity of recreational opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It’s [Jubilee Park is] just a really, really large kind of open concept outdoor playground... they have like a disc – a disc golf course... So you play golf with a Frisbee... you can kind of see like groups of friends playing like, just football in like this big field. And then they built a pretty new, like nice modern playground there, that a lot of kids like to go to. And then they’ve got like a basketball court there too.” (youth, 15 years old) • “They [the county] have a lot of like, for the sports that you want to do, they have a lot of them outdoor, like there’s outdoor basketball courts all over.” (youth, 15 years old)

Table 9b. Illustrative quotes for the major thematic findings related to “barriers to use” for outdoor spaces. Youth.

Theme	Quotes
Barriers to Use	
Security and safety issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “There’s the skate park and there’s a different crowd, I don’t really hang out with who goes there... They usually, usually somebody smoking marijuana, or the occasional person that comes there kind of, insanely aggressive...there might be a fight or something.” (youth, 16 years old) • “They don’t have bike lanes here [in Spruce Grove]. There [are] sides of highways, but those can be a little... terrifying sometimes.” (youth, 16 years old)
Cleanliness issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Well we have an outdoor pool, and I don’t like it, so I don’t go there... I just find it’s really dirty there, and I, like it’s not really their fault, ‘cause the stuff from the trees goes in and stuff. I just find that people there are kind of like messy and they don’t really clean it – I don’t know, I just don’t like it.” (youth, 14 years old)
Crowded facilities/ limited infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Also it [the outdoor pool] gets really crowded there really quickly... You find the hot summer day, there’s not too much room in that pool to jump around.” (youth, 15 years old)
Limited age-appropriate opportunities for youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I think just ‘cause of our age, we don’t – I don’t know if you guys, but I, the splash parks... Aren’t a big hit.” (male, 15 years old)

Table 9c. Illustrative quotes for the major thematic findings related to “recommendations” for outdoor spaces. *Youth.*

Theme	Quotes
Recommendations	
Community meet-ups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Something the city and I think they could do, is kind of a hiking program, or if they just have backpacks with weights in them, and get people to walk around with that, because it... could help motivate them to get the confidence they need to go hike up somewhere and see beautiful sights in, say, Jasper.” (male, 16 years old)

Summary of Main Thematic Findings

Table 10 summarizes the major thematic findings related to outdoor recreational facilities and spaces that emerged through the focus groups with *Adult Regular Users*, *Adult Non-Regular Users*, and *Youth* in the Tri-Region area (Note: this is not an exhaustive list).

Table 10. Summary of main themes related to the outdoor recreational spaces discussed in the focus groups.

Theme	Adult Regular Users	Adult Non-Regular Users	Youth
Facilitators to Use			
Diversity of recreational opportunities	✓	✓	✓
Maintenance and cleanliness	✓		
Infrastructure expansions		✓	
Barriers to Use			
Security and safety issues	✓	✓	✓
Lack of awareness and communication	✓	✓	
Cleanliness issues			✓
Crowded facilities/ limited infrastructure			✓
Limited age-appropriate opportunities for youth			✓
Recommendations			
Awareness and communication improvements	✓	✓	
Infrastructure improvements and expansion	✓	✓	
Community meet-ups		✓	✓
Child and youth recreational opportunity improvements		✓	

Limitations and Considerations

The discussions with community members revealed a number of interesting points regarding access to and use of indoor facilities and outdoor spaces within the Tri-Region area. However, there are some considerations that should be taken into account when interpreting findings from the focus groups. As with most focus groups, our discussions only involved a few individuals. This small sample of individuals may not represent the larger community in their thoughts about indoor facilities and outdoor recreation spaces.

