ST. THOMAS
THE RAILWAY CITY

Community & Aquatic Centre
Feasibility Study

February 2026



MONTEITH BROWN
PLANNING CONSULTANTS

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Limitations

This report was prepared by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants Ltd., MJMA, and The JF Group (herein referred to as "the Consulting Team") for the account of the City of St. Thomas. The material in this report reflects the Consulting Team's best judgment in light of the information available to it at the time of preparation. Any use which a third party makes of this report, or any reliance on or decisions to be made based on it, are the responsibility of such third parties. The Consulting Team accepts no responsibility for damages, if any, suffered by a third party as a result of decisions made or actions based on this report.

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of those who contributed to the development of the City of St. Thomas Community & Aquatic Centre Feasibility Study. This report is a product of the vision and dedication of the community, the Project Team, and City Council. We also extend our thanks to the many area residents and community groups whose feedback has made the study a document that embodies the core values, beliefs, and priorities of the community.

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Councillor Gary Clarke
Councillor Rose Gibson
Councillor Jim Herbert
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Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the land on which we meet is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinabek, Attiwonderonk (Neutral) and Mississauga peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We also recognize that this land is now home to the Munsee-Delaware Nation, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation and Oneida Nation of the Thames. This land was settled through Treaty 2, the McKee Purchase Treaty of 1790, and we, as beneficiaries of the treaty recognize our collective responsibilities to the land and water.

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Executive Summary

Report Overview

With St. Thomas and adjacent communities forecasted to grow much quicker and larger than previously anticipated, a detailed feasibility study is required to identify indoor recreation facility needs and provision options. Strategic investment in one or more new facilities, potentially in collaboration with multiple partners, is necessary to address the growing needs of St. Thomas and the surrounding area.

The purpose of this Community & Aquatic Centre Feasibility Study is two-fold:

1. To examine demand for major community and recreation facilities and activities with consideration of community input, leisure trends, and growth projections; and
2. To provide City Council with a series of prioritized facility provision options, location requirements, and realistic financial estimates to guide future decision-making, budgeting, and the pursuit of outside funding over the next ten to twenty-five years.

This study is also informed and guided by the City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update, which was prepared concurrently.

Key Research & Engagement Findings

To inform the facility needs assessments, extensive research (current state, trends, demographics, benchmarking, etc.) and community engagement (surveys, stakeholder input, input sessions, etc.) were undertaken. As noted in Section 2, key findings include:

- **St. Thomas' population is expected to grow** from 43,186 in 2021 to 79,500 by 2051 – almost double current numbers. Taking into account the nearby municipalities of Central Elgin, Southwold, Malahide, and Aylmer, the regional population (including St. Thomas) is forecasted to increase from 79,716 in 2021 to 133,660 in 2051.
- Residential growth and economic development are leading to **rising user expectations** for recreation services.
- **Existing recreation facilities** have practical constraints that cannot address the full range of current and future needs.
- Most municipalities focus on **providing universal programs and facilities** through which **everyone can participate** rather than specialized programming (e.g., elite athletics, high level competitions) that serve fewer people. This practice helps ensure municipal programs reach the widest number of residents across the age and ability spectrum.
- Access to services must be **affordable to residents**. There are concerns about tax impacts associated with new infrastructure, but a recognition that St. Thomas's taxbase is growing.

- There is widespread support for a **multi-use, multi-generational recreation hub**, which is preferred over single-use solutions. This trend is observed in many municipalities due to cost, land, and operational efficiencies.
- The top indoor recreation investment priority in the community survey was an **indoor aquatic centre** (83% support), followed by **gymnasiums and indoor court spaces** (73% support). An indoor aquatic facility is primarily desired for leisure swimming, aquatic fitness classes and swimming lessons. Gymnasiums were desired to accommodate a flexible range of sports and activities (e.g., basketball, badminton, pickleball, volleyball).
- Facilities have a lasting positive impact on the community and should be **thoughtfully designed** and connected to the surrounding community.
- There is support for creating new facilities through **partnerships and collaborations** if they can align with the community's values and needs.

Future Indoor Recreation Needs

Summarized below are the key findings from the Master Plan needs assessments that were used to inform the proposed facility concepts. Future needs were calculated based on the future population projection of 79,500 residents in St. Thomas by 2051. Several of these facility types may also have the potential to serve residents in nearby communities.

Summary of Indoor Recreation Facility Needs Assessment Findings (see Section 3 for more)

Facility Type	Recommended Service Target (source: 2025 Parks and Recreation Master Plan)	Additional Future Needs to 2051 (less existing supply)
Indoor Aquatics	One municipal indoor pool per 50,000 residents	1.1 pools (multi-tank)
Library Branch	0.85 square feet per capita	2 new branches*
Gymnasiums	One municipal gymnasium per 35,000 residents	1.8 gymnasiums
Indoor Turf Fields	One small-sided (e.g., 7v7 or 9v9) indoor field per 35,000 residents	2.3 small-sided fields
Arenas	One ice pad per 15,000 residents	2.3 ice pads

*Note: Library branch future needs were not determined in this report. Library needs were calculated to 2036 in the 2025 Addendum to the St. Thomas Public Library Master Plan.

Proposed Facility Options

The following facility concepts were identified based on this report's assessment of indoor recreation needs. It is recommended that these spaces be delivered within two modern, multi-use facilities – a Community & Aquatic Centre and a Sports Dome, either on the same or separate sites. The following tables summarize the components, operating

subsidies/profits, and total project costs for each facility concept. More detail can be found in Sections 4 and 5 of this report.

Community & Aquatic Centre Concepts

Presented below are two options for the development of a Community and Aquatic Centre in St. Thomas. Highest priority needs are contained within phase 1, although the City may elect to combine elements from potential future phases in the initial stage of construction.

Note: Concept 1b is the larger of the two options and it is recommended that this only be considered if the Family YMCA of St. Thomas-Elgin is removed from service, so as not to duplicate other services available to the community.

Community & Aquatic Centre Facility Options

Phases	Concept 1a: Baseline Facility	Concept 1b: Enhanced Facility
Phase 1	**Aquatic Spaces** • 2 tanks: 25M pool (with 8 lanes) and leisure pool **Community Spaces** • Double Gymnasium • Multi-Purpose Rooms (2-3) • Indoor Playground	**Aquatic Spaces** • 3 tanks: 25M 8-lane pool, leisure pool, and therapy pool **Community Spaces** • Double Gymnasium+ • Multi-Purpose rooms (3+) • Indoor Playground • Fitness Centre • Walking Track • Youth Centre
Annual Operating Subsidy	**$910,000 to $1,100,000**	**$1,300,000 to $1,600,000**
Total Project Cost – Phase 1	**$69,876,800**	**$99,528,880**
Potential future phases	• Twin Pad Arena – may be on separate site • Library Branch	• Twin Pad Arena – may be on separate site • Library Branch
Total Project Cost – Potential Future Phases	**$90,158,480**	**$90,158,480**
Total Project Cost – All Phases	**$160,035,280**	**$189,687,360**
Minimum Land Area	3.0 ha (Phase 1) to 5.0 ha (all Phases)	4.0 ha (Phase 1) to 6.0 ha (all Phases)

Note: Figures shown in 2025 dollars. Operating cost figures exclude capital replacement contributions. Calculation assumptions and exclusions are outlined further in Section 5 of this report.

