



Let's Talk New Aquatics Facility

Engagement Summary Report

February 2026

Executive Summary

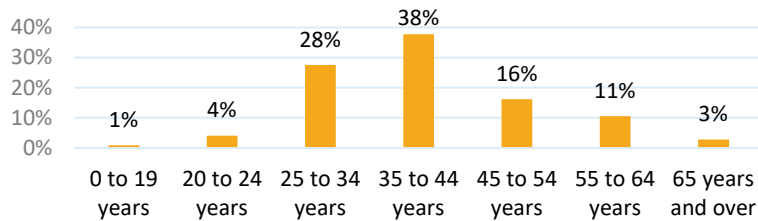
The City of Fort St. John is planning a new aquatic facility to address long-standing community needs and replace the aging North Peace Leisure Pool. The City is building on years of public input to move forward with an initial, two-phased concept for a modern, functional and inclusive new aquatics facility.

How We Engaged:

Community engagement for this phase took place in early 2026 and focused on gathering input for the Phase 1 proposed facility concept, including potential elements of a **dynamic movement gym**, **enhanced social space**, and prioritizing **additional amenities and features**. Residents were invited to participate through an online Next Wave survey, a “Vote 4 Features” interactive tool on the project’s webpage, and a range of in-person opportunities.

Who Participated:

Almost **1,500 comments or responses** were received from community members, including **636** survey responses, **456** Vote 4 Features responses, and **375** in-person participants.



- **76%** live in Fort St. John
- **16%** live in PRRD Area C
- **5%** live in in PRRD Area B

What We Learned:

What does “Enhanced Social Space” mean to you?

1. Comfortable, accessible, free (34%)
2. Variety of seating and tables (27%)
3. Café or food and beverage (19%)

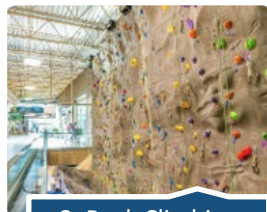
What does “Dynamic Movement Gym” mean to you?

1. Play space for children (34%)
2. Indoor court space (19%)
3. Flexible open fitness space (15%)

Top voted additional features:



1. NINJACROSS Obstacle Course



2. Rock Climbing Wall



3. Second Water Slide

- **76%** think it’s important to build a new gym
- **72%** rated **multi-purpose use** as a very important gym feature

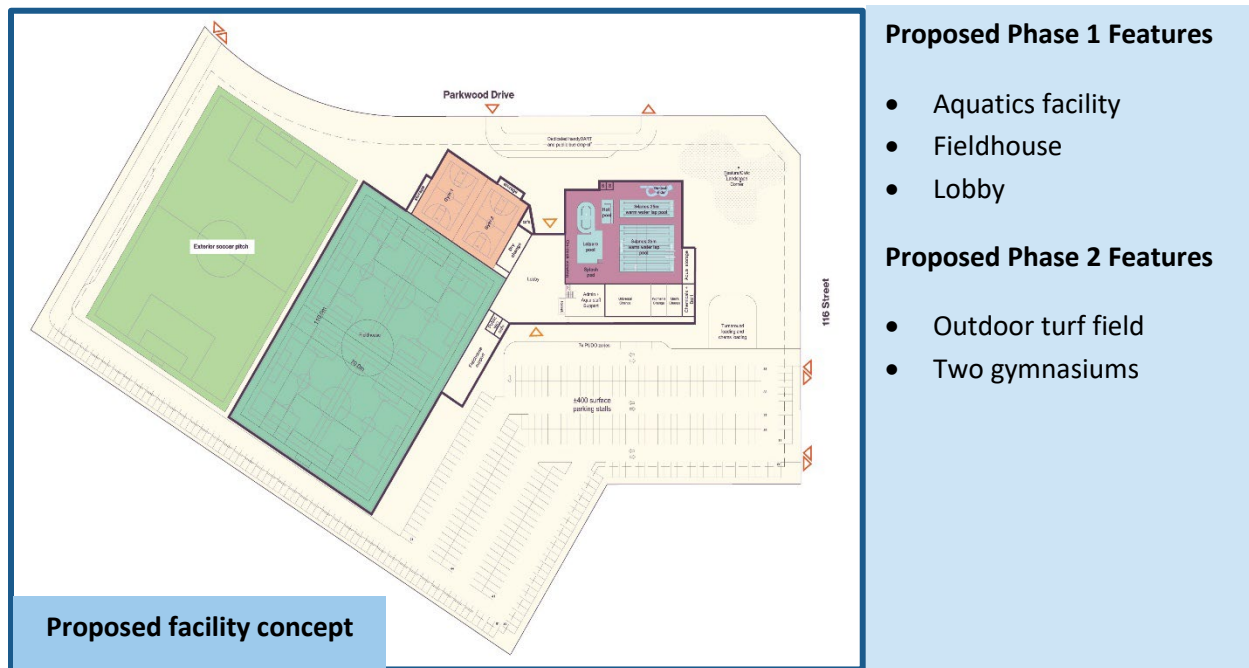
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1. Background

Since 2018, the City of Fort St. John, the Peace River Regional District, and the District of Taylor have worked together to explore options for a new aquatic facility that better meets the needs of residents today and into the future. The City of Fort St. John took over responsibility for the project in July 2025, dissolving the North Peace Leisure Facility Replacement Steering Committee and establishing the City of Fort St. John Aquatic Facility Working Group.

The Working Group has developed an initial concept for the facility based on past community engagement and ongoing technical work. This concept, which includes two proposed phases for development, was presented to the community for feedback in January 2026. The findings from this engagement are summarized in this report to guide decision-making and the creation of a more detailed design for the facility.



1.1 Past community engagement

The initial concept and engagement approach built on input community members have provided on this project over the past eight years. Click below to read each of the Engagement Summary Reports from the past three phases of engagement:

[Phase 1 Engagement
Summary Report](#)

[Phase 2 Engagement
Summary Report](#)

[Phase 3 Engagement
Summary Report](#)



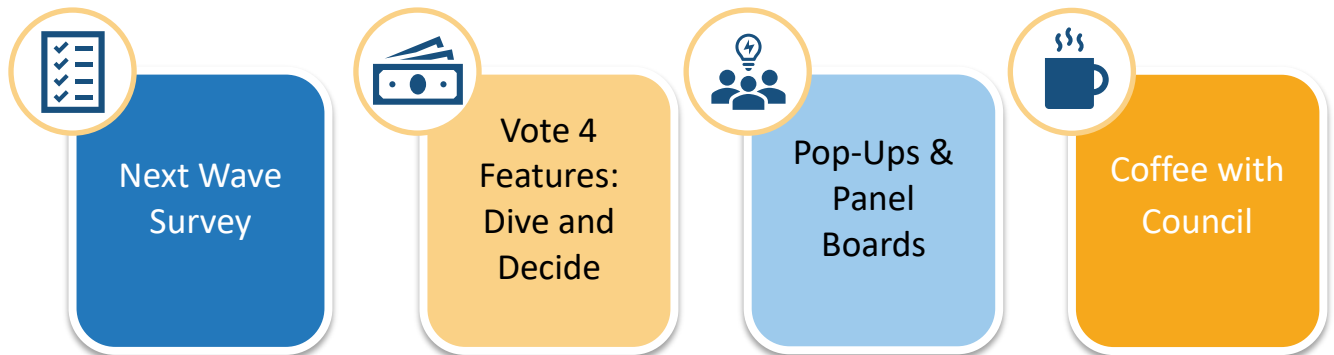
2. How We Informed

Community members were informed about engagement opportunities through a news release, social media posts, radio ads, an e-newsletter, a Council Corner video and in-person activation at the North Peace Leisure Pool.

3. How We Engaged

To dive deeper into community vision for features and elements of the Phase 1 proposed facility concept, community members were engaged through an online Next Wave survey, a “Vote 4 Features” tool on the Let’s Talk Fort St. John project page, and in-person through user group focus groups, Coffee with Council sessions, and pop-ups.

