

Bow River Boathouse



A Proposal to develop a River Recreation Centre at Harvie Passage in Calgary

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Executive Summary

Harvie Passage on the Bow River in Calgary was opened for public use in July, 2018 to great reviews. In one short season, this \$25 Million recreation/sport facility has become a great attraction for paddlers, non-paddlers, youth, seniors, families and locals.

The in-water features are fabulous and the shoreline landscaping makes this a great destination for paddlers and non-paddlers. However there is no parking nearby, no change rooms, no washrooms and no other amenities that Calgarians expect when they go to a major recreational facility. These deficiencies need immediate attention before it becomes a liability for the City.

The paddling clubs and river users in Calgary have joined together through the Bow River Boathouse Society to propose the construction and operation of the Bow River Boathouse in Pearce Estate Park. The Boathouse would provide the washrooms and change rooms for the public with accessible parking nearby. Onsite storage for boats and equipment would make the facility more user friendly and improve visitor satisfaction. The building would house paddling operations at Harvie Passage and be the central hub for everyone visiting Harvie Passage.

The building would have a rental concession for tubes and lifejackets for use at Harvie Passage. This concession would fund the building operations and amenities required for Harvie Passage **AND** a summer **River Safety Patrol** staff.

Capital funding for the \$2 Million project would be a joint venture with the Alberta Government contributing \$1,000,000 or 50% through their Community Facilities Enhancement Program. The City's contribution of a road, parking, water and sewer infrastructure equals 37.5% of the project cost -\$750,000 . This is money that the City has pledged to spend on Harvie Passage in the near future. The Paddling community will fundraise \$250,000 = 12.5% of the project cost.

Financial Projections show that the Boathouse can break even and generate enough profit from operating an equipment rental concession to fund a River Safety Patrol service through the active paddling season. The River Safety Patrol would be active paddlers, certified in Swift Water Rescue, First Aid and CPR. They would be equipped with radios and cellphones to contact City Officials in the case of an emergency or problems with the public that need the attention of Fire, Police or Bylaw Enforcement. This service would save the City \$100-\$250,000 in annual operational costs associated with Harvie Passage by reducing the number of non-emergency call outs.

Bow River Boathouse

Current Situation

Calgary has a long tradition of outdoor adventure. Alberta's east slope of the Rocky Mountains provides a great playground for all sorts of mountain sports which has included whitewater canoeing and kayaking since 1968. Within a 100 km of the city there are a variety of rivers including the Highwood, Sheep, Elbow, Kananaskis and Bow Rivers that have their headwaters in the mountains as they rush eastward into the prairies. Today there are 5 paddling clubs in Calgary, Paddle Junkies, Waterwerks Kayak Club, Calgary Kayak Club, BowWaters Canoe Club and the Calgary Canoe Club.

The 2017 Alberta Recreation Survey shows that canoeing and kayaking now rank in the top 15 sports that Albertans participate in. <http://www.albertawhitewater.ca/2017-alberta-recreation-survey-0> This is ahead of soccer, hockey, baseball/softball and other organized sports. The Survey also found that paddling was the 2nd most desired sport that people want to learn. There are of course many barriers to participate in paddling sports, but the key obstacles are the lack of time, cost of equipment, distance from home and the lack of knowledge or skills.



Harvie Passage was built in 2012 to address some of these barriers with an urban whitewater paddling facility at the Western Irrigation District weir. The 2013 flood carved out a new channel

and created several safety hazards. This was remedied in 2018, but the construction did not include any of the necessary amenities required to support this unique sport/ recreation facility.

Currently people using the river have to:

- Park in the heavily utilized parking lot at the Sam Livingstone Fish Hatchery in Pearce Estate Park
- Undress and change in the parking lot
- Drag a 50-80 lb boat and 20 lbs of gear through Pearce Estate Park for 500 meters to the river from the parking area and back to the parking lot from the river
- Relieve themselves in the Pearce Estate Park bushes because there are no washroom facilities within 400 meters of the river



The Gaps

Calgarians wanting to use Harvie Passage face several obstacles. The biggest issue is the distance this recreational facility is from any supporting amenities. It would be **unacceptable** to:

- ask swimmers to change into their swimsuits in the swimming pool's parking lot
- make hockey players carry 80 lbs of gear - ½ a kilometer to the rink and back with no drop-off/pickup zone close to the arena
- have soccer players run ½ a kilometer and back to use a bathroom
- make equipment rental companies, educational programs and clubs park their equipment, vehicles and trailers 500 meters from their teaching sites.

