

Strathcona Gardens RECREATION COMPLEX

Strathcona Regional District

Strathcona Gardens Recreation Complex Funding Models Review

March 2026

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1. Introduction

1.1. The Recreation Service Delivery Context

The Strathcona Regional District (SRD) owns and operates the Strathcona Gardens Recreation Complex in Campbell River which encompasses indoor aquatics, arenas, fitness, and multi-purpose spaces. The facility is currently funded by residents within the City of Campbell River and Electoral Area D.

At the outset, it is important to distinguish between communities with practical and routine access to Strathcona Gardens and those without. The SRD encompasses a geographically vast area that includes Campbell River and surrounding areas (EA D runs from the Jubilee Parkway to Oyster River and east into Strathcona Regional Park), Cortes Island and the surrounding Archipelago Island (Electoral Area B), the Discovery Islands and Mainland Inlets (Electoral Area C), and the Kyuquot/Nootka-Sayward areas that encompass the Villages of Gold River, Tahsis, Zeballos, and Sayward (Electoral Area A). Many of these communities face significant travel time, cost, and logistical barriers to regularly accessing Campbell River-based amenities and services. Accordingly, this Review focuses only on communities with functional proximity and routine transportation access to Campbell River. Remote communities are not considered candidates for inclusion in an expanded Strathcona Gardens service area and are therefore not analyzed further until the concluding findings of this report.

To support recreation service delivery and respond to evolving and growing needs among the population with functional access to the facility, Strathcona Gardens Recreation Complex is currently undergoing a significant multi-phase renewal and expansion. This investment reinforces the Gardens' role as a major indoor recreation hub, supporting enhanced aquatics, arena, fitness, rehabilitation and multi-purpose programming capacity for residents across the region. The City of Campbell River also contributes to the local recreation network through funding and operations of the Campbell River Sportsplex. Together, these facilities provide an important foundation for indoor recreation opportunities within the community and surrounding region.

The costs to provide publicly supported recreation services are increasing for most providers, driven largely by three key factors:

- **Capital cost escalation.** Overall construction costs in British Columbia are escalating at a rapid pace, estimated at 4% year over year in late 2025 (British Columbia Construction Association). Practically, these costs are significantly higher for recreation projects given the specialized nature of materials, labour, and lesser scale compared to other forms of construction. As such, cost escalation continues to be a challenge for most major recreation facility builds, expansions, and retrofits.
- **Limited operational revenue sources.** A focus on affordability and sustaining equitable access to quality-of-life services like recreation has resulted in a hesitancy to increase user fees and taxation requisitions. At the same time the costs associated with providing these services (e.g. staffing, utilities, insurance, etc.) are increasing.
- **Limited external project funding sources.** Large capital grant programs from senior levels of government are periodically made available, often as part of broader infrastructure initiatives aimed at fostering economic activity. Examples over the past decade include the “Investing in Canada - Community, Culture and Recreation Infrastructure Program”, “Canada 150 Community Infrastructure Program”, and “Canada Community Building Fund”. Other smaller grant programs also exist to support energy efficiency and climate related initiatives and physical accessibility upgrades. However, predicting when grant programs will become available and the probability of a successful application is challenging as competition for these funding resources is high. As such, the responsibility for developing, upgrading, and renewing recreation infrastructure continues to fall primarily on local and regional levels of government.

When discussing the context under which recreation services are provided in a community, it is important to note that there is not a standardized approach in British Columbia for defining funding areas, service levels, or defining what “recreation services” does or doesn’t encompass. As such, regional governments work with their local partners to establish service delivery models and funding responsibilities – resulting in a variety of approaches used across the province.

Within this context, Strathcona Gardens functions as the region’s primary major indoor recreation hub. This Review therefore evaluates whether the current funding structure appropriately reflects the distribution of benefits accrued by communities with functional and routine access to the facility.

1.2. Key Findings from Previous Recreation Studies

In 2024 the SRD finalized a Regional Recreation Services Feasibility Study that explored the current state of recreation in the region and provided initial guidance on potential models and considerations for future regional collaboration.

The study emphasizes that, given the geographically vast and unique context of the SRD, there are no fully regional recreation facilities that should be considered across the entire region. Instead, sub-regional funding models should be limited to jurisdictions that demonstrate practical access and benefit from major hub facilities. The study was clear that these benefits are beyond direct use by residents and should be considered to include non-direct user benefits accrued from the existence of the services.

