

## **Potential Alternate Service Delivery Models for Municipal Youth Centres**

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### **Report Summary**

This report provides information regarding potential alternate services delivery models for municipal youth centres.

### **Relationship to the Strategic Plan, Health Impact Assessment and Community Energy & Emissions Plan (CEEP)**

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan in the areas of Creating a Healthy Community and aligns with the Population Health Priority of Play Opportunities. Youth centres are safe, welcoming spaces providing a wide range of leisure and support opportunities.

This report has no direct connection to the Community Energy & Emissions Plan (CEEP).

### **Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Costs associated with the youth engagement process will be incorporated into approved 2022 operational budgets.

### **Executive Summary**

This report provides Council with information about the City's six municipally operated youth centres. The report includes a summary of recommendations on the future operation of youth centres from recent studies and program reviews. The report notes recent interest received from local non-profit organizations in operating traditional municipal youth centre sites. A targeted youth engagement strategy regarding future operations will be conducted by the City. Information received through the engagement process will inform a future Request for Proposal for the delivery of youth centre services.

## Background

The City provides recreation programming and directly operates six youth drop-in centers. These programs and centres are run by municipal employees on a part time basis. Youth Centres provide a safe and supervised facility for youth to engage in educational programs and leisure activities which encourage the growth of positive self-esteem. Youth who attend our centres are able to freely express their opinions without fear of judgement and are encouraged to participate in the development of programming. Participants' ages range from 10 to 18 years.

Youth Centres allow young people to drop in and participate in a variety of supervised activities. Participants are able to come and go to the program freely and are unsupervised once they leave the program. There are no barriers to entry and centres do not charge a registration fee. Centres offer a wide range of activities including: sports, billiards, video games, movie nights, chat time, and guest presentations on current issues. Centres offer internet access, homework assistance, peer mentoring, and educational workshops that encourage making healthy life choices. The sites connect youth with the local community, encouraging volunteerism to make a difference. Locations are as follows:

- Capreol
- Flour Mill
- Dowling
- Onaping
- Ryan Heights (Ministry funded After School program)
- Walden

There are 4,095 annual operating hours allocated across the six facilities. In 2018 there were total of 8,248 visits recorded across all municipally run youth centre locations. Centres are open during the school year (September through June).

The City of Greater Sudbury also provides an annual community grant to the Rayside Balfour Youth Action Network (\$60,000) and the Sudbury Action Centre for Youth (\$89,120) for the operation of their youth centres. These sites are operated by not-for-profit organizations. The Rayside Balfour Youth Action Network operates out of a municipally owned building located in Cote Park in Chelmsford.

## Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan Implications

The City's Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan Review (2014) states that youth are traditionally a very challenging market for municipal recreation departments to serve due to the wide range of needs (e.g., recreational, social support, leisure hang-out, etc.), segmentation, peer pressure, changing "trendiness" of certain activities, competing interests, and lack of transportation options.

The Plan suggests that youth centres should provide a place for youth who don't participate in traditional sporting activities to occupy their time in a constructive and positive social setting. The Master Plan's online survey and open houses found considerable interest in expanded program opportunities for teens, including keeping youth centres open during the summer.

The Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan does not recommend a provision target for youth centres, instead relying on needs to be identified on a case-by-case basis and in partnership with community organizations (where appropriate). The Plan states that the City should continue to facilitate opportunities and offer spaces that respond to the needs of youth. The Plan notes that the City's youth centres are generally well distributed; however, there is currently no such opportunity in Nickel Centre (an area that has a declining youth population). The Valley East area is also currently without a traditional youth centre facility. The condition and aging infrastructure of existing youth centres are also concerns noted in the Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan. The Plan recommends that youth centres be located near schools, in parks or community centres, and on transit and active transportation routes.

## **Children and Youth Programming Review**

In July 2018, staff presented the above noted report to the Community Services Committee. The report provided an overview of current status of children and youth programs and considerations for how programs could be delivered in the future. A review of youth centre support was included as per the previous direction of Council. The report included the following recommendations related to youth centres:

- There were many benefits to the Rayside Balfour Youth Centre and Sudbury Action Centre for Youth operating models. Since they are driven by volunteer-based, non-profit community organizations it creates a heightened sense of ownership and commitment. They have an ability to access other revenue sources, are open all year round and offer extended operating hours.
- Redesign youth drop-in centre programs around civic engagement, leadership development and community development activities and engage youth directly in the process.
- Consider other City owned facilities as destinations for youth centres such as libraries, community halls located in arenas and playground facilities. As the City pursues the development of new community hubs, youth centres should be considered as a possible tenant.
- Design mobile pop-up youth drop-in centres that can be setup and dismantled at various locations such as festival sites, parks and shopping mall parking lots to facilitate civic engagement.
- Review operating hours with a view of making youth drop-in centres more accessible during summer months and holidays.

The Children and Youth Programming Review also recommends further engagement with youth communities. The Review states that youth engagement is necessary to ensure that programs and spaces are responsive to the needs of local youth and to provide opportunities for youth to gain confidence and skills in decision-making and public participation.

The Review noted the Youthful Cities initiative which seeks to make cities more youthful, globally. Youthful Cities recommends that insights be used from about the real needs in and of their cities and uses an index to determine the performance of a city's youthful infrastructure.

## **Core Services Review**

The City of Greater Sudbury Core Services Review (January 2020) stated that the City should assess whether services should still be provided or if there is an opportunity to monetize or privatize those "non-essential" services. The Review stated that should the City continue with the delivery of youth centers it should assess whether space can be utilized in existing community centers (arenas and halls) for these activities (and other recreational services where appropriate) rather than having their own dedicated facilities.

## **COVID-19 Impacts**

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically changed how youth learn, play, move and connect. The pandemic has also resulted in the closure of youth centre facilities operated by the City due to restrictions imposed on indoor recreational spaces.

The City has developed a directory of online resources for youth and their families including information on support services, physical activity and play opportunities.

The City is currently assessing the implications of Provincial regulations relating to proof of vaccination to

determine reopening of traditional youth centre facilities this Fall.

## **Recent Developments**

Within the last year, the City has been approached by two non-profit organizations who have indicated their interest in providing youth centre services on behalf of the City of Greater Sudbury. Seeking a third-party operator for traditional municipally operated youth centres is consistent with the findings of the City's Children & Youth Programming Review and Core Services Review.

As the two non-profit organizations would appear to be viable operators, a procurement process would be required to adhere to the City's purchasing policies.

## **Next Steps**

Prior to issuing a procurement, a comprehensive, youth focused engagement process will be undertaken by the City to ensure that their needs and desires for the future operation of centres are understood and planned for. The engagement process will be completed by the end of Q2 of 2022.

Information collected through the engagement process will inform a procurement for youth centre operations in Q3 of 2022.

In the interim, the City of Greater Sudbury will continue to operate the six traditional youth centre locations as COVID-19 regulations and legislation allow.

## **Resources Cited**

City of Greater Sudbury Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan Review (2014)

<https://www.greatersudbury.ca/play/parks-and-playgrounds1/parks-open-space-and-leisure-master-plan-review-2014/>

Children & Youth Programming Review, Community Services Committee (July 9, 2018)

<https://pub-greatersudbury.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?documentid=5140>

City of Greater Sudbury Core Services Review Final Report (January 2020)

<https://www.greatersudbury.ca/city-hall/reports-studies-policies-and-plans/pdfs/kpmg-final-report-of-core-service-review/>