What is required now is:

1. Road Access
2. Parking
3. Washrooms
4. Change Rooms
5. Meeting Space
6. Storage Space
7. Other Amenities
8. Safety Information
9. Onsite Safety & Rescue Responders



These issues need to be addressed so that Harvie

Passage can provide the City with the recreation facility it was meant to be and provide an opportunity to teach Calgarians about safety around moving water.

The Organization

The Bow River Boathouse Society (BRBS) is a group that represents the paddling clubs and river user groups in the City of Calgary. This group includes:

- a. Bow Waters Canoe Club
- b. Calgary Kayak Club
- c. Waterwerks Kayak Club
- d. PaddleJunkies
- e. RiverWatch
- f. Bow River Trout

It also includes paddling businesses in the City:

- g. Aquabatics
- h. Rocky Mountain Paddling Centre
- i. Mountain Equipment Coop
- j. Western Kayak Adventures
- k. University of Calgary Outdoor Centre

And the provincial umbrella organizations for river users:

- l. Alberta Whitewater Association
- m. Paddle Alberta
- n. Alberta Slalom Canoe Kayak Assoc.
- o. Alberta Freestyle Kayak Association
- p. Alberta River Surfers Association

These organizations and businesses have joined together to represent the interests of the river users' community to the City of Calgary. We want all Calgarians to have the best opportunity to use Harvie Passage and to be safe during their time at the site.



Proposed Solution

The BRBS is proposing to construct a jointly funded and managed Boathouse (BRB) to provide the amenities that are urgently needed now. It will also add additional services for public safety and education to support Calgary's river users.

The Boathouse would be built close to the bottom of the Low Water Channel in the Flood Fringe zone and close to the "Boat Ramp to Nowhere". Parking would be nearby, where the BlueBird Construction staged their work in 2016-18. Trailer parking for Driftboats and RiverWatch would be on the gravel embankment near the Boat Ramp.



Within the BRB each of the different local organizations will be given an opportunity to have their own unique locked storage facility. This will enable them to store boats and paddling gear at Harvie Passage. This will minimize their time and expense for logistics, improve member/customer service and reduce the barriers to participation. The BRB would have 20 storage bays each measuring 200 ft² at ground level. The clubs and businesses can use their storage in the manner that they choose and best fits their programs and services.

The lower level area would be at risk of flooding during high water events. But the boats and paddles would not be heavily damaged and could be cleaned after a flood.

On the upper floor of the BRB will be public washrooms, change rooms/lockers & showers, meeting & classroom space and office space. This floor would be designed to be above the Bow River's high water mark and built on pilings that would withstand any flooding.



The BRB would employ a staffing arrangement that would be funded through self-generated revenues. Revenues from a tube/raft rental concession, a food concession and the rental of meeting space will offset building operations and maintenance costs.

Concession revenues would also pay for the cost of a Harvie Passage River Safety Patrol (RSP) that would be employed onsite to:

- educate the public about safety hazards and river safety awareness,
- provide immediate onsite response to river users in need of a throwbag rescue or boat rescue,
- provide onsite communications to Calgary Fire Department (CFD), Calgary Police Service (CPS) and Calgary Bylaw Enforcement (CBE) when necessary



The RSP would walk the site and the island wearing a Personal Flotation Device and a throwbag, waterproof cellphone, radio and access to a rescue kayak. They would be experienced kayakers and trained in Swift Water Rescue, First Aid and CPR, public relations and conflict resolution. These people would work through the summer months 7 days a week from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm. In the spring and fall period the RSP hours would be limited to afterschool and weekends.