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Sports Dome Concepts

To provide the City with options for further consideration, two preliminary concepts have been prepared for a Sports Dome facility, differing modestly in size and components. It is anticipated that this project would be completed in one phase.

Sports Dome Facility Options

Facility Types	Concept 2a: Turf-only	Concept 2b: Turf and Courts
Turf Fields	• 2 Small-sided Turf Fields	• 2 Small-sided Turf Fields (minimum)
Other Spaces	• Support Building	• Sports Courts (2 basketball, 4 volleyball, 6 pickleball courts)* • Perimeter Walking Track • Support Building
Annual Operating Profit	**$126,000 to 159,000**	**$131,000 to $161,000**
Total Project Cost	**$10,764,000**	**$14,003,500**
Minimum Land Area	2.5 hectares	3.0 hectares

*Note: sport courts may not be required if double gymnasium is included in proposed Community & Aquatic Centre; alternately, this space could be used to add an additional small-sided soccer field.
Note: Figures shown in 2025 dollars. Operating cost figures exclude capital replacement contributions. Specific exclusions are outlined further in Section 5 of this report.

Implementation

Modern community facilities have tremendous potential to foster healthier lifestyles, social connectivity, inclusivity and accessibility, in addition to enhancing St. Thomas' regional appeal and attracting sport tourism and increased visitor spending.

At this time, the City does not currently have sufficient financial reserves to implement all of the options presented in this report. Development charges, property taxes, reserves, and grants are likely to be relied upon to fund new facility development. Proactive planning is required to ensure that recreational facilities are delivered in step with growth.

A preferred site for the Community & Aquatic Centre has not been identified due to a shortage of readily available and suitable sites in municipal ownership. The possibility of purchasing land or partnering with others may be necessary. Key criteria for evaluating potential sites are identified in Section 6. For the Sports Dome, the City is encouraged to consider the vacant lands north of Fire Station No. 2 (Silver Street) for this facility.

Beyond this study, further assessments will be required to select sites, identify partners, confirm programs and phasing, secure funding, and initiate design. Several of these steps – outlined in Section 7 – will involve additional consultation with the community to confirm needs, design, and service delivery approaches.

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1 Project Overview

1.1 Purpose

Through past reports and stated Council priorities, the City of St. Thomas has expressed an interest in expanding the variety of recreation, sport, and wellbeing opportunities through the development of spaces that can address multiple community needs. Strategic investment in one or more new facilities, potentially in collaboration with multiple partners, is necessary to address the growing needs of St. Thomas and area.

The purpose of this Community & Aquatic Centre Feasibility Study is two-fold:

1) to examine demand for major community and recreation facilities and activities with consideration of community input, leisure trends, and growth projections; and
2) to provide City Council with a series of prioritized facility provision options, location requirements, and realistic financial estimates to guide future decision-making, budgeting, and the pursuit of outside funding over the next ten to twenty-five years.

This Feasibility Study identifies and prioritizes major indoor community recreation facility needs that can be considered as part of the City's long-term capital forecast and funding models. This includes a realistic action plan and business case that responds to St. Thomas' community profile, available resources, trends, best practices, data, community input, and more.

This study is also informed and guided by the City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update, which is being prepared concurrently under separate cover. A joint community engagement and research program was undertaken to serve the needs of both studies.

1.2 Scope and Description

This study creates a roadmap for the provision of an indoor aquatic facility and complementary activity spaces in St. Thomas. The market for such a facility includes the City of St. Thomas, as well as surrounding communities including (but possibly not limited to) the Municipality of Central Elgin, the Township of Southwold, the Township of Malahide, and the Town of Aylmer. Collectively, the population of these communities is forecasted to grow by 68% between 2021 and 2051 (from approximately 79,716 to 133,660 persons) – an additional 53,944 persons in thirty years.

The following facility/activity spaces have been considered through this study:

- Indoor swimming pools
- Gymnasiums
- Fitness and wellness spaces
- Indoor artificial turf sports fields
- Indoor ice arenas
- Multi-purpose program space
- Arts and culture spaces
- Partnered spaces (e.g., library, childcare, etc.)

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Planning for major recreation facilities is a multi-step process that becomes more defined as planning advances. This study provides a roadmap and high-level business planning to inform City Council on preliminary options for investing in aquatic and community spaces for a growing city and region. This is a necessary step in order to create a long-term funding strategy and to signal to the community the City's intentions for addressing emerging needs.

Beyond this study, further assessments will be required to select sites, identify partners, confirm the program and potential phasing, secure funding, and initiate design through the desired project delivery method. Several of these steps will involve additional consultation with the community to confirm needs, design, and service delivery approaches.

1.3 Process and Objectives

This feasibility study was initiated in early 2025 for consideration by St. Thomas City Council in summer/fall 2025. A consulting team led by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants (in association with The JF Group and MJMA Architecture & Design) were retained to assist with the project. The study was prepared concurrently with an update to the City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Figure 1: Feasibility Study Approach



Key objectives for the Community & Aquatic Centre Feasibility Study include:

a) Engage with the **public and key stakeholders** as part of an integrated consultation program with the master plan.

b) Consider **longer-term needs** for major recreation facility components including (but not limited to) indoor aquatics, indoor turf, gymnasiums, and multi-use space.

c) Identify **program and site requirements**, along with options to accommodate the required facility components.

d) Work with the City to identify and **evaluate potential locations** for a new community/aquatics centre using a set of mandatory and preferred site criteria.

e) Assess the **potential for partnerships** with stakeholders, agencies and/or the private sector for the development and/or operation of a new community/aquatics centre.

f) Prepare **concept plans** showing a potential layout of the proposed facility(ies).

g) Identify **order of magnitude capital cost estimates** for facility development, consistent with comparable and recent building projects in Ontario.

h) Undertake a **business case analysis** that identifies a potential range of annual operating costs and revenues with consideration of factors such as the governance structure and management approach, staff deployment, major expense items, program strategies and price structure, anticipated revenues, capital replacement contribution, etc.

i) Examine **opportunities for capital funding**, such as partnerships, sponsorships, and other methods to assist in covering the cost of construction and/or operations.

j) Identify a likely **timeframe for implementation**, along with key steps in the facility development timeline.

1.4 Key Drivers

Local interest in a municipal indoor swimming pool has been evident for many years and there have been several community-led initiatives to gather support. Most recently, 2020 Parks and Recreation Master Plan recommended that the City explore partnership opportunities with the Family YMCA to maximize public access to indoor aquatic facilities. In 2024, the City established a pilot partnership with the YMCA to offer St. Thomas residents without a YMCA membership access to indoor aquatics programming at City rates outside of summer months when the City's Jaycees Pool is operating. Also in 2024, the St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital ceased operation of its therapy pool, which has left a gap in the delivery of local warm-water aquatic services.

While the previous Parks and Recreation Master Plan found that St. Thomas did not have a sufficiently-large population base to support a municipally-operated indoor pool, new growth projections have created optimism that this will change. Now with the city and adjacent communities forecasted to grow much quicker and larger than previously

anticipated, there is a need to undertake a more detailed study that would identify facility needs and provision options.

