

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

TO: Shane Bourke, City Manager	DATE: February 19, 2025
FROM: Dan Lemieux, Chief Public & Protective Services Officer	MEETING: Council Committee of the Whole
REPORT WRITER: Stephanie Cajolais, Project Director	
SUBJECT: Proposed Recreation Facility Update	

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Committee recommend Council:

1. Approve the approximately 3.21 hectares (7.94 acres) site as shown in Attachment 1 as the location for the proposed recreation facility (the “Facility Site”); and
2. Direct Administration to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the design, engineering and construction of an air-supported structure on the Facility Site to accommodate a FIFA regulation-size soccer field, with flexibility for various sports activities.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL / COMMITTEE DIRECTIONS

At the May 6, 2024, City Council meeting, the following motions were passed:

“Council identify Option 4 as the preferred site for the proposed recreation facility, and direct Administration to continue negotiations with the appropriate School Division for the development of the selected site.”

“Council direct Administration to prepare an RFX for both a 135,000 square foot dome structure and fabric structure, and that the results will come back for Council review.”

“Council direct Administration to prepare a cost estimate to provide water, wastewater, proposed parking, and other necessary services to the preferred site.”

BACKGROUND

In 2023, Swan City Football Club (Swan City F.C.) presented to City Council regarding the impact of the Leisure Centre demolition on local sports, particularly soccer in Grande Prairie.

Since then, Administration has:

- Conducted site evaluations;
- Completed public engagement with community stakeholders and sport groups; and
- Explored structure types to determine the most cost-effective and feasible option.

Additionally, City Council approved, in principle, up to \$10 million in debenture funding for an indoor recreation facility.

Following Council's May 2024 motions, Administration solicited a proposal from a qualified engineering firm to provide preliminary cost estimates for servicing the proposed facility. A Request for Expression of Interest (RFEI) was also issued in summer 2024 to gather budgetary cost estimates for facility construction.

ANALYSIS

City Council previously identified Avondale North (Option 4) as the preferred site for the proposed recreation facility. However, following further analysis, Administration is now recommending an alternate location at Trader Ridge based on cost, feasibility, development readiness and economic development.

Cost estimates for off-site servicing include:

- Avondale North (Option 4): \$6.1 million (*includes costs related to 105 Street Extension*)
- Avondale South (Option 5): \$2.7 million

These estimates exclude costs for additional parking, reinstatement of lost field space, storm pond construction, and on-site servicing. They also do not account for service extensions required for future multi-family/commercial developments identified in the Avondale Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP).

Preliminary estimates from the RFEI process for an air-supported structure include:

- Estimated construction cost: \$10.5 million – \$18.4 million
- Estimated construction timeline: 8 – 16 months

The proposed facility is estimated to be 135,000 square feet, plus an auxiliary building. The air-supported structure will include a full-size FIFA compliant (11v11) sport field with a turf interior and field markings for multiple sports, including soccer, football and rugby. A netting system will allow for flexible field configurations. The RFP is expected to include design and provisional pricing for a perimeter track, as well as portable bleachers for spectators. The auxiliary building is anticipated to include four locker rooms with showers, toilets and changing areas, public washrooms, a reception area for a single staff person, and a storage room for sports equipment.

Review of the Avondale site highlighted several challenges, including the structure's size, constraints on future recreational development, and the complexity of land ownership in the area. Additionally, there is uncertainty regarding approval timelines and limitations for long-term development plans, as outlined in the Avondale ARP.

Given these factors, Administration revisited previously considered sites (Cobblestone East, Kensington, Patterson Place, and Pinnacle West) and explored new options (Arbour Hills, Community Knowledge Campus, Countryside Crossing, Northridge, Trader Ridge, and Urban Rail).

Following a thorough assessment, the proposed site was identified as the most suitable location based on lower servicing costs, readiness for development, and alignment with municipal growth strategies.

Additionally, locating the recreation facility in Trader Ridge may stimulate further development in the City’s north end. A review of air-supported structures in other municipalities also indicates they are typically situated in industrial areas, which better support the scale of the structure and parking needs.

The Facility Site offers several advantages:

- Land ownership: The City will own the land, ensuring long-term control.
- Site size: The site encompasses 13.34 hectares (32.96 acres), allowing for subdivision to the desired 3.21 hectares (7.94 acres), with space for parking.
- Site readiness: Of all the sites reviewed, the Facility Site is anticipated to be the most development ready.

Facility Site Summary:

Criteria	Current Status	Comments
Neighbourhood	Trader Ridge	
Designation	Not Subdivided	Able to subdivide to desired size
Current Use	Undeveloped	
Statutory Plan	Arbour Hills ASP Trader Ridge OP Arbour Hills OP	Amendments required
Lot Size	13.34 hectares (32.96 acres)	3.21 hectares (7.94 acres) parcel desired
Zoning	UR (Future Commercial)	Rezone to DC
Servicing	Partially serviced	City will complete necessary servicing for development
Amenities	Adjacent to commercial/future residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans for future transit access • Potential growth as per planning documents

To optimize the Facility Site layout, Administration recommends removing the planned 139 Avenue connection between Trader Ridge and the future residential neighbourhood of Arbour Hills. This adjustment:

- Enhances the development potential of the Facility Site, primarily designated for parking.
- Reduces concerns related to shortcutting, overflow parking, and other potential nuisances.
- Aligns with similar design strategies, such as the Community Knowledge Campus, which is not connected to adjacent neighbourhoods via roadways but maintains pedestrian and cyclist access.

