



Collaboration for Facility Partnerships

Special Report to St. Albert City Council

Introduction:

Over the last two years, the City of St. Albert Council was approached by community groups and potential facility partners to make decisions on funding space for programming in recreation, sport, culture and education services. Administration reviewed the situation, and will provide by the end of Q2 options for Council's consideration on how to move forward in the mid-term, as well as identify scenarios for short-term opportunities to alleviate program and facility needs.

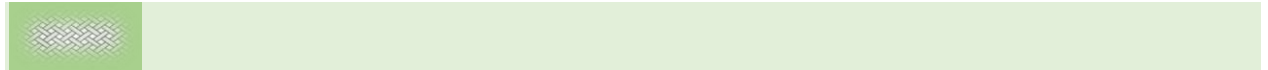
To address the community groups' requests for space/facilities in the short-term, Administration decided upon a collaborative approach to try to identify short-term space options. The community groups that provided presentations to Council expressing a need were invited to discuss possible short-term space opportunities as a collective group. The groups met to provide input on their current situation and needs, to listen to each other and to consider potential opportunities and options for moving forward. This initiative, called "*Collaboration for Facility Partnerships*", was led by Dale Bendfeld, *General Manager, Community & Protective Services* and supported by Diane Enger, *Recreation & Parks Director*, Anna Royer, *Division Business Manager*, support staff and facilitator, Stephania Duffee, *Duffee Management Consulting*.

The following report will give Council an overview of the findings of the "Collaboration for Facility Partnerships" process.

Initiative Objectives:

1. Bring together community groups so all could better understand the current community service delivery space/facility pressures and together look for opportunities for options.
2. Bring together experts and service providers of space/facility solutions to dialogue and share their views on how City of St. Albert could address short-term space/facility concerns.
3. Assess City of St. Albert's space/facility pinch points and opportunities for better space utilization.
4. Where possible, solve any space issues within existing programs and infrastructure.
5. Update St. Albert Council on the community groups' key messages regarding space utilization, potential opportunities and short-term options to space/facility needs vs. usage.
6. Prepare mid-term options for Council to consider on how to address space/facility pressures.

Background:



“Collaboration for Facility Partnership” intent was ‘due diligence’ and ‘duty of care’ to determine short-term space/facility options that could fit into current and future plans for the citizens of St. Albert. The premise was that working together for win/wins had a much greater opportunity to succeed and could lead to better options and well informed recommendations to Council.

A municipal commitment to fund facilities is a serious undertaking. In the fall of 2017 the previous Council asked the electorate on a ballot question to show citizen support for three potential initiatives. The results were:

Library Planning 36.1% in favor
Arena Planning 46.1 % in favor
Aquatics Planning 55.7% in favor

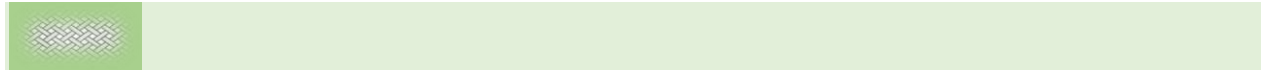
While these results are sure to provide context for long-term planning and decision making, the pressure for short-term space and facilities continues to be expressed by some of the community groups.

‘Collaboration for Facility Partners’ initiative, set out to only include community groups that made presentations to Council in 2016/17, but as the planning unfolded, it became apparent that many recreational, cultural and social groups were facing similar space/facilities pressures in St. Albert. Due to the inclusion of Aquatic question on the 2017 municipal ballot, representatives from the Aquatic community were included in discussions.

The process included two parts.

Process PART ONE: Meet with community groups with space/facility needs.

1. Groups were invited to facilitated community meetings where community groups and Administration participated in an understanding process. Participants were St. Albert Minor Hockey Association (SAMH), St. Albert Soccer Association (SASA), Dynamyx Gymnastics, St. Albert Gymnastics, St. Albert Library, and St. Albert Food Bank. Key administrators from the City of St. Albert Recreation, Culture, Social Services and Engineering were also invited to participate and hear directly from the community groups about their space issues. Aquatic group input was also included. Administration met with them separately and then included them in all subsequent meetings.
2. At the meetings, groups talked about the type, urgency, timing and particulars of their programming space/facility needs. They also considered their issues in light of the ‘public good’, the current public space infrastructure in St. Albert, awareness of competing interests, and Council approved principles that Administration is bound to adhere to.
3. Community groups learned about each other and considered ways to collaborate with one another for mutually beneficial solutions.
4. They also gave their views on how St. Albert could respond to short-term space needs.