With the city beginning to experience strong and sustained residential growth, the timing is right to consider the needs of current and future populations. The development of new amenities has the potential to significantly enhance local recreation and leisure assets and provide additional opportunities for residents in St. Thomas and the surrounding region.

Convenience is a significant factor in accessing community and recreation services. Residents are currently served by several indoor aquatic complexes and multi-use facilities located within a twenty-to-thirty-minute drive of St. Thomas (including a local YMCA), but many are interested in additional local options. Long-time residents and newcomers alike have also been exposed to a wider range of leisure pursuits (such as swimming, court sports like pickleball, age-specific programming, etc.) and are looking for local options to participate, ideally in settings that allow for year-round use. Other sports and pursuits such as basketball, volleyball, badminton, and hockey are also outgrowing their spaces as their memberships rise; some are seeking tournament-friendly facilities to draw people into the community.

It is also important to acknowledge the growing emphasis being placed on personal and community health and wellness, environmental and economic sustainability, civic identity, sport tourism, and high-quality community and recreation opportunities. Any investment in recreation services is an investment in the physical, social, and mental wellness of residents. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the critical role these venues play in creating strong and complete communities and they are increasingly viewed as “must haves” that are influencing the decisions of employers and residents as they are deciding where to live, work, and play.

Community spaces and accessible activities for residents also help the City to achieve its strategic goals related to complete communities, economic development, social connection, and resident health and wellbeing. They reinforce the community’s cultural identity as an active, healthy city by providing an important social and recreation gathering place for all residents. Recreation facilities and spaces enable people to be healthier and more connected to each other and their communities, contributing significantly to their quality of life.

The City and residents are aware that the development and long-term operation of community recreation facilities can come at a significant financial cost to taxpayers, users, and future generations. Rising labour and construction costs – driven by a variety of forces (local to global) – demand that any decision to provide higher-order facilities be adequately justified and that consideration be given to longer-term impacts. The City’s financial capacity is not unlimited. A variety of additional funding sources will be required to support the development of any new facilities, and it is possible that cost-sharing partnerships may be required to support their operation.

2 Project Background and Support

This section highlights key background inputs to establish an understanding of current conditions, as well as key factors that may influence the demand for major community recreation facilities. Foundational inputs included a review of background research such as the community profile and sector trends. Input from the community and key stakeholders is also summarized.

2.1 Service Delivery System

Traditionally, the delivery of sport and recreation programming in St. Thomas has largely been a community and volunteer-driven responsibility. The City works in partnership with several community organizations to ensure that municipal facilities (e.g., arenas, sports fields, etc.) are maximized. Agreements are in place with agencies such as the Family YMCA of St. Thomas-Elgin and St. Thomas Seniors Centre to promote participation amongst residents for various services (e.g., aquatics, fitness, camps, older adult activities, etc.). The non-profit and private sectors (including schools) also provide opportunities for more specialized activities from time to time (e.g., gymnasium sports, fitness, pickleball, etc.).

The City offers programming in response to demonstrated community needs, with a focus on affordable and accessible activities that offer introductory-level experiences for residents. Primary City-led programs include:

- outdoor swimming programs
- public ice skating
- day camps
- recreation and fitness programs
- general interest courses
- special events

The ability to expand programming is currently constrained by the availability of space and contemporary recreation and community facilities.

2.2 Market Catchment and Population Growth

Major facilities – such as multi-use community centres and indoor aquatic facilities – draw from a wide area that can be characterized by a 'primary' market (nearby, more frequent users), as well as 'secondary' and 'tertiary' markets (more distant, occasional users). The extent of these markets will be influenced by the mix of facility components and services and competing services. Since aquatic facilities have high investment costs, they typically have larger catchment areas that draw from wider distances.

This Feasibility Study defines the potential markets (see Figure 2) as follows:

Primary market (City of St. Thomas):

- This is the core area from which the largest share of users or participants is drawn.
- People in this area have the highest likelihood of regular participation or use.
- Represents the closest geographic area.
- As this is the largest population centre, it is generally expected to contribute around 75% of total demand, depending on the type of activity and space.

Secondary market (Township of Southwold and the Municipality of Central Elgin):

- This surrounding area is outside the primary zone, but will still account for a notable share of users due to growth near the edges of the primary market.
- This area does not have higher-order facilities such as indoor pools, but does provide arenas.
- Residents may be willing to travel further, but usage is generally less frequent than those in the primary market.
- The population in this area is much less than the primary market and is generally expected to contribute 10% to 20% of total demand, depending on the type of activity and space.

Tertiary market (Township of Malahide and Town of Aylmer):

- This area is father away and will present users with choices to travel to other centres for activities.
- This area has some higher-order facilities such as indoor pools, arenas, and recreation spaces both locally and in Tillsonburg to the east.
- Fewer users are expected from this area, or usage may be less frequent and focused on visitors or people traveling for unique amenities.
- The population in this area is much less than the primary market and is generally expected to contribute 5% to 15% of total demand, depending on the type of activity and space (potentially more for specialized facilities or events).

Note: Additional users may come from beyond these markets to access facilities on an occasional basis or for special events and activities.

Figure 2. Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Market Catchment Areas



2.2.1 Primary Market

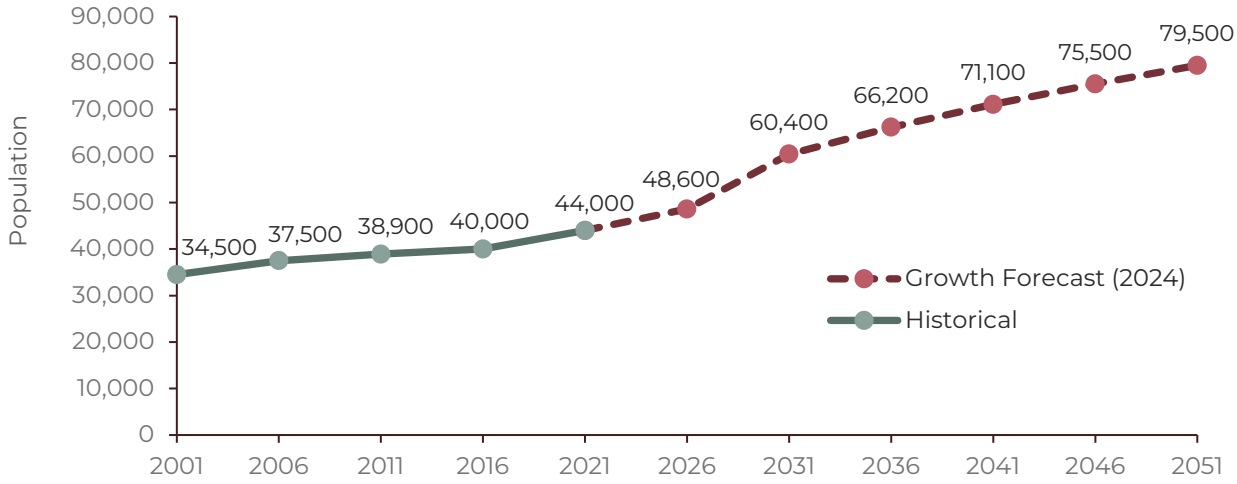
With a population of 47,818 people in 2024, St. Thomas is the largest municipality in Elgin County. Its strong industrial and commercial sectors employ residents throughout the city and the surrounding county. The newest industrial addition to the city is the PowerCo electric vehicle (EV) battery plant, which is anticipated to start production in 2027 and create 5,800 local jobs through direct, indirect, and induced employment.