Additional findings, conclusions and considerations from the study are summarized below:

- The Strathcona Gardens Recreation Complex is the primary hub facility in the region and provides a sub-regional benefit that likely extends beyond its current service area.
- Expanding the service area for the Gardens to include areas of Electoral Area C with reasonable access to Campbell River and areas of the Sayward Valley (Electoral Area A) that can reasonably access the Kelsey Centre was identified as warranting further consideration.
- The SRD is an outlier on Vancouver Island with regards to the limited use of regional and sub-regional funding models for recreation and related services (e.g. parks). Other longer tenured mid Island regional districts (including the Comox Valley Regional District, Regional District of Nanaimo, and Cowichan Valley Regional District) have established recreation and parks services that draw on funding from multiple municipalities and electoral areas.
- Precedents exist for electoral areas adjacent to larger centres funding those recreation services (similar to the current situation in which Electoral Area D is part of the Strathcona Gardens Recreation Complex funding).
- A wide array of funding approaches are used in jurisdictions that have comprehensive regional funding models for recreation services. Some models heavily integrate use while others are based on broader benefits rationale.

Importantly, the study also reinforced that remote communities with limited functional access — including Cortes Island, the Outer Discovery Islands, mainland inlets, and portions of Area A — should not automatically be presumed to benefit at the same level as communities with routine and practical access to a hub facility.

Engagement Insights on the Value and Importance of Recreation Services

The SRD's 2024 Regional Recreation Services Feasibility Study and the City of Campbell River's Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan (ongoing) provide valuable insights into the value residents place on these services and future demands.



91% of respondents to the Resident Survey fielded for the SRD's Regional Recreation Services Feasibility Study believe it's important to sustain existing facilities, with 79% also indicating that it's important to develop new types of facilities to meet emerging needs and trends.



Approximately half of respondents to the Resident Survey fielded for the SRD's Regional Recreation Services Feasibility Study indicated that the majority of their recreational activities take place in Campbell River.



Regional residents participate in recreation for a variety of reasons. The top five motivators amongst respondents to the Resident Survey fielded for the SRD's Regional Recreation Services Feasibility Study were physical health and exercise, to be with friends and family, pleasure/entertainment, mental health and wellness, and to enjoy nature.



88% of respondents to the Resident Survey fielded for the City's Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan agreed that residents can benefit (from parks, recreation and culture facilities and programs) even if they do not directly use them.

1.3. Purpose of this Review

As previously noted, the 2024 Regional Recreation Services Feasibility Study identified the need to further study expanding the service area for the Strathcona Gardens. This document, the Strathcona Gardens Recreation Complex Regional Funding Models Review, builds on the previous study to advance Board resolutions SRD 572/23 (June 28, 2023) and SRD 1000/24 (November 27, 2024).

The Review fundamentally looks to explore two key questions:

1. Is there sufficient rationale to consider a more equitable funding model for Strathcona Gardens?
2. If yes, what should that funding model be?


Answering the two above questions requires an evaluation of whether the existing funding model appropriately aligns contributions with the distribution of benefits associated with recreation services.

The 2024 study included initial, high-level catchment area analysis for several recreation infrastructure sites within the SRD, including a drive-time assessment which shows that many Electoral Area C residents are located within approximately 45 minutes of the Gardens. However, travel time alone does not fully capture real-world access, particularly in a geographically complex area that includes ferry-dependent communities. As a result, further analysis was required to better understand practical and routine access patterns.

Electoral Area C encompasses communities with distinct patterns of access and connectivity, where frequency of travel, ferry connectivity, cost, and dependency on Campbell River are more meaningful indicators than simple travel time. For example, Quadra Island demonstrates not only proximity within a 45-minute travel radius, but also regular and routine connectivity to Campbell River through frequent ferry service, which was expanded in 2023, further improving reliability and access. Many Quadra residents travel to Campbell River on a regular basis for employment, shopping, medical appointments, education, and other essential services, and there is notable two-way commuting between Quadra Island and Campbell River. This pattern of routine inter-community movement is a key component of assessing practical access and regional integration.

Quadra Island is home to the Quadra Island Community Centre, which provides important local programming, gathering space, and recreation opportunities. However, it does not provide the full range of major indoor amenities available at Strathcona Gardens (e.g., arenas, aquatics and related services such rehabilitation).

While the Quadra Island Community Centre plays an important local role, similar local-serving facilities, including the Campbell River Community Centre, exist within Campbell River. These facilities provide neighbourhood-based programming and gathering space but do not function as destination amenities, clinical rehabilitation facilities, or regional recreation hubs. As a result, Quadra residents rely on Campbell River-based major indoor amenities to meet broader recreation and active living needs. This established service relationship is a key consideration in evaluating equitable approaches to sub-regional recreation funding and service delivery. These community centres are not comparable in scale or function to Strathcona Gardens and are not considered appropriate candidates for inclusion within a regional recreation hub funding model.