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5. Not to mislead any group, Administration clearly stated that this process was to address short-term space issues and, mid-term and longer-term issues would need to be addressed through Council decisions.
 6. Administration committed to keeping community groups informed about the initiative and its progress and met with them on Feb. 15 to provide an update. Administration will continue to engage the groups as necessary.
 7. Community groups were also informed that any information gathered from them would contribute towards future Master Plans be considered in future reporting and planning.

Process PART TWO: Meet with facility solutions and expertise stakeholders

1. Administration met together with the YMCA and Active Communities Alberta as well as other potential space/facility solutions stakeholders including School Boards, County of Sturgeon, City of Edmonton, Canadian Forces Base - Edmonton, and City of Morinville on January 4, 2018.
2. Administration gave the group an overview of the current municipal space/facility pressures and current facility/space infrastructure requests by community groups.
3. Stakeholders were then asked to share their thoughts, experience and expertise on how to address space/facility issues in the short-term.

Input & Results of Meetings

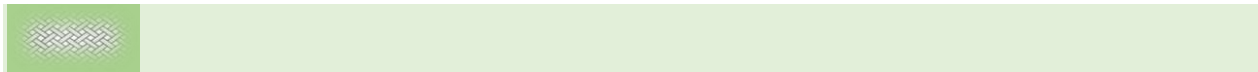
This report presents a summary of collective input from the community groups, and the space/facility experts and providers. Administration is prepared to provide further details to City Council on the outcomes if required.

PART ONE: Input from Community groups

Community Groups have:

- A great respect for how wonderful the St. Albert community is, but at the same time not fully supportive of some of the City's funding priorities. E.g. Past councils seemed to put priority on slowing traffic down vs. providing affordability to individuals and groups who want to recreate/socialize in St. Albert.
- Frustration that funding for space needs is not forthcoming from the Municipality.
- A recognition of volunteer burn out within their groups.
- A recognition that programing and facility space are not keeping pace with demand. Demographics are changing and the geographical borders are getting more and more blurred.

- The need for clarification on definitions: How does Council look at things? What defines “the public good?” What defines a sport? What defines a “reasonable subsidized activity?”
 - Example: St. Albert provides facilities for hockey but not gymnastics. Why are some activities funded and others not?
 - Example: Subsidized activities? To what degree should municipal funding be extended to boutique programming and/or elite athletes?
 - Example: Not many know that the meaning of library services in a community is changing. The library’s future is community networking, knowledge brokering and social space. Social/recreational outlets, like library space, are going to be needed more than ever as our social world shrinks while we surf the net.
 - Example: What does not-for-profit imply? Does it imply an organization working in a public interest, or does it imply an organization working in a specific interest, or both?
 - Example: What does affordability mean? Affordability to whom and at what cost?
- Key needs:
 - Library programing and storage space.
 - Private location/space or land for Food Bank.
 - Ice-time in St. Albert, preferable at prime time or close to prime time. At least one more sheet of ice with a viewing area. It would be nice to get three more sheets of ice.
 - Dryland training space.
 - Meeting/education training room space
 - Covered soccer turf fields and land if it is available.
 - More turf playing fields: for ‘K to under 10’ soccer players and drop-in soccer.
 - Expansion of community swimming opportunities and facilities.
 - Community funding/support for gymnastics. (Facility to accommodate Dynamyx’s lease expiration)
 - Room to expand and grow programs.
 - Find ways to increase parking for St. Albert Gymnastics.
- Possible opportunities, options and/or solutions for space/facility short-term and long-term issues.
 - We are open to partnering and partnerships if that means we can get some of what we want.
 - Is St. Albert managing current space/facilities to the communities’ maximum potential? How are peak hours, summer hours, other hours allocated for facility usage? And, is St. Albert maximizing the opportunity for groups to grow their sports within non-prime time?
 - Have we been good regional neighbours and looked for better ways to solve space/facility issues in a collaborative regional manner? Look to partnering with surrounding municipalities for to solve space issues.
 - Integrate library sites into recreational sites.
 - Support a more equitable funding model based on public values.



