

Information on Lively Ski Hill Capital Projects

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Report Summary

This report provides information regarding the Lively Ski Hill capital projects approved through previous capital budgets. The report also includes information on utilization and operating costs of municipal ski hills, recommended utilization targets for ski hills and alternatives to continuing with capital projects as originally contemplated.

Relationship to the Strategic Plan, Health Impact Assessment and Climate Action Plans

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan with respect to the goal Creating a Healthier Community, through investment in infrastructure to support community recreation with a focus on quality of life.

This report refers to operational matters and has no connection to the Community Energy & Emissions Plan (CEEP).

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Background

The 2023 capital budget included a project entitled Ski Hill Refurbishments. The project was for various repairs identified for Adanac and Lively Ski Hills based on 2018 Building Conditional Assessment (BCA) reports. The project scope included improvements to snow making equipment, repairs to the wood siding of the Adanac rental shop and main chalet buildings, exit sign and emergency lighting upgrades at both locations and various refurbishments of the Lively ski hill chalet. The total value of this project was estimated at \$896,849.

During the 2024-2025 budget process, a project entitled Repurposing of Ski Hill Lift Equipment (Lively Ski Hill) was included as part of the approved 2024-2027 capital budget. This project was for the repurposing of the platter tow ropeway currently located at the closed Capreol Ski Hill to replace the mid-1960s era Samson T-Bar system located at the Lively Ski Hill. The total estimated cost of this project was \$387,400.

At the April 22, 2024 Community & Emergency Services Committee meeting, the following members motion was passed:

WHEREAS part the 2024/2025 budget included a capital project for the repurposing of ski hill lift equipment to be installed at the Lively Ski Hill;

AND WHEREAS funding for Lively Ski Hill chalet improvements were previously included in the 2023 capital budget;

AND WHEREAS the City of Greater Sudbury Core Services Review (2020) suggests ski hills are a unique and discretionary services offered by the City of Greater Sudbury;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Greater Sudbury directs staff to suspend all capital work on these projects, other than essential health and safety items, and present a report by August 2024 to the Community and Emergency Services Committee providing information on the following:

- further details on the Lively Ski Hill capital projects including updated project estimates;
- alternatives to continuing with the projects as originally contemplated;
- utilization and operating costs of City of Greater Sudbury operated ski hills;
- recommended utilization targets for ski hills.

At a subsequent City Council meeting, staff were requested to bring forward the report in July 2024.

Additional Information on Previously Approved Ski Hill Projects

The **Ski Hill Refurbishments** project approved as part of the 2023 budget process included the following:

- \$279,414 for Adanac Ski Hill to replace snow making pumps, air compressor, snow making pipes, chalet lighting and upgrading emergency exit signage.
- \$130,138 to refurbish the siding of the Adanac Ski Hill chalet and rental shop buildings. Siding was originally installed in 2009. An intervention will prevent early failure of the building envelopes. The refurbishment of the Adanac chalet has been completed.

The balance of the project was for various refurbishments associated with the Lively Ski Hill chalet. The chalet is a single-storey rectangular shaped structure with no basement, with an estimated area of 1,585 sq. ft. The BCA for the chalet classifies the building condition as poor.

The main architectural items that require repairs or replacement in the next ten (10) years include cladding walls, roof deck, roof, and foundation walls at the Chalet, including all doors and windows. The chalet interior needs complete refurbishment / renovation, including new concession area and washrooms. The building is not barrier-free with no barrier-free washrooms, waiting area, or kitchen service counter. The parking lot is not paved (gravel) with no barrier-free access to the building. Mechanical and electrical items include the replacement of electric unit heaters that are in poor condition, replacement of original plumbing fixtures and replacement of inefficient lighting.

The \$396,000 allocated for Lively Ski Hill chalet refurbishments is intended to be used to address elements rated in very poor, poor and fair condition and include the following:

- Exhaust systems
- Plumbing fixtures
- Interior finishes such flooring, ceilings, and doors
- Roof coverings and soffits
- Exterior walls and windows
- Electrical services, distribution, and lighting equipment

This investment will not be able to address matters associated with accessibility, patron flow and the age of the structure itself (structural foundation repairs are called for in the medium term). The 10 capital outlook for the chalet and site elements shows an additional minimal investment of \$463,000.

