

City of Winnipeg



Athletic Field Review

“What We’ve Heard” Report

Final
August 2017





Summary of Key Findings

The City of Winnipeg is continuing its Athletic Field Review project. Over the last six months, the City has undertaken engagement with hundreds of residents, user groups and stakeholders as summarized by the following chart.

Engagement Mechanism	Responses/Participation Levels
User Group Questionnaire	31
Public Web Survey	814
Stakeholder Discussions	17 sessions
Focus Groups	4 sessions

The “What We Heard” Report (the “Report”) document provides a synopsis of the input collected from the project engagement undertaken to-date which will help inform the strategies and recommendations outlined in the draft Athletic Field Review document (scheduled to be available for review in fall 2017). Identified as follows are selected key findings and points of interest from the “What We Heard” Report document.

User Group Questionnaire

- Responding groups/organizations indicated that the top 3 factors that influence their organization’s year-to-year participation numbers are: having sufficient numbers of coaches/instructors/volunteers (57%); program costs for participants (53%); and competition with other types of programs/activities (47%).
- Forty-eight percent (48%) of responding groups/organizations indicated that the current athletic fields in Winnipeg “completely” meet their needs while 44% indicated that their needs are “somewhat” being met.
- Approximately half (52%) of responding groups/organizations indicated that they currently have access to enough athletic field time.
- Less than one-third (30%) of responding groups/organizations indicated that they would be willing to pay more to access better quality fields.
- Responding groups/organizations indicated a strong desire for enhanced online or mobile tools for booking fields and providing feedback related to specific field issues.

Public Web Survey

- Ninety-four percent (94%) of public web survey participants use athletic fields in Winnipeg.
- The top three barriers to use identified were: poor quality of athletic fields (67%), lack of amenities (45%), and booking conflicts (32%).
- Enhancing athletic field quality and supporting existing user groups were identified as the top two priority areas for future athletic field planning.
- Nearly one-third (31%) of respondents think that user fees should recover 0% to 25% of overall athletic fields costs and twenty-eight percent believe that 25% to 50% is a fair recovery rate. Less than half of respondents (41%) indicated that the City should target recovery of over 50% for athletic fields.
- If new athletic fields are required in the future, 61% of respondents indicated that partnerships should be a primary method to fund projects and 51% indicated that the City should look to re-allocate resources from under-utilized athletic fields. Just under half of respondents (44%) indicated that user fees should be a primary funding method and only 19% indicated that property taxes should be a primary funding method.

Stakeholder Discussions and Focus Group Sessions

- Overall field quality issues were frequently identified by stakeholders.
- Various opinions exist on the practice of “block booking” fields to Community Centres. While some stakeholders believe that this system works well, others identified issues and suggested that the City needs to revisit this approach.
- Many user groups believe that multi-field “hub” sites should be a priority for future athletic field planning and new development. However, the importance of ensuring that fields are easily accessible in both mature and new communities was also expressed.
- Issues with athletic field capacity (having access to enough field time) were most frequently identified by adult groups and “emerging” sports.
- Interactions with the City are generally positive; however some room for improvement exists. The need for timely response from the City to issues and inquiries was commonly mentioned.
- Stakeholders indicated that the City needs to get a better sense of its “actual” inventory of quality fields and better understand the degree to which booked fields are being used.
- It was suggested by a number of stakeholders that an investment in support amenities (e.g. washrooms, parking, storage) could help make better use of existing fields.

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Current Athletic Field Provision in Winnipeg

The City of Winnipeg (the “City”) manages approximately 1,000 athletic fields, which includes 532 rectangular fields and 375 ball diamonds. The City’s provision of athletic fields involves a variety of partnerships and collaborations with user groups and community organizations. Two significant forms of partnerships include:

- Over 90 lease agreements with user groups; and
- The opportunity for Community Centres to “blanket book” selected athletic fields that they currently maintain in their community and allocate those fields to user groups.

Athletic field management and maintenance is the responsibility of the City’s Public Works Department’s Parks and Open Space Division. Fees are currently collected from the majority of youth user groups on a per participant basis through Community Centres. Athletic fields that remain within the City’s inventory (such as those allocated to adult user groups) are booked using 3 hour blocks of time.

Project Background and Purpose

The City initiated the Athletic Field Review project in the fall of 2016 to provide a framework and implementation strategy that will guide how the City allocates and manages athletic fields in the future. The project will review and consider a number of important aspects that impact athletic field use and allocations, which include:

- Cost/affordability;
- equitability of access;
- financial impacts on the City;
- needs of users, and;
- best practices.

RC Strategies+PERC, a consulting firm specializing in recreation planning, has been hired by the City to conduct the review and provide a policy recommendation.

Included in This Section

- Overview of current athletic field provision in Winnipeg.
- Description of the project background and purpose.
- Overview of the project process and anticipated timing.
- Purpose of this “What We’ve Heard Report” Report document.



Project Process and Anticipated Timing

The following chart outlines the process being used to conduct the Athletic Field Review project. As identified in the chart, the project work plan has been organized into four distinct phases.

Project Phase	Components
Phase 1: Project Initiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Background review.• Refinement of the engagement plan.• Initial project communications (project website, announcement).
Phase 2: Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholder Discussions.• User Group Questionnaire.• Public Web Survey.• Focus Groups.
Phase 3: Analysis and Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identification of preliminary strategic directions.
Phase 4: Athletic Field Review and Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draft Athletic Field Review and Recommendations document.• Public and stakeholder review.• Final Athletic Field Review and Recommendations.

It is anticipated that the project will be completed in late 2017.

Purpose of This “What We’ve Heard” Report

This report has been developed to provide stakeholders and the public with findings from the public engagement conducted to date. Sharing findings with stakeholders and the public is important and ensures that those individuals and organizations that have provided input thus far are kept aware of the current state of the project and key findings that will influence future project directions.

Contained in forthcoming sections of this report document are the following pieces of information:

- Overview of the engagement plan and activities (Section 2).
- Findings from the User Group Questionnaire (Section 3).
- Findings from the Public Web Survey (Section 4).
- Key themes from the Stakeholder Discussions (Section 5).
- Key themes from the Focus Group sessions (Section 6).

Stay Updated on the Athletic Field Review Project!

Updates and future opportunities to get involved will be communicated on the project website.

winnipeg.ca/athleticfieldreview

Engagement with user groups, residents, and stakeholders was identified as a critical aspect of the Athletic Field Review project. The project engagement plan was developed to ensure that a wide array of perspectives and viewpoints could be heard and, along with other project research being conducted, used to inform the recommendations that will comprise the Athletic Field Review study document.

The following chart summarizes each engagement mechanism and associated responses/participation levels.

Engagement Mechanism	Responses/Participation Levels
User Group Questionnaire	31
Public Web Survey	814
Stakeholder Discussions	17 sessions
Focus Groups	4 sessions

Included in This Section

- Description of the public engagement process.
- Purpose of engagement and future impact on the expected Project Outcome.



Methodology and Overview

The User Group Questionnaire was distributed to athletic field user groups and related stakeholder organizations (e.g. sport governing bodies, associations, umbrella groups, etc.) in early December 2016. Group/organization representatives were provided with the option of completing an online version of the questionnaire or a PDF paper version. The questionnaire was available for completion for a time period of approximately 6 weeks. To ensure that a diversity of feedback could be collected, only one response per group/organization was accepted. In total, 31 groups/organizations provided a response to the User Group Questionnaire (a list of participating groups/organizations can be found in Appendix A).

Note: The percentages indicated in the findings reflect the number of responses to that specific question (some questions were not answered by every group). Each of the graphs and charts presented identify the number of groups that responded to that question.

Included in This Section

- Description of the methodology used to field the User Group Questionnaire.
- User Group Questionnaire findings.