It is important to recognize that functional access to Campbell River-based hub facilities is not consistent across the SRD. Quadra Island has regular ferry connectivity that enables routine travel for recreation and essential services, while more geographically distant communities — including the Outer Discovery Islands and mainland inlets within Electoral Area C, Cortes Island (Electoral Area B), and much of Electoral Area A — face substantially greater travel time, cost, access limitations, including reliance on other local facilities such as the Kelsey Centre, and logistical barriers. Accordingly, any expanded funding model should be scoped to communities with practical and routine access to the City of Campbell River and Strathcona Gardens, rather than applied broadly across all electoral areas. Given these differences, any expanded funding model may need to consider the degree of practical and routine access to the City of Campbell River and Strathcona Gardens when determining how participation in the service is structured. Communities with more limited functional access may require different considerations or approaches to ensure the model reflects the varied geographic realities across the SRD.

It is also important to note that the SRD Board is separately considering sub-regional service options in other parts of the region where functional access patterns differ. For example, a portion of Electoral Area A (the Sayward Valley) should be evaluated for participation in a sub-regional recreation service arrangement associated with the Kelsey Centre, which is owned and operated by the Village of Sayward. This further reinforces the principle that sub-regional recreation funding models should be tailored to the specific facility, geography, and benefiting population, rather than applied uniformly across the SRD.

2. The Benefits of Recreation Services

2.1. The Benefits Context

Public providers of recreation services, including the SRD and its partners, must continually attempt to define and delineate “need” from “demand”. While there is not one, universal way to do this, a commonly used approach is to focus in on the degree of community benefits provided by services. This concept attempts to create a distinction between:

- **Direct Benefits:** Accrued primarily by the program participant / facility user.
- **Indirect Benefits:** Accrued by all residents in a community regardless of whether they are direct participants.

While participation in recreation provides numerous direct benefits (e.g. improved health and wellbeing of the participant), the indirect benefits of recreation services provide the most significant return on investment and broadly significant outcomes, including:

- Community connectedness and pride
- Improved quality of life
- Enhanced ability to attract and retain residents (including key skill sets such as health care, commerce and education)
- Potential for savings (or stabilization) in health care and other forms of social spending (e.g. justice system, policing, etc.)
- Improved safety
- A vibrant volunteer sector
- Economic generation (through non-local visitation and associated spending)
- Increased property values and home equity.

The following two sub-sections expand on the key insights summarized above with data from several available research sources.

The Benefits of Parks and Recreational Catalogue (1992) is a foundational source for the recreation sector which has helped shape conversation around the societal benefit of recreation. The Catalogue coalesced available research to support eight overarching and wide-ranging benefits provided by public parks and recreation services:

- Recreation is essential to personal health;
- Recreation is key to balanced human development;
- Recreation is essential to quality of life;
- Recreation reduces self-destructive and anti-social behaviour;
- Recreation builds strong families and healthy communities;
- Recreation reduces health care, social service, and police / justice costs;
- Recreation and parks are significant economic generators in the community; and
- Parks, open space and natural areas are essential to ecological survival.

2.2. Insights from Research and National Policy

The benefits of recreation beyond individual wellbeing are highly recognized, with 98% of Canadians agreeing that parks and recreation benefit community and are an essential service.¹ The connection between quality recreation provision and social wellbeing, mental and physical health, societal productivity, and community vibrancy are becoming better understood and supported by research. The price of physical inactivity in Canada is estimated at \$3.9 billion (2022) with the total cost of providing health care in Canada accounting for 12.2% of the total GDP.² Even incremental improvements in societal well-being provide an opportunity to reduce burden on the health system. A recent study concluded that a 15% relative increase in physical activity amongst adults in Canada could reduce the economic burdens of treating and managing non-communicable diseases, depression and absenteeism; accruing a cost savings of almost \$1 billion.³

While the benefits of recreation are well established, many Canadians are not active enough to accrue these benefits. Half of Canadian adults (51%) and a staggering 72% of children not being active enough to meet recommended physical activity guidelines.

Another excellent source to gauge national health and wellness insights on an ongoing basis is the annual ParticipACTION Report Cards on Physical Activity. The Report Cards source data from several government and academic sources to assess activity levels and provide recommendations on how to improve the current situation. Provided below are key highlights from the most recent children and youth (2024) and adult (2025) report cards.

1 Harper, 2009, as cited in *A Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015: Pathways to Wellbeing*.

2 *The Price of Inactivity: Measuring Impact (2022)*. Retrieved from: https://measuring-impact.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/CFLRI-CPRA_Price-Inactivity-Full-Report-EN-FINAL.pdf

3 2024 Physical Activity and Sport Survey, CFLRI. Custom analysis.

ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity – Children and Youth (2024)

- 39% of children and youth (five to 17 years of age) in Canada met the recommendation of 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity per day.⁴
- 22% of children and youth five to 17 years of age accumulated more than two hours per day of total time engaged in indoor and outdoor unstructured play.⁵
- 68% of children and youth five to 17 years of age participated in organized sport in the past year. However, reiterating the importance of affordable activity provision, significant discrepancies exist based on socio-economics. Children from high-income households were 31% more likely to participate in organized sport compared to children from low-income households.⁶
- Just over half (55%) of parents reported facilitating physical activity and sport opportunities for their children and youth often or very often. As with other findings, socio-economics were a significant indicator of parent facilitated activity.⁷

ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity – Adult (2025)

- 46% of adults met the recommendation of doing at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week, with 32% taking 7,500 steps per day (minimal physical activity lifestyle category).⁸
- Age and gender remain significant factors that influence participation. In general, women across most age cohorts have lower activity levels than men with activity also decreasing as individuals age.
- 27% of adults reported that they participated in sport within the past 12 months.⁹

4 Data sources:

- 2021 Canadian Community Health Survey, Statistics Canada. Custom Analysis.
 - Colley RC, Saunders TJ. The ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on physical activity and screen time among Canadian youth. *Health Reports*. 2023 Oct 18;34(10):3-12.
 - 2018-19 Canadian Health Measures Survey Cycle 6, Statistics Canada. Custom Analysis.
 - 2022-2023 Cohort Study for Obesity, Marijuana Use, Physical Activity, Alcohol Use, Smoking and Sedentary Behaviour [COMPASS], University of Waterloo. Custom Analysis.
 - 2021 ParticipACTION COVID-19 Survey [Wave 3]. Custom Analysis.
- 5 2022 Parent Survey on Physical Activity and Sport (PSPAS), Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute (CFLRI). Custom Analysis.
- 6 2022 Parent Survey on Physical Activity and Sport (PSPAS), Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute (CFLRI). Custom Analysis.
- 7 2022 Parent Survey on Physical Activity and Sport (PSPAS), Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute (CFLRI). Custom Analysis.
- 8 2022-24 Canadian Health Measures Survey Cycle 7, Statistics Canada Custom analysis.
- 9 2024 Physical Activity and Sport Survey, CFLRI. Custom analysis.

2.3. Social Impacts of Recreation and Active Living

UK Research Into the Annual Societal Value of Sport and Physical Activity

International research provides useful context on the broader societal value of recreation and physical activity infrastructure. Summarized as follows is recent research undertaken in the United Kingdom by State of Life, Sheffield Hallam University, and Manchester Metropolitan University and Sport England around the societal return on investment accrued through sport. Key findings included:

- The total annual value of sport and physical activity in England was £107.2 billion in 2022/23 (equivalent to ~\$196 billion CAD).
- The social cost of inequity in adult physical activity levels is £15.6 billion (equivalent to ~\$28.5 billion CAD).

A related study in the UK also found that for every dollar invested in sport and physical activity, the Social Return on Investment was as high as 3.5 times the return for every unit of currency investment.¹⁰

Social Determinants of Health Fact Sheet – Quadra Island

The Strathcona Community Health Network periodically publishes reports on social indicators and determinants of community health for geographic areas within the region. Summarized below are key indicators from the [Social Determinants of Health Fact Sheet for Quadra Island](#).

- 77.6% of residents report a somewhat strong or strong sense of community belonging, compared to 71.6% of BC residents.
- In School District 72, which includes Area C, 28% of Kindergarten children are deemed vulnerable, meaning that without additional support, these children may experience future challenges in school and society. This figure is slightly lower than the provincial average of 32%.

Recreation and Social Isolation

Recreation additionally provides a mechanism to reduce social isolation and its associated negative impacts. The 2017 Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario¹¹ reported that individuals who experience social isolation have nearly a 50% risk of dying early. The Report also identified several key population cohorts as being particularly at-risk of experiencing social isolation, including:

- Older adults, especially those living alone;
- Youth (increasingly as a result of screen time); and
- Immigrants and refugees (often as a result of language and cultural barriers).

10 Davies, L. E., Taylor, P., Ramchandani, G., & Christy, E. (2020). Measuring the Social Return on Investment of community sport and leisure facilities. *Managing Sport and Leisure*, 26(1–2), 93–115. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23750472.2020.1794938>

11 2017 Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario. (2017). Ontario Ministry of Health. Retrieved from: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2017-annual-report-chief-medical-officer-health-ontario>

SPAR Measuring Impact Calculator

The Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute (CFLRI) and the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA) have collaborated to [create a tool](#) that can help measure the economic and health impacts on population that are accrued from new infrastructure projects. **Using this tool and a series of baseline assumptions¹² for the REC-REATE project, the following annual incremental impacts are estimated for the amenity projects being undertaken at Strathcona Gardens:**

Positive Annual Health Impacts

- Approximate \$13.2 M economic burden alleviated due to a reduction in non-communicable diseases.
- Approximate \$1 M economic burden alleviated due to a reduction in depression.

Economic Impacts

- Approximate one-time GDP impact of \$91 M during construction.
- 837 short term jobs created during construction.
- Annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) impact of approximately \$1.315 M as a result of ongoing operations.
- 23 annual jobs created as a result on ongoing operations.
- Annual value of tourism generated by the facility of approximately \$1.4 M.

