

PARKS FEASIBILITY PHASE 1 & 2

What We Heard Report

Prepared
for



Sturgeon
COUNTY

Prepared
by



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1 Introduction

The provision of parks and open space is an essential service, and through recent initiatives Sturgeon County has demonstrated its commitment to enhancing its system of parks available for both residents and visitors alike. Initiatives have involved building on the County's Strategic Plan, Parks and Open Space Master Plan (and its recent update), the Municipal Development Plan, and other statutory and non-statutory plans in the past few years.

1.1 The Project

Sturgeon County identified the need to focus its attention on developing a stronger network of parks through the completion of a feasibility study, to thoughtfully plan for programming needs across parks, and to identify usership of existing amenities.

The purpose of this project is to create a concept and management plan for future county-wide parks, building on the success of current amenities, including Cardiff Park and Bellerose Park. This initiative will establish recommendations for a county-wide parks system that enables the provision and distribution of parkland and amenities across the County. As a secondary objective, this project will identify locations where additional parks and open space could be developed, assessing the impacts of these amenities on residents.

1.2 This Report

This report is intended to provide a summary of the engagement conducted to date and document the outcomes to support the Parks Feasibility Study.



2 Engagement

Engaging residents and County staff provides valuable insights into how people currently use parks, trails, and open spaces and what is missing or could be improved. This input helps identify unique cultural, social, and recreational preferences so that the Parks Feasibility Study can reflect the needs, values, and priorities of the community it aims to serve. It also helps to situate the County's programming needs and limitations in this study.

Key engagement groups were:

- Residents;
- Business Owners;
- Landowners;
- Staff and administration; and
- The travelling public.

The level of engagement and the purpose of engagement were catered to each specific group identified so that each unique perspective, need, and priority, is captured and considered.

2.1 Focus Groups


The project team sent a call out to specific groups to hear their thoughts about the overall project, including the park concepts and the Parks Feasibility Study. The purpose of gathering each focus group was to understand how different user groups utilize Sturgeon County parks, trails, amenities, and open spaces. Each group was chosen to bring similar organizations or interest types together for more directed conversations. These groups included:

- FCSS Department;
- Environmental advocacy groups;
- Seniors' groups;
- Youth groups; and
- Protective Services.

During these sessions, the project team talked with various focus groups on how Sturgeon County can improve its parks to better serve the community. This was an opportunity for focus group attendees to have a direct impact on the Parks Feasibility Study.

2.1.1 FCSS Department

The Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) department works closely with residents and understands the needs of different demographic groups, including families, seniors, youth, and vulnerable populations. The FCSS has valuable insights into how Sturgeon County can support programming opportunities, mental health, and community well-being and identify barriers to access and participation.



This focus group was held online on October 2, 2024. From this focus group round table, two main themes emerged:

- The need to focus on existing parks, open space, and recreation amenities; and
- The need to have community consultation.

Many participants expressed the need to have indoor and outdoor space designed for programming as many programming events, such as winter skating in Cardiff Park, are well attended. It was expressed that the county's community halls are some of the most valuable assets because when people look to rent a programming space, they look for a multipurpose space with a kitchen and washroom facilities. Some participants stated that the Sturgeon County app has helpful information on its trail network; however, it could benefit from updating the information and adding more functionality.

The discussion around the need for community consultation focused on engaging the community to understand what residents want the most. Particularly servicing amenities for residents in country residential areas in more remote areas. This conversation was challenging because of the discourse on whether country residential residents' use of park amenities correlates to the amount of money that may be spent on these areas. There is also a perception that more facilities would bring non-residents who are not financially contributing to the facilities. Some participants shared that they do not know what events and park services are offered.

To increase community well-being, the FCSS group recommended:

- Creating events that build community, such as having outdoor spaces for food sharing/picnics in the park;
- Using parks and outdoor spaces to help improve wellness and connect to nature by adding outdoor programming;
- Building confidence in youth by connecting FCSS and young leaders;
- Including more bathrooms, public showers, and clubhouses for people who may be experiencing housing instability;
- Increasing partnerships to promote/plan/execute; and
- Finding ways to promote knowledge-sharing opportunities and for the community to come together to teach and skill share.

At the end of the session, the project team asked the FCSS group what was on their “wish list” that they would like to see come out of the Parks Feasibility Study. Major themes included:

- Better access and connectivity to parks, trails, and open spaces;
- Opportunities for educational programming, such as adding markers and history wayfinding at trailheads or outdoor classrooms;
- Improved seniors programming;
- Additional programming revolving around art and culture, such as photography opportunities, Indigenous plant walks, farmer markets, etc.;
- Increasing equity and accessibility to parks and recreation;
- Exploration of partnerships to enhance relationships and programming in parks; and
- Increasing opportunities for agriculture and agri-business.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

When exploring what kind of parks, open spaces, and recreational opportunities would benefit the community, Sturgeon County could consider how to optimize these amenity spaces for programming and community use. Researching how to design multipurpose facilities or spaces that can accommodate a variety of activities, or enhancing existing infrastructure, such as upgrading trails with wayfinding markers, can elevate a space to be flexible and engaging.

It is crucial to engage community members throughout the Parks Feasibility Study to understand residents' priorities and to capture the needs of a diverse demographic. Inclusive consultation can foster understanding and support equitable investment across the County. Addressing concerns about non-residents accessing facilities and raising awareness of existing events and services will be crucial to building trust and maximizing the reach of the county's parks and recreation offerings.

FCSS participants highlight strategic opportunities to enhance community well-being and engagement through parks. Priorities include improving access and connectivity, developing educational programming, and offering activities tailored to seniors, youth, and underrepresented groups. Expanding partnerships and incorporating art, culture, and agriculture-focused programming can further enrich the parks system, fostering connections between residents and their natural environment.