The **Repurposing of Ski Hill Lift Equipment (Lively Ski Hill)** project approved as part of the 2024-2025 budget process was estimated at \$387,400. The major scope of work includes the moving of existing City owned ski lift equipment from the closed Capreol Ski Hill site and re-engineering equipment so that it can be installed at the Lively Ski Hill to replace aging and failing equipment. The project scope also included the removal of equipment located at the former Nordic Ski Hill location due to health and safety concerns (estimated cost of work is \$10,000).

Staff reached out to Ancam Solutions Company Ltd. (ANCAM) who have historically provided engineering, consulting and professional services and have been involved with the passenger elevating and ropeway systems at City of Greater Sudbury ski hill facilities for over 15 years.

ANCAM has previously raised concerns on the safety and reliability of the Lively Ski Hill Samson Bar lift which is described as a mid-1960's vintage elevating device which is in original structural condition. ANCAM has worked closely with City of Greater Sudbury staff to source critical components required for maintenance and operations. ANCAM was contacted earlier this year to provide an updated opinion on the Lively Ski Hill lift equipment and provided the following commentary:

- Samson Lifts is no longer in business meaning that there is no manufacturer support.
- Controls system upgraded in the mid-2000s by Doppelmayr but integration was not performed in a complete manner.
- The system has electrical controls system and power inconsistencies which cause operational issues.
- Original motor, structure, haul rope, tensioning system is original condition; upgrading this device to modern standards would cost significantly more than the lift is worth.
- Original line equipment (sheaves, liners, bar springs) are obsolete and becoming difficult to service. Parts are now being sourced from non-lift suppliers which may not be suited for service on a passenger ropeway.
- Original carriers and grips are obsolete and becoming difficult to maintain and keep in operation.
- The existing alignment does not provide safe access to areas of this lift that require service by ski lift mechanics.
- The original alignment is tucked into the hill with the drive station and operator hut in a very wet area of the hill ski area.
- Salvage or sale of this device is no longer an option; lifts of this style and vintage are no longer in service at winter recreation areas.
- The existing lift profile is very steep and not suited for a beginner ski area; providing a more user friendly, revised profile with a more modern ski lift would likely attract additional patrons in the form of skiers and snow boarders.

ANCAM advised that a new lift for the Lively Ski Hill would cost approximately \$2.0M to purchase and install. They note that the lift equipment currently at Capreol Ski Hill will continue to deteriorate from vandalism and environmental wear if left. They have stated the Samson Platter Lift operating at the Lively Ski Hill should be removed from service before the lift suffers a catastrophic breakdown or causes a safety incident for patrons or City employees.

City of Greater Sudbury Ski Hill Operating Costs

The following tables represent the actual operating revenues and expenses for each of Adanac and Lively Ski Hills for the years 2019 through 2023. Budget figures for 2024 and 2025 are also provided. 1. Cost recovery rates don't account for facility capital requirements.

Adanac	Actual					Budget	
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
User Fees	(\$408,191)	(\$406,539)	(\$171,568)	(\$521,660)	(\$555,164)	(\$565,944)	(\$582,858)
Salaries & Benefits	\$478,920	\$414,138	\$278,245	\$427,613	\$425,994	\$369,306	\$381,007
Operating Expenses	\$169,851	\$158,778	\$110,809	\$132,804	\$92,796	\$129,305	\$129,567
Energy	\$125,566	\$116,115	\$107,440	\$170,342	\$79,525	\$149,311	\$154,925
Net Levy Impact	\$366,147	\$282,492	\$324,927	\$209,098	\$43,151	\$81,978	\$82,640
Cost Recovery	53%	59%	35%	71%	93%	87%	88%

Lively	Actual					Budget	
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
User Fees	(\$12,161)	(\$14,796)	(\$14,065)	(\$24,632)	(\$15,846)	(\$15,569)	(\$16,037)
Salaries & Benefits	\$76,855	\$93,322	\$70,934	\$103,713	\$88,585	\$58,435	\$60,291
Operating Expenses	\$33,219	\$38,104	\$16,297	\$52,333	\$47,551	\$38,376	\$38,376
Energy	\$52,107	\$39,256	\$26,308	\$70,658	\$100,952	\$57,981	\$60,604
Net Levy Impact	\$150,019	\$155,886	\$99,474	\$202,072	\$221,241	\$139,222	\$143,234
Cost Recovery	7.5%	8.7%	12.4%	10.9%	6.7%	10.1%	10.1%

The City's staff time and activity reporting system (COMPASS) provides further insights into the level of effort across the entire organization to support the delivery of municipal ski hills. COMPASS shows that 10,720 hours of staff time are spent annually supporting Adanac and Lively Ski Hills across the organization.