Engagement opportunities were held between January 13 and February 1, 2026.



Pop-ups and panel boards gathered input in-person on the following dates:

- Friday, January 23 at the Fort St. John Huskies Game at the North Peace Arena
- Friday, January 23 at the Winter Fest Kick-off in Kin Park
- Friday, January 16 to Sunday, February 1 at the North Peace Leisure Pool

Coffee with Council, as well as panel boards for community members to provide input, took place at the Farmhouse on Main on Tuesday, January 27 and Saturday, January 31.

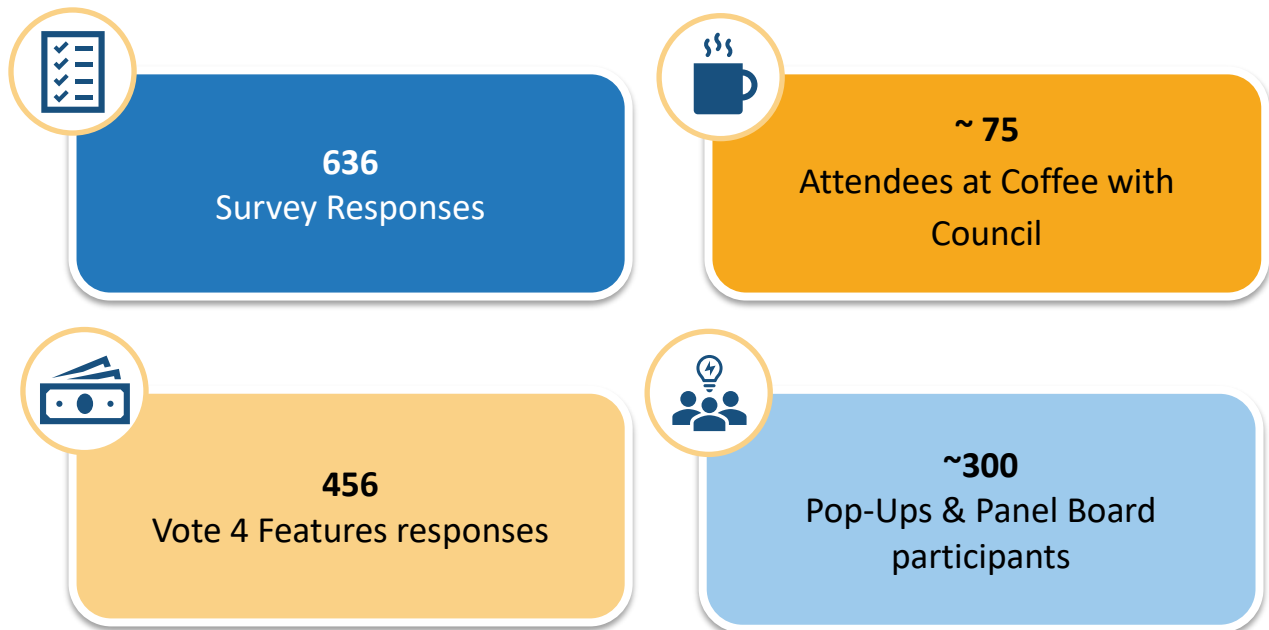
4. What We Asked

Community engagement focused on confirming the community’s vision for the aquatic facility based on engagement that has taken place over the past eight years. Questions explored what the community envisioned for a **dynamic movement gym** and **enhanced social space**, priorities for **additional amenities and features**, and ideas for **gymnasium space design**.

5. Who Participated

Overall, almost **1,500 comments or responses** were received from community members during this round of engagement, including:

- 636 responses to the online survey
- 456 responses to the Vote 4 Features
- Approximately 300 participants at the pop-ups and panel boards placed at the North Peace Leisure Pool
- Approximately 75 participants at Coffee with Council

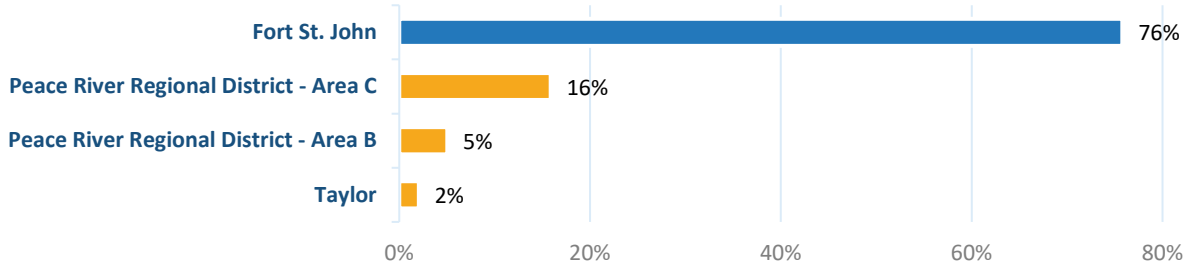


Demographic data collected through participants in the Next Wave online survey showed that most participants (76%) live in Fort St. John. Most survey participants were adults between the ages of 25 to 54, which is a greater proportion of adults than the overall population of Fort St. John, and far fewer people under the age of 24 participated in the survey than the overall population of the city.

However, 35% of survey participants indicated that they have children under the age of 18 and likely expressed the needs of their children in their survey responses. More women responded to the survey than men, with 69% of survey responses coming from women compared to 29% of respondents who identified as men.

More women than men who completed the survey have children under 18. Almost one-quarter (23%) of men who responded have children under 18 and 38% of women who responded have children under 18.

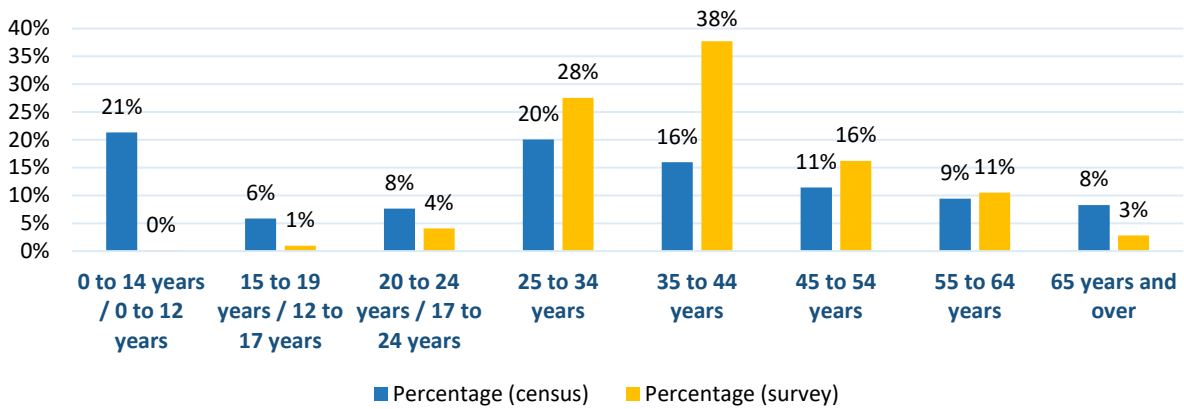
Where do you live?



Total: 636 responses

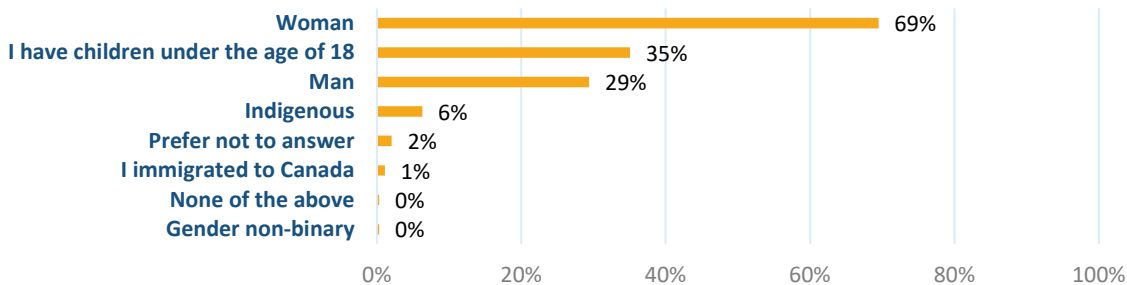
What age bracket do you fall into?