2.1.2 Environmental Advocacy Groups

To capture perspectives on environmental conservation and ecological sustainability, environmental parties were invited to share their feedback and opinions about the Parks Feasibility Study. Their expertise can help identify environmental risks and opportunities while providing a perspective of how parks and open spaces can be designed to balance recreational use with ecological health, contribute to long-term sustainability, and foster community connection to nature.

This focus group was held online on October 7, 2024. From this focus group round table, two main themes emerged:

- Establishing and maintaining environmental stewardship; and
- Encouraging appropriate activities in parks and open spaces.

From discussions with environmental parties, there is a desire to keep natural areas as natural as possible, specifically supporting parks that are not intrusive to wildlife and protecting the beds and shorelines of water bodies. To support this sentiment, participants shared that it is important to:

- Conduct biodiversity assessments before development;
- Engage in regional conservation efforts;
- Follow a riparian setback matrix to protect waterbodies; and
- Develop trail networks with wildlife migration patterns in consideration.

To support the promotion of education in environmental stewardship, the environmental parties elaborated on what infrastructure and activities are appropriate in parks and open spaces. These include, but are not limited to:

- Group walks (including grief walks, photography walks);

- Low-impact amenities (such as picnic tables and washrooms); and
- Bird watching.

Some examples that the group thought balanced environment conservation with recreation activities were Bellrose River Walk, Cardiff Park, and Boisvert's Greenwoods Conservation Land. It is important to note that Indigenous engagement is critical in developing the Parks Feasibility Study so that the design and planning of parks honour Indigenous knowledge, cultural heritage, and connections to the land while fostering inclusivity and mutual respect.

The main "wish list" items the environmental parties highlighted were to establish more connections throughout Sturgeon County and to other communities, and to provide designated infrastructure for parks and open spaces so that natural areas are not disturbed.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The environmental parties provided insightful feedback on how to develop parks and open spaces that balance recreational opportunities with environmental conservation. Sturgeon County can explore establishing a checklist of environmental considerations when reviewing the feasibility of parks and open spaces within the County so that the County can take the appropriate steps to preserve natural areas.

Balancing recreational opportunities with environmental conservation can mean providing recreational infrastructure that prevents damage to the natural environment by users. This can mean:

- Maintaining more garbage cans in parks so that users do not litter in the natural environment;
- Having an appropriate number of parking stalls so that users do not park in undesignated open spaces;
- Having designated infrastructure for recreation, such as spray parks, to protect lakes that are restricted from swimming in;
- Establishing appropriate signage so that users do not visit areas that would disrupt the natural environment; and
- Having a boot brush station so that people can remove debris from their shoes, minimizing the spread of invasive species.

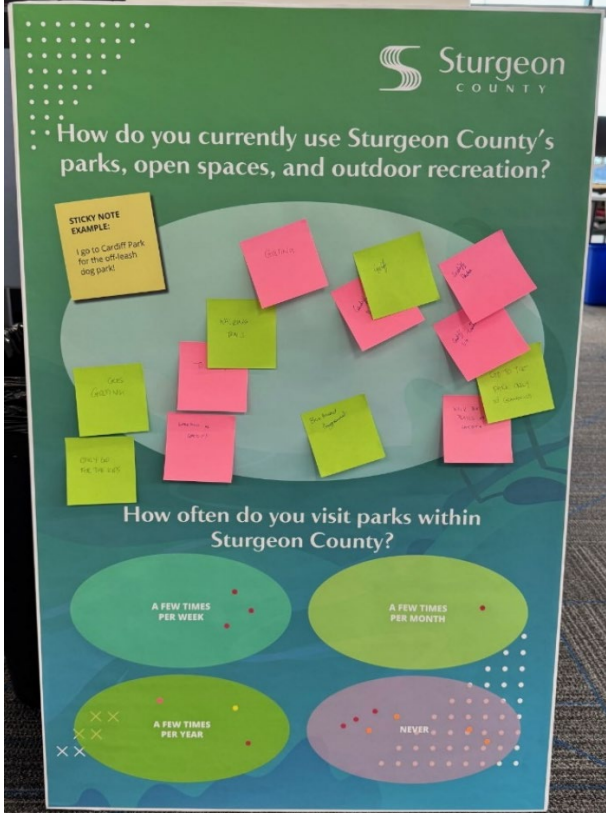
The added layer of environmental consideration can help the County preserve its natural environment while bringing awareness to the importance of environmental sustainability.

2.1.3 Seniors Groups

Instead of having an online focus group session, the project team adapted to Sturgeon County's programming and set up a booth at the Seniors Conference to gain seniors' perspectives on parks and open spaces. The conference was held on October 3, 2024, and the booth was set up for seniors to visit for two hours. At the booth, seniors could speak to the project team about the project and share their thoughts by interacting with the engagement boards or answering the same questions in an online survey format.

A summary of the questions asked, and the overall themes extracted from the seniors' focus group engagement is shown in *Table 4*.

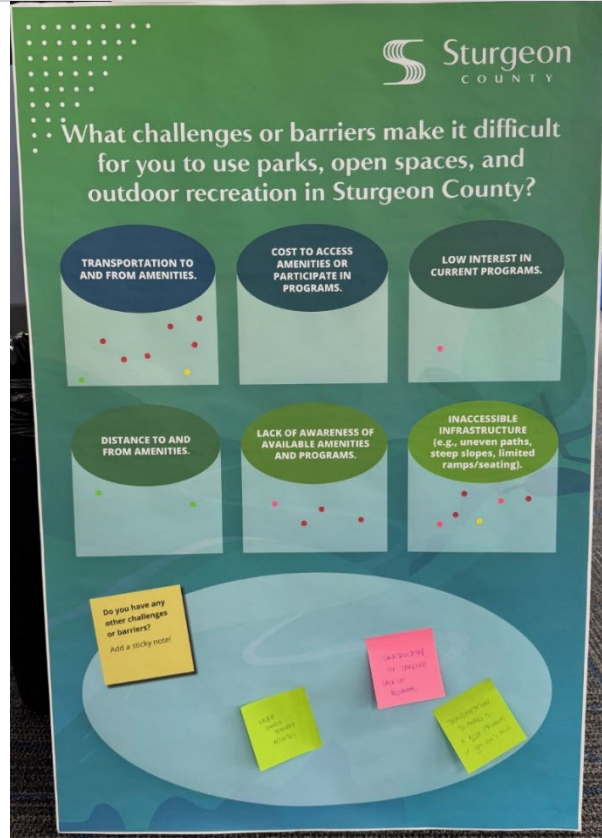
Table 1. Seniors' focus group engagement.