It is important to note that the above estimates only reflect the newly developed major amenities that are part of REC-REATE Phases 1 and 2 and do not capture existing spaces.

¹² Based on a total construction cost of \$130 M (Phases 1 and 2); \$1.5 M annual operating cost; 50,000 unique facility visitors; 5,000 volunteer hours; and 12 provincial / national level events with 500 participants each.

3. Regional Funding Precedents & Approaches

3.1. Comparing Recreation Infrastructure Provision

This section of the report looks at how other major recreation hubs (and services in general) are funded across Vancouver Island. As previously noted in the report, there is not a standard or legislated approach for funding recreation services. Rather, most regional funding models are formed out of a combination of necessity (e.g. major facilities would not be viable without a broader funding area) as well as a recognition of the benefits provided by recreation services.

As reflected by Table 1 on the following page, the current funding area for the Strathcona Gardens Recreation Complex is relatively limited in terms of population when compared to other similar levels of recreation infrastructure provision. While other factors come into play (e.g. proportion of residential vs industrial tax base, how funding responsibility is assigned, etc.), the table clearly reflects that the SRD is currently supporting a level of recreation infrastructure funded by a population that is much less than other Vancouver Island comparators.

Table 1. Examples of Funding Areas by Population for Major Indoor Facility Hubs

Indoor Facilities within the Service	Major Indoor Amenities	Funding Jurisdictions	Total Population Included in the Funding Area
Oceanside Place / Ravensong Aquatics Centre (operated by the Regional District of Nanaimo)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 arenas • Indoor pool • Program rooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Parksville • Town of Qualicum Beach • Electoral Areas E, F, G and H 	50,326
Comox Valley Sports Centre / Comox Valley Aquatics Centre (operated by the Comox Valley Regional District)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 indoor pools • 2 arenas • 1.5 fitness centres • Program rooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Courtenay • Town of Comox • Village of Cumberland • Electoral Areas B and C (a defined portion of EA A contributes to the complexes) 	72,445 *Includes EA A
Juan de Fuca Recreation Centre / Q Centre (operated by Westshore Parks and Recreation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 arenas (including a performance arena with 2,300 seats) • Indoor pool • Fitness • Indoor turf (converted curling rink) • Program rooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Langford • City of Colwood • District of Highlands • District of Metchosin • Town of View Royal 	84,669
Panorama Recreation Centre (operated by the Capital Regional District)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 arenas • Indoor pool • Fitness centre • Program spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town of Sidney • District of North • District of Central Saanich 	42,789
All facilities classified as 'regionally significant' in the Cowichan Valley Regional District (9 total)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 arenas • 2 aquatics facilities • 1 performing arts centre • Variety of program spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All municipalities and electoral areas are contributing based on use 	89,013
Strathcona Gardens (operated by the SRD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 arenas • Indoor pool • Program spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Campbell River • Electoral Area D 	42,261

3.2. Funding Approaches

A variety of funding approaches are used to support the capital and operating requirements of major recreation infrastructure on Vancouver Island. Table 2 provides an overview of the models used across the comparator facilities reflected in Table 1.

Table 2. Examples of Regional Funding Approaches

Service Area	Funding Model
District 69 Recreation Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facility operations of Oceanside Place and Ravensong Aquatics Centre are funded by taxpayers from the City of Parksville, Town of Qualicum Beach, and Regional District of Nanaimo Electoral Areas E, F, G and H. • Oceanside Place and the Ravensong Aquatics Centre are funded based on actual utilization by residents in each jurisdiction.
Westshore Parks and Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Westshore Parks and Recreation (Juan de Fuca Recreation Centre, the Q Centre, and outdoor amenities) are funded by the City of Langford, City of Colwood, District of Highlands, and District of Metchosin. • Each jurisdiction is a co-owner of the entity and has financial responsibilities for capital based on a complex formula that integrates ownership share, location, and other factors. • Assessment (unit cost and converted assessed value) is generally used to apportion operational costs.
Comox Valley Recreation Complexes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Comox Valley Sports Centre and Comox Valley Aquatics Centre are funded by taxpayers in City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland and Electoral Areas B and C (a defined portion of EA A contributes to the complexes). • Assessment is the primary method used to calculate funding contributions for each jurisdiction.
Peninsula Recreation (Panorama Recreation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Panorama Recreation Centre and Greenglade Community Centre are funded by the Town of Sidney, District of North, and District of Central Saanich. • Funding of services is based on 50% population and 50% net taxable value (assessment).
Cowichan Valley Regional District – Regionally Significant Recreation Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 9 facilities classified as “regionally significant” are funded based on use by residents in each jurisdiction (municipality and electoral area). This funding approach was changed in 2023 – the previous formula was based on 1/3 use and 2/3 historical funding approaches.