Having the RSP service on site will reduce the number of times that the CFD, CPS or CBE are dispatched to Harvie Passage for non-emergency situations. They would improve public knowledge about how to use the river safely and increase the safe river message in a non-threatening manner. The mandate would be similar to the Glenmore Boat Patrol which provides safety and supervisory services on Glenmore Reservoir. But it would be totally funded by the Bow River Boathouse without financial support from the City of Calgary.

The benefits of the Bow River Boathouse Society plan include:

- relieves congestion in the already busy Sam Livingstone Fish Hatchery parking lot,
- reduces the 500 m hike with 80 lbs of boat and gear to and from the SLFH to the river,
- provides access to a public boat ramp for River Watch's rafts and trailered drift boats,
- decreases pressure on wildlife in the park,
- removes conflicts with existing Pearce Estate Park users,
- provides change rooms for people getting into swim suits for water activities,
- provides public toilets close to the activity,
- will house boats and gear for clubs, businesses and paddlers making it easier for programs and participants to paddle.

Edmonton paddling groups operate a similar facility at Rundle Park, that houses all the Capital City's paddling clubs and their programs. This model can be found around the world at urban paddling centres.



Capital Costs

Lower Floor	4000 ft ² @ \$100/ft ²	= \$400,000
Upper Floor	4000 ft ² @ \$150/ft ²	= \$600,000
Furnishing & Equipment		= \$150,000
Roadway to BRB	500 metres @ \$ 500/m	= \$250,000
Water, Sewer and Power to BRB	300 metres @ \$2,000/m	= \$600,000
Total Cost		\$2,000,000

Funding

5	- 10' x 20' Bays for Paddling Organizations Storage Areas @ \$5,000	= \$ 25,000
6	- 10' x 40' Bays for Paddling Organizations Storage Areas @ \$10,000	= \$ 60,000
1	- 20' x 30' Bay for Bow River Boathouse Storage Area @ \$15,000	= \$ 15,000
	Fundraising Campaign	= \$ 150,000
	City of Calgary Infrastructure contribution	= \$ 750,000
	Gov't of Alberta Community Facilities Program Grant @ 50%	= \$1,000,000
Total Funding		\$ 2,000,000

All of the Paddling Clubs have access to Casino funds and internal funding mechanisms to finance their contribution for the BRB Storage Areas. But these financial resources have to be managed well so an investment into the BRB has to show a future return to the club. See Appendix for the operational funding models for different types of paddling organizations.

Conclusion

The City of Calgary committed to build proper road access and parking and bring water and sewer to Harvie Passage in their 2016 River Access Strategy. Combining the construction of the Bow River Boathouse with the road, sewer and utilities construction, will maximize the opportunity to use matching Provincial grants to construct the building. Providing the infrastructure services to the building site by the City of Calgary enables our not-for-profit consortium to match that contribution to build a \$2 Million facility with a \$1 Million Alberta Major Capital Facility Enhancement Program grant.

The Bow River Boathouse will address the deficiencies at Harvie Passage for all people wishing to use this \$25 Million recreation facility. Having all the paddling interests in Calgary share in this facility creates an open program that allows for many different types of uses and programs.



The operational plan to create a rental concession on site provides the revenue to provide safety services for this recreation facility and reduces the City's commitments and future operational costs. Future profits from the BRB can be reinvested in maintaining Harvie Passage and the Bow River Boathouse. It can also be a springboard for other paddling projects in other quadrants of the City.

This model for a joint operational venture has been proven effective in other jurisdictions for paddling groups. With our current history of working together on Harvie Passage, the Calgary River Access Strategy, the Kananaskis River and other projects, the paddling community has the ability to make this a success as well.