- Consider private/public model for long-term solutions to facility space.
 - Better utilization of ice time in non-prime seasonal slots.
 - Run dry land training in off times at schools, Servus Place, other locations within the region.
 - Provide meeting rooms for hockey coaches during recruitment and evaluation phases, in the hockey venue. For other hockey meeting requirements we do not need to be in a hockey venue.
 - Work towards supporting 'Field of Dreams'.
 - More turf fields to extend the season.
 - Build a facility that has unique space for gymnastics that Dynamyx could lease from St. Albert. Some of the design components of a unique gymnastics facility could incorporate community partnership for child care, meeting rooms and study/computer space.
 - While more accommodation at the present facility for St. Albert Food Bank could work, in the long-term the Food Bank will be looking for land to build a separate facility. Partnering could be considered with the right partner.
 - Identify storage space opportunities for library assets.
 - Library would consider being a community hub anchor with other partners.
 - Have we exhausted space/facilities opportunities and partnerships with schools? Do we have a collaborative model with them so both can see benefits?
 - Centralize child care space in such a way that citizens can be rest assured that their little ones are well taken care of while they pursue activities within St. Albert.
 - Continue the role of facilitating discussions of various groups so we can find ways to better deliver services collaboratively.
 - Thank you for the opportunities to look for collaborative solutions to our space/facility issues.
- Key Messages Community Groups want to send to Council.

Give us a commitment.	<i>We all have urgent needs. We've been asking for funding for a long time. We need a firm commitment/answer from Council so that we can move forward with decision making that is best for us within the next six months.</i>
We want Council to be an informed decision maker.	<i>New Councilors must become informed and educated regarding community programing and services.</i>
Timing is critical. We cannot wait for another cycle.	<i>Council's cyclical processes do not serve our emerging needs well. Our needs usually have shorter timelines because we are responding with community services. The window for future decision making is getting smaller and smaller for some of us. If options, and/or help does not come, some services like Dynamyx say they may be out of business as lease expires in 3 years, and the Food Bank may need to relocate out of St. Albert.</i>
Council please help us maintain affordability.	<i>We are non-profit. Costs continue to rise and our members are starting to suffer fee fatigue. We question at what point we will no longer be able to offer services to our members.</i>

Provide the necessary facilities even if you need to raise taxes.	<i>This was emphatically expressed by only several of the groups.</i>
Consider cultural, recreational and social needs as a high priority against other requests for funding.	<i>Consider a community without Library, Foodbank, hockey, soccer, swimming, and gymnastics. Would we want to live here?</i>
We are open to partnerships and shared use.	<i>Combine services within a facility or facilities. We all know we are not going to get everything we want but we will get more if we collaborate. Council should know we are willing to collaborate.</i>
Continue to support the relationship model between municipalities.	<i>It is critical that we work together. More and more we see how people no longer see borders between jurisdictions.</i>
“It isn’t what you can provide for us. It is what you can enable us to do.” - SASA	<i>A little bit for everyone. Your role is to facilitate discussions of various groups so that they can find ways to deliver services better and collaboratively.</i>
Think about either forming or being part of a multisport council.	<i>This is important as boundaries continue to disappear. We want to continue the dialogue with each other and we want you to do it too with our municipal neighbours.</i>
Consider a campus approach for offering long-term facilities/space to us.	
Collaboration for win/win is a commendable and engaging process.	<i>Thank you St. Albert. We feel much more empowered to continue our quest and leadership in the community.</i>

PART TWO: Space/facilities experts and stakeholders Input.

Their ideas for addressing short-term space/facilities issues in St. Albert:

- Do an assessment of what space/facilities are available for lease, sharing, partnering within St. Albert and within the bordering communities. Is St. Albert making maximum/best use of public space? Is St. Albert getting maximum value out of our current infrastructure and resources?
- Municipalities could collaborate more if there was a process to do so.
- Repurpose current facilities/space.
 - Avoids land issues.
 - Better use of floor space. (E.g. Servus Place 2nd floor for cardio gear)
 - Lower capital costs.
 - Smaller capital investment – still costs.
 - Might not fit the programming, structure requirements.
 - Perception of “cheaper” alternatives by potential citizens vs other communities.
 - Less impact on tax dollars.