3.3. Islands and Remote Communities Context

Table 3 provides an overview of recreation funding approaches in Island communities along the south coast. Of the three examples provided, only residents in RDN Electoral Area B fund some off-island recreation amenities.

Within the SRD context, Electoral Area C includes communities with markedly different degrees of functional accessibility. Quadra Island residents have comparatively viable and frequent access to Campbell River, whereas Cortes Island and more remote island and inlet communities do not have the same practical ability to access Strathcona Gardens on a routine basis. This distinction is important when evaluating precedents and determining whether sub-regional recreation funding models are appropriate or equitable across different parts of Area C.

Table 3. Examples of Recreation Service Funding Approaches on Gulf Islands and Other Remote Communities

Community / Jurisdiction	Population	Funding Approach
Regional District of Nanaimo Electoral Area B (Gabriola, Mudge and DeCourcy Islands)	4,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gabriola Island residents fund Gabriola Recreation Services to provide on-island programming. Electoral Area B is included within the RDN's Southern Community Recreation Services Area that encompasses the City of Nanaimo, the District of Lantzville and Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) Electoral Areas A, B and C. Sports fields, arenas, and pools are included within the Southern Community Recreation Services Areas.
Salt Spring Island (Capital Regional District)	11,635	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents fund their own service (Salt Spring Island Parks, Arts, Recreation & Culture) that includes a community centre and pool. Operations of the service managed by the Capital Regional District through a services agreement. Do not fund recreation services in other jurisdictions but are part of a broader CRD regional parks system.
Pender Island	2,467	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents fund limited recreation services and grants through the Parks and Recreation Commission (overseen by the Capital Regional District). Do not fund any recreation services in other jurisdictions but are part of a broader CRD regional parks system.

4. Utilization and Visitation Analysis

4.1. Current Facility Utilization Indicators

Strathcona Gardens receives high levels of use by both residents within the current service area (Campbell River and EA D) and outside of the funding area. Table 4 summarizes use for several major amenity and activity types within the facility.

Table 4. Summary of Amenity Use by Residents With and External to the Current Funding Area *Based on available data.

Amenity Type	% of Use by Campbell River and Electoral Area D Residents	% of Individuals Residing Outside of Campbell River and Electoral Area D
Arenas	64%	36%
Pool (Overall)	71%	29%
Pool (Swim Lessons)	54%	46%
Fitness (Overall)	79%	21%
Fitness (Registered Programming)	60%	40%
Fitness (Drop-in)	75%	25%

In addition to recorded facility utilization, Strathcona Gardens supports regional access through a range of programming and service delivery approaches that extend beyond the current funding area. This includes participation by organized ice sport teams based outside the current funding area, transportation-enabled access for youth programming, and outreach-based delivery of aquatic safety instruction in surrounding communities.

The facility also provides access to aquatics and fitness environments that support rehabilitation and recovery needs for residents in areas where comparable services are limited or unavailable. The REC-REATE project will further expand rehabilitation opportunities by providing a wider range of aquatics setting for use by residents (e.g. greater mix of shallow and deeper water, warm and colder tanks, deck space, improved accessibility / entry / exist to the pool, etc.).

Examples of Quadra Island Opportunities Supported by SRD Operated Recreation Services

- Quadra Old Growth Hockey Team use of the Gardens
- Camp program that provides transportation to youth living on Quadra Island to the Gardens
- Gardens supported water safety event on Quadra Island

Additional analysis of recreation account holders by SRD residents outside of the Strathcona Gardens current funding reflects the following key indicators for unique user accounts created between 2018 and 2025:¹³

- SRD Electoral Area A residents comprise 15.6% of accounts held by non-contributing SRD residents.
- SRD Electoral Area B residents comprise 7.4% of accounts held by non-contributing SRD residents.
- SRD Electoral Area C residents comprise 66% of accounts held by non-contributing SRD residents.

Analysis of outside of area accounts, per family, created between 2018 and 2025 show limited use by individuals in Area B. Postal Codes in Area A and Area C align with the communities nearest Campbell River including Quathiaski Cove, Heriot Bay, Sayward and Race Point (in order of usage statistics)

Table 5. Gardens' Client Summary by Non-Contributing Electoral Area

Count of Client Area			
Electoral Area	Families	Organizations	Grand Total
Area A Kyuqot/Nootka-Sayward	221	2	223
Area B Cortes Island	103	3	106
Area C Discovery Islands - Mainland Inlets	935	9	944
Grand Total	1,509	14	1,523

13 2026 update conducted by SRD staff

4.2. Movement Data Sampling

Movement data was procured from a third party provider, Propulso, to help provide additional insights into utilization and visitation patterns for Strathcona Gardens. This data helps further capture the regional significance of the facility as a 'hub' location for recreational and related activity.

Summarized as follows are key findings from the movement data analysis.