ENGAGEMENT BOARD & QUESTION	OVERALL THEMES
<p>How do you currently use Sturgeon County's parks, open spaces, and outdoor recreation? & How often do you visit parks within Sturgeon County?</p> 	<p>The majority of participants “never” visit parks within Sturgeon County, with a few participants visiting a few times a week and a few times a year.</p> <p>For those who use the county's parks, the majority of residents and visitors indicated that they currently go walking or golfing in Sturgeon County's parks, open spaces, and outdoor recreational areas. Specifically, many of the participants utilize Cardiff Park. It is also important to note that many participants stated that they only go to parks and open spaces with their grandchildren.</p>

ENGAGEMENT BOARD & QUESTION

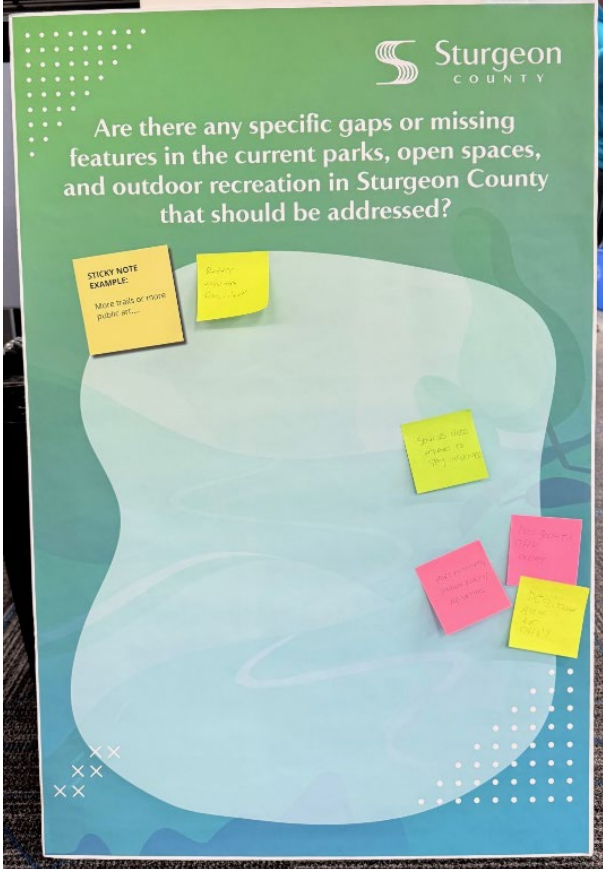
OVERALL THEMES

What challenges or barriers make it difficult for you to use parks, open spaces, and outdoor recreation in Sturgeon County?



The main challenges shared by seniors that make it difficult for seniors to visit parks, open spaces, and outdoor recreation areas include transportation to and from amenities, and inaccessible infrastructure. Some participants indicated barriers included a lack of awareness of available amenities and programs and distance to and from amenities.

With the option to add if there are any other barriers besides the options shown, participants stated the need for more family friendly activities, and different modes of transportation to access parks and open spaces. It was noted that construction in Cardiff Park has created barriers to accessing the park.

ENGAGEMENT BOARD & QUESTION	OVERALL THEMES
<p>Are there any specific gaps or missing features in the current parks, open spaces, and outdoor recreation in Sturgeon County that should be addressed?</p> 	<p>Participants commented on any gaps or missing features in Sturgeon County's parks. These comments included having designated areas for OHVs, increasing awareness through posters, newsletters, and the internet, and adding more washroom facilities.</p>

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The senior demographic provides insights into unique needs, such as accessible infrastructure, seating, and amenities that promote comfort, safety, and mobility. Many participants stated they do not go to parks, indicating the need to focus on making parks more accessible and inclusive for seniors. The main challenges for seniors revolved around accessibility in parks and open spaces, which could be resolved by considering different modes of transportation, accessible infrastructure along trails, and maintaining designated spaces for certain activities, such as OHVs.

Providing multiple modes of transportation, including active and sustainable options, helps people of all ages and abilities access parks, reducing barriers for those without personal vehicles. Accessible infrastructure, such as seating, washrooms, and well-maintained pathways, enables seniors and anyone with mobility challenges to comfortably and safely enjoy outdoor spaces, promoting physical activity and social interaction. Designating spaces for activities prevents conflicts between different user groups so that everyone can safely engage in their preferred activities without disruption. These elements foster a welcoming and well-planned park system that meets the community's diverse needs. Parks can

provide leisure, socializing, and health benefits like walking and light physical activity for seniors, so engaging with this group helps enable parks to support healthy aging, improving the quality of life for older residents.

2.1.4 Youth Groups

To engage the youth, the project team met students after a school-directed program on October 18, 2024, and met with the Youth Advisory Committee on November 4, 2024. Meeting with youth after the school-directed program kept the engagement casual and informal. The engagement involved a survey, similar to the engagement boards asked of the seniors, but tailored to youth. The questions were asked in survey format where youth could answer online or on a paper copy, as shown in **Figure 12**. Twelve youth participated in the survey.

Figure 1. Youth survey sheet.

Sturgeon County Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces High School Engagement Survey



1. Are you a resident of Sturgeon County?

☐ Yes ☐ No

a. Where do you live?