Survey participant ages compared to Fort St. John population census data¹



Total: 636 responses

Which of these apply to you?



Total: 636 responses

¹ Statistics Canada. 2023. (table). *Census Profile*. 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. Released November 15, 2023. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed February 10, 2026).

6. What We Learned

6.1 Phase 1 Facility Features

Through past engagement, community members told us the facility should have space for all ages and users, including families, seniors, and sports organizations. The most important features mentioned by community members included a lap pool, leisure pool, hot tub, sauna, steam room, and water slide.

Specific recreation amenity priorities that were identified in Phase 3 of engagement included a “dynamic movement gym” and “enhanced social space.” To better understand the community’s vision for these amenities, community members were asked to share what each of these concepts meant to them.

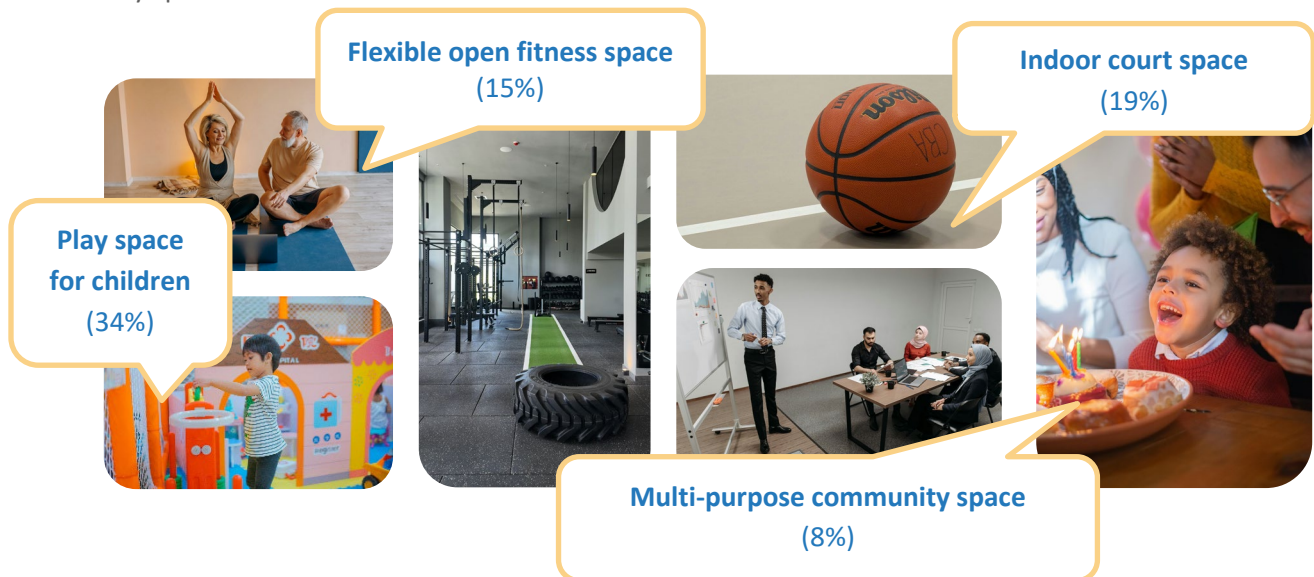
General feedback

Feedback received on the proposed facility concept from the in-person engagement opportunities included concern about the cost and property tax impacts, feedback on the desire for a 50-metre pool to be included in the aquatic facility, and questions about the construction timelines.

Other features frequently mentioned at the in-person engagement included a climbing wall, pickleball, an outdoor pool, a zipline, a rope swing, water slides, hot tubs and a coffee shop.

What does “dynamic movement gym” mean to you?

The top themes from responses about what a “dynamic movement gym” means to the community included play spaces for children, indoor court space, flexible open fitness space, and multi-purpose community space.



Theme	Description	% of Comments
Play space for children	Equipment to climb, swing, jump, tumble and roll on, such as a jungle gym, soft play area or obstacle course.	34%
Indoor court sports	Indoor court spaces, specifically for squash, pickleball, basketball, volleyball, badminton, and walleyball.	19%
Flexible space/open fitness	Open fitness space that can be adapted for different uses, including exercise equipment and spaces for individual workouts and group classes that can accommodate different fitness levels, abilities and ages.	15%
Multi-purpose community space	Adaptable space that can be rented and used by community groups.	8%

Total: 559 comments

What does “enhanced social space” mean to you?

Responses about what an “enhanced social space” means to community members primarily focused on having a space that is comfortable, easily accessible, and free to enter, with a variety of seating and table options. Community members also would like a café or food and beverage options, private bookable rooms, and a play area for children



Theme	Description	% of Comments
Variety of seating and tables	A variety of seating and table options for groups to gather, work, play games, and view the pool, play space, or activities. Modular furniture that can be moved to adapt the space would help it be used for different purposes.	27%
Café or food and beverage vendor	Food and beverage options to purchase drinks, snacks, and light meals.	26%

Theme	Description	% of Comments
Comfortable and accessible gathering space	An accessible and free to enter space with soft and comfortable seating, Wi-Fi, greenery and natural light.	19%
Play area	Area for children or youth to play games and socialize indoors.	10%
Private bookable rooms	Rooms that can be booked for events or groups, like birthday parties or meetings.	5%

Other comments shared a desire for a greater focus on athletics than social space, adaptable spaces, and a viewing area.

Total: 529 comments

Vote 4 Features: Dive & Decide

In the Vote 4 Features tool, participants were given 10 points to spend on potential features and amenities that could be added to the facility, each with a different cost in points. Participants at in-person pop-ups also had the opportunity to vote by placing stickers on panel boards.

The top three features voted for were the NINJACROSS obstacle course, rock climbing wall, and a second water slide. These all had a relatively similar number of votes, with 21% of the votes, 20% of the votes, and 14% of the votes respectively.



