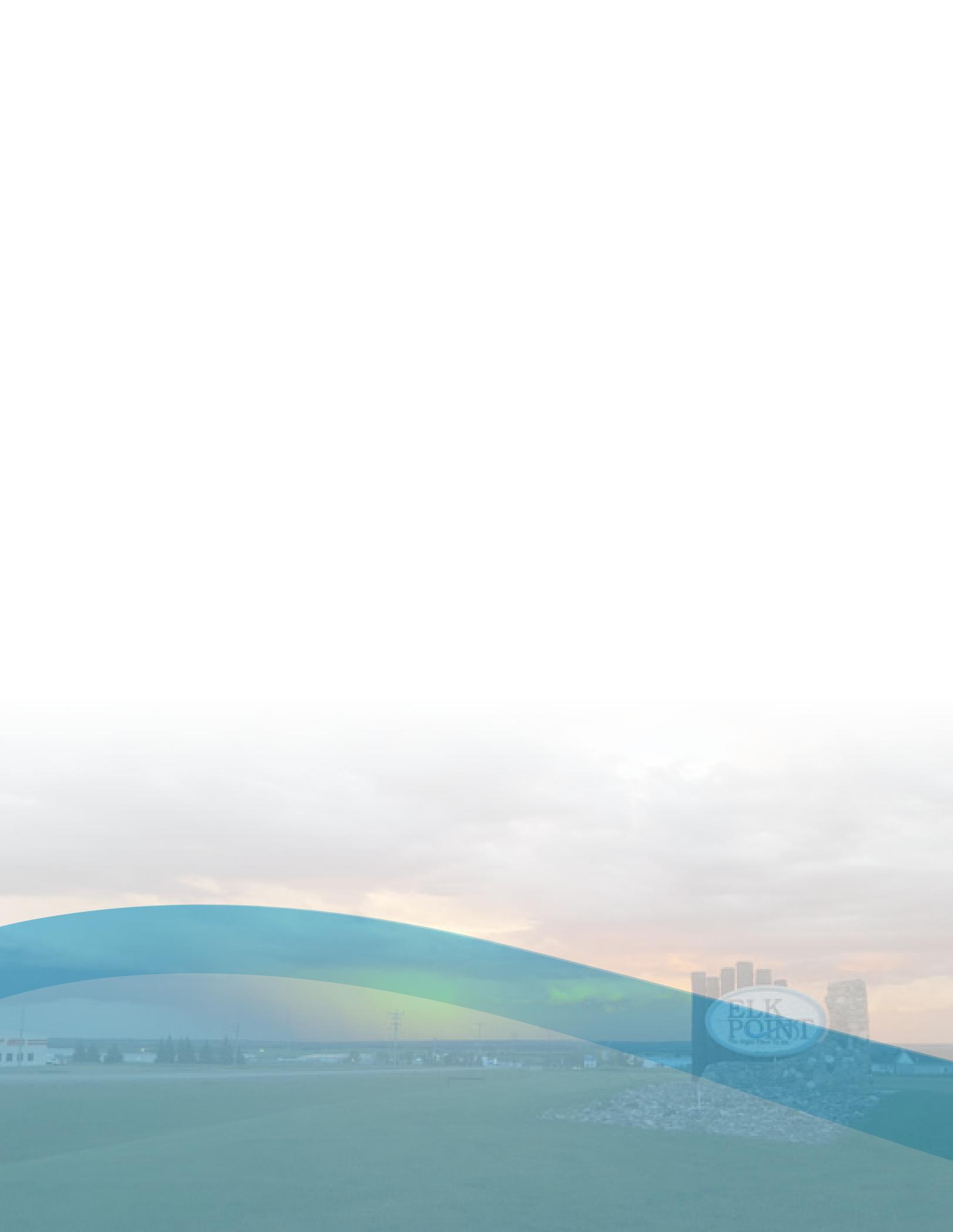


St. Paul – Elk Point Regional
Partnership
Regional Recreation Master Plan
Summary

June 2019





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POINT



The Town of St. Paul, Town of Elk Point, Summer Village of Horseshoe Bay and the County of St. Paul have partnered to plan the future of recreation services in the region. This document will summarize the purpose, research and analysis contained within the Master Plan report, which is forthcoming.

What is a recreation master plan?