☐ St. Albert ☐ Legal

☐ Bon Accord ☐ Morinville

☐ Gibbons ☐ Redwater

☐ _____

2. How do you currently use Sturgeon County's parks, open spaces, and outdoor recreation?

(These are facilities such as dog parks, tennis courts, baseball fields, soccer fields, trails, etc. These do not include school parks, fields, or other facilities.)

3. How often do you visit parks within Sturgeon County?

☐ A few times per week

☐ A few times per month

☐ A few times per year

☐ Never

4. What makes it difficult for you to use parks, open spaces, and outdoor recreation in Sturgeon County?

☐ Transportation to and from amenities.

☐ Cost to access amenities or participate in programs.

☐ Low interest in current programs.

☐ Distance to and from amenities.

☐ Lack of awareness of available amenities and programs.

☐ Inaccessible infrastructure (e.g., uneven paths, steep slopes, limited ramps/seating).

☐ _____

5. What improvements or new facilities, programs, or services would you like to see in Sturgeon County's parks, open spaces, and outdoor recreation?

7. Are there any specific gaps or missing features in the County's current parks, open spaces, and outdoor recreation that should be addressed?

8. What types of programs or activities do you think are suitable for Sturgeon County parks, open spaces, and outdoor recreation?

☐ Keep parks and open spaces accessible 24/7.

☐ Allow private events at recreational facilities.


☐ Allow off-road vehicles and ATVs on trails and open spaces.

☐ Integrate smart technology in parks (e.g., smart lighting, interactive exhibits, digital wayfinding).

☐ Host large events and festivals in parks.

☐ Allow off-leash dog areas in parks.

9. What types of programs or activities do you think are unsuitable for parks, open spaces, and outdoor recreation in Sturgeon County?



Survey data indicates many participants do not go to parks; however, the ones that do, utilize the baseball and soccer fields and find hang-out spots to spend time with their peers. There was an even spread of participants who visited county parks a few times per week, a few times per month, a few times per year, and never. The major barrier for participants to use park space in the county was transportation to and from amenities. This could be explained by the fact that many youths may not be of age to drive or do not have their license. Because there is not a vast public transportation network in Sturgeon County, youth may have difficulty getting to and from places without their guardians, including transportation to parks and amenities. Main improvements for new facilities, programs, and services and missing features in parks include having a pool and more hang-out spots. There was a mix of responses to the types and programs or activities that are suitable/unsuitable in Sturgeon County parks, open spaces, and outdoor recreation.

The Youth Advisory Committee meeting had nine participants, and participants had the opportunity to join a discussion on how they currently use Sturgeon County parks and what improvements could be made. Most participants utilize park infrastructure that focuses on the natural environment, with Cardiff Park being particularly popular for walking, picnicking, skating trails, paddleboarding, and fishing. Other commonly visited areas include Heritage Lake, Sturgeon River Valley, and natural areas such as Athabasca Landing Trail and Redwater Recreation Area. Usage patterns highlight family-oriented visits and group activities, while individual visits are less common unless prompted by specific events. However, some participants note they rarely or never consider these spaces for recreational activities.

Much of the discussion elaborated on the desire for an expanded and better-connected trail network linking Sturgeon Valley, nearby towns, and subdivisions to eliminate walking on roads and highways. Suggestions included adding features like a golf course in Cardiff Park, improved playgrounds, and more engaging trails with interpretive signs and child-friendly activities. A central map or directory for all parks and trails in the County was also identified as a critical need for accessibility. Some participants highlighted gaps in amenities for smaller communities and underscored the importance of creating spaces for organized sports and informal recreational activities.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

From the youth focus group, insightful feedback included the need for more hang-out spots for youth and teens to casually meet their peers. To support this, other modes of transportation besides driving may be considered so that youth can access parks and open space facilities. Part of this sentiment can be considered by having an expanded and better-connected trail network to link throughout Sturgeon County.

Youth are a key demographic whose needs and preferences can influence the long-term success and inclusivity of parks and open spaces. Involving youth helps reflect their evolving interests, such as active sports, technology-integrated play areas, or environmental initiatives, fostering a sense of belonging and ownership in the community. This early engagement also educates and empowers them to be proactive stewards of public spaces, contributing to sustainable parks that meet the needs of all generations.



2.2 User Intercept

As part of the public engagement process, the project team conducted user intercept activities at popular parks and open spaces across the county. These sessions involved short, targeted discussions with 3-5 key questions designed to address the “big questions” relevant to park planning. The team tailored conversations to the users who stopped by, engaging cyclists on trail networks and asking parents and children about their preferences for park features and amenities. Topics included the appropriateness of off-leash areas, OHVs, alcohol, and camping in parks, so a diverse range of voices and perspectives were captured to inform the Feasibility Study. Six user intercept engagements occurred over a few weeks in October at different times during the day, to capture various users.

2.2.1 Lamoureux Trail

Lamoureux Trail is a scenic pathway nestled along the North Saskatchewan River. It offers picturesque views and a peaceful environment for walking, cycling, and birdwatching. The project team engaged at Lamoureux Trail on two occasions: one day at 8 a.m. and another at 10 a.m.

Stationed at the Fort Saskatchewan Bridge on an early morning, between Sturgeon County and the City of Fort Saskatchewan, the project team asked users passing through the trail in a conversation about Lamoureux Trail and Sturgeon County parks in general. While a handful of users passed through, many were using the trail to cycle and did not stop to have a conversation. Between engagements on both days, five users participated in this engagement, with one living in Lamoureux and the rest living in Fort Saskatchewan. Many participants enjoy Lamoureux Trail because of its proximity to their homes. Users typically use the trail for dog walking, biking, or running and most of these users utilize the trail frequently (2-5 times a week). Some improvements to the trail noted were:

- Adding washrooms along the trail;
- Providing more connections to other trails;
- Providing more garbage cans to mitigate litter; and
- Maintain the nearby lift station so that the smell is not prominent.