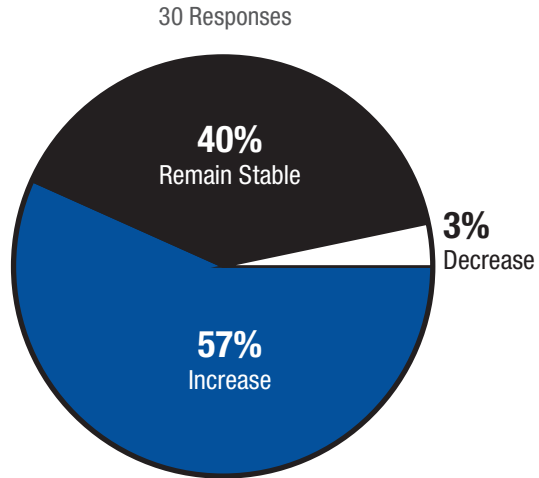


Findings

Expectations for Growth

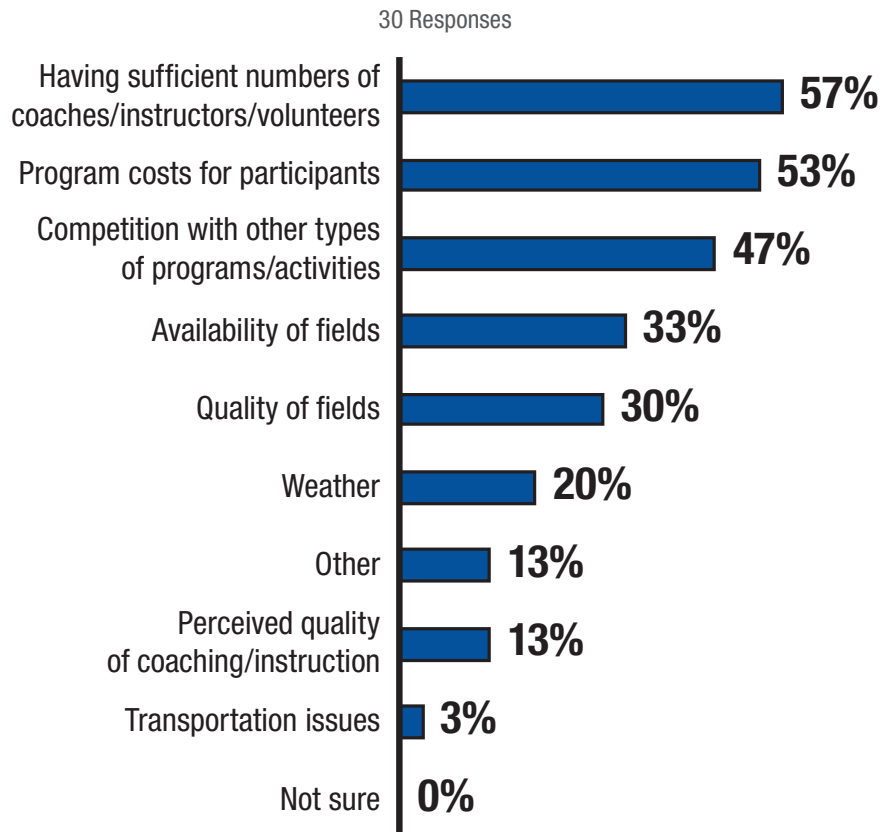
Group/organization representatives were asked about their expectations for membership or participant numbers over the next few years. As illustrated by the adjacent graph, the majority (57%) of responding groups/organizations expect to grow while 40% expect to remain stable. Encouragingly, only 3% expect to experience a decline.

Over the next couple of years, what are your expectations for membership or participant numbers?



Group/organization representatives were next asked to identify up to 3 factors that influence their organization's year to year participation numbers. As reflected in the adjacent graph, the top three factors identified were: having sufficient numbers of coaches/instructors/volunteers (57%); program costs for participants (53%); and competition with other types of programs/activities (47%).

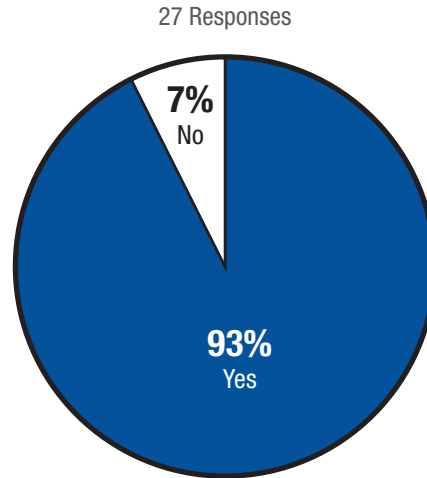
Identify up to 3 Factors that Influence Your Organization's Year-to-Year Participation Numbers



Use of Booked Hours

Group/organization representatives were asked to indicate if their organization uses all of the hours that they book (not including weather related issues). As illustrated by the adjacent graph, 93% of groups indicated that they did use all of the time that they book.

Not including weather-related issues, does your organization actively use all of the hours that it books?



Strengths

Group/organization representatives were provided with space to identify the aspects that their organization likes the **best (strengths)** about the athletic field sites that they use. In total, 23 comments were provided. Comment “themes” with multiple mentions are summarized as follows:

- Location/proximity/convenience (13 comments).
- Positive comments about the overall quality and/or maintenance of fields that they use (4 comments).
- Like that their organization is able to conduct field maintenance themselves (3 comments).

Aspects Requiring Improvement

Group/organization representatives were then provided with space to identify the aspects that their organization would like to see **improved** at the athletic field sites that they use. Twenty-six (26) comments were provided. Comment “themes” with multiple mentions are summarized as follows:

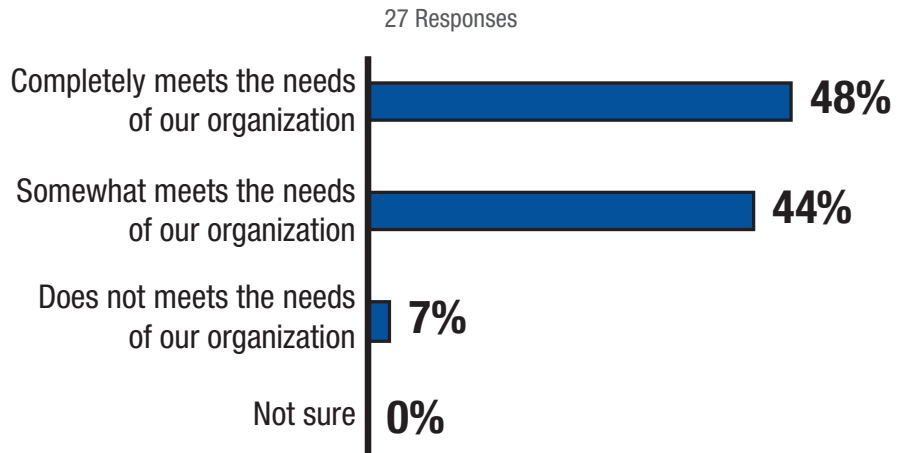
- Issues with field maintenance and/or quality (12 comments)
- Not enough quality fields or lack of access to existing higher quality fields (4 comments)
- Lack of amenities at field sites (4 comments)
- Concerns related to the “cost to use” vs “value received” (2 comments)

Are Group/Organization Needs Being Met?

Group/organization representatives were asked to indicate the level to which current athletic fields in Winnipeg meet the needs of their organization. As illustrated in the accompanying graph, 48% indicated that the current athletic fields “completely” meet their needs and 44% indicated that their needs are “somewhat” being met.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Overall, Please Indicate to What Level the Current Athletic Fields in Winnipeg Meet the Needs of Your Organization



Importance of Athletic Field Aspects

Next, group/organization representatives were asked to rate a number of aspects of athletic field provision in the city. Areas of provision that were identified as being “good” by over 50% of groups/organizations are highlighted in green in the following chart. Areas of provision that were identified as being “poor” by over 25% of groups/organizations are highlighted in red in the following chart.