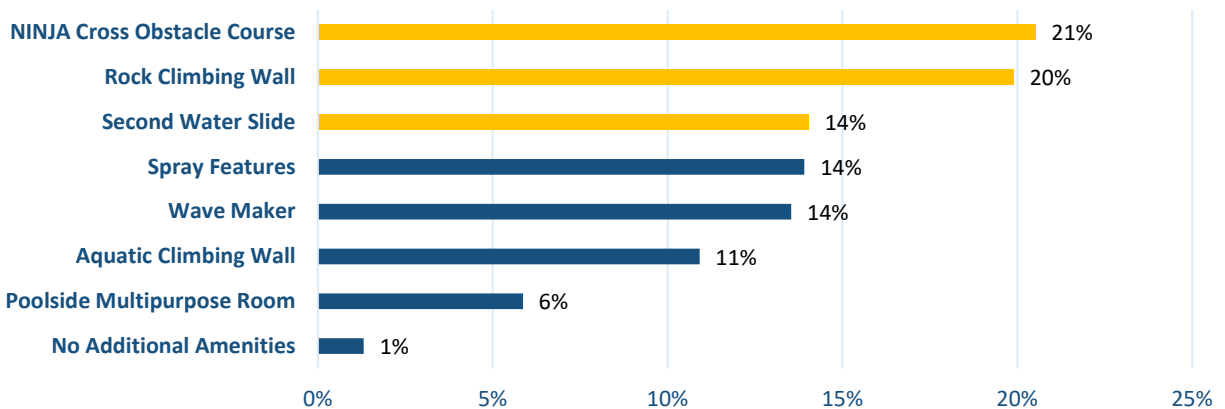
**NINJACROSS
Obstacle Course**



Rock Climbing Wall



Second Water Slide



Total=1603 votes

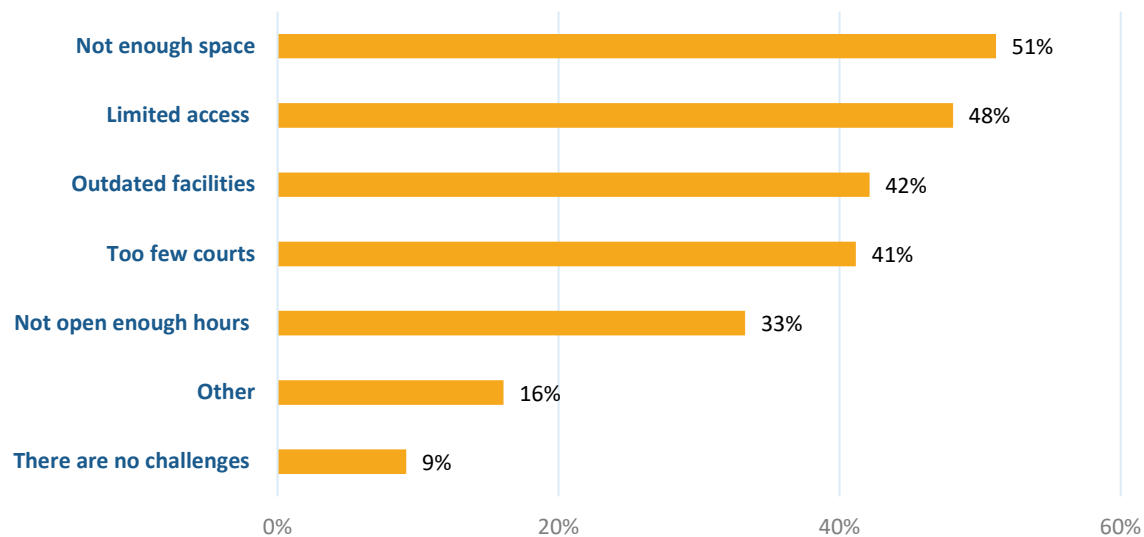
6.2 Phase 2 Facility Features

In the proposed Phase 2 of the facility, an outdoor turf field and two gymnasium spaces would be added to the aquatic facility. To better understand the needs, priorities, and vision for a gymnasium space, community members were asked about various aspects of potential gymnasium features and programming.

Key themes related to new gymnasium priorities include:

- It's important to build new gymnasiums because current facilities and school gyms are at capacity, making it difficult for groups to find time to play indoor sports.
- Community members want flexible, multi-purpose space that can accommodate many different activities.
- It's very important for community members that new gymnasiums are designed to host tournaments or other events.
- The top sports community members would play in the gymnasium are basketball, volleyball and pickleball.

What challenges do you see with current gym facilities in Fort St. John?

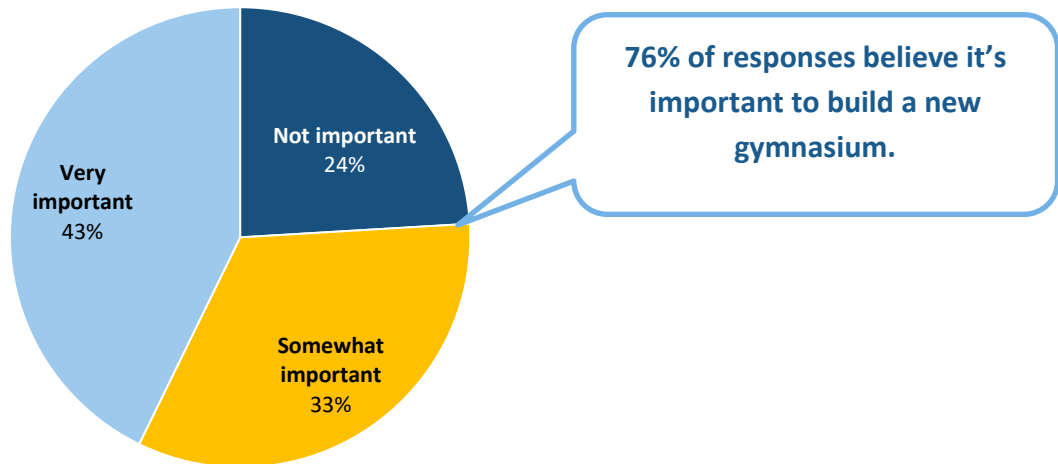


Total: 621 responses

Over half of survey participants (51%) indicated challenges with “**not enough space**” with current gym facilities in Fort St. John. A similar number of participants (48%) felt that “**limited access**” was another common challenge.

“Other” responses (16%) included other factors such as price, awareness about fitness programming, lack of spectator seating, and lack of indoor court facilities.

How important is building a new gymnasium to you?



Total: 636 responses

Why do you believe a new gymnasium space is needed?

Community members believe a new gymnasium space is needed primarily because there's not enough court space in the city and current school gyms and private gyms are over capacity. Community members also expressed a need for more indoor activity options in the winter, especially for children and youth.

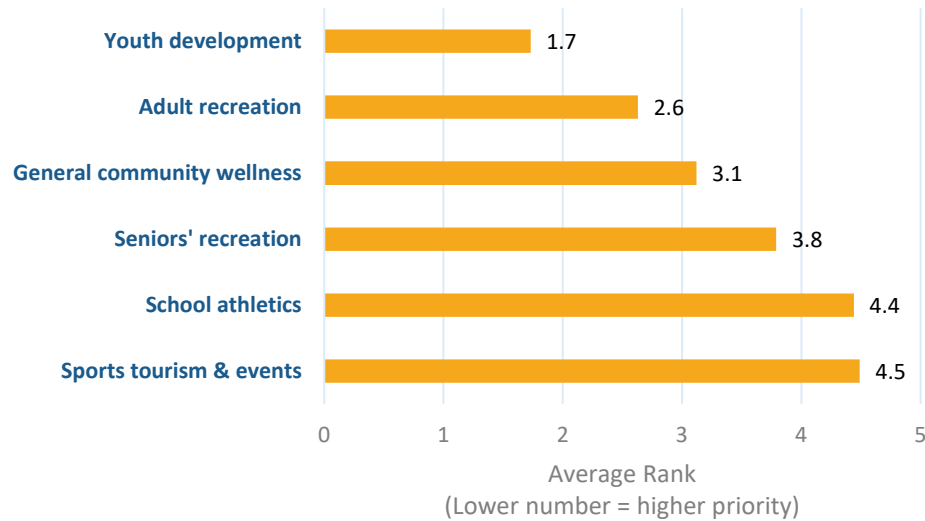
Theme	Description	% of Comments
Demand for court space	There's not enough court space for indoor sports such as basketball, volleyball, badminton, and tennis. It's difficult for all teams to get space to practice and play.	25%
Need for indoor activities in the winter	Living in a Northern community, people want options for activities that can be done indoors in the winter to stay active and healthy.	19%
Lack of access to school gyms	Many groups currently use school gyms outside of school hours, but there's too much demand and school gyms are not suitable for all activities.	12%
Need for youth activities	Fort St. John needs more spaces designed for children to play and participate in sports to stay healthy and active.	11%
Lack of gym space	All other indoor gym spaces are too crowded, and there isn't enough space for sports aside from hockey.	8%

Other themes from the comments focused on the inadequate condition of existing facilities, a focus on greater community health and wellness, the ability to host tournaments and events, and to support community growth.

Total: 472 comments

What outcomes should the new gym facilities support?