KEY TAKEAWAYS

The Lamoureux Trail user intercept feedback can be applied to other Sturgeon County parks and open spaces. Having washrooms and garbage cans can help enhance a positive and accessible user experience. Washrooms provide comfort and convenience, enabling visitors to spend more time enjoying recreational activities, particularly families with children and seniors. Similarly, garbage cans encourage responsible waste disposal, reducing litter and maintaining the cleanliness and ecological integrity of the park.

2.2.2 Redwater Provincial Recreation Area

The Redwater Provincial Recreation Area has one of the largest sand dune fields in the region and contains numerous natural trails and habitats. It is used extensively by OHV riders and is an environmentally significant area used for both conservation and recreation purposes.

The project team was positioned at the Redwater West Loop parking area to converse with users visiting the area for off-roading purposes. While a handful of OHV riders were on their way to use the park, the



project team only spoke to eight users. Most users came from Edmonton, two from Fort Saskatchewan and one from Sherwood Park. The users who participated indicated they would travel far (2-5 hours) for amenities that allow for off-roading or other activities that require a proper recreation area for the activities, such as boating and quadding. The participants come to this park specifically for off-roading, quadding or biking, and camping, where users visit on average two times a month.

Participants highlighted that they liked Redwater Provincial Recreation Area because of the:

- Nice trails;
- Designated area for ATV off-roading;
- Well-maintained washrooms;
- Large areas; and
- Relatively close proximity to where they live.

Participants shared that to improve this park, more camping facilities could be added, and more trail maintenance could be implemented.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

This engagement was directed to users of OHVs, which highlights the park's popularity for off-roading, quadding, biking, and camping with visitors who do not reside in Sturgeon County. Having visitors from outside Sturgeon County highlights the broader regional appeal of Redwater Provincial Recreation Area as a destination for outdoor recreation. This influx of non-resident visitors contributes to local tourism. It emphasizes the importance of maintaining and enhancing park amenities, as a well-managed recreation area can attract repeat visitors, fostering long-term engagement and recognition for Sturgeon County as a hub for outdoor adventure.


2.2.3 Bellerose Park

Bellerose Park is a green space that offers a natural setting for outdoor recreation. Surrounded by scenic landscapes, it provides a peaceful retreat for visitors who enjoy walking, picnicking, and connecting with nature. Bellerose Parks includes an off-leash dog park, playground, and walking trails.

The project team engaged with users coming out of the parking lot. This park had high traffic, and the project team was able to speak with 17 users across two days of engagement. Most participants resided in St. Albert, with a few living in Sturgeon County and Edmonton. Users said they liked Bellerose Park because of its proximity to their homes, and they consistently visit this park for the dog park, trails, and scenic views. Users with kids expressed gratitude for the playground their kids played in. Many users expressed that they could travel further to visit other park amenities but enjoy the convenience of Bellerose Park. Some improvements to the park were noted:

- Incorporating washrooms and water fountains;
- Adding more garbage cans, more seating, and more trees for shade;
- Adding a small dog section into the off-leash dog park; and
- Adding more amenities, such as a baseball diamond or basketball court.

Many users stated they are unfamiliar with Sturgeon County's parks and open spaces and use social media to learn about the county's events and programs. Because users engaged were not from



Sturgeon County, many participants stated that taxes should be used to improve parks since they were not taxpayers of the County. Otherwise, people thought all streams of funding should be exhausted. Users generally agreed to dog parks and private events; however, opinions were divided for alcohol in parks and unlimited restrictions to park hours.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Discussions at Bellerose Park highlighted the convenience of having a well-maintained park near residents. However, the engagement revealed that a significant number of visitors were from outside Sturgeon County, primarily from St. Albert and Edmonton. This highlights the park's appeal beyond local residents, positioning it as a regional destination rather than just a community park. While this increased usage benefits the park by fostering social activity and community engagement, it also raises important considerations regarding the funding and maintenance of public spaces. Increased visitor traffic can lead to higher maintenance costs for amenities such as trails, playgrounds, and off-leash areas. Since non-resident visitors do not contribute to Sturgeon County's municipal tax base, there can be an ongoing discussion about how to balance accessibility with financial sustainability, whether it is reevaluating intermunicipal agreements or finding other streams of funding to maintain parks.

2.2.4 Cardiff Park

Cardiff Park is a well-loved recreational area featuring walking trails, picnic spots, a skating trail in winter, and a fishing pond. The park offers a peaceful retreat for families, outdoor enthusiasts and community gatherings year-round. Five users were engaged at this user intercept, with two users from Sturgeon County, one from Morinville, one from Legal, and one from Edmonton. It should be noted that construction was occurring during the time of engagement, which could temporarily influence usership observed at the park.

Participants stated they enjoy Cardiff because of the walking trails and washroom facilities. Other activities enjoyed at this park included paddleboarding, picnics, and BBQs. Some participants use Cardiff Park frequently, going as much as 4-5 times a week, and others visit less frequently, once every two months. Improvements shared included enhancing the existing amenities, such as adding to the trail system and adding more washrooms.

The users engaged were unfamiliar with Sturgeon County's programs and events and typically use road signs to see what activities are happening in the county. This group of participants were open to alcohol in parks if it is well enforced and private events as long as the event does not use the entire park area. None of the participants in this group were open to 24-hour park times.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Feedback highlighted the park's popularity for walking, paddleboarding, picnicking, and seasonal activities like skating, with some users visiting multiple times a week. The presence of washrooms was identified as a key benefit, reinforcing the importance of maintaining and expanding these facilities. From a broader planning perspective, this engagement highlights the need for increased awareness and promotion of Sturgeon County's parks and recreational programming. Participants primarily relied on road signs to learn about events, suggesting that the County could benefit from improved communication strategies, such as enhanced digital outreach or social media engagement.