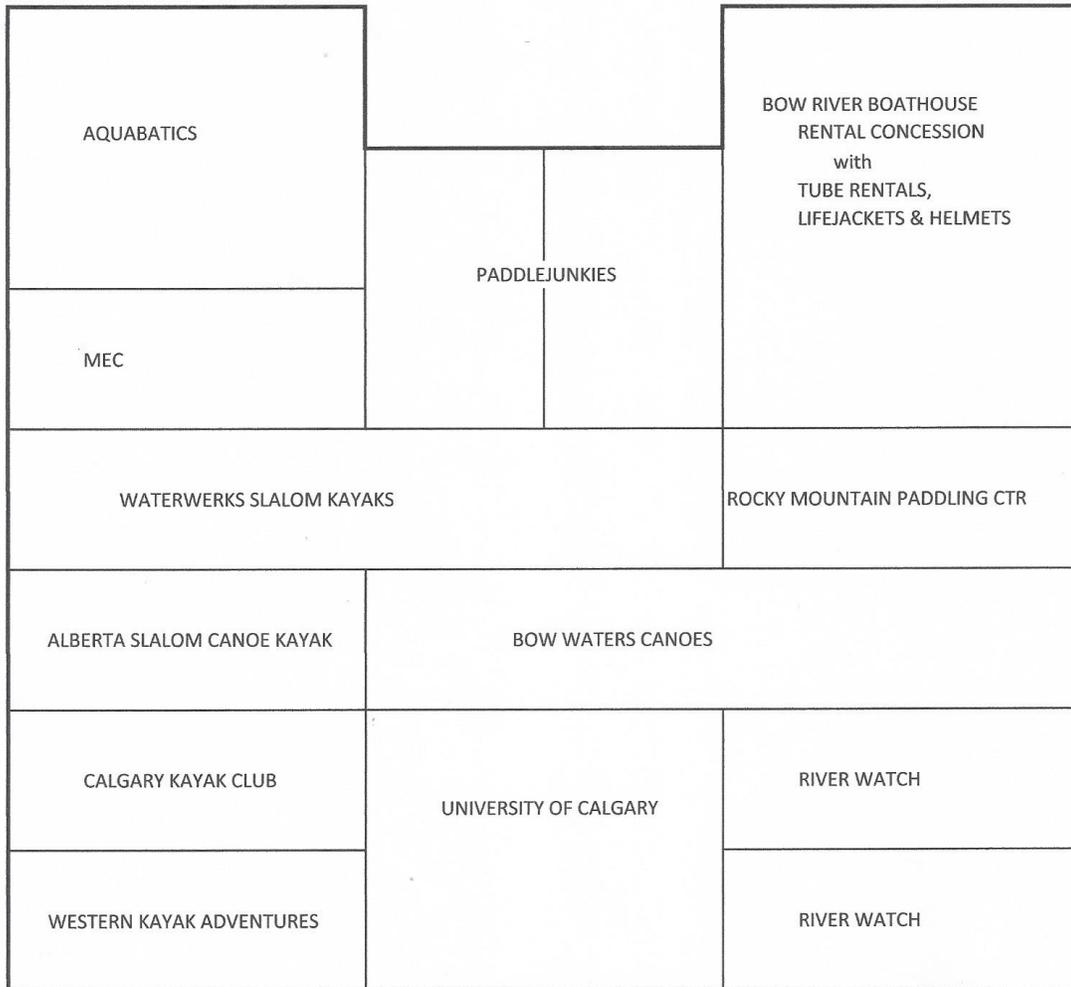
Appendix A

Building Plan Concept

Each Square = 2'

Storage Area = 10' x 20' or 20' x 20'

Lower Level



Paddling Clubs' funding

Recreational kayak club Rental of Storage lockers for members with **plastic** kayaks
 10' x 40' Storage Area will fit 40 playboat kayak lockers 2-3' x 3' x 10' tall with 3' aisle
 Monthly Rental \$6/month = \$120/month x 12 months = \$2880/year

At a cost of \$10,000 for 400 ft² of 2 Storage Areas with annual revenues of \$2,500
 = 4year payback

Slalom Kayak Club Rental of Storage lockers for members with **slalom** kayaks
 10' x 40' Storage Area will fit 18 Slalom Kayak Lockers 13' long x 3.5' wide x 40" tall
 Monthly Rental \$12/month = \$216/month x 12 months = \$2592/year

At a cost of \$10,000 for 400 ft² of 2 Storage Areas with annual revenues of \$2,300
 = 4.5 year payback