Ski Hill User Fees

The following are the rates included in the City's Miscellaneous User Fee By-Law for ski hills (effective April 1, 2024). The User Fee Framework was established during 2021 budget deliberations to support a strategic intent and an expectation that fees, or the lack of fees, demonstrate a thoughtful perspective about how services fit into the community's quality of life. The framework is based on a set of principles reflected in cost recovery targets for each service that has a fee. As part of budget processes, user fees are reviewed through the User Fee Framework and adjusted. Upon review of ski hill fees, it was determined that lift fees and passes should fall into the 'Less Community Benefit/Primarily Individual Benefit' category and that fees should be calculated at 60 to 90 per cent recovery of operating expenses. These adjustments were made during the 2023 budget process.

	Adanac	Lively
Individual Daily Passes		
Junior - Full day	\$44.00	\$18.50
Youth - Full day	\$47.00	\$22.00
Adult - Full day	\$53.00	\$22.00
Individual Season Passes		
Junior	\$465.00	\$182.00
Youth	\$530.00	\$205.00
Adult	\$660.00	\$205.00

Ski Hill Utilization

The following tables provide five years of historical information on utilization of Adanac and Lively Ski Hills. Group programs, private lessons and school bookings are only available at Adanac Ski Hill.

Adanac Ski Hill Utilization								
Season	Operating Days	Season Passes	5-Day Passes	Program Participants	Private Lessons	Student Visits	Total Visits	Visits per Operating Day
2018-2019	64 days/ 33 evenings	146	266	453	700	670	11,239	175.6
2019-2020*	84 days/ 27 evenings	222	236	443	844	89	12,070	143.7
2020-2021**	25 days/ 15 evenings	68	74	0	0	0	6,203	248.1
2021-2022	67 days/ 27 evenings	170	165	43	1398	209	16,699	249.2
2022-2023	70 days/ 30 evenings	367	249	209	1031	306	20,268	289.5
2023-2024	52 days/ 23 evenings	318	335	224	805	663	10,653	204.9

Lively Ski Hill Utilization					
Season	Operating Days	Season Passes	5-Day Passes	Total Visits	Visits per Operating Day
2018-2019	43	n/a	n/a	1563	36.3
2019-2020	39	n/a	n/a	1826	46.8
2020-2021**	17	n/a	n/a	1235	72.6
2021-2022	41	20	9	2250	54.9
2022-2023	45	40	8	1646	36.6
2023-2024	25	120	18	715	28.6

*school bookings impacted by school board strike

**COVID-19 closures and restrictions

Recommended Utilization Targets for Ski Hills

The 2020 City of Greater Sudbury **Core Services Review** described the delivery of ski hills as a service not commonly provided by other municipalities and suggested the City should consider outsourcing the provision of ski hills to a third party given this is not an essential service.

The Ontario Snow Resorts Association advises that the following ski centres are operated/supported by municipalities or conservation authorities in Ontario:

- Albion Hills Conservation Park (Caledon), Town and Region Conservation Authority
- Big Ben Ski Centre, City of Cornwall
- Chapleau Ski Hill, Township of Chapleau
- Earl Bales Ski and Snowboard Centre, City of Toronto
- Glen Eden, Conservation Halton
- Kiwissa Ski Hill, Township of Manitouwadge

- Laurentian Ski Hill (North Bay), supported by City of North Bay
- Mount Chinguacousy, City of Brampton
- Larder Lake Ski Club, Township of Larder Lake
- Mount Fairweather, Town of Atikokan
- Remi Ski Club, Town of Kapuskasing
- The ROC, Town of Georgina
- Trestle Ridge Ski Hill, Township of Terrace Bay

The City's **Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan Review** (POSLMP) does not provide utilization targets or establish provision levels for ski hills. The action item relating to municipal ski hills in the POSLMP calls for the City to ensure for the sustainability of municipal ski hills through responsible asset management, customer-responsive programs and services, and four-season opportunities. The 2014 POSLMP indicated that at the time replacement of lift equipment and Adanac and Lively ski hills would be required in the near term.

Input was sought from industry experts in determining utilization targets for ski hills. One method of determining utilization is by measuring visits against comfortable carrying capacity for a ski hill. For City of Greater Sudbury Ski Hills there is an annual carrying capacity of 59,430 visits calculated as follows:

- Adanac Ski Hill - 700 users x 70 days = 49,000
- Lively Ski Hill - 298 users x 35 days = 8,330

Alternatively, the expected annual ski visits for Greater Sudbury, can be based on 18% of expected participation rate in skiing/snowboarding and average skier/snowboarder visits. Based on this measure, the City would expect 44,821 annual visits calculated as follows:

- 166,004 (2021 census) x 18% x 1.5 visits = 44,821 expected annual visits

For the 2023-2024 season there were a total of 11,368 visits, which is 19.1% of comfortable carrying capacity or 25.4% of annual expected attendance in Greater Sudbury.