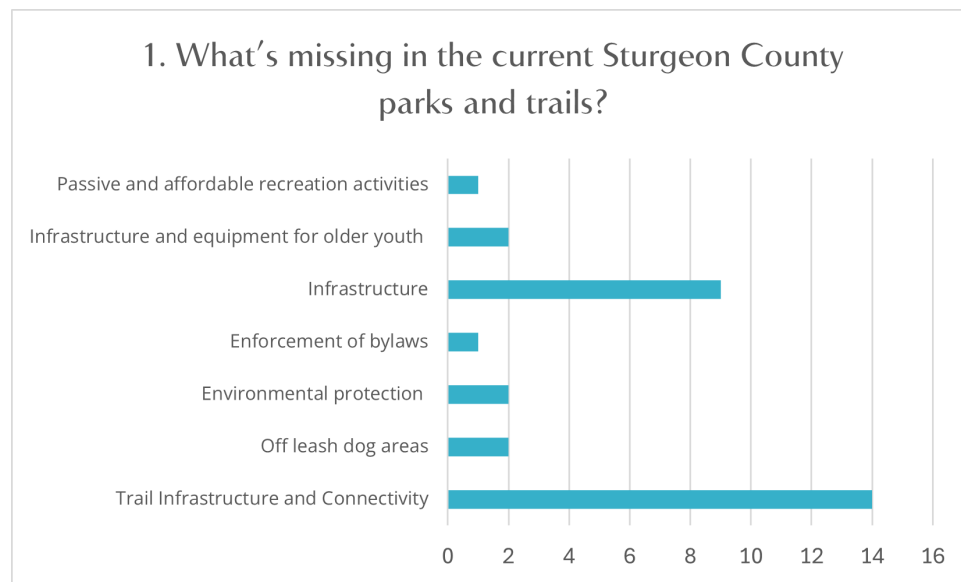


2.3 Survey

A general survey was posted on Sturgeon County's website and ran in Fall 2024 that collected comments for anyone interested in parks. Five questions were asked and there were 29 respondents. Because the questions were open-ended, the responses were thematically coded to help extract qualitative insights.

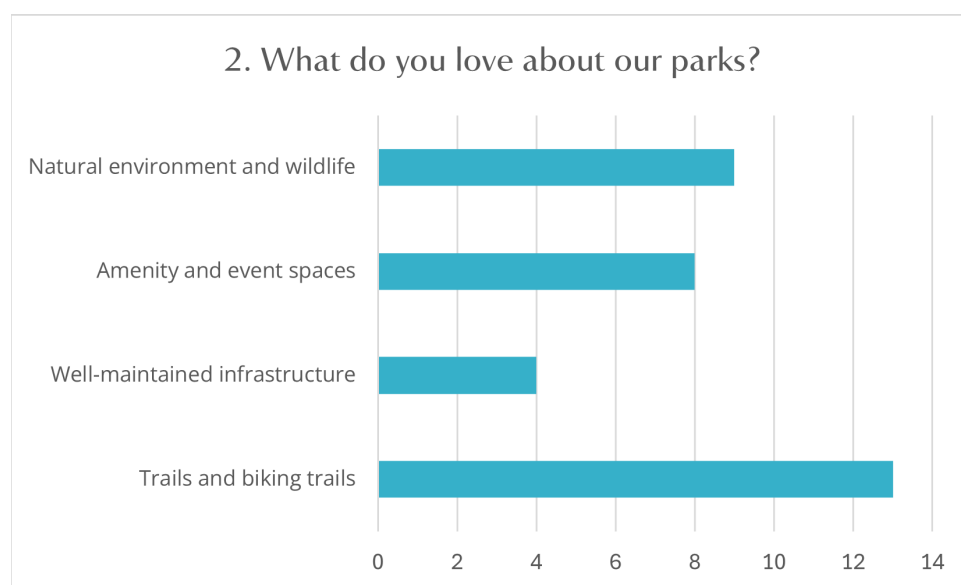
Question 1 asked about what is currently missing in Sturgeon County parks and trails, as shown in *Figure 13*. Most respondents expressed that there could be more trails throughout the County, and some specifically highlighted that there should be amenities along trails and increased connectivity between trails. Infrastructure was the second most common response to what was missing in the County. This includes outdoor rinks, playgrounds, washrooms, picnic tables, accessible infrastructure, pedestrian bridges, and sports courts. It was noted that infrastructure for older youth should be considered.

Figure 2. Question 1: What's missing in the current Sturgeon County parks and trails?



Question 2 asked, "What do you love about our parks?". As shown in **Figure 14**, many responses indicated they are content with walking and biking on the trails the county provides. The second highest response was people's love for the natural environment and wildlife. This included scenic views throughout Sturgeon County, particularly the river valley. The Amenity and Event Spaces option speaks to all the amenities highlighted that respondents like, such as skating areas, off-leash dog areas, Cardiff Park, etc. Four respondents highlighted they liked the well-maintained infrastructure in the County's parks and open spaces.

Figure 3. Question 2: What do you love about our parks?



Question 3 asked respondents, "What community do you call home?" to see how far they would travel to access parks and open spaces. 74% of respondents come from Sturgeon County, with the rest

coming from nearby towns, such as Morinville (16%) and Gibbons (10%), as shown in **Figure 15**. Within Sturgeon County, respondents indicated the hamlets, localities, and communities they were from, as shown in **Figure 16**.

Figure 4. Question 3a: What community do you call home?