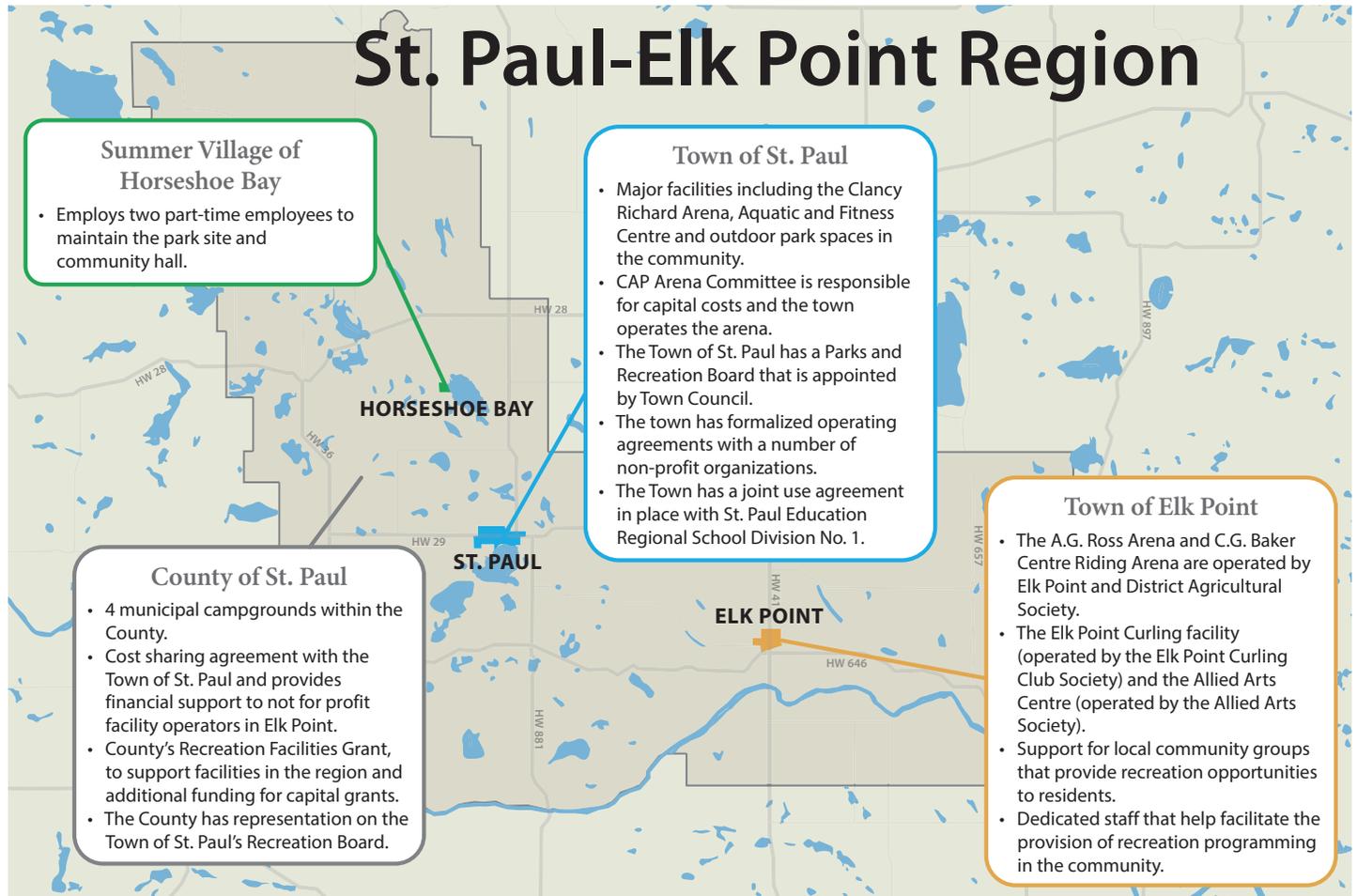
This Regional Recreation Master Plan is meant to be a guiding strategic document, it is helpful to think of it as a “roadmap”, that can help inform decision making and future collaborations between the partner municipalities in the provision of recreation opportunities in the St. Paul-Elk Point region.

The Plan is based on thorough research and public engagement; it was also guided by a regional project steering committee, consisting of administration and elected officials from each of the partner municipalities.



What recreation opportunities are currently available in the St. Paul-Elk Point Region?

There is a vast array of recreation opportunities currently available to residents. The management of these opportunities are handled by the various municipalities, not for profit community groups, and institutional organizations (e.g. schools). The following map summarizes the opportunities currently available in the region.



Why is recreation important?

It is widely acknowledged that recreation is an essential component to personal health and well-being. This belief is supported by research, which has shown that:

- Increased leisure time and physical activity improves life expectancy.
- Physical activity contributes to improved mental health and reduced rates of depression.
- Participation in physical activity can reduce workplace related stress.
- The provision of green spaces has been linked with a number of health and wellbeing benefits including; increased physical activity, reduced risk of obesity, minimized utilization of the healthcare system, and stress reduction.