Overall Visitation Metrics & Characteristics

- In 2024 there were 13,726 unique adult (19 and over) visitors to the Gardens. On average, these unique adult individuals visited the facility 4.48 times for an estimated 62,613 total adult visitations.
- 12.1% of unique adult visitors could be considered high intensity users (10 or more annual visits).
- Visitation to the Gardens is relatively consistent throughout the year ranging from 4,416 to 6,137 adult visitations per month. Friday is the busiest day for adult visitations at the Gardens (20% of the weekly average) with Sunday and Monday being the least busy days (10-11% of the weekly average).
- The average duration of an adult visit to the Gardens is 47 minutes, however notably 25% of adult visitations last between 60 – 119 minutes.

Movement Data Methodology Overview and Limitations

- Propulso estimates the actual number of visits based on a sample of detected mobile devices associated with adults ages 19 and over and then extrapolates to the population.
- Mobility devices associated with individuals <19 years of age are not included in the figures show.
- Polygons (boundaries) are created for each site.
- The analysis used data for 2024 – the last complete year for which data was available at the time of analysis.

Visitation by Residency Metrics and Characteristics

- The average distance from place of residence to the Gardens for adults visitors is 34.93 km. Breaking this down further, 60.9% come from less than 5 km, 15.2% come from 5 – 19 km, 2.5% come from 20 – 39 km, 4.2% come from 40 – 59 km, 1.1% come from 60-99 km, and 16.1% come from over 100 km away.
- 74% of adult visitors and 80% of adult visits are derived from the Strathcona region. Approximately 13% of visits and 12% of visitors come from the Comox Valley / Nanaimo region.

4.3. Other Data Points on Resident Mobility, Movement and Migration for Services

Beyond simply use and visitation to Strathcona Gardens Recreation Complex, another key consideration is broader regional resident movement throughout the area. As previously discussed in Section 2, recreation services and opportunities support strong communities in several ways which include:

- Attracting and retaining key skill sets and service providers.
- Generating primary and secondary employments opportunities.
- Economic generation through regional and visitor spending.

Several data points support a high degree of mobility within the broader Campbell River area by regional residents.

- The Campbell River – Quadra Island (Quathiaski Cove) ferry made 6,948 round trips in 2023, the last available year of data. Through the first 9 months of 2024 (Q1-Q3) the route accommodated 748,675 passengers and 411,609 vehicles.¹⁴ Of the 22 “Minors” sailing routes operated by BC Ferries, only one route (Horseshoe Bay – Snug Cove) serviced more travellers. Notably, the Campbell River – Quadra Island (Quathiaski Cove) served approximately 50,000 more passengers during Q1-Q3 of 2024 than the Nanaimo Harbour to Gabriola Island route despite Nanaimo having a larger population than Campbell River and Gabriola Island having a larger population compared to Quadra Island.
- 62.8% of Electoral Area C residents drive to their place of work.¹⁵
- The 2024 State of Campbell River Report identifies the continued shift towards a service based economy (primarily healthcare, education and public administration sectors) with a gradual decline in resource extraction. The Report further notes that the healthcare sector in Campbell River is expected to continue to grow along with overall population levels and will play an important role in attracting and retaining a skilled workforce.

14 BC Ferries Sailing Statistics and Operational Reports

15 Statistics Canada, Census 2016 – Strathcona C, Regional District Electoral Area (Census Subdivision)

5. Conclusions

5.1. Summary of Key Findings

Summarized as follows are key findings and highlights arising from research, analysis, and data contained in this report.

- The direct and indirect benefits of recreation services to a community and region are well documented and indisputable. These benefits include healthier and more vibrant communities, increased home equity, and meaningful economic generation. High-quality recreation amenities also play a critical role in attracting and retaining residents, including key professionals in health care, engineering, education, and other essential sectors, who increasingly seek communities that support work–life balance, wellness, and a high quality of life.
- Community facilities provide broad public benefit through their availability and readiness to serve, even when individual residents may not directly or frequently use them. As such, intensity of direct facility utilization is not a singularly representative indicator of the benefits accrued through the provision of recreation services and a broader regional benefits lens is appropriate to apply.
- Building on the previous two findings, Quadra Island has functional proximity and transportation access (via BC Ferries) to Campbell River which appear to support the conclusion that it benefits from quality-of-life services provided in Campbell River (including recreation).
- While ensuring locally based and accessible recreational opportunities is important, providing major recreation infrastructure through a hub facility model enhances efficiency, allowing one facility to provide benefits across multiple communities and optimize resource use, effectively reducing costs for all participants.
- Collectively, the utilization analysis, movement data, and comparator analysis indicates that Strathcona Gardens functions as a regional-serving recreation facility, despite being funded by a limited portion of the population it serves.
- The funding population for Strathcona Gardens is smaller when compared to similar major indoor recreation facility complexes on Vancouver Island. The Gardens is currently funded by approximately 42,000 residents, whereas comparator facilities are typically supported by populations ranging from approximately 50,000 to 90,000 residents.
- Minimal precedent examples of an Island community supporting recreation services in an adjacent centre exist along the south coast of BC. However, numerous examples exist across Vancouver Island of remote and rural electoral areas participating in various services, including recreation and parks, through a variety of regional and sub-regional funding models.