To streamline the process, Administration will work with the landowner to complete required amendments to the Area Structure Plan (ASP), Outline Plan (OP), and zoning. These steps will proceed concurrently with the RFP process. If approved, the timeline anticipates that site work will begin this year, with project completion in the spring of 2026. See attachment 2 for the optimal project timeline.

Projected Key Milestones:

- RFP Issuance: February 25, 2025
- Evaluation & Awarding of Contracts: April 2025
- Subdivision Approval & Land Title Registration: May – June 2025
- Construction Start: July 2025

Relationship to City Council's Areas of Focus / Strategic Priorities

This project aligns with Council's Strategic Priorities of Quality of Life and Innovative Efficiencies & Economic Readiness.

Environmental Impact

Air supported structures require fewer materials than traditional buildings, reducing resource consumption. However, they rely on constant air pressure maintenance which requires continuous energy demand.

Economic Impact

- It is anticipated that the facility will attract regional and provincial competitions, fostering economic growth through sport tourism.
- Locating the recreation facility in Trader Ridge may create incentive for further development in the City's north end.

Social Impact

The social bonds formed at community recreation facilities foster stronger, safer, and more inclusive communities while enhancing civic pride.

Relevant Statutes / Master Plans / City Documents

[Avondale High School Sites Area Redevelopment Plan Bylaw C-1407](#) (2021)

[Grande Prairie Area Joint Recreation Master Plan](#) (2016)

[Recreation and Culture Strategy](#) (2024)

[Arbour Hills Area Structure Plan](#) (2024)

[Trader Ridge Outline Plan](#) (2024)

[Arbour Hills Outline Plan](#) (2019)

[Land Use Bylaw](#) (2025)

Risk

The proposed Facility Site is contingent on amendments to the statutory planning documents for Trader Ridge and Arbour Hills. These amendments require additional stakeholder engagement and public hearings, which may introduce potential delays or objections during the approval process.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Administration engaged in discussions with both the Grande Prairie Public School Division and the Peace Wapiti Public School Division regarding the Avondale site option. Additionally, discussions continue with Swan City F.C. and the County of Grande Prairie Council regarding the proposed development. Internal stakeholders have also been engaged in the development of this report.

Administration plans to host a public information session to provide the public and sport user groups with an opportunity to ask general questions about the recreation facility.

BUDGET / FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

In 2021, City Council allocated \$100,000 in seed funding to Swan City Football Club for design fees. Additionally, Council has approved, in principle, up to \$10 million in funding through debenture financing for an indoor recreation facility.

The total project cost, including construction (based on RFEI estimates), land acquisition and site costs, as well as parking development, is estimated at \$16.4 million.

Site Costs	Item	Cost
Public Reserve	Land	\$1,515,904
CSI (Land sale)	Land	\$434,096
CSI (Land sale)	103 Street Extension	\$150,000
CSI (Land sale)	Servicing	\$284,904
Total		\$2,384,904

Facility Construction	
Debt	\$10,000,000
Reserves*	\$4,000,000
Total	\$14,000,000

* Reserves will be determined and presented by Administration at a future date

Due to the timing of construction, interest on loan advances in 2025 is estimated at \$63,875, with interest and loan repayments in 2026 projected at \$686,071.

Debt Financing	Amount
Principal	\$10M
Interest Rate	5.11%
Term (years)	20
Annual payments	\$801,206

Operational Analysis

The annual operating costs for the facility are estimated at \$660,000 assuming the City operates the facility using a demand-driven staffing model similar to the Community Gyms, where staffing levels are tied to facility bookings. These cost estimates are based on the operational costs of the Activity and Reception Centre and utility costs of comparable air-supported structures.

SUMMARY / CONCLUSION

In summary, the proposed recreation facility at Trader Ridge will address growing demand for indoor turf space and accommodate soccer, football, rugby and other field sports. The facility will support sport tourism and economic development, providing a shovel-ready, cost-effective solution. Based on site analysis and financial feasibility, Administration recommends proceeding with the Facility Site and issuing the RFP.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Facility Site Map
- Attachment 2 – Optimal Project Timeline



Attachment 2 – Optimal Project Timeline

Milestone Description	Start	Days	Finish
Council Approval of Site	2025-02-24	1	
City Issues RFP	2025-02-25	42	2025-04-08
Borrowing Bylaw	2025-03-04	34	2025-04-08
RFP Evaluation	2025-04-08	10	2025-04-18
Subdivision Process	2025-03-11	51	2025-05-10
Land Titles Registration	2025-05-11	28	2025-06-08
Transfer of Ownership	2025-06-11		
Land Use Plan Amendments & Rezoning	2025-03-11	33	2025-04-21
Contract Awarded	2025-04-21	14	2025-05-05
Start Construction	2025-07		