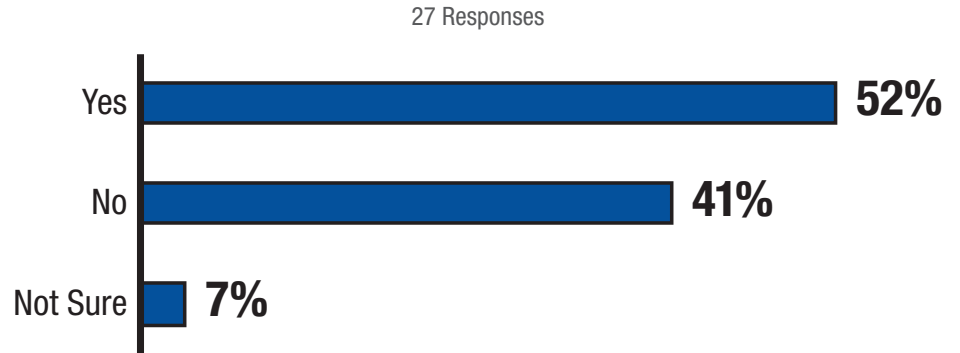
Athletic Field Aspect	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't Know	Total Responses
Allocation system (how athletic fields are made available to groups)	52%	26%	19%	4%	27
Convenience of the booking system/permit process	54%	27%	15%	4%	26
Cost to use athletic fields	31%	31%	27%	12%	26
Customer service/communications with the City	39%	19%	31%	12%	26
Athletic field quality and maintenance	26%	37%	37%	0%	27
Availability of fields (ability to access enough fields at appropriate times)	46%	31%	19%	4%	26
Geographic distribution of fields throughout the city	31%	39%	8%	23%	26

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Access to Athletic Field Time

Group/organization representatives were then specifically asked if their organization has access to enough athletic field time to meet their current program needs. As illustrated in the accompanying graph, just over half of groups (52%) indicated that they have access to enough field time while 41% indicated that they do not.

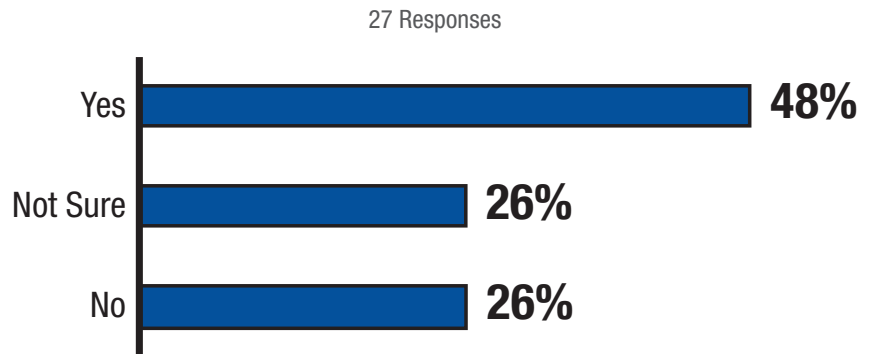
Does your organization have access to enough athletic field time to meet your current program needs?



Future Needs

Group/organization representatives were next asked if their organization will require more hours (above what they currently have) in the future to meet programming needs. As illustrated in the graph just under half of groups (48%) indicated that they will require access to more field time. Approximately one-quarter (26%) of groups were “not sure” and an addition one-quarter (26%) indicated that they do not expect to need additional field time.

Looking into the future, will your organization require more hours than it currently has to meet program needs?

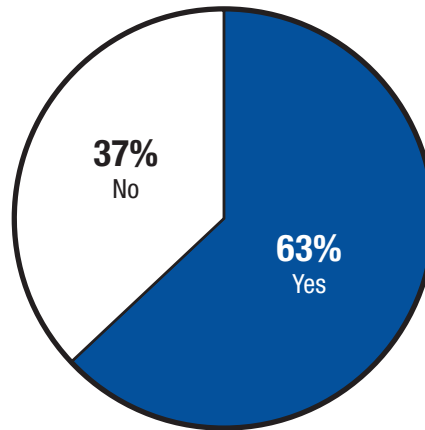


CS4L and LTAD Awareness

Group/organization representatives were asked if their organization is aware of Canadian Sport for Life (CS4L) and the Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) framework. As illustrated in the following graph, approximately two-thirds (63%) of groups are aware of CS4L and LTAD.

Is your organization aware of Canadian Sport for Life (CS4L) and the Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) framework?

27 Responses

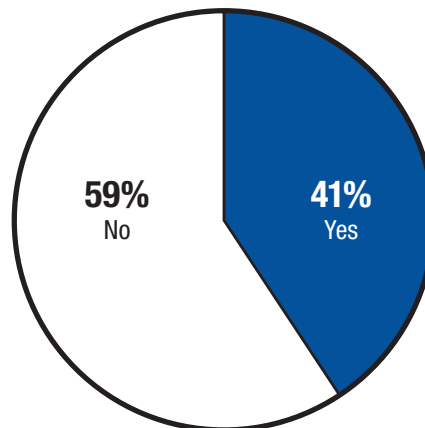


LTAD Implementation

Group/organization representatives were then asked if their organization uses the Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) framework in the delivery of programs and scheduling. Less than half of groups (41%) indicated that they use the LTAD framework.

Does your organization use the Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) framework in its delivery of programs and scheduling?

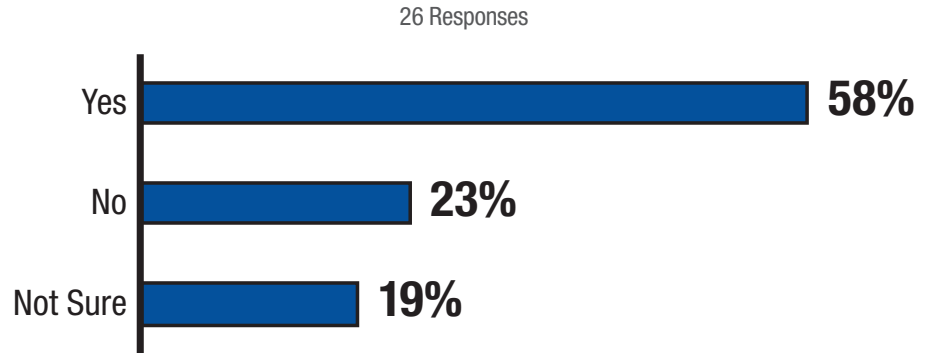
27 Responses



Current Booking Increments

Group/organization representatives were asked a series of questions on current bookings and allocations practices in Winnipeg. First, group/organization representatives were asked if they believe the three (3) hour 'block' booking system is appropriate. As illustrated in the adjacent graph, 58% indicated that this system of booking is appropriate.

Athletic fields in Winnipeg are currently booked in three (3) hour increments/blocks of time. Do you feel this system is appropriate?

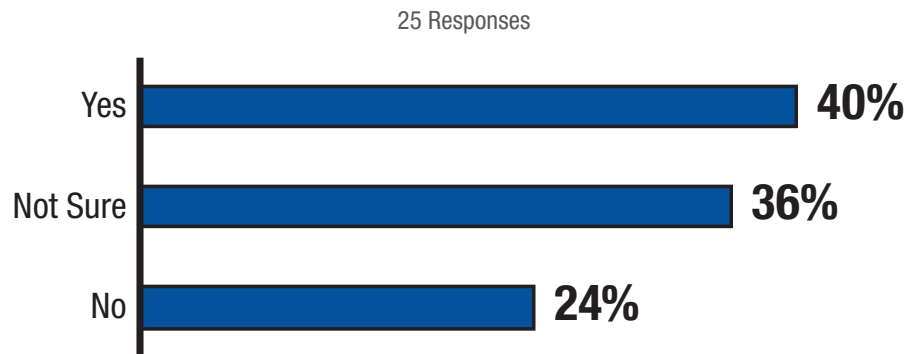


Current Youth Fee Collection System

Next, group/organization representatives were asked if the current system to collect fees from youth users (per participant fee) works well for their organization. As illustrated in the accompanying graph, 40% indicated that this system works well while 36% were unsure and 24% indicated that the current system does not work well for their organization.