- Does not meet demand for prime time. (This is central to the space/facility issues faced by St. Albert)
 - Consider value based decisions. For example are the facilities being used for community development or athlete development?
- Construct short-term solutions for certain multiuse space.
 - Depends on facility type
 - Needs measurable outcomes and benefits. Not just about infrastructure. It is about what is the infrastructure doing? (i.e. better health, well-being)
- For the longer term consider a Campus/Multi-Purpose Facility.
 - Economy of Scale
 - Economy of Cost (No one can do it alone anymore because it is too cost prohibitive)
- Regionalization of public facilities.
- Partnerships with facility providers. E.g.:
 - Other Municipalities
 - CFB/ Alternate primetimes
 - Indigenous neighbours
 - Private Sector vendors
- Question if every community needs every type of facility or can we regionalize usage for core facilities? How are facilities accessible for all residents/users? Should they be available to anyone, no matter what the need?
- Provide strategies to change citizen's expectations about proximity to facilities. Help people to think differently. Travel is habitual. For example, if one needs to travel across St. Albert to access services and it is 7 kilometers what is the difference between travelling 7 kilometers east, west, south or north or even across municipal borders? It is understood that rural travels to urban to use facilities, but the opposite meets with resistance.
- Partnerships can be complicated – there needs to be a common set of principles. What common outcomes are trying to be achieved? (Well-being, event attraction, etc.) What kind of partnership model would work for St. Albert and for that matter other municipalities?
- Don't just think about bricks and mortar it is about more than that, it is about community and flexibility.
- Citizens' consultation should be done in geographical areas and across boundaries where practical.
- Private groups can deliver with more focus on specific needs than Municipalities that tend to be more general. This avoids Municipal monopoly and creates healthy competition within the region.
- Answer questions of why Municipalities are doing some things and why they are not doing other things. For example St. Albert does not support a golf course but they support hockey arenas... etc. Other municipalities support golf courses. Citizens want to know why certain things are supported and others are not.
- We need performance measurement based on social outcomes and not facility statistics.
- Put more focus culturally on recreational sports and decreases emphasis on high level competition sport



DMC Observations and Summary

As a result of “Collaboration for Facility Partnerships” community groups found there was a far better understanding of each other’s needs and opportunities for collaboration for solutions. In general, participating community groups related their short-term, mid-term and/or long-term facility/space issues. Some solutions to these issues are clearly the responsibility of the City of St. Albert, while others reside with the not-for-profit organization. Throughout this process Administration clearly stated that “Collaboration for Facility Partnerships” was focused on ideas for how the City could alleviate short-term space pressures within the current infrastructure. Due to limitations on serviced land, mid-term options would be tied to current city-owned facilities in the South area of the city. Longer-term decisions would be guided by Master Plans and/or City Council priorities, and would be highly dependent on land availability, servicing, and funding.

While space and facility issues were at the core of most of the discussions it was apparent that flexibility of infrastructure was perhaps even more important than the infrastructure itself. Some mused that it was difficult to change mindset about how and where we use space, but they followed that up by looking to a future where flexible space is good design for a regional community.

Through this process it was learned that community groups have high expectations for subsidized sport/recreation/educational programming and facilities in St. Albert for a variety of reasons, including: St. Albert’s high standard of living; it’s recognition as one of the 10 best places to live in Canada; St. Albert’s population growth because of the desirable family amenities; the fact that St. Albert citizens participate at a much higher rate in sport, fitness and educational activities than most of Canada; St. Albert is a highly engaged and educated community; groups compete across the province and compare what other municipalities offer to community groups; hesitation to ask members to drive beyond St. Albert’s borders to access programming; heightened awareness of what a community is entitled to have through participation in a predictive modeling process several years back; a young and vibrant rural and urban community bordering St. Albert; lack of recreational facilities in the northern part of the region and so forth... All these factors appear to drive high expectations for the level of support from St. Albert Municipal Government.

Unfortunately, available facilities and municipal funding have not kept pace with citizen expectations. Current statistics are pointing to recreation, cultural and social space shortages. One doesn’t need to do much research to see that St. Albert is a growing community with high expectations.