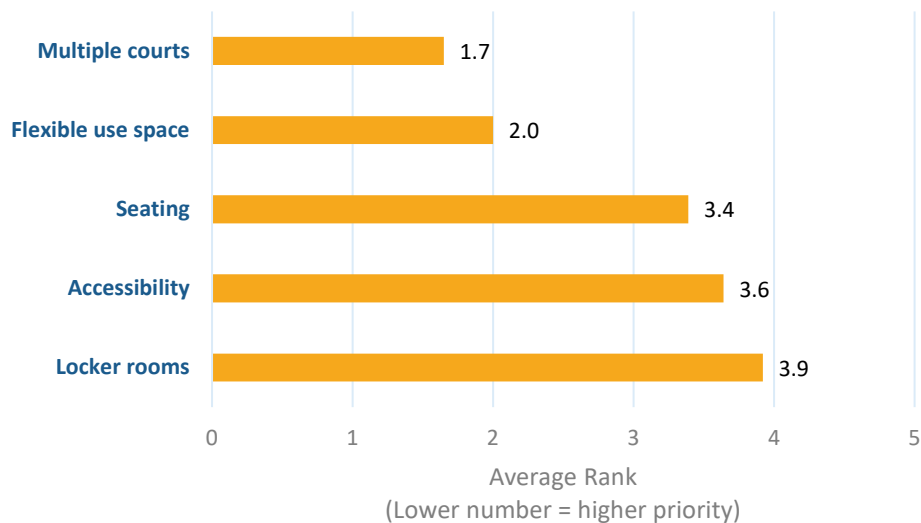
When asked to rank important outcomes for the new gym, participants on average chose **youth development** as their top answer, followed by **adult recreation**.



Total: 483 responses

What are your top priorities for the proposed gymnasium space?

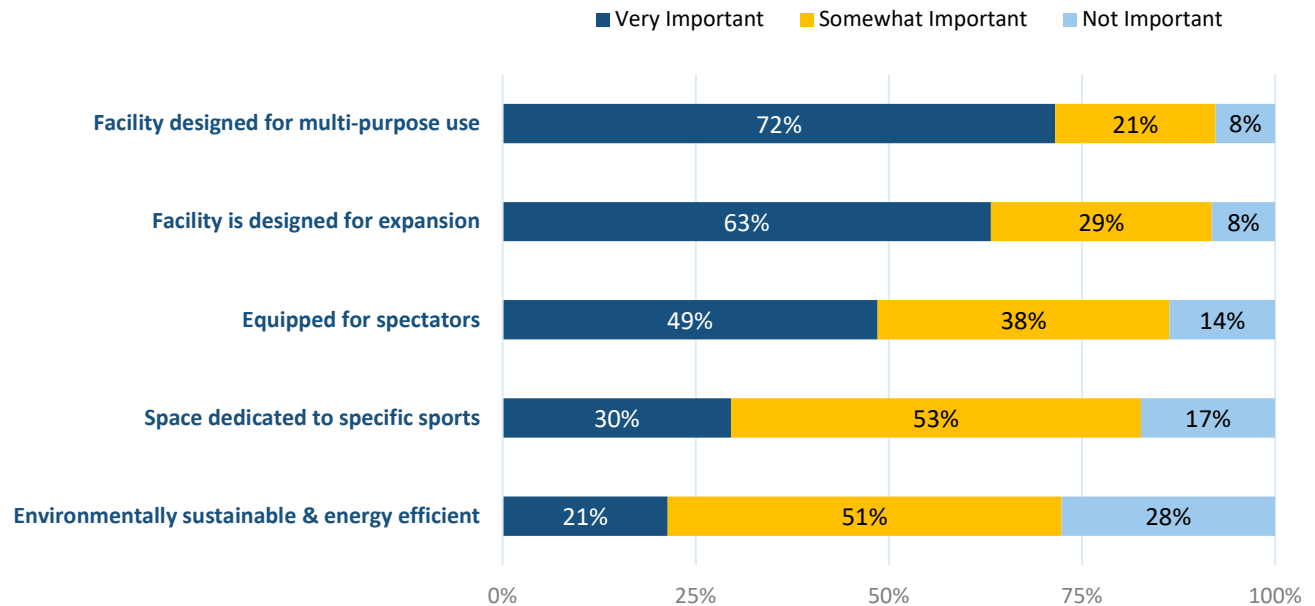
When asked to rank priorities for the new gym space, participants on average chose **multiple courts** as their top answer, followed by **flexible use space**.



Total: 483 responses

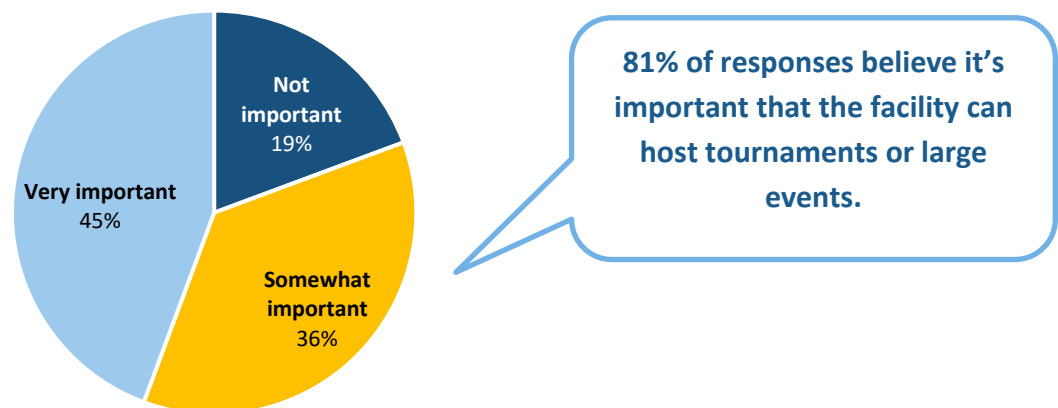
Please rate how important each of these are to you:

When asked to rate design features for the new facility, the highest number of participants (72%) rated **multi-purpose use** as their most important feature. The next most important feature is a facility that is **designed for expansion** (63%).



Total: 636 responses

How important is the ability to host tournaments or large events in the proposed gymnasium?



Total: 636 responses

What is the most important thing the City should consider when planning new gymnasium space?

The top five most common ways participants felt a new gym could be designed to feel welcoming and inclusive were:

Theme	Description	% of Comments
Demand for court sports	Accommodating court sports like basketball, volleyball, tennis and pickleball and having court space easily sectioned off for different uses.	20%
Flexible, multi-use design	Space that is suitable for many different sports and activities to meet the needs of different user groups and community members.	17%
Meet the needs for youth, families and seniors	Activities for all ages, from toddlers to seniors, including play areas, accessible fitness spaces, and places for parents to watch children's sports.	13%
Costs, funding and impacts on taxes	Cost to community members, including reducing impacts on taxes and ensuring affordability of user fees.	12%
Attracting tournaments and tourism	Spaces designed to attract tournaments, including change rooms, spectator viewing areas, and enough space to host larger events.	11%

Total: 517 responses

What would make this gym feel welcoming and inclusive to you and your family?

The top five most common ways participants felt a new gym could be designed to feel welcoming and inclusive were:

Theme	Description	% of Comments
Accommodating the needs of children and families	Spaces that are designed for children and families, including play areas, programming for all ages, and places for parents to watch their children.	15%
Diverse programming for all abilities	A range of programming for all fitness levels and abilities to give people the opportunity to learn new skills and try new sports.	14%
Clear availability and scheduling to use the facility	Clear availability and scheduling for when different groups can use spaces, including drop-in hours and fairness for different groups scheduling use.	13%
Comfortable seating and viewing areas	Large open seating and viewing areas with comfortable seats.	14%
Natural lighting, bright and colourful interior design	Warm, bright, open, clean, colourful layout which could include local artwork.	10%

Total: 446 responses

Are there successful gym or recreation facilities in other towns you think we should model?

The most common examples provided by survey participants as potential models for the new aquatic facility were the Grande Prairie Eastlink Centre or Design Works Centre. Other examples mentioned included recreation centres in Edmonton, Fort Nelson and Dawson Creek. Specific reasons why people liked these examples were that they have spaces for many different activities, including a pool, courts, fields and rinks, as well as shops and cafes or cafeterias in one facility.



Total: 443 responses

Do you have any other comments or suggestions regarding the new gym space?