Alternatives to Continuing with Projects as Originally Contemplated

Not proceeding with the capital projects associated with Lively Ski Hill as originally contemplated, would have the following implications:

- Potential of catastrophic failure of the existing 1960s era lift with the potential for safety incident as per the engineering and professional services firm who have reviewed the lift condition.
- Absent of a complete failure of the lift, continued issues and service interruptions associated with maintaining lift equipment as parts are no longer able to be sourced.
- The existing chalet would continue to operate in poor condition. Escalating operational costs associated with mitigating roof leaks and other building repairs.

Absent an operational lift and support facilities, the City would be challenged to provide a functional ski hill. The City of Greater Sudbury previously decided to discontinue the operation of Capreol Ski Hill in 2015. Since that time, the facility has operated as an unofficial sliding hill as an alternate recreation amenity.

Tubing hills are another similar winter recreation activity that could take place at location with appropriate vertical and terrain. More investigation would be required to see if the Lively Ski Hill location is conducive to this type of activity. It's expected that this type of operation would require additional/alternate equipment, snow making considerations and support facilities. This type of operation is likely most suited for a third party operator.

Work of the **Lively Recreation Advisory Panel** who are working with the City to make recommendations on investment of the \$4M received from the disposition of Meatbird Lake Park. Funds are to be reinvested into the Lively/Walden community to develop new recreational opportunities and will ensure residents have access to safe ways to play in the area. Proceeds of the \$4 million sale are being held in the Capital Financing Reserve Fund (General) and are dedicated to the improvement of leisure infrastructure.

Two rounds of community engagement have been completed to date. Engagement results indicate that outdoor swimming, waterfront, or beach activities are the top priorities for investment consideration for the project. Water activities (canoeing/kayaking), trails/hiking and a splash pad are the other most frequently mentioned priorities. Overwhelmingly, the feedback has been that the City should invest in a single, new recreational amenity. The community has also clearly indicated that a quality, new, modern facility would most encourage future use. Three locations have been identified including the Lively Ski Hill property, with the others being Anderson Farm and greenspace adjacent to the Lively Citizen Service Centre/Library.

Council has approved a draw funds up to the amount of \$400,000 from the Capital Financing Reserve Fund (General), which are dedicated for the Lively Recreation Project, to obtain professional services to provide conceptual plans and design services to further analyze the three preferred locations. A request for proposal for these services is expected in the coming weeks.

Summary

As per Council direction, the ski hill capital projects described in this report have been paused. This report provides the information requested by Council including additional details on the capital projects in question, information about utilization and financial performance of municipal ski hills, suggested provision level targets and potential alternatives to proceeding with ski hill capital work.

Absent any additional direction, staff will proceed with the capital projects as described in this report.

Should Council direct staff to cancel capital project(s), funds would be returned to the Capital Holding Account. The budget associated with Lively Ski Hill projects described in this report total \$773,400.

Resources Cited

Ski Hill Refurbishment project description, 2023 City of Greater Sudbury Budget document (page 445)
<https://www.greatersudbury.ca/city-hall/budget-and-finance/previous-budgets/2023-budget/proposed-budget/2023-proposed-budget/#zoom=page-width>

Repurposing of Ski Hill Lift Equipment (Lively Ski Hill) project description, 2024-2025 City of Greater Sudbury Budget document (page 445)
<https://www.greatersudbury.ca/city-hall/budget-and-finance/2024-2025-budget/proposed-budget1/proposed-2024-2025-budget/>

City of Greater Sudbury Core Services Review (January 2020)
<https://www.greatersudbury.ca/city-hall/reports-studies-policies-and-plans/pdfs/kpmg-final-report-of-core-service-review/>

City of Greater Sudbury Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan Review (2014)
<https://www.greatersudbury.ca/city-hall/reports-studies-policies-and-plans/report-pdfs/parks-open-space-and-leisure-master-plan-review-2014/>

Lively Recreation Advisory Panel Update and Request to Proceed to Procurement, Community and Emergency Services Committee (September 18, 2023)
<https://pub-greatersudbury.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=50925>