Fees for youth user groups in Winnipeg are currently collected based on a fee per participant basis (as opposed to an hourly or block rate).

Do you feel that this fee structure works well for your organization?



Key Considerations for Future Athletic Field Provision

Group/organization representatives were provided with a list of six key considerations that the City must balance in the provision of athletic fields, and asked to prioritize those factors (1 through 6). The following chart reflects the priority areas as ranked by the twenty-four (24) groups that responded to the question.

Consideration	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th
Supporting existing user groups	33%	13%	25%	17%	8%	4%
Supporting new and emerging activities and interests	29%	25%	13%	33%	0%	0%
Keeping users costs similar to current levels	17%	13%	29%	21%	8%	13%
Enhancing athletic field quality	13%	17%	13%	8%	17%	33%
Developing more athletic fields	8%	25%	8%	13%	25%	21%
Enhancing support amenities (i.e. on-site washrooms, seating areas, etc.)	0%	8%	13%	8%	42%	29%

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

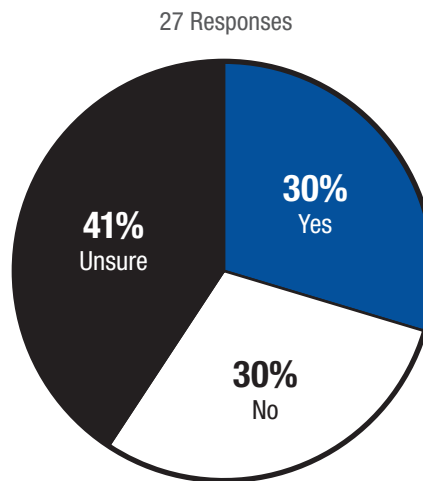
Willingness to Pay

Group/organization representatives were asked if their organization would pay increased fees to access higher quality fields. As illustrated by the accompanying graph, the highest proportion of groups were unsure with 30% indicating that they would be willing to pay more and 30% indicating that they would not.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

** Groups that were willing to pay more for access to better quality fields were then asked to indicate (as a percentage) how much more they would be willing to pay. The majority of these groups indicated that they would only be willing to pay up to a 10% increase.*

Would your organization pay more for access to better quality fields?



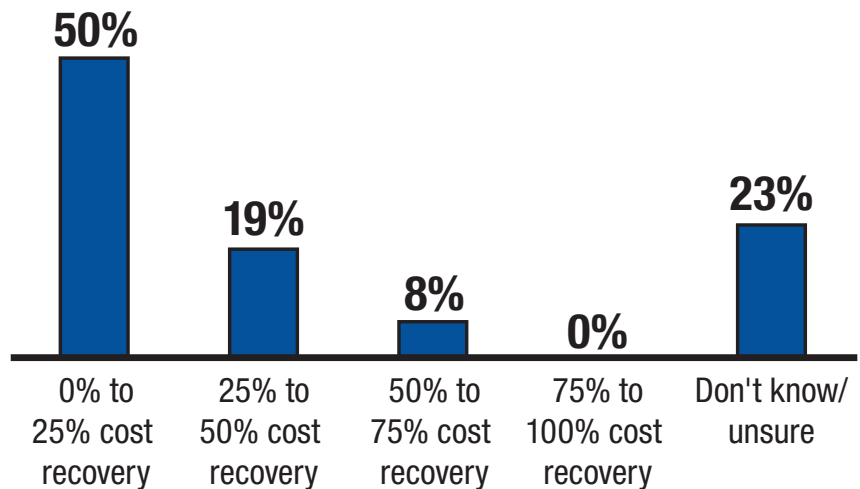
City Cost Recovery Considerations

Group/organization representatives were asked to identify the level of cost recovery that is fair for the City to achieve for athletic fields. As reflected in the accompanying graph, half (50%) of responding groups believe that the City should target cost recovery of 25% or less.

** The following definition of cost recovery was provided: "The term "cost recovery" in this context refers to the percentage of expenditures (costs) recovered through revenues (user fees)".*

What percentage of cost recovery does your organization feel is fair for the City to achieve for athletic fields?

26 Responses



Interest in Additional Supports/Tools/Resources

Group/organization representatives were asked if their group/organization would be interested in accessing additional supports, tools, or resources (a list of potential supports/tools/resources was provided). As indicated in the following chart, there was a strong desire among responding groups to access online or mobile tools for booking fields and providing feedback related to specific field issues.

Support/Tool/Resource	Yes	No	Not Sure	Total Responses
Online or mobile tools for booking fields	70%	11%	19%	27
Information sessions (e.g. how the allocations/bookings system works)	44%	33%	22%	27
Online or mobile tools for providing feedback and identifying field specific issues	70%	19%	11%	27
Training opportunities (i.e. Long Term Athlete Development, issues in sport, etc.)	35%	39%	27%	26

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Other Comments

Space was provided throughout the questionnaire for group/organization representatives to comment on specific topic areas and questions as well as provide general thoughts on the state of athletic fields in the city and future needs. Numerous wide ranging comments were provided by group/organization representatives. Identified as follows are prevalent themes from the comments.

- Issues with the quality of fields in the city were frequently identified and impacts user experience and safety.
- Users generally indicated that while better field quality is desired, affordability for users cannot be compromised.
- Varying opinions exist on the current "block booking" system. Comments were provided on issues with this approach while other comments were provided on the strengths associated with this current method of field allocations.
- A number of user groups take pride in the quality of fields that they maintain directly and, in some cases, would like to see these contributions further recognized.
- A number of user groups would like to gain further insight into how the City allocates resources to athletic field maintenance, upkeep and enhancements.

4

An online survey was conducted to gather the public's perspective on athletic fields in Winnipeg. The survey was available on the City of Winnipeg website and was available in both English and French. In total, 814 responses were submitted.

Included in This Section

- Description of the methodology used to field the Public Web Survey.
- Survey findings.

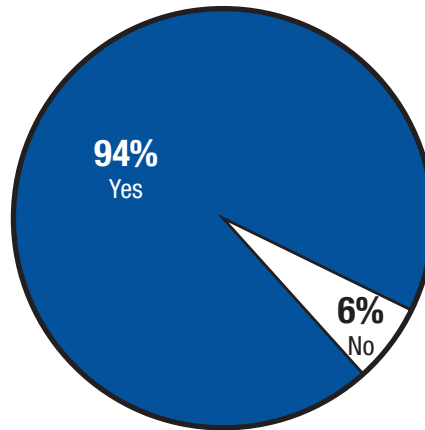


Findings

Use of Athletic Fields

Ninety-four percent (94%) of respondent households use athletic fields in Winnipeg.

