

Council Report No. PRC 058-2026

Date: July 14, 2026

File No. 7800

To: Mayor and Council
From: Geoff Paynton, Director of Recreation and Culture
Subject: Arena Services and Facilities Strategy – Implementation Update

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council direct staff to immediately undertake Project Framing work to advance planning for a new two-sheet arena complex to be constructed and operated by the City of Abbotsford at Abbotsford Exhibition Park, as outlined in Report No. PRC 058-2026; and
2. That Council approve an initial \$325,000 in funding from the Capital Reserves Fund, for the Project Framing work, which will be advanced through a future budget amendment.

REPORT CONCURRENCE	
GENERAL MANAGER The General Manager concurs with the recommendation of this report.	CITY MANAGER The City Manager concurs with the recommendation of this report.

PURPOSE

To provide Council with an update on the Action Plan of the Arena Services & Facilities Strategy (Strategy).

To seek direction to undertake project framing work to progress the concept of a new two-sheet arena complex built and operated by the City of Abbotsford (City) at Abbotsford Exhibition Park which would be a participant-focused community facility focused solely on rentals.

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

The Arena Services & Facilities Strategy, which included nine directions comprising the Action Plan, was approved in a Regular Meeting of May 13, 2025.

Work on Action Plan items began immediately following Council's approved the Strategy, and much progress has been made in addressing the nine Action Plan Directions.

At the May 13, 2025 Regular Meeting, staff were directed to prioritize Action Plan Direction 8, which was to undertake a competitive process to engage interested parties in the development

of an arena venue within Abbotsford on private land, with the City acting as an anchor tenant.

Based on further analysis, staff have concluded that the preferred short-term approach for providing additional ice capacity and dry floor space to the community is for the City to construct and operate a two-arena, participant-focused facility at Abbotsford Exhibition Park (Park).

In order to advance this proposed project, approval of Project Framing work and a related cost estimate are required. This Project Framing scope of work will create a baseline of information related to the new arena, enabling the City to receive appropriate cost estimates.

It is anticipated that the Project Framing work could be completed within a 12-week timeframe following securing the services of the appropriate professionals.

BACKGROUND

The Strategy includes an Action Plan with nine directions, as listed in Table 1:

Arena Strategy – Action Plan Directions	
Immediate Planning (1-5 years)	1. Identify level of service targets for ice, dry-floor and curling
	2. Increase availability of ice for the community
	3. Monitor the impact of the new Allocation Policy (2022)
	4. Renew agreement with the Abbotsford Curling Club
	5. Plan for aging community-wide facilities
Medium-term Planning (5-10 years)	6. Increase availability of dry-floor for the community
	7. Explore new curling service delivery models
	8. Explore partnership opportunities for renewed or redeveloped arenas
Long-term Planning (10+ years)	9. Explore redevelopment opportunities for MSA and MRC arenas

Table 1

Work on many of these action items began immediately after Council approved the Strategy, and an update on the progress to date is the subject of this report.

DISCUSSION

Action Plan Direction 1 – Level of Service Targets

The Arena Services and Facilities Strategy identifies clear short term and long-term targets to meet current and expected demand in the future. At minimum, future planning targets will look to add 1.6 ice sheets and 0.8 dry floors to the current City-wide inventory between today and 2041.

This Strategy data was initially gathered in 2019 and, given the amount of time that had elapsed

due to the global COVID-19 pandemic and other uncontrollable circumstances, staff reviewed the data with the consultant again in early 2026 to confirm relevance to the Action Plan Directions.

No substantial deviations were noted based on recent usage data. As a result, the projection of 1.6 ice sheets and 0.8 dry floor sheets remains valid.

Action Plan Direction 3 – Allocation Policy Implementation

Full implementation of the new Allocation Policy, supported by the Allocation Framework, began for arena services in 2025 after completion of the Arena Services and Facility Strategy.

In general, the Allocation Policy has given the community clear decision points with rationale on how spaces administered by the Parks, Recreation and Culture department are allocated.

Across all amenities and service categories, staff continue to build a more predictable seasonal allocation schedule, advance technological supports in cooperation with the Information Technology division, Improve communications with community organizations and consider future updates to the Allocation Policy based on experiences and feedback from community organizations.

Action Plan Direction 4 – Renew agreement with the Abbotsford Curling Club (Club)

The Club has created an Abbotsford Curling Club Agreement Renewal Committee (Committee), which includes board members and staff, to work with key City staff on a new agreement governing the curling venue at 2555 McMillan Road.

Numerous discussions have occurred with the Club over the past year, with a number of options being explored by the Club for the new agreement. While the Committee has been actively working with staff on scenarios and, ultimately, agreement options, Q2 and Q3 of 2026 represent a period of time when curling activities are minimal compared to Q4 and Q1 each year. As a result, staff are aware of the reality that further input from the Committee will likely occur at a suitable time in the curling calendar.

Action Plan Direction 7 - Explore new curling service delivery models

Once the City and Club have an agreement in place to guide the sport of curling for the coming years, exploration of new curling service delivery models can be undertaken in cooperation with the Club, as such delivery model considerations should likely align with substantive renewal or replacement of the existing curling venue at some point in the future.

Action Plan Direction 8 - Explore partnership opportunities

A Request for Pre-Qualification (RFPQ) for development of an arena venue in the City of Abbotsford on private land, with the City acting as an anchor tenant, was issued in October 2025 and closed later that same month.

The results of the RFPQ led to the development of a Request for Proposals (RFP) process, which was undertaken in January 2026. The RFP process concluded in Q2 2026 with a cancellation of the competition.