Furthermore, recreation is considered an essential community service as it can foster an engaged, healthy community and create strong family units.

Vision of Regional Collaboration

“Residents and visitors to the St. Paul – Elk Point Region will continue to enjoy a diverse array of recreation and active living opportunities that are delivered in an efficient, quality and collaborative manner.”

Resident Perspectives on Regional Collaboration (from the Household Survey)

- **80% of regional residents believe that municipalities in the region should work together in the provision of recreation opportunities. *These findings were consistent across all communities.**
- **43% of regional residents believe that some major facilities in the region should be considered “regional” (45% were “unsure” and 12% indicated “no”).**

This Master Plan outlines a potential approach for municipal leaders to classify recreational facilities, which will help to determine what facilities are “regional” and should be managed and funded by all municipal partners. The classification is based on a number of agreed to criteria. For example, the aquatic facility and arts centre would be considered regional facilities, that would benefit from collaborative management and funding from all municipal partners in the region.

Goals and Recommendations to improve recreation in St. Paul-Elk Point Region

Based on the public consultation and engagement with community stakeholders, four goals were identified to guide recreation services in the St. Paul – Elk Point Region. The municipal partners should:



1. Prioritize getting more people, more active.



2. Increase the appeal and attractiveness of the region for residents and visitors.



3. Use recreation as a mechanism to connect and build strong communities and bring the region together.



4. Maximize efficiency and effectiveness through regional collaboration.

To achieve these goals and to improve the current state of recreation in the region the Recreation Master Plan, outlines seven recommendations. These recommendations build off of not only the goals, but also the vision and strategy for regional collaboration and the overarching foundation for the regional delivery of recreation services.

Recommendation 1: Enhance the capacity building support provided to volunteers and community organizations.

It was identified that some volunteers in the community are struggling with “burn out” and issues of capacity, to address this the municipal partners could offer regular training sessions and other development programs. Also, they could create pathways to connect residents with volunteer opportunities to attract new volunteers.

Recommendation 2: Enhance the promotions and marketing of recreation (and related) opportunities in the region.

To improve the awareness of programming in the region, the municipal partners could create a regional brand and marketing plan, including a recreation guide to inform the public. The successes of recreation should be promoted and celebrated in the community.

Recommendation 3: Ensure clarity and / or consistency regarding the grant funding processes and decision making.

To ensure consistency, grant processes and policies in the region should be aligned and an annual report created to transparently communicate funding to the community.

Recommendation 4: Provide additional training and development opportunities.

The Municipalities should continue to ensure that opportunities exist for elected officials, volunteers and staff to attend provincial training opportunities provided by sector organizations, such as the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association, the Alberta Association of Recreation Facility Personnel, and applicable provincial sport organizations.

Recommendation 5: Undertake a Needs Assessment every 5 years to track progress and update the Master Plan.

A periodic review of the Master Plan, will help the municipal leaders to understand the success and impact of the plan in the region.

Recommendation 6: Develop a regional financial assistance program to ensure inclusion and access to recreation programs and opportunities.

To ensure all residents have access to the variety and type of sport, leisure, and cultural opportunities, the Municipalities should continue to work with and fund community partners delivering these services.

Recommendation 7: Improve the collection and analysis of utilization data.

Create a common method for collecting user data across the region, this could be accomplished by creating templates and/or protocols for facilities and community groups to use across the Region.



Regional recreation infrastructure strategies

As part of this study, the future development of recreation facilities was considered and recommendations were made as to what types of facilities the municipal partners may fund based on community demand and the lifecycle of current facilities.

It is recommended that the number of regional trails and field house facilities in the region are increased. It is recommended that the current number of agricultural grounds, campgrounds, large community halls, major sport field complexes and aquatic facilities remain the same. Considering the current levels of demand and the user rates, it is recommended that the number of ice arenas and curling facilities remain the same or possibly decrease if there is a shift in user numbers.

It is important to note that these recommendations are only suggestions based on current community demand, facility lifecycle, and benchmarking with comparable regions. These recommendations serve as a bases for ongoing analysis of the region and its' facilities, and for future planning to meet the recreation needs of the community.

Conclusion

This Master Plan outlines a number of recommendations to strengthen the delivery of recreation in the region, and importantly to make public recreation more beneficial to all. The majority of the goals and recommendations can be adopted independently by the municipalities in the region, which will improve recreation in each community. However, a regional approach has also been proposed where regional municipalities can work together in providing certain aspects of recreation.

The ultimate goal of the Plan is to provide the region with a road map for improving recreation, regardless of how municipalities decide to collaborate. The recommendations presented in the Plan are meant to strengthen and bolster the benefits in the region from investment in recreation facilities and services. Residents and visitors of the area will be better off as Plan implementation occurs.