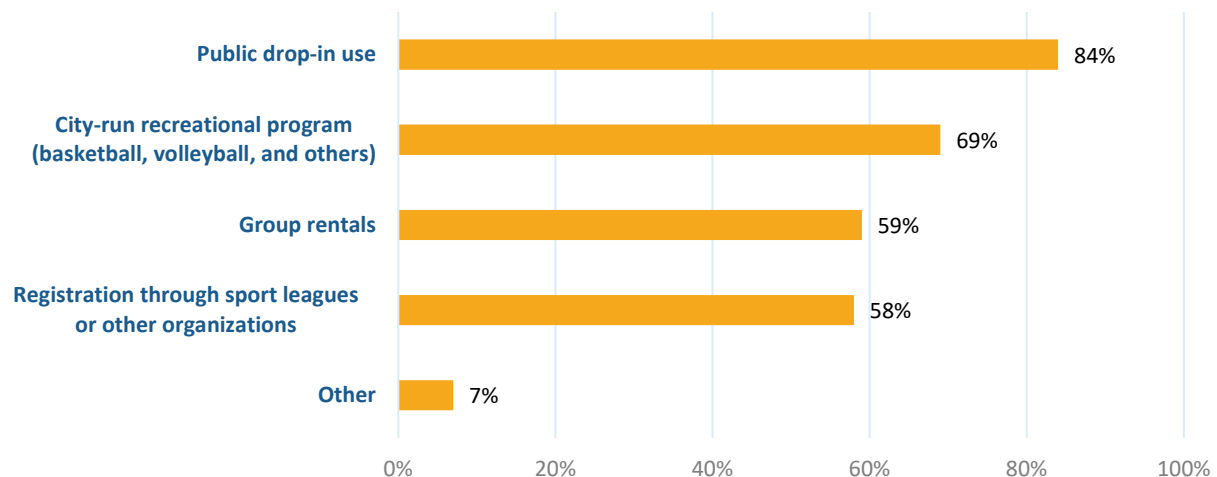
Comments on the new gym space emphasized previous priorities about focusing on court space and the pool before the new gym space, a need to make the facility adaptable for multiple uses, and concerns about the project costs.

Theme	Description	% of Comments
Prioritize court space	Court space and availability is a key priority for sports teams and individual players.	25%
Prioritize the pool and aquatic space	Focus on building a larger pool and more aquatic amenities, such as a splash park, change room with showers, water slide, hot tub, and steam room.	13%
Facility design, size and specifications	Make the facility adaptable to multiple uses and build with enough space to accommodate the growth of Fort St. John over time.	13%
Concerns about cost, tax impacts and funding	Concerns about whether the City can afford a larger facility with more amenities, and how this will impact taxes.	12%
All-ages programming and spaces	Create spaces that are usable for all ages, including children, teenagers, adults and seniors so the entire community can benefit.	8%

Total: 281 responses

How would you prefer to use the gymnasiums that are proposed to be added in Phase 2?

Most participants (84%) would access the new gym for **public drop-in use**, and participants also showed a high level of interest (69%) for **City-run recreational programs**, such as basketball, volleyball, and other organized sports.

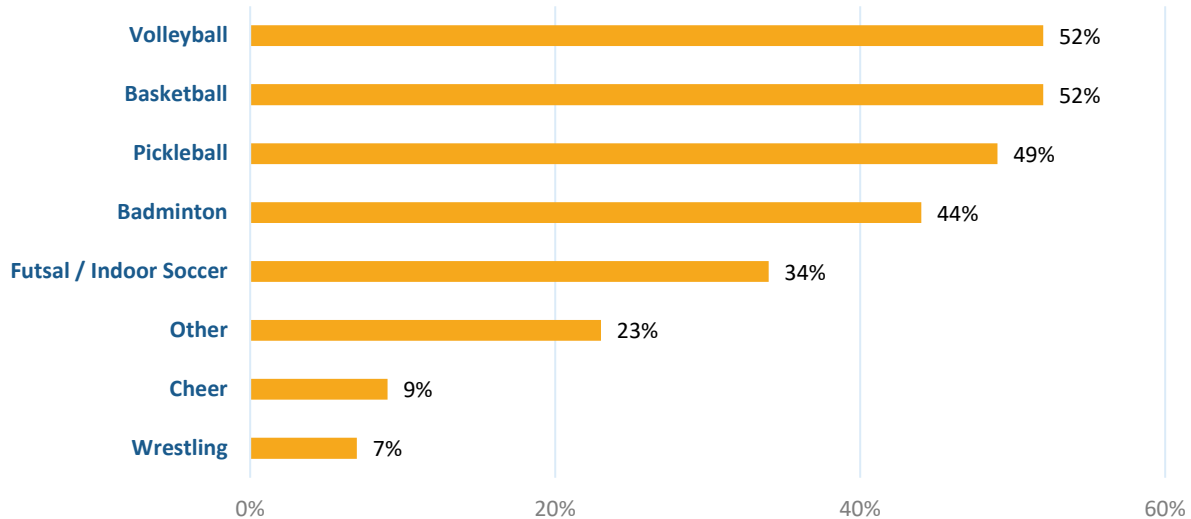


Total: 619 responses

“Other” responses (7%) included people who would not use the proposed gym.

What type of sports would your household participate in the most?

The most popular sports indicated by survey participants were **volleyball**, **basketball** and **pickleball**, followed by badminton.

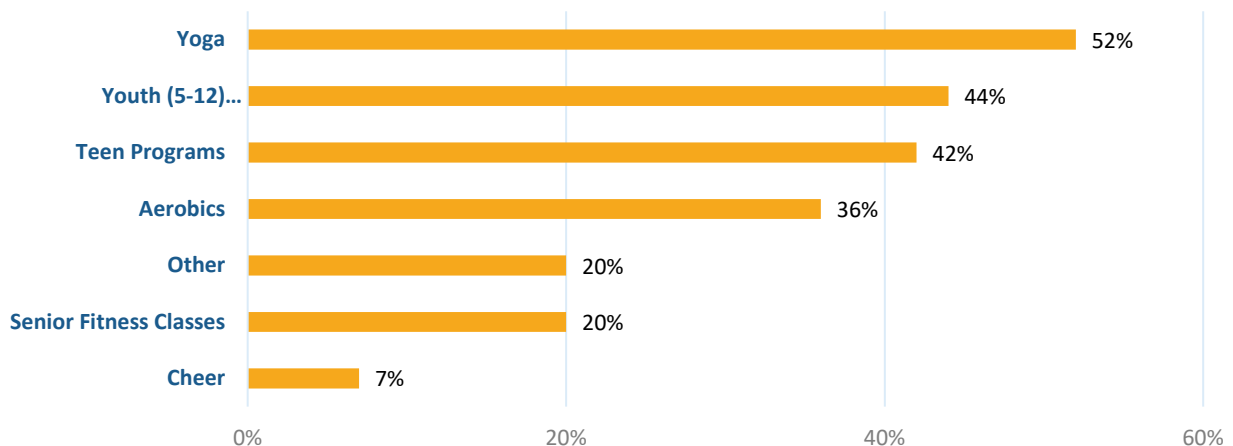


Total: 596

“Other” responses (23%) included other recreational activities such as jiu-jitsu, dodgeball, and squash.

What type of fitness or recreational activities would your household use the most?

Fitness or recreational activities that participants would use the most included **yoga**, **youth after-school programs** (ages 5-12), and **teen programs** (ages 13-18).