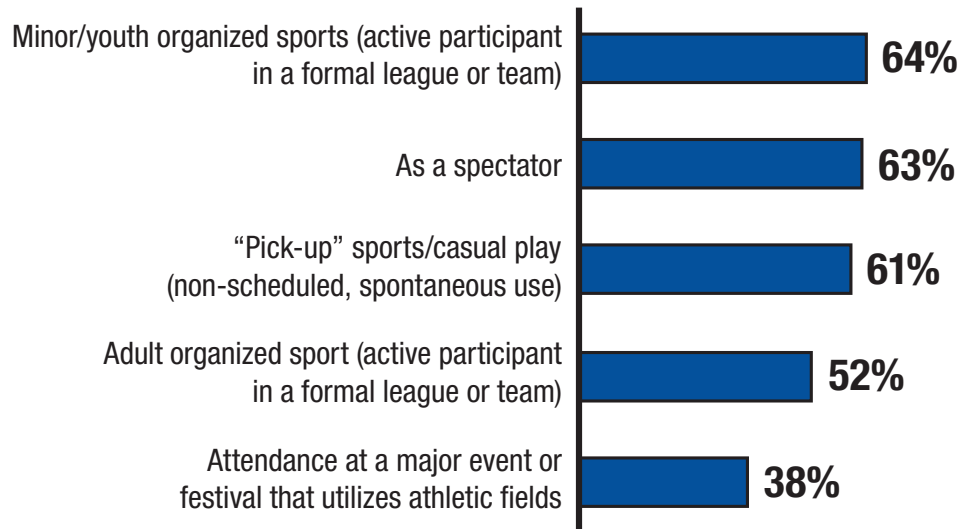
Do members of your household use athletic fields in Winnipeg?



Purpose of Use

The most common use of athletic fields by respondent households is for minor/youth organized sports (64%) which likely correlates with the second highest use, using the field as a spectator (63%). Sixty-one percent (61%) of respondents use athletic fields for “pick-up” sports or casual play. Respondents were permitted to select more than one response.

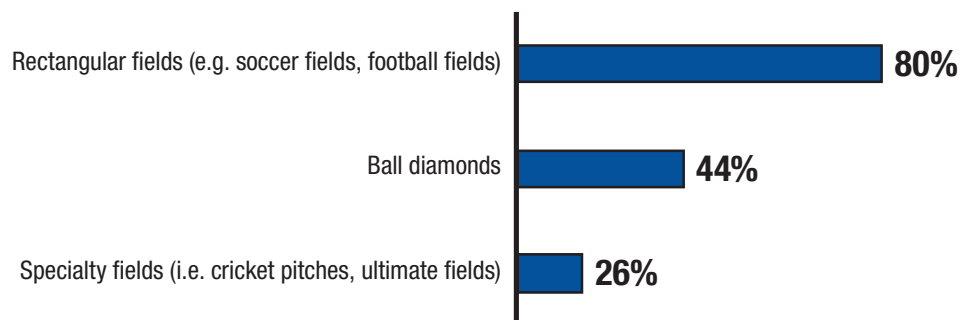
For what purpose(s) do members of your household use athletic fields in Winnipeg?



Type of Fields

Respondents were asked to identify the type of fields their household uses. Rectangular fields are used by 80% of respondent households, followed by ball diamonds (44%) and specialty fields (26%). Respondents were permitted to select all responses that apply.

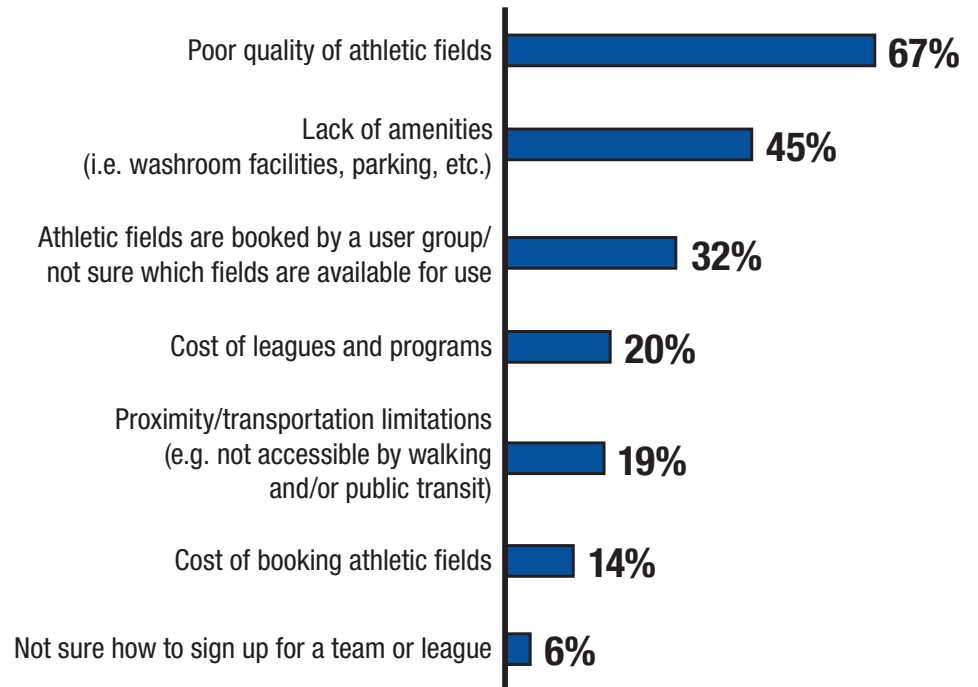
What types of fields do members of your household use?



Barriers

When asked about what prevents respondents from using athletic fields in Winnipeg, the top response was the poor quality of athletic fields which was selected by two-thirds of respondents (67%). Lack of amenities (45%), booking conflicts (32%), and cost of leagues and programs (20%) were also identified as top barriers. Respondents were permitted to select multiple responses if applicable.

What, if anything, keeps members of your household from using athletic fields in Winnipeg?

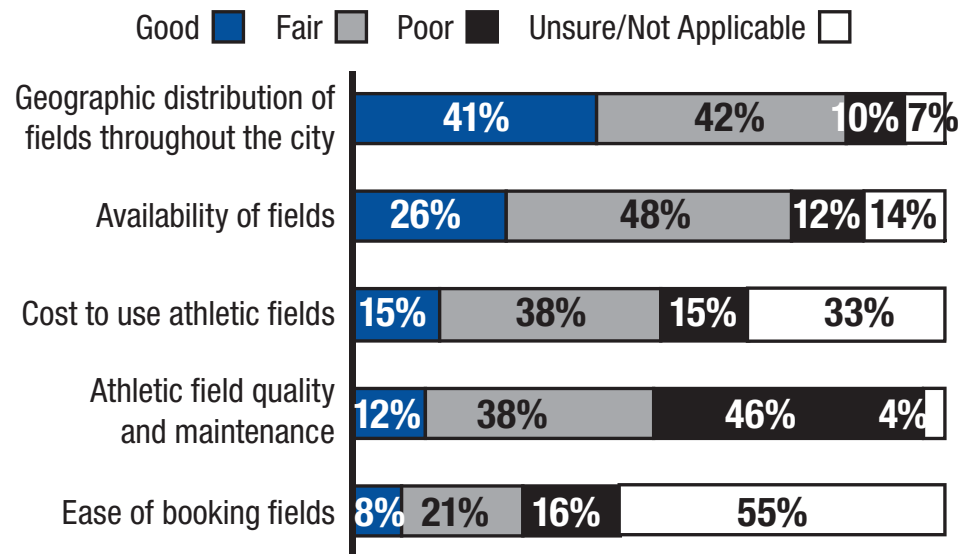


Rating Aspects of Athletic Field Provision

Respondents were asked to rate five aspects of athletic field provision in the city. Geographic distribution of fields throughout the city is perceived to be good (41%) or fair (42%) by the majority of respondents. The availability of fields is regarded to be fair by 48% and good by one-quarter (26%). The aspect with the highest “poor” percentage rating was athletic field quality and maintenance as 46% of respondents indicated this.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Overall, how would you rate the following aspects of athletic fields in Winnipeg?



Comments on the Current State of Athletic Fields

Respondents were then provided with space to provide any additional comments on the current state of athletic fields in Winnipeg. Two hundred eighty (280) comments were provided. Comment “themes” with multiple mentions are summarized as follows:

- The grass does not get cut enough (76 mentions).
- Overall, maintenance of fields is poor (68 mentions).
- Expressed safety concerns due to field quality (52 mentions).
- Fields are overrun with weeds and dandelions (42 mentions).
- Not enough washrooms at field sites (19 mentions).
- The increased fees do not correlate to an increased level of service (18 mentions).
- The quality of fields is inconsistent throughout the city (17 mentions).
- Issues with field lining (13 mentions).
- Lack of Ultimate Frisbee fields (12 mentions).
- Some fields have drainage issues (10 mentions).

