

Rationale for the Delivery of Public Leisure Services

In a fall of 2004 and then again in the fall of 2005 in two workshops with Council, senior staff, and the Recreation Advisory Committee, a framework was established and confirmed for decision-making. It consists of a Foundation Statement, a Mission statement, a commitment to a benefits based approach and a series of benefits that would act as goals and objectives. More detail on this chapter is included in Appendix A.

Foundation Statement

All our decisions about leisure services are anchored in the following underlying premise.

The City will direct its efforts toward achieving the greatest “public good” possible in return for the investment of limited available public resources designated by council each year.

Mission Statement

The following mission statement is based on and consistent with the foundation statement above.

The City will use public parks and recreation services as vehicle in achieving socially worthwhile goals and objectives in our City, where the achievement of such goals and objectives clearly results in some form of indirect (i.e. public good) to all citizens.

Goals

The following two goals add direction to and are consistent with the mission statement above.

To use leisure services to foster a sense of community identity, spirit, pride and culture. Parks and recreation services in Dawson Creek can be used as a vehicle to connect local citizens more positively to their City and enhance their sense of comfort with it. Where such initiatives require City support, it will be considered in terms of the amount of public good created in relation to the cost to the taxpayers. The success of such initiatives will clearly benefit all citizens.

To use leisure services to foster growth of individuals to become the best that they can be. Parks and recreation services in Dawson Creek can and do help individuals to grow physically, emotionally, morally and creatively and help them to be as good as they can be. Where City support is needed to ensure such success, it will be considered within the

cost/benefit framework referred to above. Healthier, more responsible citizens will clearly benefit the entire community.

Service objectives

The following twenty-one service objectives are consistent with the two goals described in the previous section. (They may be considered as specific public goods under which the goals can be measured.) All City parks and recreational initiatives directed toward achieving the two goals could be categorized under one or more of these twenty-one objectives.

Sense of Community

1. To Encourage Special Events and Celebrations

Special events (e.g. carnivals, fairs, and the likes) can be contributed to a feeling of community identity and spirit. Therefore, the municipality should be involved in supporting special events to the extent necessary to ensure promotion of this objective.

2. To Support Local Groups

Local clubs, groups and agencies are and will be organizing and sponsoring leisure opportunities. The “people doing things for themselves” aspect of such groups is socially worthwhile and desirable. The City should support such groups in their efforts. Support may occur in a number of ways, including subsidized access to facilities, provision of public land, assistance in problem solving or help with promotion.

3. To Facilitate Spectator Exposure To Sporting Events

Community identity, spirit and culture can be fostered through the environment generated by spectators at athletic events. In such events, sport can be closely linked with community identity and pride. Because of this, opportunities should be provided for spectator experiences at athletic events. The City may have a role to play in ensuring such opportunities exist.

4. To Facilitate Spectator Exposure To And Appreciation Of The Arts

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

5. To Facilitate Opportunities for Social Functions

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

6. To Protect Community Natural Resources

The protection of natural aesthetic features, vistas and natural phenomenon and the provision of public access to such features will contribute to a greater understanding of

and pride in the community and, therefore, contribute to an enhanced sense of community.

7. To Beautify The Community

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

8. To Support Family Oriented Leisure Opportunities

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

9. To Integrate Generations and Sub Groups Within Our Community

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

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

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

Individual Growth

10. To Foster and Promote Fitness and Overall Well Being

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

11. To Foster and Promote Pre-School Leisure Opportunities

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

- Expose the child to social settings
- Foster gross motor development
- Provide a generally happy and satisfying atmosphere where growth can occur
- Teach basic safety skills and attitudes
- Celebrate their natural creative tendencies

12. To Foster and Promote Basic Leisure Skill Development in Leisure Pursuits For School Aged Children

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

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

Other agencies (e.g. the school system) may provide skill instruction in some areas, with the City filling the gaps.

13. To Foster and Promote Advanced Leisure Skill Development in Leisure Pursuits for School Aged Children

Opportunities should be provided for those children who wish to further develop their interest and skills in a wide variety of leisure pursuits beyond the basic level.

14. To Foster and Promote Social and Leadership Opportunities For Teens

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

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

15. To Foster and Promote Basic Leisure Skills in Leisure Pursuits for Adults

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

16. To Foster and Promote Advanced Leisure Skills in Leisure Pursuits for Adults

Opportunities should be provided for those adults who wish to further develop their interests or abilities in a wide variety of leisure pursuits.

17. To Foster and Promote Leisure Opportunities For Seniors

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

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

18. To Interpret The Environment

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

19. To Create Opportunities for Reflection and Escape from Daily Pressures

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

20. To Educate Individuals About the Wise Use of Leisure Time

All residents should be generally educated as to the best use of leisure time and the benefits (e.g. growth and fulfillment) that accrue therefrom.