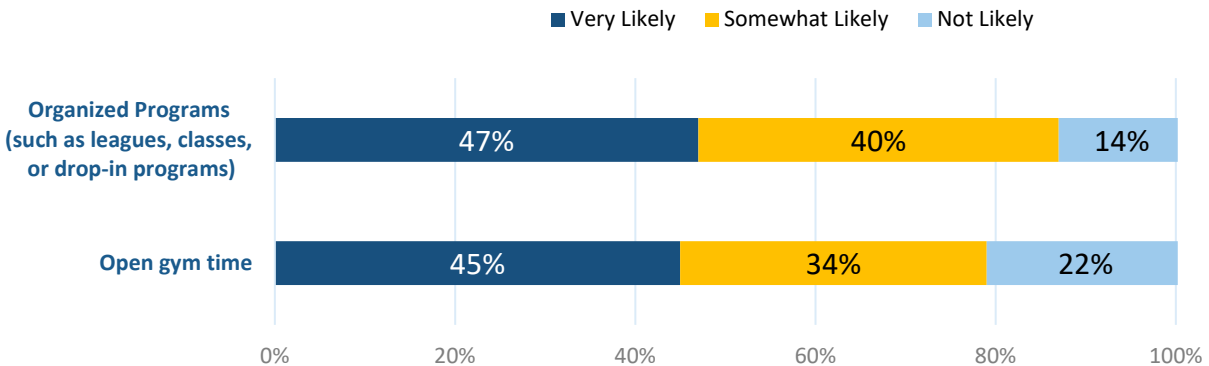


Total: 584 responses

“Other” responses (20%) included activities such as Pilates, spin classes, dance classes, and rock climbing.

How likely are you to participate in organized programs compared to open gym time?

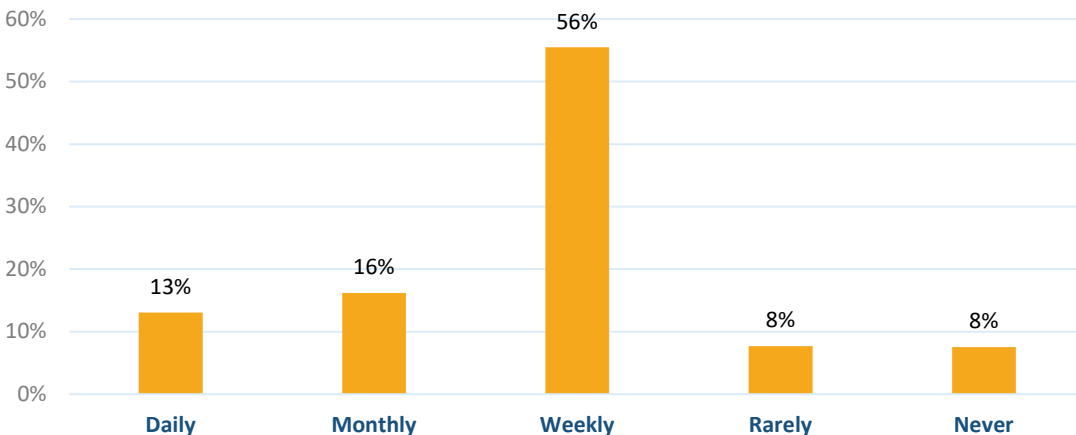
Survey responses indicated a high level of interest in both **organized programs** and **open gym time**, with a slight preference towards programming such as leagues, classes or drop-in programs.



Total: 636 responses

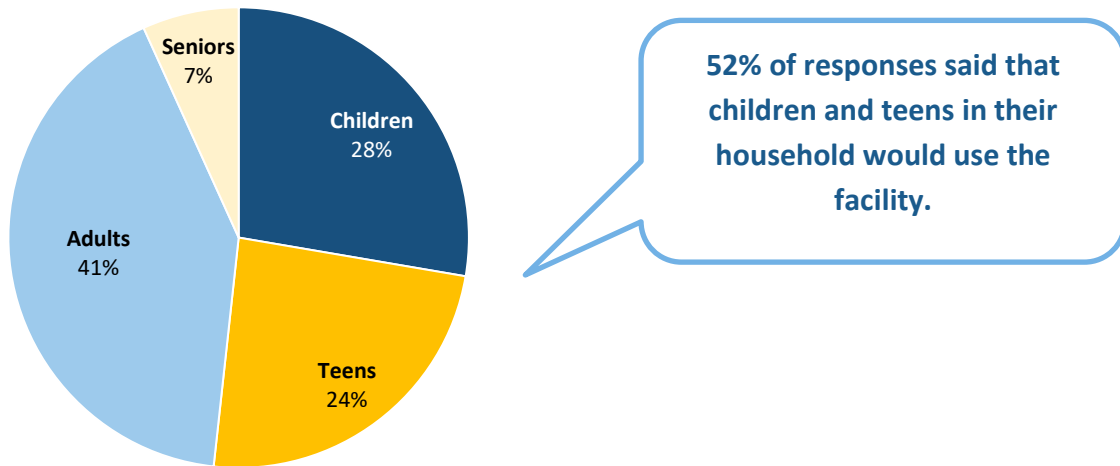
How often would you or someone in your household use the proposed gymnasium space?

Over half of participants (56%) would use the proposed gym on a **weekly** basis.



Total: 636 responses

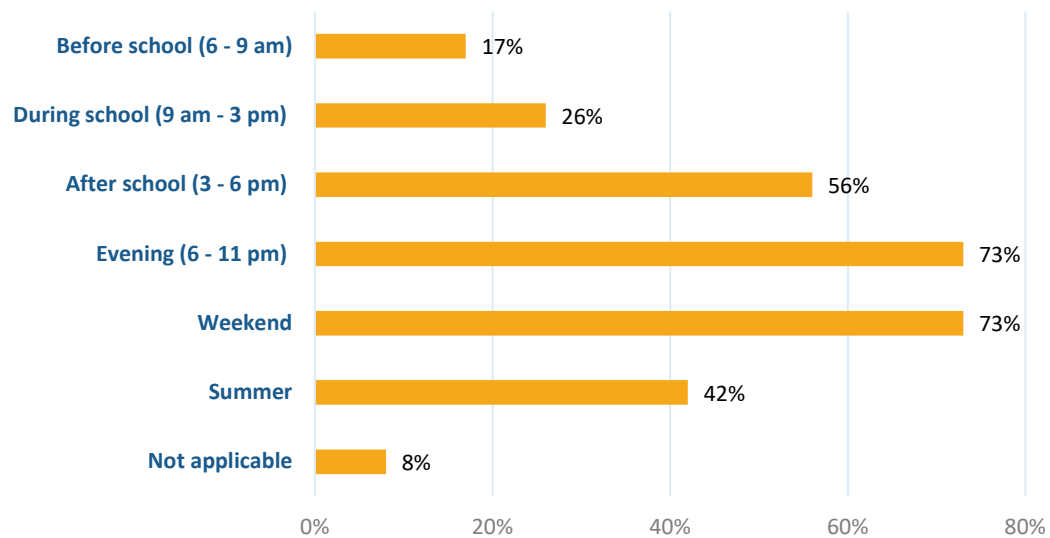
What age groups in your household would use the facility?



Total: 636 responses

What time of day would you most likely use the gym facility?

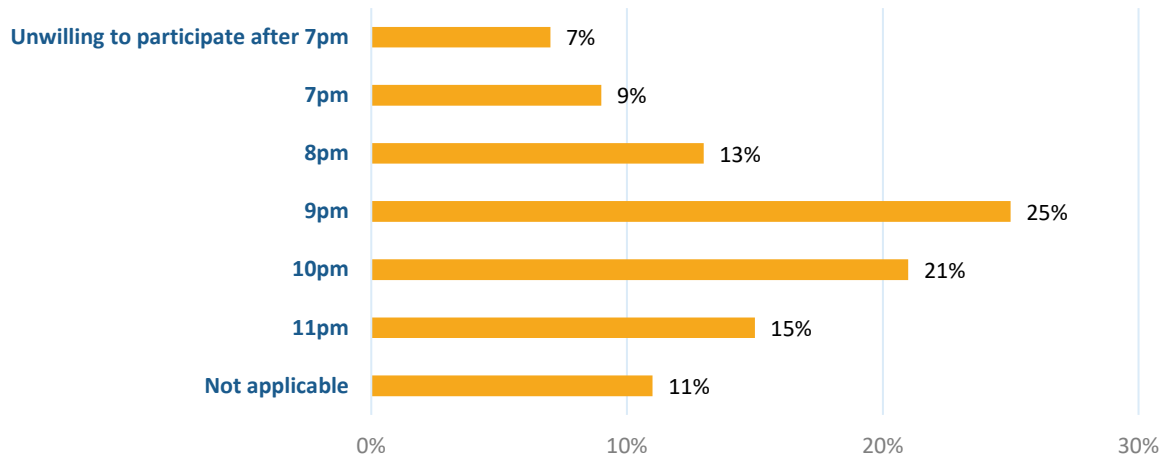
The highest number of participants (73%) would use the facility in the **evening** and on **weekends**.