Considerations for Future Planning

The City of Winnipeg must balance a number of considerations as it plans for the future of athletic fields in the city. Respondents were presented with six considerations that could help prioritize future planning and were asked to rank them in order of importance. Enhancing athletic field quality was perceived as the top priority for respondents as it received 45% of first place votes and 21% of second place votes. It was then followed by supporting community groups and keeping user costs similar to current levels.

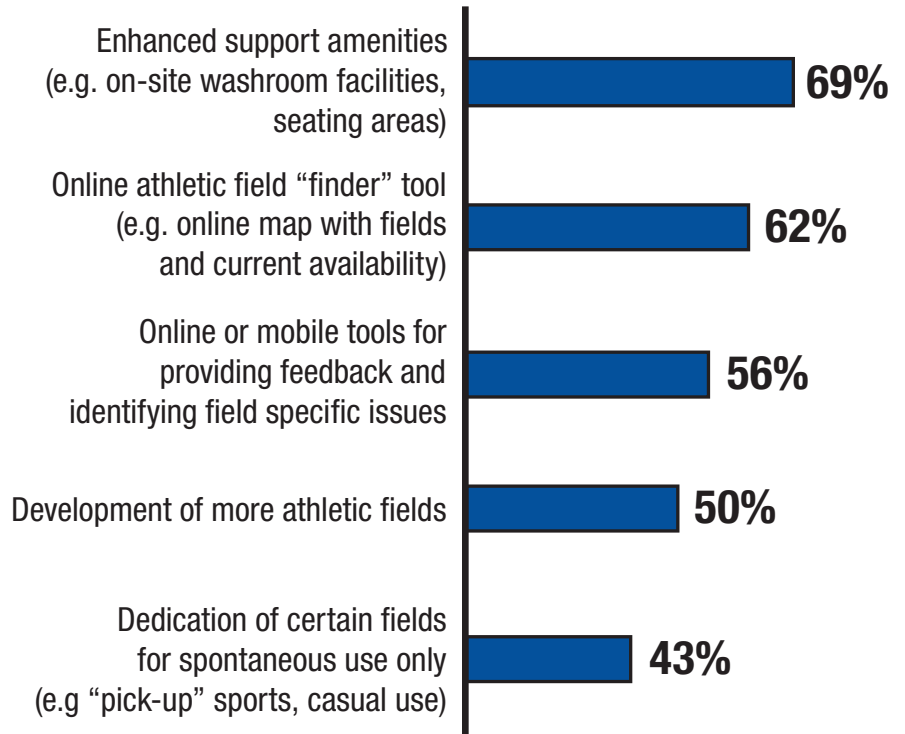
Consideration	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th
Enhancing athletic field quality	45%	21%	13%	11%	8%	2%
Supporting existing user groups	25%	20%	19%	19%	12%	5%
Keeping users costs similar to current levels	9%	19%	21%	21%	18%	13%
Enhancing support amenities (i.e. on-site washrooms, seating areas, etc.)	10%	19%	22%	16%	16%	17%
Developing more athletic fields	8%	14%	15%	14%	16%	33%
Supporting new and emerging activities and interests	5%	9%	11%	19%	28%	27%

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Communication Tools and Initiatives

Respondent households were asked about potential initiatives and communication mechanisms. Enhanced support amenities such as washrooms and seating areas would benefit sixty-nine percent (69%) of respondents. An online athletic field “finder” tool (62%) and online or mobile tools for providing feedback and identify field specific issues (56%) would benefit over half of respondents. Half of respondents (50%) indicated that they would benefit from the development of more athletic fields. Respondents were permitted to select all responses that applied.

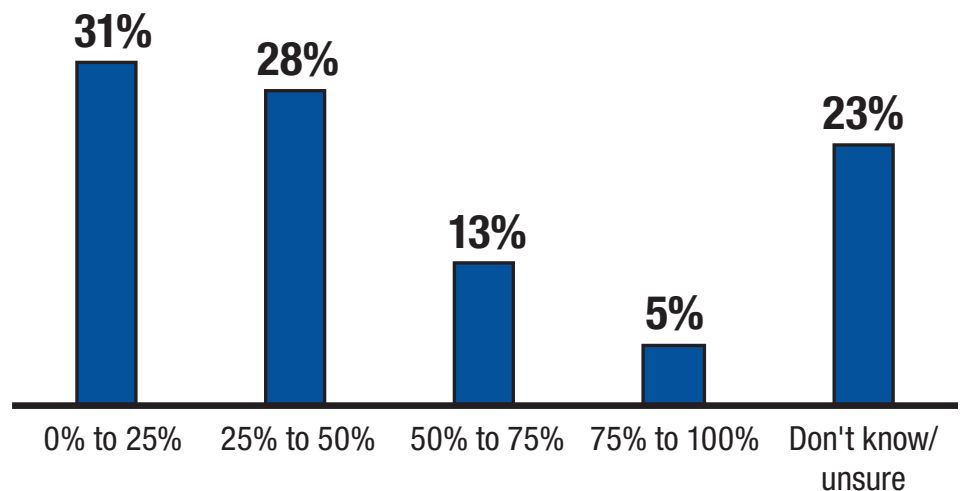
Would members of your household benefit from any of the following communication mechanisms, tools, or other athletic field initiatives?



Recovery Rates

Nearly one-third (31%) of respondents think that user fees should recover 0% to 25% of overall athletic fields costs. Twenty-eight percent (28%) believe that 25% to 50% is a fair recovery rate. Eighteen percent (18%) of respondent households indicated that the City should target recovery of over 50% for athletic fields.

What percentage of overall costs (expenses) do you think is fair for the City to try and recover through use fees?

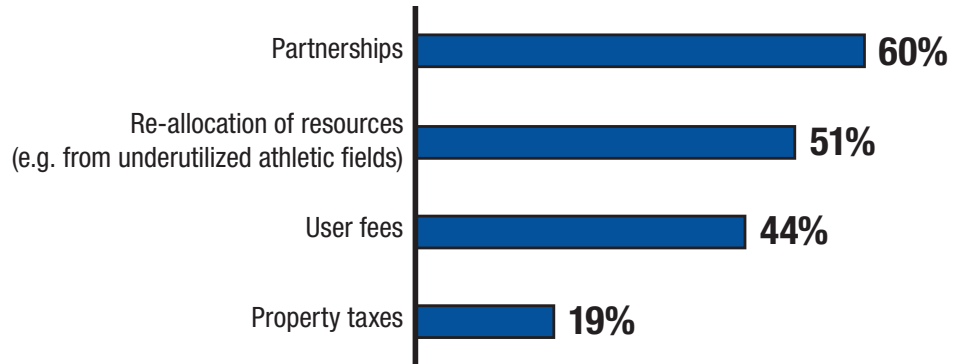


Funding New Projects

Respondents were asked to select two ways that they think is best for funding athletic field development. Partnerships (60%), re-allocation of resources (51%), and user fees (44%) were the top three responses.

Note: Not all respondents selected two responses.

If new or enhanced athletic fields are developed in the future, what are the two (2) best ways for the City to fund these projects?