St. Thomas' 2024 Growth Analysis Study, which accounted for the PowerCo EV battery plant's impact on population growth, found that the city's population is expected to grow to 79,500 residents by 2051 (see Figure 3).[1] This rapid growth represents a population increase of 2% annually over the 30 years. All age groups are expected to increase in population, especially the senior age group which is forecast to increase by 119% from 2021 to 2051 (see Figure 4). [2]

[1] Forecast from Growth Analysis Study (2024) by Watson & Associates Economists.

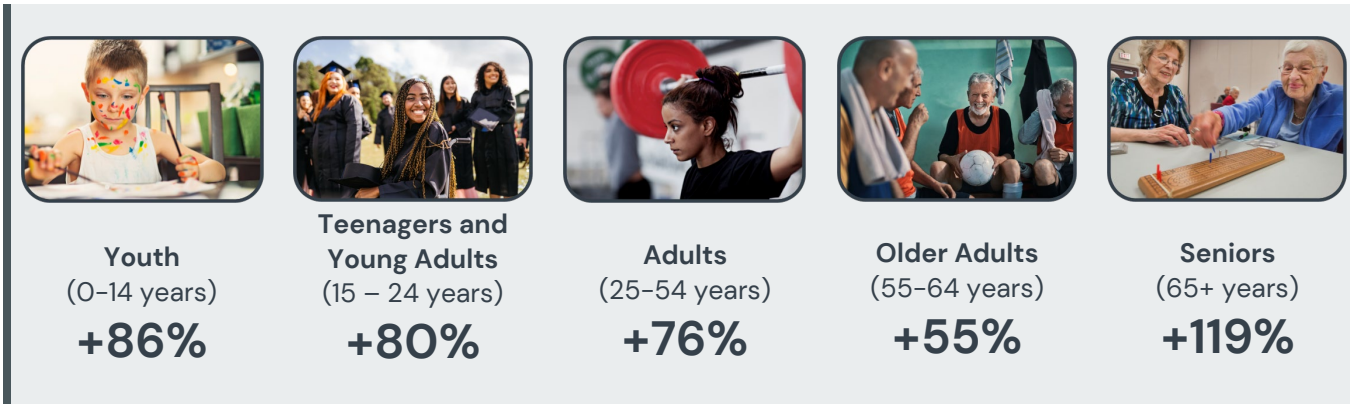
[2] Ibid.

Figure 3. City of St. Thomas historical and forecast population, 2001 to 2051



Note: Forecast includes the net Census undercount of 2.7%.
Source: Historical data from Statistics Canada Census. Forecast from Growth Analysis Study (2024) by Watson & Associates Economists.

Figure 4. Forecasted Population Increases by Age from 2021 to 2051



Note: Forecast includes the net Census undercount of 2.7%
Source: Forecast from Growth Analysis Study (2024) by Watson & Associates Economists.

St. Thomas will need to invest in age-friendly recreational spaces that can support physical and social activities. A growing population of older adults and senior residents will require accessible recreational spaces and tailored programming such as walking tracks, pickleball courts, heath and wellness activities (e.g., low-impact fitness, etc.), arts and crafts, etc. Multi-use facilities with inclusive programs and accessible designs have the potential to increase participation amongst this age group and other users with mobility challenges.

Employment opportunities and new housing developments will also attract families and younger residents, necessitating youth-focused programming, including team sports and multi-sport recreational spaces. As a result, the City may need to increase family-oriented and youth-specific recreational programming, including aquatics programs, summer camps, team sports, and creative spaces for arts and music.

Facilities should also be designed to accommodate flexible, multi-generational use. For instance, community centres could include gymnasiums, child care services, flexible program space, and spaces for family events to meet the needs of a growing, diverse population. Greater cultural diversity will require recreation programs and facilities that reflect the interests and needs of different ethnic communities (e.g., cricket, badminton, special events, etc.). Consulting with new and existing cultural groups to design activities and spaces that meet the evolving needs will be an important step.

Affordability will also be a key factor in making recreation accessible to all residents. Lower income families may face barriers to participation if fees are too high or if there are limited low-cost options. Providing a mix of free, subsidized, and fee-based programs will help ensure that all residents, regardless of income, can benefit from recreational offerings.

2.2.2 Secondary and Tertiary Markets

Municipality of Central Elgin

St. Thomas is surrounded by Central Elgin on its northern, southern, and eastern sides, including the Tier 1 Settlement Areas of Lynhurst, Eastwood, and Norman Lyndale. A large portion of Central Elgin's current and future population will be located in these settlement areas, just outside of St. Thomas (within a 10-minute drive).[3]

Based on the 2024 Ministry of Finance (MOF) projections for Elgin County, the population of Central Elgin is expected to increase by 57% over the next 30 years, from 14,080 people in 2021 to 22,060 in 2051.[4] Part of this projected population growth is due to the PowerCo EV battery plant which is expected to add 1,600 jobs through direct, indirect, and induced employment in the commuter shed outside of St. Thomas. [5] To accommodate growth, the Norman Lyndale Settlement Area in Central Elgin is proposed to expand to include an additional 270 acres of land from the former St. Thomas Psychiatric Hospital lands.[6] While the Province currently owns these lands, they are working on divesting them for residential/mixed-use development. Central Elgin Council's preliminary ideas for these lands include the potential development of a 6,000 to 10,000-person residential and commercial community, which would support additional growth.[7, 8]

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[3] Hemson Consulting Ltd. "Population, Housing and Employment Forecasts and Associated Land Needs Analysis." June 2022.
[4] Hemson Consulting Ltd. "Updated Growth Forecasts and Land Needs Assessment for County of Elgin." February 2025.
[5] Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. (for the City of St. Thomas). "Growth Analysis Study." April 2024.
[6] Hemson Consulting Ltd. "Updated Growth Forecasts and Land Needs Assessment for County of Elgin." February 2025.
[7] Municipality of Central Elgin. "Memorandum, Council Visioning Workshop." January 27, 2025.https://centralelgin.civicweb.net/document/129713/
[8] Lale, Brent. "'Transformative opportunity': Central Elgin brainstorming plans for former Psychiatric Hospital land." CTV News. January 29, 2025. Accessed February 03, 2025.

Township of Southwold

The Township of Southwold is located on St. Thomas' western border, with a significant proportion of the population located within a 10- to 20-minute drive of St. Thomas. Based on the 2024 MOF growth projections for Elgin County, the population of Southwold is expected to increase by 28% over the next 30 years, from 4,980 people in 2021 to 6,390 in 2051.[9] Similar to Central Elgin, part of Southwold's projected growth is due to the additional jobs that the PowerCo EV Battery Plant is anticipated to create. Another contributing factor to the Township's growth is the new Amazon facility in the Talbotville Settlement Area near St. Thomas.[10]

Township of Malahide

The Township of Malahide is located east of Central Elgin. Many residents in Malahide reside within a 30-minute drive of St. Thomas. Based on growth projections for Elgin County, the population of Malahide is expected to increase by 46% over the next 30 years, from 9,560 in 2021 to 13,970 in 2051.