It is also important to note that there were some differences in socio-demographic variables between the *Adult Regular User* and *Adult Non-Regular User* focus group participants. There was a higher percentage of *Adult Regular Users* from rural Parkland County (57%) compared to *Adult Non-Regular Users* (38%). As well, 14% of *Adult Regular Users* were from Stony Plain, compared to 37% in the *Adult Non-Regular User* group. With respect to total household income, none of the participants in the *Adult Regular User* focus groups reported income higher than \$100,000 CAD, whereas 50% of participants in the *Adult Non-Regular User* focus group fell within this category, including 38% of *Adult Non-Regular Users* reporting a household income over \$125,000 CAD. Overall, and despite these considerations, the focus groups illuminated many factors that would not have been found through telephone survey data alone.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Focus group participants described a number of facilitators and barriers to the use of indoor facilities and outdoor spaces, as well as provided some suggestions for the future. Based on these findings, members of the research team formulated their main recommendations that could enhance use of and access to indoor facilities and outdoor spaces by all members of the Tri-Region community.

Note: some of the recommendations that emerged from the focus groups may overlap with initiatives already underway in or planned for by the City of Spruce Grove, Town of Stony Plain, or Parkland County. This may indicate that some residents may not be aware of these initiatives and may benefit from further communication tailored to this purpose.

The recommendations listed below are in no particular order.

1. Diversifying the advertising strategies to promote recreation facilities, programs and events may encourage people to use recreation spaces. While social media is an effective communication tool, the use of old-fashioned ways of marketing is still needed to reach those people who are digitally excluded (e.g., rural residents who may not have access to high-speed internet and older people who are less interested in using the internet). Mailed newsletters or poster displays at strategic community places may have a positive impact on these groups.
2. Showcasing programs and activities periodically on traditional media (e.g., local newsletters and news programs on radio and television) and social media may increase awareness of the recreation opportunities available in the communities.
3. Listing all recreation facilities, programs, leisure activities, and sports events offered in the Town of Stony Plain, City of Spruce Grove, and Parkland County throughout the year on only one website may help residents to find opportunities to be physically active. Also, brochures may be needed to reach those people who have no easy access to the internet.

4. Creating better wayfinding signs are needed to easily direct people to the recreation opportunities available in the community. Improving signage on the streets and roads may foster access to the recreational facilities and outdoor spaces and encourage physical activity.
5. Reducing the price of drop-in passes may have a positive impact on the use of indoor recreation facilities among people who currently do not have memberships. In addition, subsidizing memberships for low income families may promote equitable access.
6. Increasing the police presence and installing better lighting in the parks may decrease drug use, enhance perceptions of safety, and encourage people to be physically active outdoors. In particular, skateboard parks should be prioritized to create spaces where families and young children can play and have fun without fear.
7. Improving security at Tri Leisure Centre with cameras on site and security guards doing regular patrols may prevent lockers thefts. Campaigns to report suspicious behaviors and situations may contribute to a decrease in thefts.
8. Installing exclusive, continuous bike lanes on the streets and highways may encourage people to cycle either for transportation or for leisure.
9. Expanding programming and drop-in activities in the evenings would help the working population access indoor recreational facilities. Another advantage of the evening activities would be to reduce peak hours, since participants reported crowded conditions as barriers to use recreation facilities.
10. Offering programs that last less than a month could help potential users to identify which sport or activity is more suitable to their needs, increasing usage rate.
11. Developing specific programs for seniors and permitting them to use the tracks at no charges during wintertime may foster their engagement in physical activity and contribute to healthy, active aging.

12. Creating physical activity programs that focus on health and well-being may encourage people who are currently physically inactive, particularly those who are receiving prescription for physical activity.
13. Providing more physical activity programs for youth may increase the usage rate of indoor recreational facilities. In addition, adding equipment appropriate for their age in parks where they feel safe may foster physical activity engagement among youth.
14. Defining specific skating times for families and for adults who want play hockey may encourage parents to bring their children to skate in outdoor rinks.
15. Promoting community-based physical activity programs and meet-ups at community centres would help people meet their physical activity needs in the community where they live. Organizing these activities for underserved rural residents may be a short-term solution for those people who do not live close to the recreational facilities and face more barriers to use these spaces.
16. Improving the cleanliness in the outdoor swimming pool, as well as promoting water sports (e.g., canoeing in the river) and group activities (e.g., for walking) may be effective strategies for increasing engagement in outdoor physical activity.
17. Ensuring cleanliness of the indoor recreation facilities, especially during the evenings may create a welcoming atmosphere where users can enjoy their time when exercising. Moreover, it may attract potential users to use the recreation facilities more frequently.

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