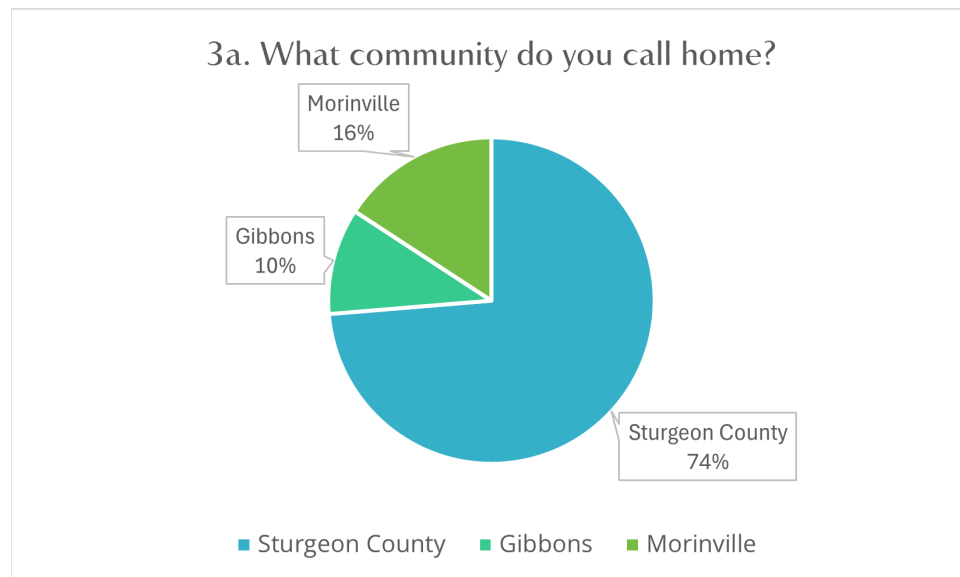
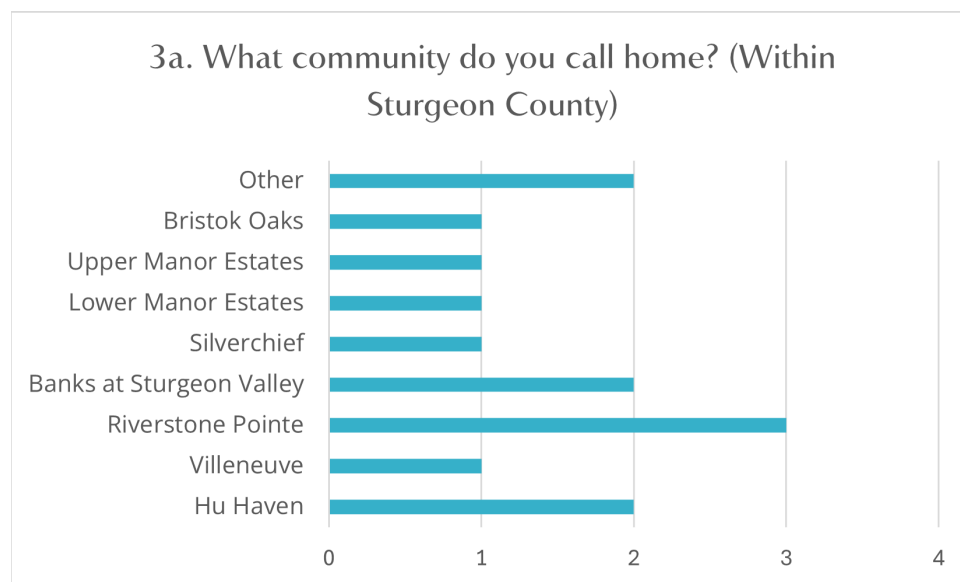


Figure 5. Question 3a. What community do you call home? (Within Sturgeon County)



The second part of the question asked, "How far do you travel to access parks?." This question was interpreted in different ways by different respondents. Many participants responded about where they go to parks, and some indicated how far they go. Out of the respondents who outlined how far they travel for parks, three indicated they travel short distances (~1km), and two indicated they travel further distances (10-15km). Those who indicated the places they travel to for parks include:

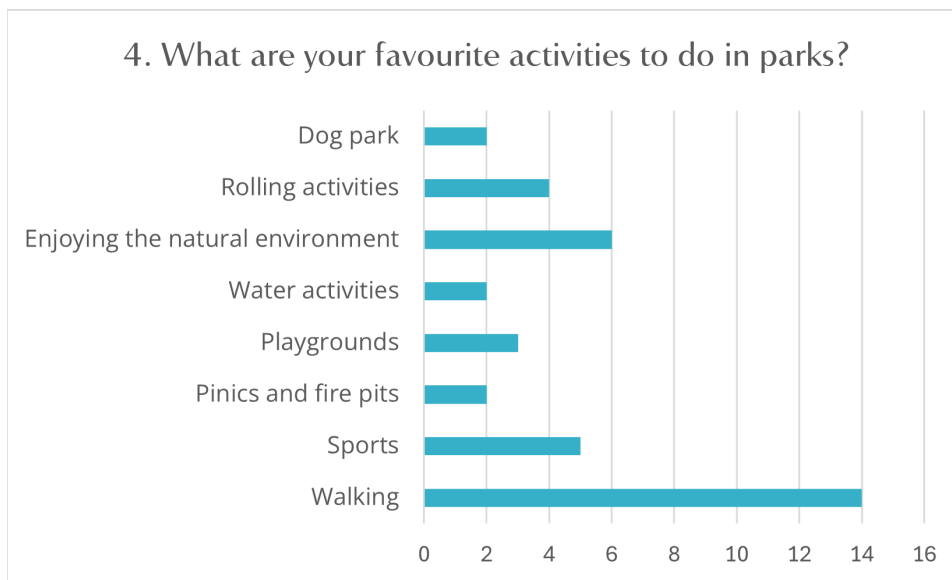
- Edmonton;

- Gibbons;
- Redwater;
- St. Albert;
- Fort Saskatchewan; and
- Morinville.

Notable parks included Cardiff Park and Bellerose Park. Two respondents indicated they do not use parks.

Question 4 asked, “What are your favourite activities to do in parks?”. Walking was the top activity, with 14 responses. The second highest response involved enjoying the natural environment. Sports included tennis, baseball, golfing, skiing, and skating, with rolling activities indicating biking and rollerblading. Other activities indicated in responses included playing with dogs, playing on the playgrounds, water activities, such as fishing and kayaking, and having picnics.

Figure 6. Question 4: What are your favourite activities to do in parks?