Town of Aylmer

The Town of Aylmer is surrounded by the Township of Malahide, to the east of Central Elgin. Many Aylmer residents live within a 30-minute drive of St. Thomas. Based on growth projections for Elgin County, the population of Aylmer is expected to increase by 48% over the next 30 years, from 7,910 in 2021 to 11,740 in 2051.

Population Growth Summary

The primary, secondary, and tertiary markets are expected to have rapid population growth in the coming years. From 2021 to 2051, the population for these three markets is expected to increase by a combined total of 68%, reaching a population of 133,660 people.

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https://www.ctvnews.ca/london/article/transformative-opportunity-central-elgin-brainstorming-plans-for-former-psychiatric-hospital-land/

[9] Ibid.

[10] Lale, Brent. "'Future is exciting': Southwold Township mayor expects population to double in next decade." CTV News. July 10, 2024. Accessed Accessed February 03, 2025. https://www.ctvnews.ca/london/article/future-is-exciting-southwold-township-mayor-expects-population-to-double-in-next-decade/

Table 1. Market Catchment Area Population Growth Summary, 2021 to 2051

Market Catchment Area	2021 Population	2051 Projections & Forecasts	Increase (%)
Primary Market • City of St. Thomas	43,186	79,500	84%
Secondary Market • Municipality of Central Elgin • Township of Southwold	19,060	28,450	49%
Tertiary Market • Township of Malahide • Town of Aylmer	17,470	25,710	47%
Total Population	**79,716**	**133,660**	**68%**

Note: Forecast includes the net Census undercount of 2.7%
Sources: Primary market data from Growth Analysis Study (2024) by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. Secondary and tertiary market data from Hemson Consulting Ltd.'s Updated Growth Forecasts and Land Need Assessment for County of Elgin (2025), which is based on the Ministry of Finance projections from 2024.

2.3 Public and Stakeholder Engagement

2.3.1 How we Engaged

Consultation with residents, community stakeholders, Council and staff is critical to understanding current issues and future strategies for enhancing community wellness and recreation opportunities in St. Thomas. An integrated consultation strategy was developed to guide the community engagement process for this feasibility study alongside the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update. Tactics were devised to raise awareness for the projects including the creation of a project webpage on the City's website, social media, word of mouth, and an e-mail address.

Consultation activities included:

- community survey
- public input sessions (Phase 1 and Phase 4)
- input from community organizations
- youth engagement
- Council and staff engagement

The study's consultation program yielded input from nearly 3,000 respondents and 50 organizations.

2.3.2 Input Summary

The public and stakeholder engagement program has highlighted practical constraints with existing facilities, emerging needs for expanded programming and activities, and a concern that these needs will be magnified without a long-range plan to address growth.

A summary of key points has been provided below, with key findings relevant to this Feasibility Study integrated into the analysis that follows.

Note: The information and suggestions presented in this section should not be interpreted as recommendations. Community input has not been altered even in the instances where comments may incorrectly reflect the City's actual policies, practices, or service levels.

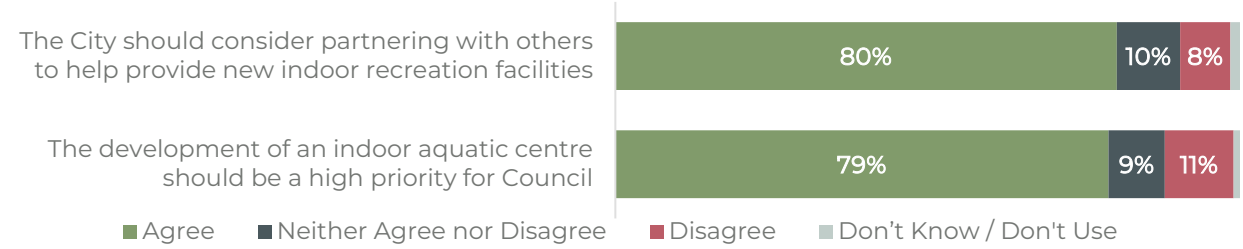
What We Heard: Highlights

1. **Existing recreation facilities** have practical constraints that cannot address the full range of current and future needs.
2. There is widespread support for a **multi-use, multi-generational recreation hub**, which is preferred over single-use solutions.
3. The top community priority is an **indoor aquatic centre** to support leisure swimming, aquatic fitness classes, and swimming lessons.
4. There is also a desire for **gymnasiums and other spaces** that can accommodate a flexible range of sports and activities.
5. As some existing facilities reach capacity, there is growing **tension around access** between organizations and activities, as well as competition for funding.
6. Facilities have a lasting positive impact on the community and should be **thoughtfully designed** and connected to the surrounding community.
7. Access to services must be **affordable to residents**. There are concerns about tax impacts, but a recognition that St. Thomas is growing.
8. The potential for **sport tourism** was raised, highlighting the role that St. Thomas can play in serving a regional market and beyond.
9. There is support for **partnerships and collaborations** that can bring value to the community.

2.3.3 Specific Feedback on a Community & Aquatic Centre

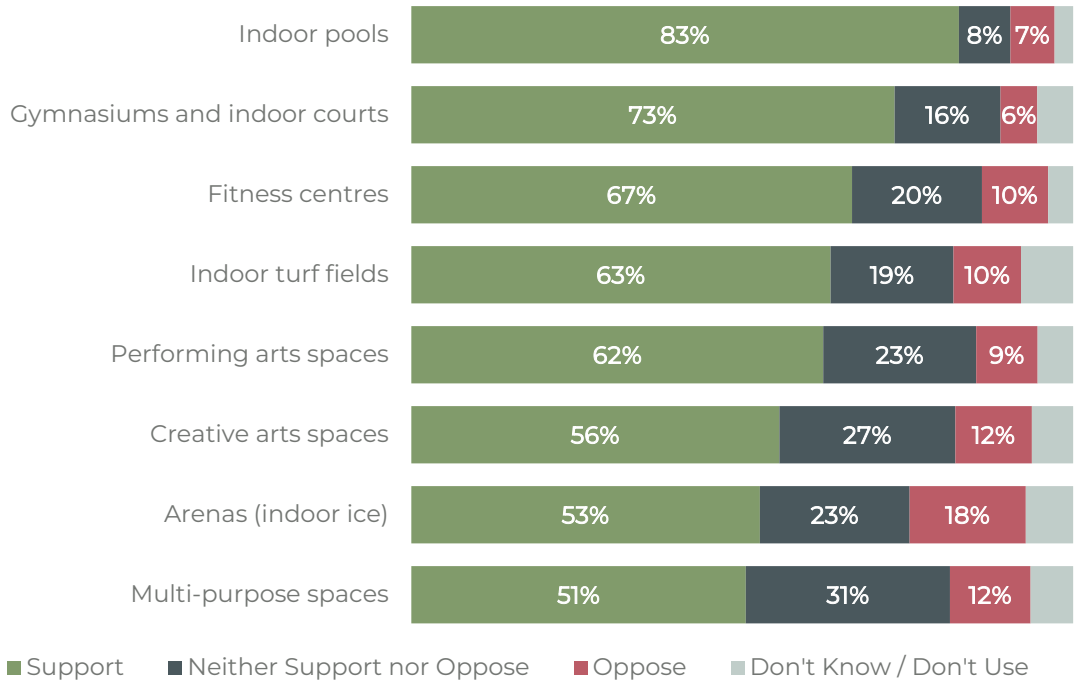
The majority (79%) of survey respondents– whether pool users or non-users – felt that the development of an indoor aquatic centre should be a high priority for Council. While current and potential pool users have higher percentages of agreement with this statement, over 50% of non-users also agree. Most (80%) survey respondents also agree that the City should consider partnering with others to help provide new indoor recreation facilities.