21. To Communicate about all Leisure Opportunities Available in the City

The city should ensure that all local citizens are aware of all leisure opportunities that are available to them and how to gain access to each opportunity. Without this, the City could be good at everything above, and yet still fail due to lack of awareness.

In order to achieve the above, the City will provide leadership and coordination where necessary. It may also provide services directly where no other agency is able or willing to provide the service and the need is great. The City will also monitor the infrastructure necessary for success in achieving the above objectives. For example, an effective communication system is necessary so that all citizens are aware of the leisure opportunities that are available in Dawson Creek and how to get access to them. Therefore, the City might provide leadership and coordination in creating such a system.

Guidelines

The following six guidelines constitute overarching considerations that will influence how the decision-making framework will be implemented. They are detailed in Appendix A.

1. The City should become involved in the delivery of leisure services only if and to the extent that a “public good” (i.e. as measured by the twenty-one Service Objectives and the two Goals above) can be demonstrated. In the process of becoming involved, the City should work with and through community groups and the private sector wherever possible.
2. Services should be provided to people at all levels of ability from the most talented participants to people with special needs. However, cost benefit considerations may dictate providing more assistance to the large numbers of people at basic skill levels and below.
3. All other things being equal, the City should put more emphasis on the variety of leisure services rather than the quantity of leisure services when increasing or reducing service levels.
4. All other things being equal, the City should put more emphasis on quality of service than on quantity of service when increasing or reducing service levels.
5. All other things being equal, the City should facilitate and support others to provide the services rather than providing the services directly.
6. The City should attempt to reduce or remove any barriers to public participation in leisure services including financial barriers.

Service Delivery Process

Although this document is meant to provide long term direction within which to provide public leisure services, each year it will be important to adjust and fine tune priorities and services. The following steps suggest how this short term planning should occur.

Evaluate Services

The City should first inventory each of the services it now provides (e.g. sportsfields, arenas, grants to groups, indoor swimming pool, and the like), and catalogue them under the twenty-one service objectives each is responsible for achieving. ***Figure Three*** provides a basis for that assessment.

Before budget preparation each year, staff would use a chart such as that illustrated to document the extent to which each of its services actually contributes to the objectives. Instead of simply putting an “x” in the box to indicate whether or not a service meets an objective, a three point weighting scale could be used to show whether the service contributes in a “modest”, “moderate” or “major” way. Completion of this chart will show where the City’s resources are currently being allocated.

One point is particularly worthy of note. A service which contributes to only one objective is not automatically less important or effective than a service which contributes to many objectives. Consideration must also be given to the cost of the service, how many other services are directed at the same objective, the priority of the objective, and the extent to which the service meets the objective. If, for example, a play school program was considered a very high priority, the fact that this service met only one objective would not make it less important than other high cost services which contributed marginally to many objectives, most of which have low priority. Obviously, any service which does not contribute to the objectives, nor supports other city activities which do, would be a candidate for termination.

Figure Three
Department Activity/Service Objective Matrix

Goals/Service Objectives	Service Units		
Sense of Community 1. Special Events and celebrations 2. Support of Local Groups 3. Exposure to Sporting Events 4. Exposure to and Appreciation of the Arts 5. Social Functions 6. Protect Community Natural Resources 7. Beautify the Community 8. Family Oriented Leisure Services 9. Integrate Generations and Sub-Groups Better Individuals 10. Fitness and Overall Well Being 11. Pre-School Leisure Opportunities 12. Basic Skill Development for School Ages Children 13. Advanced Skill Development for School Aged Children 14. Social Opportunities for Adults 15. Basic Skill Development for Adults 16. Advanced Skill Development for Adults 17. Opportunities for Seniors 18. Interpret the Environment 19. Reflection Escape 20. Leisure Education			

21. Communicate Opportunities

Service Contributes:

3 – in a major way

2 – in a moderate way

1 – in a modest way

0 – not at all

Figure Four
Service / Benefits Matrix

	Service Objective	Ar en as	Aq ua tic s	M ult ipl ex *	Ch ild ca re Se rvi ce s	Sp eci al Ev en ts	O SC	Pr og ra m s and Se rvi ce s	Gr an ts to Gr ou ps	Pa rk s and Pl ay gr ou nd s	Be au tifi ca tion	Sp ort sfi eld s
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Community Growth												
1.	Special Events	3	2	3		3				3		3
2.	Support for Local Groups	3	2	3	1	3		2	3	2		3
3.	Spectator Sports	3	2	3		3		1				3
4.	Spectator Arts			1		3			3	1		
5.	Social Interaction	1	2	1		3		1		3	2	2
6.	Protection of Natural Res.								3	2		
7.	City Beautification							1		3	3	
8.	Family Opportunities	1	2	2	1	3		1	3	3		3
9.	Integrate Sub-Groups	1	2	2	1	3		1	3	2		1
Individual Growth												
10.	Fitness and Well Being	2	3	3	1			2	2	2		3
11.	Pre-school Opportunities	2	3	2	3			3		3		2
12.	Basic Skills for Children	3	3	3				3	3			3
13.	Advanced Skills for Children	3	3	3				3	3			3
14.	Social Opportunities for Teens	2	2	2		3				3		
15.	Basic Skills for Adults	2	2	2				3	3			3
16.	Advanced Skills for Adults	1	1	1				3	3			3
17.	Leisure for Seniors	1	3	2		3		3	2	3		3
18.	Interpret Environment							2	3	2	1	
19.	Reflection/escape								3	3	2	
20.	Educate About Leisure					2		2				
21.	Communicate Opportunities											

*Anticipated when operational

The consultants have provided a initial assessment by inserting the numbers in **Figure Four** and also subjective assessment of the degree to which each of the twenty-one service objectives is being met in Dawson Creek on an overall basis as one of the requirements of the Master Plan. This analysis is included in **Figure Five**. The fact that not much is being done to achieve a specific objective is not important in itself. It depends on whether that objective is deemed by the City to be in need of more effort and resources. Perhaps not much is being done because the objective is very low priority or because other service

providers in the City are achieving the objective on the City's behalf. That is determined in the next step.

Figure Five
Subjective Evaluation of Service Objectives

	<i>Sufficient Services are Provided to Meet the Objectives (1)</i>	<i>More Could be Done to Meet the Objectives (2)</i>	<i>Very Little is Being Done to Meet the Objectives (3)</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Special Events	*			The number and quality of special events are both quite good in Dawson Creek and the Multiplex should offer even more opportunity to meet this objective.
Support to Local Groups		*		There is strong support to local sports and arts groups and to non-profit facility and service providers. However, a more consistent framework of support is required and more work to make these groups feel appreciated for the work they do. It is important to make local groups feel they are doing great work for their community, not for the City corporation.
Exposure to Sport	*			Some spectator sport opportunities are provided at Memorial Arena and sportsfields but there should be a great deal more opportunity to achieve this objective once the Multiplex is operational. Spectator opportunities should be incorporated into the new pool.
Exposure to the Arts	*			There is a great deal of high quality audience exposure to performing arts and to the visual arts
Social Functions		*		A wide variety of social events exist for most age groups and for all sizes of events. Some non-profit halls are in jeopardy of closing in the foreseeable future and some require some retrofits.
Protecting Natural Resources	*			With initiatives like the Community Forest, and a focus on protecting creek valleys, the city has begun to invest more in this area. There is relatively little natural resource to protect in the City. However, local environmental groups and the city have done much to protect what exists.
Beautify the Community		*		A significant emphasis has been placed on beautification in recent years, particularly in the downtown. A great plan is in place to guide future efforts, but more can be done to expedite those efforts.

	Sufficient Services are Provided to Meet the Objectives (1)	More Could be Done to Meet the Objectives (2)	Very Little is Being Done to Meet the Objectives (3)	Comments
Family-Oriented Opportunities		*		A wide variety of formal and informal opportunities exist, but little focus exists on this objective.
Integrate Generations and Sub-Groups			*	A variety of opportunities exist for mixing generations. However continued emphasis is required in this area and more programming/service ideas are required.
Fitness and well being	*			Private sector opportunities are available as well as non-profit sector (e.g. sports groups) and City sponsored opportunities.
Pre-School Leisure	*			Opportunities are provided by a number of agencies including the City.
Basic Leisure Skills for Children	*			Activities are provided within the school system and within the community for children to gain basic proficiency for a wide variety of sports and arts skills.
Advanced Leisure Skills for Children		*		Many opportunities for advanced skill development are available in the arts and in many sports. More could always be done to increase the breadth of these activities, but it may not be a priority.
Social Opportunities for Teens		*		Recent initiatives such as the skatepark have helped, but there is definitely more to do here.
Basic Leisure Skills for Adults	*			A variety of opportunities are available from a number of sources in sports, the arts and in City sponsored activities such as swimming.
Advanced Leisure Skills for Adults		*		Many opportunities for advanced skill development are available in the arts and sports. More could always be done but it may not be a priority for the community.

	Sufficient Services are Provided to Meet the Objectives (1)	More Could be Done to Meet the Objectives (2)	Very Little is Being Done to Meet the Objectives (3)	Comments
Opportunities for Seniors	*			There is a wide variety of opportunities available both within mainstream programs and within programs focused on seniors. However, as the population continues to age, more will be required.
Interpret the Environment		*		Some interpretive opportunities exist (e.g. the Community Forest) but more could be done here.
Reflection/ Escape	*			A variety of passive areas are accessible to the people of Dawson Creek especially along the creek valley trail system.
Leisure Education			*	Very little is being done by the City or anyone else. However, some leisure education is done through the public school system.
Communicate Opportunities		*		While the City puts out brochures and some maps, more coordinated effort is necessary to ensure that everyone understands all the opportunities available to them.