Total: 636 responses

How late into the evening would you be willing to participate in programs?

Survey responses showed a slight preference for programs that end between 9 and 10 pm.

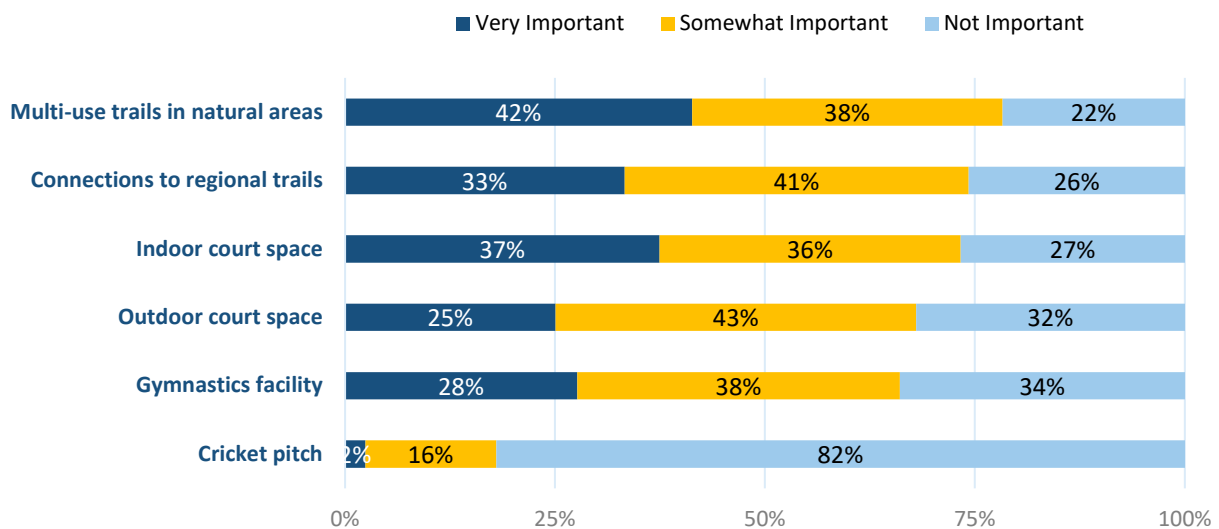


Total: 636 responses

Please rate the importance of potential Phase 2 features.

Survey participants rated the importance of features for Phase 2:

- High level of importance for **multi-use trails** (42%) and connections to **regional trails** (33%).
- A slight preference for **indoor court space** (73% Very/Somewhat Important) over **outdoor court space** (68%).
- Moderate interest in a **gymnastics facility** (66% Very/Somewhat Important).
- Low level of support for a **cricket pitch** (18% Very/Somewhat Important)

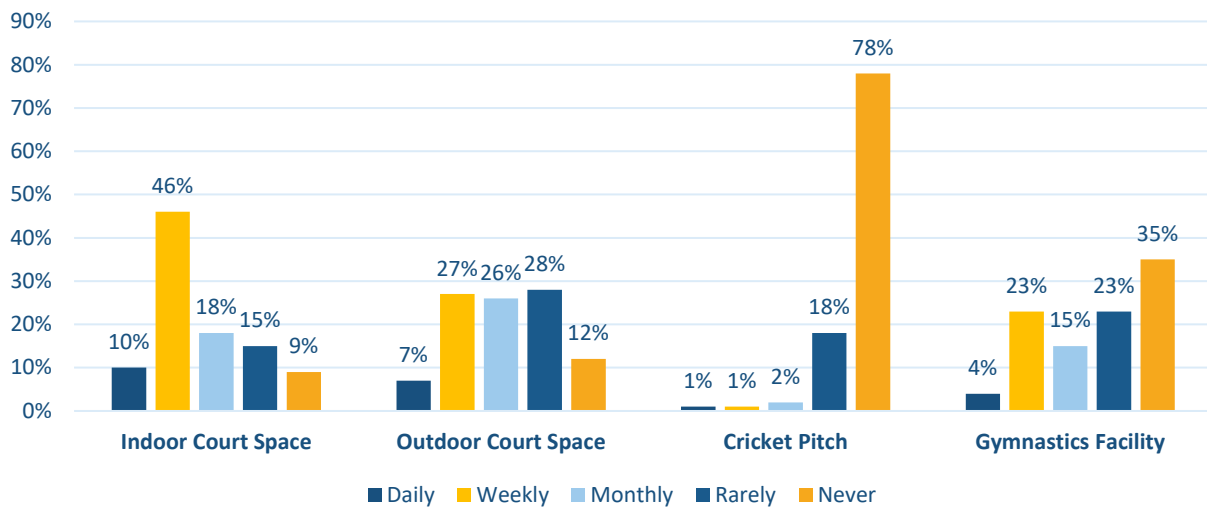


Total: 636 responses

How often would you or someone in your household use indoor court space?

Based on four potential amenities under consideration for Phase 2 of the facility, indoor court space would be the most frequently used. Other takeaways include:

- **Indoor court space:** Almost half of survey participants (46%) would use indoor courts on a weekly basis.
- **Outdoor court space:** For outdoor court space, most survey responses were balanced across rare/occasional use (28%), weekly use (27%), and monthly use (26%).
- **Cricket pitch:** The highest number of survey participants (78%) would never use a cricket pitch.
- **Gymnastics facility:** While over a third of participants would never use a gymnastics facility (35%), many responses ranged from weekly (23%) and monthly (15%) to occasional use (23%).



Total: 636 responses

Do you have any other comments or suggestions regarding other recreation amenities in the City?

Final comments reiterated many of the themes from the other questions, including a focus on court space, pool amenities, and soccer fields, but concerns from the community about project costs.

Theme	Description	% of Comments
Demand for indoor court space	The City needs additional indoor court space for sports such as volleyball, pickleball, and basketball.	30%
Important pool features	The aquatic centre needs to be bigger, have features for kids and adults, and support competition swimming for the region.	26%
Concern about project costs and tax impacts	The project costs relative to the average taxpayer should ensure affordability and fiscal responsibility.	14%
Indoor/outdoor soccer fields	Interest in additional soccer facilities, indoor sportsplex, and outdoor soccer pitch.	10%

Total: 223 responses

7. Next Steps

Feedback gathered through this phase of community engagement will help refine the concept, guide design decisions, and ensure the project reflects community needs alongside best practices and financial analysis.

Over the coming months, the City will continue advancing the project by:

- Finalizing amenities based on public input
- Developing detailed site plans and facility designs
- Exploring funding sources, including grants, partnerships, cost-sharing, borrowing, and sponsorships
- Preparing cost estimates and assessing potential tax impacts
- Conducting a public assent process to confirm community support

The City will continue to engage with residents throughout the planning and design process to ensure the future facility reflects the needs of our community.

The City should look at all sports that are offered here and want to provide a healthy environment for our youth to play/learn and grow in. It is so very important, now more than ever, to invest in our youth, provide the spaces for them to play their sports and encourage them to be part of a team.

We have outdoor courts all over town. We are only able to use them for 3 months of the year. The focus needs to be on indoor spaces that are available to the public for the bulk of the year when going outside is not feasible/enjoyable.

I'm excited for a facility like this. But I'm hesitant about the cost. I would really appreciate seeing consideration for the tax payers who will be asked to fund this facility.

We are a winter city with competitive sports clubs. We are limited by the available school district facilities. While we appreciate what we have (low cost and shared with us), our population has grown, so has the popularity of our indoor sports clubs (volleyball, pickleball, basketball, and badminton). This restricts the availability of court time significantly.