5.2. Recommendations

The Strathcona Gardens Recreation Complex provides destination amenities (pool and arena) that are regionally significant with data to support that it provides a wide array of benefits beyond its current funding area.

Sustaining and aligning the facility with trends and best practices in the provision of major recreation 'hubs' is likely to require an expanded service area. This recommendation is informed by the utilization analysis, mobility data, comparator review, and community context described in Sections 2 through 4 of this report.

As an overarching recommendation, it is suggested that utilization not be the sole or primary reference point for determining which jurisdictions should be included in financial contributing to the facility. As discussed throughout this report, the benefits of recreation services (and more specifically a major hub facility) are much broader and benefit residents even if they are not directly using the service. **Functional proximity, access to essential services (e.g. health, education, etc.), and employment opportunities provided in a regional centre should be key considerations when establishing a funding area for recreation and related quality of life services.** This recommendation is based on the fundamental rationale that major recreation facilities and the programming provided in them underpin the ability of a region to attract in-demand or specialized skill sets, businesses, and residents across a wide array of demographics.

Electoral Area C encompasses several geographically distinct communities with significantly different levels of access, travel time, and functional connection to Campbell River. **Based on the analysis contained in this Review, Quadra Island should be considered for inclusion within an expanded sub-regional funding area for the Strathcona Gardens Recreation Complex.** Quadra residents have reasonable and routine functional access to Campbell River and accrue clear regional benefits from Strathcona Gardens through recreation opportunities, employment connections, and access to broader community services.

In contrast, other portions of Electoral Area C, the Outer Discovery Islands, and mainland inlets, and Area B (Cortes Island) do not have the same practical or functional accessibility to Campbell River-based recreation infrastructure even though they do receive the benefits that sustain a healthy and vibrant Campbell River. **These communities should not be included within an expanded Strathcona Gardens funding area, as residents do not accrue comparable levels of benefit due to the limitations of routine travel and access.**

Should the SRD pursue this course of action, the following additional considerations and parameters are recommended:

- The expanded funding area should be limited to communities with reasonable functional proximity to Campbell River, including travel time, frequency of access, and overall viability. In this context, the Quadra Island Community Hall service area provides an appropriate and administratively established boundary for inclusion, encompassing Quadra Island only.
- Residents living in less functionally accessible portions of the SRD, — including the Outer Discovery Islands and mainland inlets within Electoral Area C, Cortes Island (Electoral Area B), and much of Electoral Area A — should not be included in an expanded Strathcona Gardens funding area, as these communities do not accrue comparable levels of benefit due to the practical limitations of routine access.
- If Quadra Island is included as a participating jurisdiction to Strathcona Gardens, the SRD should not include either the Quadra Island Community Centre or the Campbell River Community Centre within the sub-regional recreation service framework. While Quadra's facility plays an important local role, many comparable indoor recreation opportunities are available in Campbell River, and the Community Centre does not serve the same destination or regional hub function as Strathcona Gardens. Both community centres provide local-serving, neighbourhood-scale programming space. Neither facility functions as a destination recreation hub generating regional draw. Accordingly, they are not appropriate candidates for inclusion within an expanded Strathcona Gardens sub-regional service.

5.3. Implementation Considerations and Impacts

The following tables reflect preliminary modelling undertaken by the SRD to reflect the potential impacts of expanding the Garden's funding area. This modelling is based around the requirement to generate a \$12,216,135 requisition amount for 2026 to support operations of the Gardens. It is important to note that this modelling uses the current assessment approach (Gross Assessment Value) to prorate the costs between areas. Should the funding model for the Gardens be expanded, the new bylaw may be prudent to explore methods that can create more consistent mill rates across the contributing jurisdictions.

Table 6. Current Funding Area (Campbell River and EA D)

Jurisdiction	Requisition	Residential Ratio	# Homes	Average Contribution Per Home
EA D	\$1,604,107	74.0%	1,930	\$614.75
City of Campbell River	\$ 10,612,028	77.6%	14,366	\$579.22
Total	\$12,216,135			\$596.99

Table 7. Potential Funding Area (Campbell River, EA D, and defined area of EA C)

Jurisdiction	Requisition	Residential Ratio	# Homes	Average Contribution Per Home
EA C	\$943,114	90.8%	1,535	\$557.86
EA D	\$1,533,047	74.0%	1,930	\$587.52
City of Campbell River	\$9,739,974	77.6%	14,366	\$525.87
Total	\$12,216,135			\$557.08

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