Figure 5. What is your level of agreement with the listed statements? (n = 2315 to 2320)



To understand what types of indoor recreation spaces residents would like to see in a new community facility, the survey asked respondents to identify the degree in which they would support or oppose additional public spending towards various facility types, as shown below. Over 50% of respondents indicated they would support additional public spending for all the facility types listed, suggesting there is overall support for expanding and improving the supply of indoor recreation offerings. The top facilities that survey respondents identified they would support additional public spending towards were indoor pools (83%) and gymnasiums/indoor courts (73%).

Figure 6. For the indoor amenities and facilities listed below, to what degree do you support/oppose additional public spending towards building new facilities or improving existing facilities? (n = 2269 to 2310)



Note: Top "other" responses for indoor facility investments included indoor playgrounds (n = 9), no additional public spending (n = 9), and a therapy pool (n = 7).

While 53% of respondents indicated they would support additional spending towards arenas, this facility type also received the most opposition towards additional investments (18% oppose). In the "other" comments for this question, some respondents indicated feeling the city has enough arenas and that investments are needed in other areas.

A full analysis of public and stakeholder input (including listings of who participated) can be found in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update (2025). This includes detailed findings around the use of and demand for indoor aquatic facilities and related recreational components.

2.3.4 Input on Draft Feasibility Study

Along with the draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update, the draft Community & Aquatic Facility Feasibility Study was made available for public review in early 2026, including two public input sessions and opportunities for written submissions. Feedback was received from approximately 130 individuals and organizations.

Broad support was received for the proposed capital projects, in particular an indoor aquatic centre that would meet community needs and aquatic sport requirements (whether a sport-friendly 25-metre pool or 50-metre pool, as well as a warm-water

therapeutic pool), gymnasiums, a sports dome, and potentially a performing arts space. Additional input was received regarding the community need for these components, along with several questions relating to implementation (e.g., timing, location, detailed design) that are better addressed through a future stage of planning.

Where appropriate, this input has been reflected throughout this final Feasibility Study. A more detailed write-up of the submissions can be found in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update.

2.4 Participation Indicators

The way in which recreation services and facilities are designed and provided is constantly evolving in response to economic factors, market characteristics, and activity trends. Summarized below are a number of observations from across the province and beyond that can be used to help anticipate future participation demands and trends.

2.4.1 Focus on Active Living and Wellness

Compared to previous generations, Canadians are placing a greater emphasis on active living and wellness, which is closely linked to healthy living and longevity. The Healthy Communities movement recognizes that recreation and leisure opportunities are vital contributors to social and personal health, thereby improving overall quality of life and enhancing the attractiveness of communities to live in. This is recognized in the Framework for Recreation in Canada, which establishes “active living” as its first goal. In turn, municipalities are focusing on strategies to improve activity levels and the health and wellbeing of their residents by expanding the range of publicly-accessible activities and interests. The aging baby boomer population is a notable segment of the population who are remaining active later in life as their interests are shifting away from traditional seniors’ activities and towards leisure opportunities focused on wellness and active living (including therapeutic recreation).

2.4.2 Growth and Rising User Expectations

Residential growth and economic development in St. Thomas and area will have a significant influence on future recreation facility needs. St. Thomas has traditionally seen many young families seeking more affordable lifestyles and new housing opportunities. Many of the city’s new residents are moving from more urbanized areas with higher levels of service, bringing with them expectations that may not always be locally attainable. Nevertheless, this growth will mean that accessible spaces and services will be needed to address increasingly busy lifestyles and growth areas, possibly including new ways of delivering services.

With projected population growth across all age cohorts, St. Thomas must ensure that there are community wellness and recreation opportunities for all age groups. In addition, greater ethnic diversity will introduce new sports and leisure activities into the community, as well

as adjusting norms around design and operations. Further, rising income disparities are creating greater interest in both low-to-no cost alternatives, as well as higher-cost and more advanced recreational training opportunities. Regular planning and trend tracking will help the City to remain nimble in responding to changing needs.

2.4.3 Spontaneous, Drop-in and Affordable Activities

Busy lifestyles are commonly identified as a barrier to recreational participation. Activities such as organized sports, particularly at competitive levels, often require considerable time commitment for training, practices, travel, and related activities. Given competing interests and an inability to commit to structured activities, there is a growing interest for casual drop-in and unstructured activities that do not require advanced registration and can be self-scheduled.

Municipalities are now evolving their service delivery models to respond to this trend by expanding the range and frequency of drop-in programs. The City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update encourages increasing the breadth of drop-in and unstructured recreational activities to respond to the time crunch experienced by residents. Additional public spaces will be required to realize this vision.

2.4.4 Emerging Activities

The popularity of recreation activities and sports changes with time and can be affected by several factors, most notably socio-economic characteristics, lifestyle trends, and the exposure and accessibility of the activity. For example, national registration figures indicate that, where once ice hockey and baseball were dominant, soccer took rise in the early 2000s, and now sports such as basketball, volleyball, and pickleball are increasing. The once popular sports of curling, racquetball, and aerobics – though still popular in some areas – have generally given way to these new and emerging activities, which also include (but are not limited to) cricket, year-round indoor athletic training, challenge/adventure recreation, and more.

2.4.5 Serving the Broadest Community Needs

It is common for municipal program, access, and user fee frameworks to demonstrate a thoughtful perspective about how services fit into the community's quality of life. An equity-based approach is commonly applied whereby taxpayers pay for the societal benefits and users pay for the individual benefits. This approach means that most municipalities focus on providing universal programs and facilities through which everyone can participate (characterized in the figure below), thereby reaching the widest number of residents across the entire age and ability spectrum.

Figure 7: Typical Municipal Approach to Service Delivery and Facility Provision



In this way, municipalities typically prioritize introductory programs, general interest activities, and other services with wide community benefits above those that serve special interests and serve fewer people (e.g., advanced programming, elite athletics, higher level competitions, etc.). Further, those activities that have the widest social and community benefits are typically the most subsidized as this investment is spread across a wide population. Generally speaking, as the skill level required for an activity increases, the percentage of the population participating lessens, resulting in fewer municipal resources allocated to the activity. **In other words, municipalities tend to focus on overall "participation", rather than "performance".**

Nevertheless, competitive development experiences and opportunities are in high demand in many communities, especially in cities with the population, infrastructure, and organizations to properly support them. Specialized, year-round facilities are sometimes needed for such activities, which limits them to larger markets. In evaluating the provision of facilities to support higher levels of play, municipalities must factor in existing and future demand, regional markets, and alignment with sport tourism goals and capabilities.

2.5 Facility Design Trends

2.5.1 Multi-Use Recreation Facilities and Community Hubs

In this era of user convenience and cost recovery, many municipalities are centralizing multiple recreational facilities under one roof. Experience in communities across Canada supports the finding that multi-use recreation facilities can provide a great number of benefits. While the specific nature and degree of these benefits will depend on local circumstances, facility design and operation, and other factors, there is no denying that multi-use recreation facilities have the potential to generate substantial economic, social, and environmental gains for communities and individuals.