Development of a partnership with a private partner to build and deliver arena services on private land was thoroughly explored through the recent process. While high quality submissions and proposals were received, through the confidential competitive process outlined, it was determined through subsequent work that the City was in the best position to address the immediate needs of the community.

This determination was established by staff working through the feasibility of the City directly providing for the needs of the community directly through a new, two-sheet arena facility focused solely on sport participant needs and, by association, rentals.

Based on that analysis, staff concluded that the preferred approach for providing additional ice capacity (Action Plan Direction 2) and dry floor space (Action Plan Direction 6) to the community in the short term is for the City to construct and operate a two-sheet arena facility.

Action Plan Direction 2 – Increase availability of ice for the community

Action Plan Direction 6 – Increase availability of dry-floor for the community

Action Plan Direction 9 – Explore redevelopment opportunities for MSA and MRC arenas

Key considerations in proposing the concept of a new two-sheet arena complex built and operated by the City at Abbotsford Exhibition Park include the following:

- Direct Oversight – through this avenue, the City will have full authority on the decision-making process on this initiative, including project scope and timelines
- Maximize Availability – a City-owned two-sheet arena will ensure maximum access by community sport organizations through the Allocation Policy
- Long-Term Outcomes – Aligning with existing service standards, the City will be in the best position to develop and maintain this community amenity on public lands for decades to come
- Operational Standards – Once completed, the City will retain full authority on the standards associated with the provision of this amenity to the community.

Exhibition Park was identified as the preferred location for this proposed facility due to the ease of access within Abbotsford and the availability of space, including current parking capacity.

The provision of two additional City owned and operated ice sheets would immediately accommodate ice and dry floor needs expressed by the local not-for-profit minor sports organizations. It is projected that this type of facility (Attachment A) would provide approximately 4,200 hours of prime-time ice each season, thus achieving Action Plan Direction 2 – Increase availability of ice for the community.

Assuming the two proposed ice sheets operated from September through March each year and the April – August time period is operated as dry floor space, this proposed facility would help to serve the needs of lacrosse and ball hockey in Abbotsford. Hence, the proposed facility also achieves Action Plan Direction 6 – Increase availability of dry-floor for the community.

Though both the arena at the Matsqui Recreation Centre (MRC) and the MSA arena are aging, both continue to serve the community well, delivering valuable ice and dry floor services. Both the MRC and MSA arenas will require substantive renovations in the next 10-20 years. The development of a new two-sheet arena at the Park will allow the City additional capacity, enabling thoughtful planning of both the MRC and MSA sites over the coming years to ensure

that the community's arena needs continue to be met.

In the interim, both the MSA and MRC arenas as well as the Abbotsford Recreation Centre arena are professionally monitored and maintained utilizing maintenance planning software overseen by qualified staff. This current arena inventory of the City is maintained through annual capital budgets and related, specialized projects, such as the recently completed ARC HeRO Project, which helps to maximize energy efficiency between the arena and pool.

Next Step – Project Framing

As a result of the work outlined above, this report recommends that staff retain expertise to undertake Project Framing work to ensure that the full scope of the two-sheet arena venue is better defined with further details. These details will support the development of a cost estimate, enabling the City to consider the timelines and avenues by which to advance this project.

The Project Framing scope of work generally includes:

1. Site Plan – development of a Site Plan for an arena facility located in the Park
2. Placement – building placement, including considerations on access and parking
3. Long-Term Expansion – exploration of potential expansion considerations in future decades
4. Concept Plan – high-level concept of the facility
5. Floorplans – preparation of concept-level floorplan layouts
6. Concept Plan and Floorplan Refinement – opportunity for adjustments and updates based on City feedback and objectives
7. Topographical Site Survey
8. Structural Foundations Assessment
9. Civil Assessment – for appropriate site servicing
10. Geotechnical Study – for the identified Park space
11. Traffic Impact Study
12. Environmental Assessment – Stage 1
13. Archeological Overview Assessment (AOA)
14. Class D Cost Estimate

This Project Framing scope of work will build on a baseline of information related to the new arena facility and will also help to support future development considerations at the Park. It is estimated that most of Project Framing work could be completed within about 12 weeks once the necessary professional expertise is retained through standard procurement processes. Overall, it is estimated that the overall scope of work at this stage would be completed in Q1 2027.

Given the nature of archeological assessments, the AOA is the one component of the Project Framing work which may exceed the identified timeline; however, this work is critical as findings could impact project budget and schedule.

FINANCIAL PLAN IMPLICATION

It is anticipated that Project Framing work will commence in Q3 2026. Funding in the amount of \$325,000 required for the identified scope of work is proposed to be drawn from the General Capital Reserves Fund and will be brought forward as part of an upcoming budget amendment.

Staff will undertake the necessary financial planning to support implementation over the identified timeframe. This process will evaluate various funding strategies, including the potential use of long-term debt financing.

IMPACTS ON COUNCIL POLICIES, STRATEGIC PLAN AND/OR COUNCIL DIRECTION

Council's 2022 – 2026 Strategic Plan, Principle 1 – Inclusive and Connected Community, Goal 3 includes the completion and implementation of the Arena Services & Facilities Strategy.

APPROVALS

Todd Stewardson, General Manager of Parks, Recreation and Culture
Komal Basatia, Chief Financial Officer
Peter Sparanese, City Manager

ATTACHMENT

Attachment A – Abbotsford Exhibition Park New Arena Rendering



Cadets

Ag. Rec

Existing Ball Field