General Comments

Lastly, respondents were provided with space to provide any additional comments on future needs for athletic fields in Winnipeg. One hundred ninety-eight (198) comments were provided. Comment “themes” with multiple mentions are summarized as follows:

- Better maintenance/upkeep and enhance existing fields (56 mentions).
- More amenities at field sites (e.g. washrooms, parking, playgrounds, garbage bins) (15 mentions).
- Develop Ultimate Frisbee fields (13 mentions).
- Keep rental fees reasonable (11 mentions).
- Community centres should get first access to the fields (8 mentions).
- Local users should get first priority to the fields located where they live (8 mentions).
- New fields should be built in recently developed areas (8 mentions).
- Sometimes difficult to book fields and unsure of which fields are available (6 mentions).
- Fencing is suggested around some fields (4 mentions).
- Pursue sponsorships to increase funding for field maintenance (4 mentions).

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Respondent Profile

How old are you?	
Under 18 years of age	<1%
18 – 24 years of age	5%
25 – 39 years of age	40%
40 – 59 years of age	47%
Over 60 years of age	8%

Please describe your household by recording the number of members in each of the following age groups.	
Age 0 – 4 Years	7%
Age 5 – 9 Years	11%
Age 10 – 19 Years	20%
Age 20 – 29 Years	11%
Age 30 - 39 Years	17%
Age 40 – 49 Years	19%
Age 50 – 59 Years	9%
Age 60 – 69 Years	4%
Age 70 – 79 Years	1%
Age 80+ Years	<1%

How long have you lived in Winnipeg?	
Less than 5 years	2%
5 to 10 years	5%
More than 10 years	93%

Do you own or rent your primary residence?	
Own	90%
Rent	10%

5

Purpose and Overview

Seventeen (17) discussion sessions were convened in November and December 2016 with athletic field stakeholders. These discussions provided the opportunity for the consulting team to gain initial insight into the current state of athletic fields and key issues. The discussions also helped with the development of the User Group Questionnaire and Public Web Survey by identifying topic areas to further explore.

Thirteen (13) of the discussions sessions were convened in-person and three (3) sessions were convened over the phone. Some of the sessions included multiple participants based on the nature of the group. A listing of stakeholder discussion participants can be found in Appendix B.

Findings (Key Themes)

Summarized as follows are key themes that emerged from the discussion sessions. However, it is important to note that discussion session participants offered a wide array of perspectives and opinions and the key themes presented are not intended to reflect majority viewpoints or consensus.

- **Overall field quality was cited as an issue by a number of discussion session participants.**
 - » A range of issues related to field quality were identified. Commonly mentioned issues included a lack of regular maintenance, uneven playing surfaces, poor grass quality, “worn-out” goal areas, and poor drainage.
 - » The number of organizations and groups involved in field maintenance and provision (City, user groups, community centres, school districts) was identified as impacting consistency of field maintenance and associated user expectations across the city.
 - » Expanded use of partnerships, increased efficiency and better use management (e.g. rotating goal posts, penalization for groups using wet fields) were frequently identified as the best ways to improve field quality.

Included in This Section

- Background on the discussion sessions (purpose and objectives).
- Key themes from the discussions.



- **Various opinions exist on the practice of “blanket booking” fields to community centres.**
 - » While some discussion session participants believe that this system works well, others identified issues and suggested that the City needs to revisit this approach.
 - » Positives identified for maintaining the current approach included: sustains a valuable connection between community centres and youth sport organizations; creates year to year consistency and ease for volunteers that are responsible for scheduling; and helps sustain community centres as an important entity in the city.
 - » Issues identified with “blanket booking” included: inability of adult user groups to access unused field time; lack of clarity over the actual utilization of fields; and overall inconsistencies in how fields are allocated and managed.
- **Multi-field “hub” sites should be a priority for future athletic field planning and new development.**
 - » While geographic balance of fields in Winnipeg and the need to ensure ease of access were identified as important, discussion session participants generally believed that the City should focus future capital resources on developing multi-field “hub” sites.
 - » Benefits identified of developing multi-field “hub” sites included: operational efficiencies; increased tournament hosting capacity; user convenience; and the ability to provide support amenities (e.g. washrooms, parking areas, and concessions) that can service multiple fields.
- **Issues with athletic field capacity (having access to enough field time) were most frequently identified by adult groups and “emerging” sports.**
 - » With a few exceptions, discussion session participants generally believed that there are enough fields for youth sport organizations.
 - » However a number of discussion session participants identified issues with adult user groups having access to sufficient field time. The inability to access fields that are block-booked to community centres was frequently mentioned by representatives of adult user groups.
 - » The need to support emerging field user groups was identified as important and a current challenge in some instances (e.g. cricket, disc sports, and recreationally focused adult sport).
- **Affordability is a key priority for athletic field users.**
 - » The need to ensure affordable access to fields was commonly mentioned during the discussions and is a high priority for stakeholders.
 - » Although the need to improve field quality was often mentioned, discussion session participants did not generally believe that raising user fees was palatable.
- **Interactions with the City are generally positive; however some room for improvement exists.**
 - » A number of discussion session participants offered positive comments on their interactions with City staff.
 - » Issues identified by multiple discussion session participants included: not receiving a timely response to an inquiry or issue; lack of clarity over communication processes; and varying levels of know-how and pride among City staff conducting field maintenance.
 - » Some discussion session participants expressed that the City should enhance its current website tools and integrate mobile technologies in order to provide a higher level of customer service.
- **Varying opinions exist on whether “rogue” field users are an issue in Winnipeg.**
 - » Issues with “rogue” or “guerrilla” field users (groups that use fields without booking) were identified by some discussion session participants.
 - » However others believed that these issues were overstated and suggested that the City could mitigate any perceived issues by formally dedicating fields for spontaneous use and informal play.

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Purpose and Overview

Four (4) Focus Group sessions were convened in June 2017 with athletic field stakeholders. These focus groups completed the initial stage of engagement and provided the project team with the opportunity to delve further into issues and key findings identified through the other engagement methods (User Group Questionnaire, Public Web Survey, Stakeholder Discussions). Each discussion was facilitated by the consulting team with support from City staff.

A presentation of the preliminary research findings was given at the beginning of session, followed by a facilitated discussion with a focus on the following four topics:

1. Reaction to the engagement findings
2. Optimizing existing fields
3. Future priorities
4. Use of resources

The Focus Groups ranged from 2 to 9 participants, with a total of 22 individuals, representing 17 organizations. A listing of participants can be found in Appendix C.

Included in This Section

- Description and purpose of the methodology used for the Focus Group sessions.
- Themes and findings from the Focus Group sessions.



Findings (Key Themes)

As previously mentioned, the discussion was led through four discussion topics. Comments were recorded and organized into point-form statements. Some comments may not represent the perspective of all participating organizations; however, they will be taken into consideration as the project moves forward.

Reaction to the Engagement Findings

After the groups were presented the preliminary research findings, session participants were encouraged to share their initial reactions.

Surprises:

- Surprised by the relatively high user group satisfaction.
- In general, discussion participants had minimal surprises from the engagement findings.

Findings that validated previous viewpoints:

- Cost is a barrier for many groups, particularly at city-operated fields.
- Access to fields is a main need.
- Field quality is an issue and it is especially difficult to maintain school fields.
- Heavy reliance on volunteers.

Potential areas of additional research and/or engagement that should be considered:

- Continue to look at user needs on an ongoing basis.
- Consider broader policies and sport organization standards.
- The reported number of rectangular fields and ball diamonds do not represent the number of playable spaces.
- Would be helpful to have a complete inventory of athletic fields that identifies:
 - » Functional and bookable athletic fields
 - » A definition of athletic fields or a classification system

Optimizing Existing Fields

Discussion participants were asked questions on how to optimize the existing athletic field inventory.

“Easy win” opportunities and recommendations:

- Develop a master inventory list of athletic fields including contact information.
- Raise awareness of existing fields; location, maps, dimensions, and descriptions should be available online.
- Enhance amenities at existing field sites.
- Improve the signage at fields to include field name and information on how to book it.
- Improve communication for spontaneous use such as pick-up games; if a field is closed, direct users to another space.
- Gather utilization data, make reporting easy for community centres, identify underused fields, and identify demand for specific field types.