Canoe Club Rental of Storage lockers for members with **open canoes**

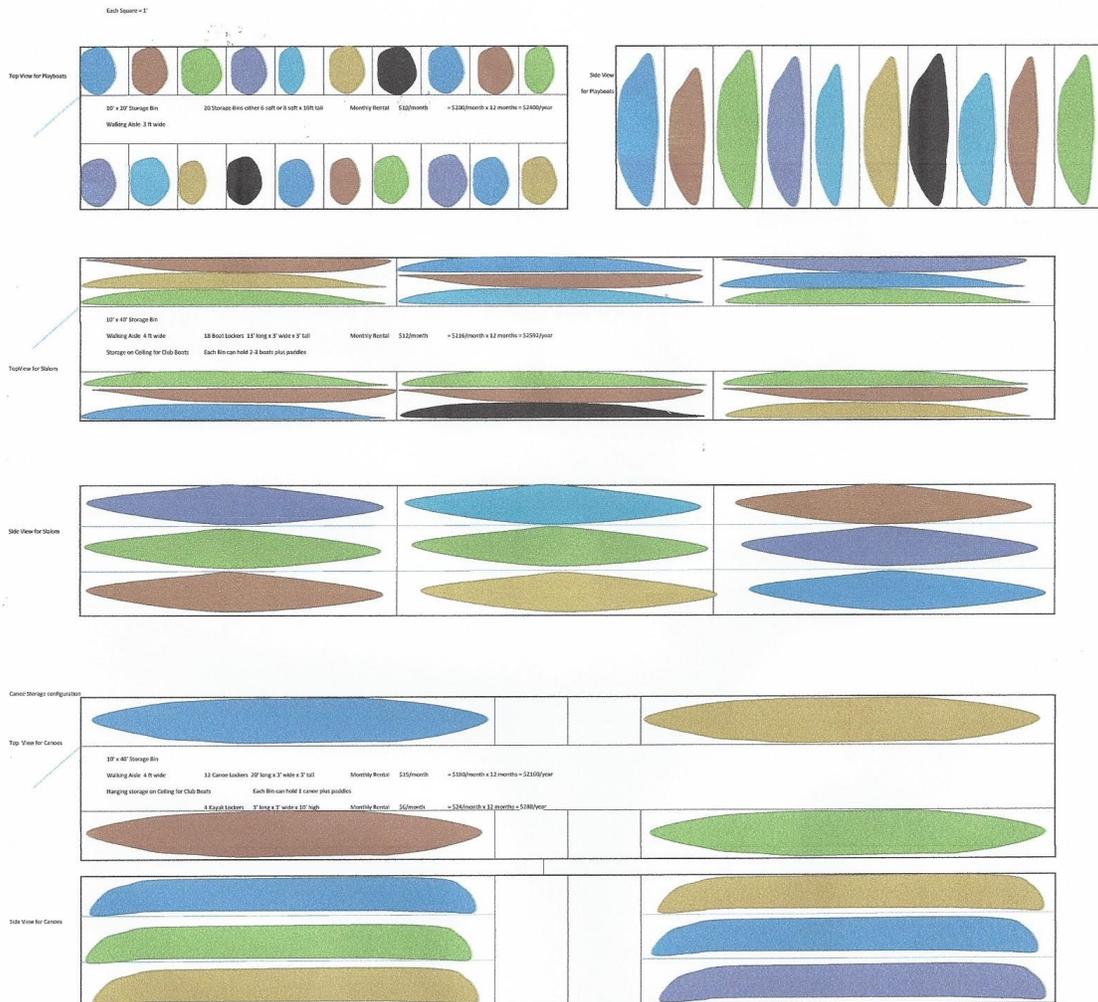
10' x 40' Storage Area will fit 12 Canoe Lockers 17' long x 3.5' wide x 40" tall

And 4 Plastic Kayak lockers 3' long x 3.5' wide x 10' tall

Monthly Rental \$15/month for canoe lockers = \$180/month x 12 months = \$2160/year

Monthly Rental \$6/month for kayak lockers = \$24/month x 12 months = \$288/year

At a cost of \$10,000 for 400 ft² of 2 Storage Areas with annual revenues of \$2,000
= 5 year payback