The majority of recent recreation facility construction across Ontario has been in the form of multi-use venues. There are a range of benefits of multi-use facilities including the creation of a destination where all household members can gather and engage in recreation activities, thereby contributing to sport development, tourism, and operational efficiency. Some are also co-located with other civic uses (e.g., libraries, municipal offices, schools, health facilities, etc.). The benefits and unique attributes of multi-purpose facilities are more fully highlighted in the next section of this report.

The creation of "community hubs" has also been a recent focus in many communities as it offers tremendous social benefits, strengthens community cohesion, and fosters enhanced quality of life by providing a central location to deliver a range of services. A community hub is a central access point for a range of needed health and social services, along with cultural, recreational, and green spaces to nourish community life. These spaces serve as critical public infrastructure and valuable "third spaces" within our communities, offering affordable, accessible, welcoming, and comfortable spaces to meet, hangout, and play. Confronted by increasingly smaller residential units and increasing privatized spaces, the value of public space cannot be understated.

2.5.2 Accessible Facility Design

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) seeks to "improve opportunities for persons with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to their full participation in the life of the province" (c.32, s.1). Barriers are defined to include anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of disability, including physical, architectural, informational, communicational, attitudinal, technological, or policy/practice barriers. It is estimated that 27% of Canadians aged 15 and older had at least one disability (2022) and this figure is growing.[11]

[11] Statistics Canada. Canadian Survey on Disability, 2022. www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2023063-eng.htm

Applying a physical literacy lens to facility design results in spaces that can be used by everyone. Building and retrofitting recreation facilities with accessible features typically comes at a higher cost and as a result; therefore, initial construction and capital replacement costs must be considered when designing inclusive facilities.

2.5.3 Sustainable and Climate-Ready Designs

Environmental concerns are often a top-of-mind issue among Canadians and there is an increasing need to minimize our impact on the planet. Many municipalities have demonstrated environmental awareness in the design of new facilities that utilize state-of-the-art technologies (e.g., net zero greenhouse gases, photo voltaic systems, geo-thermal, etc.) to enhance energy efficiency and environmental objectives such as reducing or fully eliminating greenhouse gas emissions.

The pandemic and extreme weather events/disasters also emphasized the ability of these spaces to support not only personal and community health, but also to serve as vital response centres during extreme weather conditions (as heating and cooling centres) and times of crisis, providing refuge, support, and essential services.

Many older recreational facilities are likely to be running aging systems, many of which do not comply with current provincial building codes or health regulations within their jurisdictions. Specifically, energy efficiency and green/carbon neutral designs are a challenge for pools due to the high levels of energy and water required to operate them. Incorporating green building design standards such as LEED, along with selection of energy efficient and shared equipment, provide ways to reduce energy consumption. Preventing heat loss and re-using water discharge in appropriate means further reduces the carbon footprint of pools.

Combining a pool system with an ice plant from an arena provides a heat source for the pool from the rejected heat of the compressors. Further adding in geo-thermal and solar heating systems reduces the reliance on fossil fuels to provide a dedicated heating system to the pool system.

2.5.4 Importance of Partnerships

Municipal recreation departments are increasingly challenged to provide and maintain top quality facilities, services, and programs within defined budget envelopes. As financial pressures mount and the need for cost containment rises, many communities are examining new and creative service models including revenue-generating services and developing relationships with third-party entities.

There are many potential advantages of a collaborative service delivery approach including the sharing of risk, possible cost or service efficiencies, higher levels of service (especially for specialized services), and minimizing service duplication. The City of St. Thomas collaborates with many partners to provide various community services. In particular, third-

party partners play a key role in offering community access to facilities and providing valued-added services.

2.6 Benefits of Multi-use Facilities and Community Hubs

Multi-purpose facilities are typically better able to meet community and individual needs and the City's overall objectives than single-use facilities. The potential benefits of multi-use community hubs are summarized below.

1. Multi-use facilities can be transformational

Multi-use facilities represent a significant monetary investment. In addition to enhanced service levels, these facilities can have a transformational impact on communities. When done right, they can help to address broader economic, health, and social outcomes ranging from sport tourism to community revitalization and beyond.

Investment in recreation facilities should be part of a larger vision for the City as this can provide significant benefits to the local quality of life and economic success. Quality recreation opportunities are known to be key factors that attract and retain residents and business.

2. Multi-use facilities are more efficient and provide value for money

On a per square foot basis, larger facilities are typically more cost efficient to build and operate than single-use venues due to economies of scale. Operationally, multi-use facilities allow for efficient use of resources for facility operation through staffing, support spaces (reception, lobby, parking, etc.) and more. Modern facilities are also more energy efficient and require less short-term maintenance.

3. Multi-use facilities can serve more people and serve as community destinations

The effectiveness of any recreation facility is highly dependent on its location, design, offerings and management. Multi-use facilities offer a critical mass and vibrancy that attracts users at a higher rate. As "one-stop shopping" destinations that respond to a broad range of users, their usage is greater than the sum of the parts. Facilities with spaces and activities that generate usage throughout all hours of the day tend to attract the greatest number of users and can serve as important community destinations.

Conversely, smaller facilities tend to be more intimate, allowing for strong local connections. As most are not as well utilized as larger facilities, local solutions are often sought to maximize utilization and develop neighbourhood-centric programming.

4. Multi-use facilities attract tournaments and events

Multi-use facilities are better positioned to attract and host events and tournaments, which can boost tourism and enhance local program and sport development. Residents can take

pride in their recreational facilities as they invite groups from afar to visit the area and make use of first-class facilities.

With many other municipalities in the province having recently invested in new and expanded facilities, there is substantial competition for sport tourism, economic development, and growth. Sustainable, functional, and attractive recreational facilities would help to position the City to maximize its potential.

5. **Multi-use facilities are better equipped to serve all ages and abilities, including equity-denied populations**

Multi-use facilities allow for a wide variety of spaces and activities that respond to a broader range of residents, as well as greater potential for barrier-free spaces and quality public spaces. For example, ice organizations are seeking space for dryland training to supplement their on-ice program and for pregame warm-up – gymnasiums, fitness rooms, and multi-use activity spaces allow for this.

Through their inclusive and intergenerational spaces, larger facilities allow for cross-programming, allowing for multiple family members to participate at one time (e.g., field sports, walking the track, drop-in activities, programs, etc.). A lack of free time is a persistent barrier to participation and multi-use facilities are an effective mitigating measure as they offer multiple opportunities for people of all ages (often simultaneously, which is a key benefit for families that are time-pressed).

6. **Multi-use facilities offer more opportunities for year-round use**

Many older sports facilities are well used for six months of the year and severely under-utilized for the off-season. These facilities directly serve a minority of the City's residents, though the number rises when family members and spectators are included. Like all public facilities, recreation facilities have the potential to provide access to a broader range of recreational and community activities that can be enjoyed by people of all ages, abilities, and interests. The role that these facilities play in the community can be amplified through various upgrades, programs, events, and neighbourhood involvement, making them true multi-purpose facilities. Opportunities to enhance community use throughout the year, co-located with other recreation spaces should be promoted.