Space vendors and other jurisdictions are also recognizing the regional space/facility squeeze. Lobbying of Council and the community has already begun. E.g. a) YMCA, an experienced not-for-profit facilities vendor presented to Council their interest in partnering with St. Albert for a recreational/community facility. b) Active Communities, a newly formed not-for-profit asked for public and Council support for a facility that they intend to own, and run. There are sure to be others coming to council with their good ideas in the next few months. The reason this is being pointed out is that it is not advisable for Council to make long-term commitments without assessing the big picture. Regionalization is a major consideration in planning for tomorrow. Collaborating with regional neighbours must be part of the long-term planning process. The City of St. Albert no doubt wants to make informed space/facility decisions. That means Administration putting effort into updating and integrating Master Plans and working towards collaborating with regional potential partners to realize economies of scale.



In the short-term, Administration has now opened the doors for collaborative thinking regarding space/facilities needs and solutions. The community groups and stakeholders that were engaged acknowledge that their needs must be taken into consideration alongside many other needs. Participants of this process provided feedback to Administration that they want to continue to be involved, they want to look for ways to collaborate so that this is the best community it can be, and they want consideration to have some of their needs met by public support. Administration committed to keeping them informed.

In the short-term, Administration could address short-term space needs by reviewing the recommendations from both groups within the current constraints, pick those that are most achievable and act.

There were many good ideas coming from both the community needs groups and the solution stakeholders during the collaborative meetings. In summary, consider the following:

Short-term (6 mo.– 2 years)	Mid-term (2 – 3 years)	Long-term (3-5 + years)
Maximize/repurpose current facility space where viable. (Look for quick wins e.g. accommodating the Foodbank's need for more space and meeting rooms for recruitment and evaluation of hockey players.)	Update City of St. Albert's Master Plans through use of integrated planning, collaboration and teamwork. Request that Council update the set of principles and guidelines on what public funding could be used for. These would guide decision making. The principles would help answer the key questions "what benefit, for whom and at what cost". This would also help guide community expectations.	Do an inventory of City owned space infrastructure, evaluate how it is currently being utilized and make decisions on how it could potentially be used better, differently by the community.
Look for possible partnerships with neighbouring Municipalities to share/utilize space/facilities for short-term needs.	Explore all possible options for additional sheets of ice and make decisions that are most likely to compliment a long-term commitment.	Gather a team of City of St. Albert Administrators from different areas to work collaboratively together, review and manage space efficiently and effectively within St. Albert.
Collaborate with the Library and facilitate additional library programming needs at community facilities.	Work towards designing a partnership model for regionally shared facilities/space.	Consider a regional solution for long-term sports hub.
Explore opportunities to solve Library storage issues within the City's current infrastructure.	Complete a demand analysis of indoor turf facilities and then make decisions accordingly.	Consider if a Regional Multisport Council would be a good investment. If yes, participate or lead.
Explore further enhanced partnership agreements with schools.	Build strategies to help change community mindset in three areas.	Consider the growth of soccer within St. Albert and if the City should support the notion of

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entitlement and demand for access and utilization of facility space during prime time. • Receiving all public services within the borders of St. Albert. • Acceptable travel distances to access recreational services. 	moving away from boarded soccer space to covered turf fields.
Work with St. Albert Soccer Association to find additional field space for K to under 10 and drop-in soccer field demand.	Encourage community groups to utilize subsidized space and prime time for entry and basic developmental recreation, education and social programming.	Continue to support a “good relationship” model between community groups and Municipal neighbours
Look for opportunities to direct not-for-profit groups that are currently self-sufficient to space/facilities vendors who may be best positioned to help solve the groups’ space/facility needs.		
If funding for a not-for-profit community groups’ requests were not supported by previous decisions of Council and any changes by current Council will not be made until Master Plans are complete (2-4 years) inform the group so they can make plans accordingly.		

The next steps will be defined by St. Albert Administration.

It was a pleasure to contribute to “Collaboration for Facility Partnerships”. If any part of this report has inadvertent errors or omissions, please contact me immediately to make the corrections. You may reach me at DMC@duffee.ca, or 780-914-2676.

If I could be of service towards the goal of excellence in community collaboration, and space allocation, I’d be happy to support in any way I can. Thank you for putting your trust in my services.

Stephania Duffee, DMC