Allocation of fields:

- There is a desire for the allocation date to be much earlier so that organizations are not scrambling for fields right before the season.
- Some opportunity exists to turn back fields, however currently, most turn backs occur with too short of notice for another group to organize its participants.
- Aligning certain groups with certain fields could be considered.
- The wear and tear of overused fields could be reduced by allocating fields better.

Booking process:

- Confusion exists regarding the booking of specific fields because the group does not always know who to contact.
- The City could improve partnerships with school divisions instead of the group having to form individual relationships with each desired school.
- Gaining access to fields is a challenge for adult and emerging groups; communication could be improved so that information regarding the booking process is better known.

Future Priorities

Participants were asked to identify gaps in the current inventory and suggest future needs.

Current gaps:

- Baseball diamonds for the older age groups (midget and bantam) were mentioned as a gap.
- A lack of artificial turf fields was mentioned as a gap.
- Lack of fields with lighting.
- No dedicated high school football game field.
- The dedicated Ultimate Frisbee fields are outside of the city.
- Standard quality fields are well used and continue to be in high demand.

Local level fields:

- Local fields are important for younger age groups.
- Opportunities for spontaneous play should be available at the neighbourhood level.
- Some of the local fields have inadequate buffer zones.
- The development of community fields is important to consider in new neighbourhoods (to ensure access is not a barrier).
- Geographic balance is important for schools as transportation is a barrier.
- A majority of the community centres are in favour of maintaining the model of local level fields.

Multi-field hub sites:

- Hub sites are needed for older youth, adults, and competitive leagues.
- A majority of the sport organizations are in favour of developing multi-field hub sites with a variety of support amenities.
- It is important to understand the impact of hub sites to local communities; hub sites might impact the operations of community centres.

Observed trends:

- Most other cities have hub sites and multi-use spaces; this is a trend especially in soccer.
- Artificial turf fields extend the playing season and require less ongoing maintenance.
- Cricket is an emerging activity.
- Consult provincial sport organizations to learn about trends and standards.

Suggested enhancements:

- Overall enhancement of current spaces (quality and amenities).
- Repair existing fields that need grading, re-seeding, drainage, and other improvements.
- Consider adding support amenities such as washrooms, parking, benches, and others.
- Allow overused fields to rest occasionally.
- Communicate future enhancements by publishing an annual renovation plan and reporting back to all user groups.



Use of Resources

With many potential future priorities in mind, Focus Group participants were asked to brainstorm how the City could make better use of available resources.

Rates and fees:

- A variety of viewpoints were provided regarding user fees.
- Fees should match field quality.
- If fees increase, enhanced services will be expected.
- Fees should be equitable to allow people of all financial means to afford opportunities.
- There's a higher expectation for adult bookings because their fees are higher.
- Fees were increased in the past with an intent to allocate staff time to check if field users actually had permits; discussion participants were unsure if the City actually took action to help reduce booking conflicts.

Partnerships:

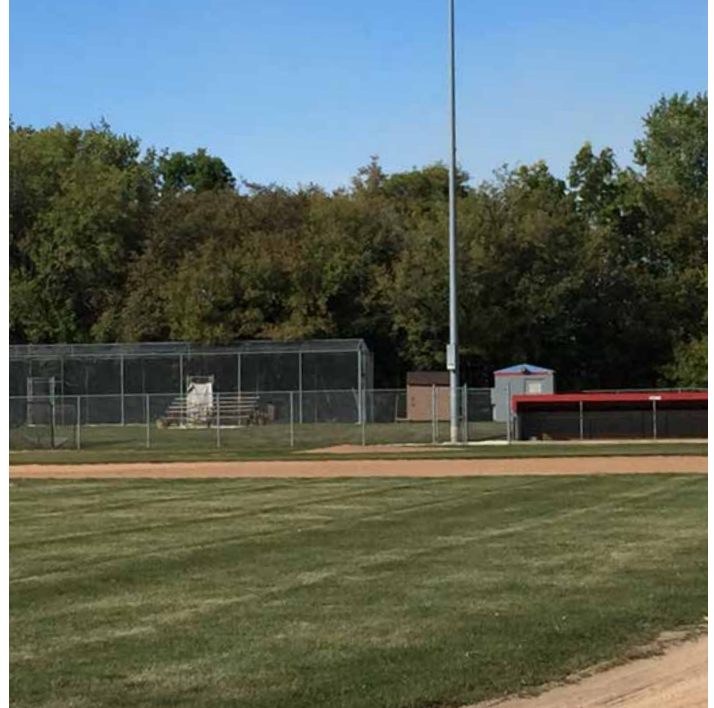
- Look for cost-savings through partnerships.
- If a certain sports organization wants higher service levels, see if they are willing to help pay.
- Use community centres to provide fields as they can operate at a lower cost than compared to City-operated fields (due to volunteer efforts and cost of staff).
- Keep the maintenance assistance program to allow community centres to be flexible with maintenance in order to better suit user needs.
- Provide volunteer supports to ensure a healthy volunteer base.

Perspectives on cost recovery:

- Cost recovery targets must consider the age of participants (e.g. lower cost recovery for children and youth).
- The City should consider expanded partnerships and collaborations to address issues without increasing expenditures and associated user fees.

Think long term:

- Although more expensive initially, invest in higher quality spaces.
- Think about ways to streamline City processes; it is too slow when trying to get lighting, fencing, and other upgrades even when resources are available.
- Have a budget for maintenance and vandalism.



Appendices

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A

1. Bonivital Baseball Association
2. Bronx Park Community Center
3. Burton Cummings Community Centre
4. Central Community Centre
5. Chalmers Community Centre Inc.
6. Dakota Community Centre Inc.
7. East Elmwood Community Centre
8. Fort Garry 6 & 4 Slopitch League
9. Fort Garry Community Centre
10. Gateway Recreation Centre
11. Heritage Victoria Community Center
12. Manitoba Cricket Association
13. Manitoba Soccer Association
14. Melrose Park Community Center
15. North East Softball Association
16. Norwood Community Centre
17. Pembina Trails School Division
18. PIT Football
19. Red River Community Centre
20. Royal City Soccer Club
21. Softball Manitoba
22. Special Olympics Manitoba
23. St. Boniface Diocesan High School
24. St. Mary's Academy
25. Tuxedo Community Club
26. Varsity View Community Centre
27. Vincent Massey Collegiate
28. Volleyball Manitoba
29. Winnipeg Rec League
30. Winnipeg School Division
31. Winnipeg Women's Soccer League

Appendix

Stakeholder Discussion Participants

B

1. Pembina Trails School Division
2. Winnipeg School Division
3. FC Northwest
4. Louis Riel School Division
5. Northeast Softball Association
6. Softball Manitoba
7. Sport Manitoba
8. Winnipeg Community Sport Alliance
9. Winnipeg Youth Soccer Association
10. Phoenix Soccer FC
11. Bonivital Minor Baseball Association
12. Winnipeg South End United Soccer Club
13. Northeast Softball
14. Manitoba Association of Disc Sports
15. Winnipeg Rec League
16. Charleswood Minor Baseball Association
17. Buhler Recreation Park

Appendix

Focus Group Session Participants

C

1. East Elmwood Community Centre
2. Chalmers Community Centre
3. Transcona East End Community Club
4. Gateway Recreation Centre
5. Winnipeg Community Sport Alliance
6. Winnipeg School Division
7. Charleswood Baseball
8. Winnipeg South Baseball
9. Manitoba Organization of Disc Sports
10. PIT Football
11. Vincent Massey Collegiate/Pembina Trails School District
12. Dakota Community Centre
13. Sturgeon Heights Community Centre
14. Bonivital Soccer Club
15. Varsity View Community Centre
16. Winnipeg Sport Alliance
17. Winnipeg South End United

“What We’ve Heard” Report