In interpreting **Figure Five**, it should be noted that in column 1, existing leisure programs and opportunities are being operated in a manner that is acceptable in meeting the specific objectives; column 2 suggests that some success is currently being realized in meeting these service objectives, but more could be done in these areas to fully meet the objective; and column 3 suggests that very little is being done to meet the objectives and much more could be done if the objective is to be realized.

In the consultants' opinion, ten of the twenty-one objectives are sufficiently addressed currently or when the new Multiplex opens and is operated to full potential. Another nine need some attention to move them left into column one. In only two cases is very little being done; integrating generations and subgroups and leisure education. It is important to note that just because an objective is assessed as being in column three, it does not necessarily mean that additional resources must be allocated in these areas. That decision would be delayed until priorities for improvement are determined. It may be that very little is being done to achieve a specific objective, but that the City determines that the objective is sufficiently low on the priority list that no more resources should be allocated to achieving it.

This assessment is meant to focus efforts in the future. It suggests that effective efforts are already being applied in most areas and that very few critical areas need urgent attention.

Prioritize Service Objectives

The second step in the annual priority setting exercise would be to prioritize the objectives. This should be a City responsibility as part of the budget and the Business Plan process because it deals with overall City priorities. After reviewing the completed inventory chart outlined in **Figure Four**, City may decide that a few of these objectives are not as well served as others. It may set the attainment of these objectives as higher priorities for the coming year. This, of course, would have an impact on budget considerations and may require that new resources be added to meet new objectives, or that resources be shifted from those objectives which are already being met.

In subsequent years, the City may decide that earlier defined priorities are now relatively well served in relation to other objectives and that new priorities have emerged. The November 2005 workshop tested this prioritizing procedure, and determined that it could work. Although very preliminary in nature (participants had not been through the exercise before) the needs for improvement as perceived by participants are recorded in **Figure Six**.

Figure Six
Areas Which Most Need to be Improved

<i>Foster Sense Of Community</i>	Score	Rank
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Special Events	0	
Support to Community Groups	1	
Spectator Sports	1	
Exposure to and appreciation of the Arts	4	6
Social Functions	3	9
Protecting Natural Resources	4	6
Beautify the Community	5	5
Opportunities for Family Units	8	1
Mixing Generations	4	6

<i>Foster Growth Of The Individual</i>	Score	Rank
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Fitness/Well Being	6	3
Preschool Recreation Opportunities	2	
Basic Leisure Skills for School Aged Children	6	3
Advanced Leisure Skills for School Aged Children	1	
Social Opportunities for Teens	7	2
Basic Leisure Skills for Adults	2	
Advanced Leisure Skills for Adults	1	
Recreation Opportunities for Seniors	5	5
Interpreting the Environment	1	
Reflection/Escape	1	
Leisure Education	3	9
Communicating opportunities	3	9

Working Towards High Priority Objectives

The above chart represents local decision-makers' prioritization of improvements required in achieving the twenty-one service objectives.

The final step would be to render the City's activities more effective as meeting the twenty-one objectives. To do this, the City would review the inventory chart (**Figure Three**) from each of the two axis independently.

To start, the separate rows of the chart, each representing a service objective, should be analyzed with a view toward more effective strategies for achieving each objective.

For example, the City might brainstorm new ideas for achieving a specific objective. Then it might estimate costs and benefits of each item on the list, prioritize them and implement only those that are the most cost effective. At the end of the year an evaluation process would reveal that success or lack thereof in achieving a specific objective. The costs of the strategies could then be weighted against the benefits, and adjusted during the following year to delete those that are least effective and where appropriate, initiate new strategies.

It would be necessary to analyze each of the existing services that are assigned columns on the chart. The City might, for example, "discover" through the inventory process that a particular program or service was involved in a major way in achieving two objectives, in a moderate way in achieving three others, and in a minor way in achieving two more. With some thought it would be possible to develop low or no cost strategies for:

- Moving some of the modest or moderate symbols up to the major category.
- Reducing costs of achieving the objectives.
- Achieving new objectives with the same program.

In the final step, all suggestions for developing or adjusting existing services would be developed into budget proposals showing their cost/benefit in terms of achieving objectives. The final budget review and approval process would also be based on this more structured cost/benefit approach.

Conclusion

The City Should:

Use the model described herein or a version of the corporate priorities setting model to set priorities and evaluate existing services on an annual basis.