KEY TAKEAWAYS

The general survey results provide valuable qualitative insights for future planning of community needs. A key takeaway is the strong demand for expanded and better-connected trails. A large majority of responses elaborated on their satisfaction with using the trails and the need for trail connectivity. It was highlighted that connectivity is important for those who do not want to drive to a park or families and kids who want to ride their bikes to the park. It is important that there is infrastructure that allows for different modes of transportation to parks so that more people can access the county's parks, even if they cannot drive or do not have a car. There was also a demand for additional amenities such as washrooms, picnic tables, and accessible infrastructure to support the parks and recreation areas that Sturgeon County currently has.

Respondents highlighted a gap in facilities for older youth, suggesting that future park improvements should include spaces that cater to this demographic. The feedback also emphasized the importance of maintaining scenic natural areas while enhancing infrastructure to support recreation. Parks like

Cardiff and Bellerose were frequently mentioned, indicating that certain locations already meet user needs but could benefit from enhancements.

2.4 County Bounty

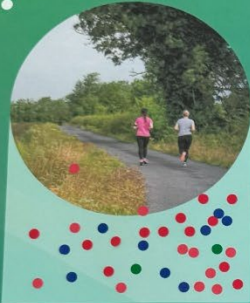
On July 11 and 12, 2024, the project team attended the County Bounty Fair in Riviere Que Barre and hosted a pop-up booth. The booth had large, printed maps and the same key questions as the survey for residents and visitors to weigh in on.



The booth featured a draw, and 111 ballots were cast to enter the draw. Over two days, an estimated 140 people stopped by the booth.

What makes a park worth visiting (top three)?

Trails



Boardwalks (Over Water)



Recreation/Play Area



Camping



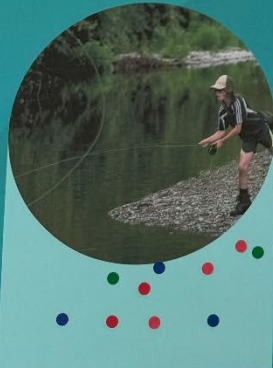
Public Art



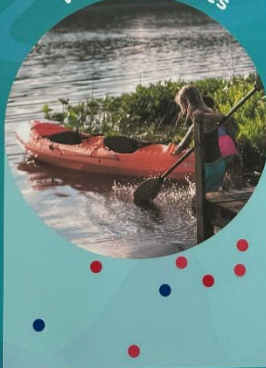
Picnic Area



Fishing



Water Activities



Wildlife Viewing Platform





The sticky notes on the board reflect a strong community interest in enhancing Sturgeon County's parks with more recreational amenities, better connectivity, and improved park experiences. Many participants highlighted the need for water-based recreation, including splash parks, spray parks, and SUP (stand-up paddleboard) access. Others emphasized the importance of shaded areas—both for trails and general park spaces—to create more comfortable environments for visitors.

There is also a clear desire for expanded trail networks, with multiple suggestions for more walking and biking trails, better signage, and even bike paths along highways to improve regional connectivity. Additionally, residents expressed interest in community-focused programming and amenities, such as outdoor picnic hubs, movie nights in the park, and equipment rentals to encourage more park use.

Safety and designated-use areas were also recurring themes. Some residents suggested off-leash dog areas, while others called for designated quiet spaces and better-defined zones for activities like skimboarding. Overall, these notes paint a picture of a community that values diverse, well-maintained, and accessible parks that cater to a wide range of interests, from family-friendly play areas to nature-focused and recreational spaces.



The community's input on this board shows a strong demand for more diverse and well-equipped parks in Sturgeon County. A major theme is the desire for water-based recreation, with repeated mentions of splash parks, swimming areas, and water stations. Residents also want expanded trails, including walking, biking, and hiking paths, with some emphasizing the need for better connectivity between parks and communities.

Many sticky notes highlight the need for more shaded areas to make parks comfortable during hot weather. There is also a push for more family-friendly amenities, such as playgrounds, zip lines, and designated play areas in residential subdivisions. Camping opportunities, outdoor pools, and picnic shelters were also frequently mentioned, showing an interest in overnight and extended-stay park experiences.

Additionally, residents expressed the need for better facilities and infrastructure, such as bathrooms, garbage bins, and location information. Programming ideas—such as 4H activities, seniors' programs, and community events—suggest that people want parks to be not just recreational spaces, but also hubs for social engagement.

Overall, the community envisions vibrant, accessible, and well-maintained parks that support a wide range of activities, from nature exploration to active recreation and family-friendly gatherings.



3 Conclusion

The engagement process for Sturgeon County's Parks Feasibility Study provided valuable insights into the community's desires, concerns, and priorities for parks, trails, and open spaces. Residents and stakeholders expressed a strong interest in enhancing existing parks while ensuring equitable access to well-maintained and strategically developed new spaces. Key themes from the engagement highlight the need for:

- **Improved Connectivity and Accessibility:** Residents desire better trail networks linking communities, increased transportation options, and infrastructure improvements such as seating, washrooms, and accessible pathways to support all ages and abilities.
- **Expanded Recreational Opportunities:** There is demand for diverse activities, including educational programming, cultural and arts-based initiatives, additional sports facilities, and designated spaces for social gatherings.
- **Balanced Environmental Conservation and Recreation:** Environmental advocates emphasized the importance of protecting natural areas, integrating conservation efforts, and designing parks that minimize ecological disruption while allowing for responsible public use.
- **Stronger Community Engagement and Awareness:** Many residents indicated a lack of awareness about available parks, programming, and events, highlighting the need for improved communication through digital tools, signage, and outreach efforts.

Moving forward, these community-driven insights will help shape a thoughtful and inclusive Parks Feasibility Study. By prioritizing accessibility, sustainability, and diverse recreational opportunities, Sturgeon County can foster a well-connected and vibrant park system that enhances the quality of life for all residents and visitors. Continued collaboration and engagement will be essential to ensuring the county's parks evolve in alignment with community values and future needs.

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