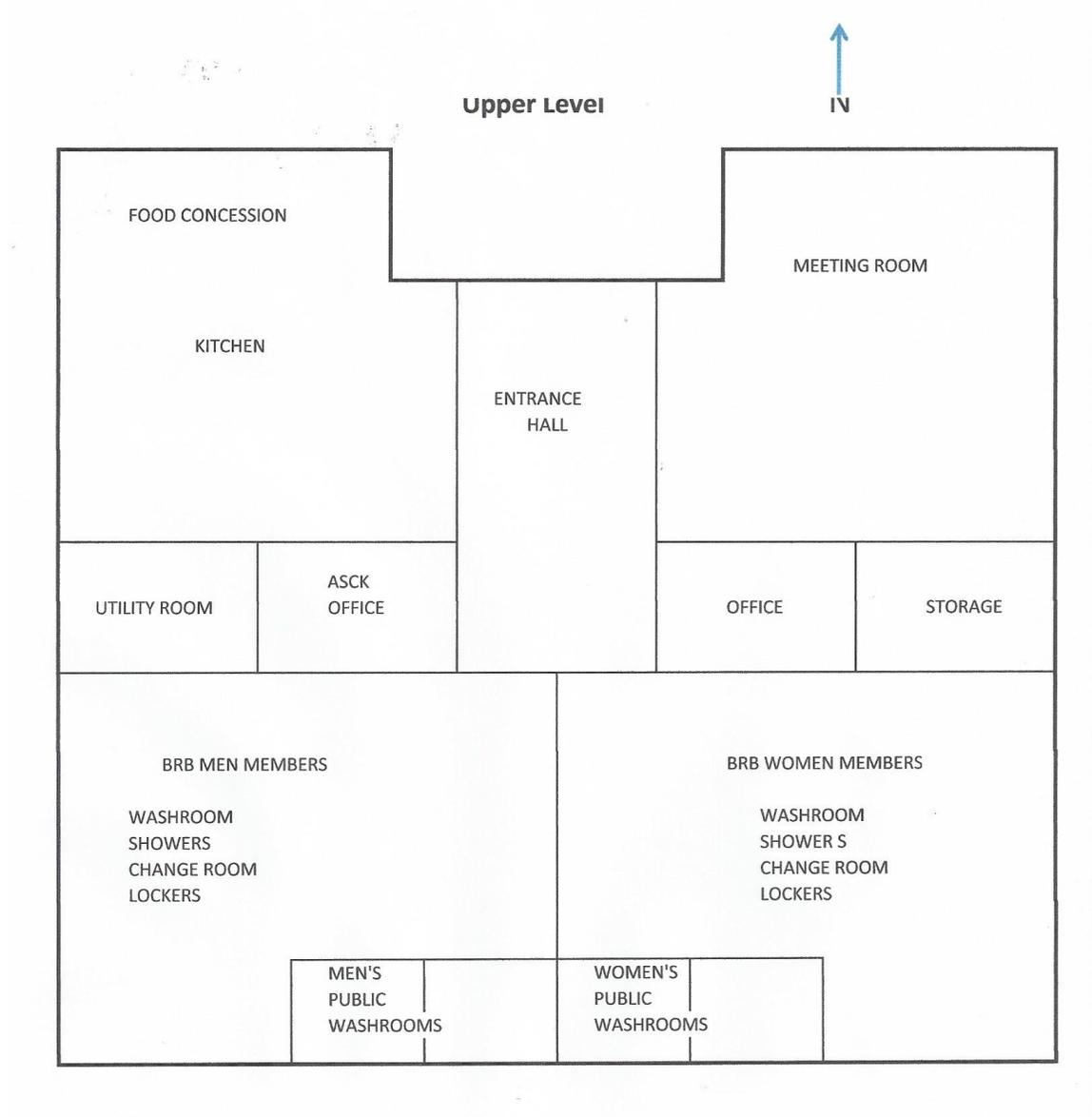
Paddling Business Model

Businesses and Educational Institutions such as Aquabatics, UofC Outdoor Centre, MEC and Western Kayak Adventures have to move their boats and equipment from their storage compounds to Harvie Passage and back home for every paddling session that they teach at HP. By having a locked Storage Area, the businesses will be able to reduce the time and effort to set up their paddling sessions and create positive advertising on site for their businesses.

Load boats and gear for paddling session at Harvie Passage at business location = 30 minutes

Drive to Harvie Passage for paddling session with truck and trailer = 20 minutes
 Unload boats and gear for paddling session = 10 minutes
 Repeat to take back to business location = 60 minutes

Total Time for 1 staff member = 2 hours @ \$20/hr = \$40 per session
 3 sessions/week x 20 weeks = 60 sessions @ \$40 per session = \$2,400/year
 Investment in 1 Storage Bin = \$5,000. Return on Investment in 2 ¼ years.
 Investment in 2 Storage Bin = \$10,000. Return on Investment in 4 ¼ years.



Appendix B

Trend Analysis

Activity trends in Canada support this proposal from several perspectives. In the past activity participation had a higher indoor facility focus, involved structured programs, contained frequent participation in smaller segments, and involved more team oriented sports. Today we are seeing more outdoor and home based activity. The shift has moved to more informal self-oriented participation with larger blocks of activity fewer times per week. Team sports are being replaced with individual activity where participants are interested in doing something with an experiential focus.

Chart Changes in Activity Participation

Past		Present
<i>Indoor facility focused activity</i>	--- → shift to --- →	<i>Outdoor or home based activity</i>
<i>Highly structured programs</i>		<i>Informal self oriented participation</i>
<i>Frequent participation in smaller amounts</i>		<i>Larger blocks of activity fewer times per week</i>
<i>Team oriented sports</i>		<i>Individual activity</i>
<i>Participating</i>		<i>Doing something with an experiential focus</i>

Environmental Stewardship Trends

Parks provide a valuable "sense of place in communities" and are places for self-discovery, unstructured activity, heritage interpretation and access to natural environments. The Public Perception on Use of Benefits of Local Government on Recreation and Park Services (2008) notes that parks "enhance aesthetic quality, increase property values and improve the image and liveability of communities."

**Alberta Recreation and Parks Association 2008*

The 2011, "Results of a Provincial Dialogue, Reporting in the Pan Canadian Survey", noted that many municipalities have difficulty building policies and programs that connect children and youth with the natural environment. Recreation professionals identified not having appropriate financial resources as the main challenge.

**Alberta Recreation Parks Association 2011*

Recreation Facility Development and Sustainability Trends

Parks and recreation are core facilities that provide opportunities for residents to be active and enjoy nature year round. In Alberta Recreation and Parks Association's 2010 study the Role of Recreation, Parks and Open Space in Regional Planning it was noted the importance to conserve open space helps to build the unique character within the community.

**Alberta Recreation Parks Association 2010*

Recreation Activity Trends

Recreation contributes to individual and community health and wellness. Recreation and cultural activities provide social opportunities for people to interact with others and learn new skills. The top leisure activities Albertans participate in include: outdoor recreation activities

such as walking for pleasure (79%), gardening (65%), and bicycling (48%); cultural activities such as, attending a fair or festival (62%), doing a craft or a creative hobby (54%), and visiting a museum or art gallery (51%); spectator at a sport event (59%); playing video/computer games, and indoor activities such as swimming in pools (47%) and aerobics/fitness/yoga (45%). Of the active sports, more people canoe/ kayaked (#15) than played soccer, hockey, baseball, mountain bike or x-country ski.

**Alberta Recreation Survey 2017*

Albertans are becoming less active. The trend in Alberta from 2000 to 2017 has shown a decreasing participation in the majority of activities. However the research points out that eight activities were growing in participation which include aerobics, wall climbing, swimming lakes and rivers, motor boating, attending festivals, river rafting, canoeing/kayaking and jogging/running.

Recreation Interest Trends

When asked about what activities Albertans would like to try, canoe/kayak was their #2 choice. Barriers to participation included lack of facilities and equipment and a limited knowledge about the sport and how to get involved.

**Alberta Recreation Survey 2017*

These trends have direct implications to this proposal as five of these outdoor recreation activities (jogging/running, canoeing/kayaking, river rafting, and swimming in lakes and rivers) are consistent with the proposed facility being available for both residents and visitors who come to the area to participate in activities.