7. **Multi-use facilities allow for co-located services and partnerships**

Larger facilities create a critical mass that can also enhance the attractiveness of private sponsorships, concessions/retail sales and leased commercial spaces, offering opportunities to improve revenues streams if desired. They are also appealing to social services and agencies, such as child care, public libraries, and other governmental and non-profit agencies, encouraging them to co-locate under one roof to serve the needs of the community.

8. Multi-use facilities are more flexible and responsive to changing trends

The extra space afforded by larger facilities translates into improved flexibility for changes season-to-season and year-to-year as trends and programming needs evolve. Combined with the application of contemporary standards and thoughtful design, this increases the facility's relevance and longevity. Flexible multi-purpose spaces are highly desirable for dryland training, tournament support, meetings, emergency response, and more.

9. Multi-use facilities promote physical activity, social wellbeing and inclusion

Communities are increasingly placing a priority on robust, highly functional public spaces that are fully accessible. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) requires that municipalities remove physical barriers within municipal facilities by 2025, particularly with respect to entrances, elevators, washrooms, etc.

Modern recreation facilities contain multiple high-capacity components, large public space lobbies, well lit spaces with access to natural light, energy efficient systems, and access to outdoor spaces. These amenities help to maximize the user experience. The provision of common areas and casual use spaces such as walking tracks also helps to increase visits during non-peak hours as residents use the facility to meet friends or as part of their daily routine.

These benefits extend beyond recreation and sport to outcomes involving community engagement, social connections and personal health, wellness and physical activity for all residents. Multi-use facilities also attract a more diverse customer base, fostering understanding, awareness, connectedness, and reduced isolation.

As older adults and seniors seek expanded health and wellness activities, existing facilities will struggle to meet the programming needs of everyone within this age group. The diversity and multiplicity offered by larger multi-use facilities creates an excitement and vibrancy that is not normally achieved in single purpose facilities.

3 Facility Component Analysis

Community recreation services play an important role in the daily lives of St. Thomas residents and demonstrate the City's commitment to promoting physical activity, healthy lifestyles, skill development, athletic competition, community building, and economic growth. There is a mounting need to support new and expanded recreation spaces to accommodate the city's growing population.

This section reviews the local provision of major indoor community recreation facilities through a qualitative and quantitative assessment, guided by the local planning context and the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Recommendations for amenities outside the scope of this Strategy can be found in the City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update.

3.1 Guiding Principles for Facility Provision

A set of principles have been developed to guide the assessment of facility components and implementation of this study. The principles are supported by public and stakeholder input and are consistent with community priorities as documented in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan update and other foundational studies.

These principles are core directional statements intended to support decision-making relating to the provision of major community recreation facilities. They are to be interpreted as a set; no one particular principle takes priority over another.

New community and aquatic facilities in St. Thomas will be:

1. **Impactful:** Facilities and services will enhance community recreation, health, and social outcomes.
2. **Integrated:** Spaces will be designed as multi-use hubs that are year-round destinations for the community.
3. **Affordable:** Affordable activity and program options will be supported, especially for local youth, families, and seniors.
4. **Collaborative:** Where appropriate, partnerships that create synergies, leverage resources, and protect public interests will be fostered.
5. **Sustainable:** Facilities will be designed and operated in a way that is financially and environmentally sustainable for the City and residents in the long-term.

In order to achieve these principles, the City and its partners are encouraged to provide one or more community facilities, potentially phased to align with growth. These facilities

should include a variety of multi-purpose spaces that can be programmed for a range of aquatic, sport, fitness, and community uses.

3.2 Facility Component Identification and Assessment

3.2.1 Components Assessed

The public and stakeholder engagement process yielded a wide variety of requests for new or additional community, recreation, and aquatic facilities to include in a new community centre. Input from this process also served to create as short-list of spaces that have been assessed further through this Feasibility Study.



Aquatic Centre:

- Therapy Pool
- Leisure/ Teaching Pool
- Competition Pool (25M to 50M)



Community Centre:

- Gymnasiums
- Multi-Purpose Spaces
- Wellness Centre
- Indoor Ice Pads
- Library Branch
- and more (walking track, outdoor amenities, youth/seniors spaces, etc.)



Sports Dome:

- Indoor Turf Fields
- Indoor Sports Courts

3.2.2 Assessment Methodology

Through a coordinated planning process involving the City's 2025 Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update, potential facility components have been assessed against a series of factors to enable an evidence-based decision-making process that focuses on demonstrated needs and community priorities. Key considerations include:

a) guiding principles and project goals (e.g., community benefits);

b) municipal service mandate and service provided by alternate providers;

c) public and stakeholder input;

d) forecasted population growth and identified planning targets;

e) industry trends and demographic indicators – markets should be catchment-based and consider both local and regional populations;

f) availability, condition, and usage profiles of existing facilities in the city; and

g) overall financial viability (e.g., available funding, partnerships, cost-sharing potential, value for money spent, etc.).

Several of these factors are documented within the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update, which should be read in combination with this Feasibility Study to provide a fulsome overview of the planning context (public input, growth forecasts, trends, other providers, long-term requirements, etc.). **An effort has been made not to duplicate all findings herein, but rather this section highlights facility needs identified through the Master Plan and expands on the strategies for delivering on these needs over time.**

3.3 Aquatic Centre Components

A strong and growing demand for aquatics facilities/spaces exists in the community. Currently, St. Thomas is served by the Family YMCA and – despite recent efforts by the City and YMCA to generate greater public use of this pool – this facility is unable to meet the full range of resident needs and expectations. Area residents also travel to London, Aylmer, and beyond to access aquatics opportunities.

The success and performance of indoor pools is driven largely by their proximity to people, functional and multi-use designs that can accommodate a range of activities, high quality programming aligned with demand, and co-locations with other municipal and recreational facilities (e.g., fitness, gymnasiums, libraries, arenas, etc.).

Together, the City and Family YMCA of St. Thomas-Elgin have the potential to offer a varied range of aquatic services – these services should be viewed as complementary rather than competition.

The continued availability of the YMCA pool is in the best interest of the community and the City; continued communication and coordination between all parties will be required to sustain these services for long-term public benefit.

As identified by the Master Plan Update, a new indoor community pool is also required to serve a growing city and the resulting demand for aquatic programming.

3.3.1 Economics of Pool Provision

Aquatics facilities are important and popular public recreation spaces that improve fitness and enhance critical lifesaving skills of participants (Elgin County has a higher rate of drowning compared to the province of Ontario). They are also one of the most costly types of recreation spaces that governments provide and must be carefully planned as a result.

As purpose-built year-round facilities, indoor swimming pools are highly regulated spaces that require trained staff to operate and program, all within a harsh and humid environment that can impact the longevity of building systems. Municipalities and other service providers often co-locate pools with revenue-generating business units such as fitness centres to help offset the overall building maintenance and operational costs.

Most annual indoor pool costs are relatively fixed and are not significantly impacted by usage – water filtration and air handling are just two examples of necessary operational functions regardless of whether there are swimmers in the tank or not. Lifeguarding is another notable cost, which can be impacted by the busyness of a pool as well as its design (e.g., water depth, configuration, presence of slides, etc.). Conversely, revenues are variable and will change with use – they are typically highest in the winter and when programming is running at full speed, and lowest in the summer when demand is lower due to outdoor swimming and other fitness opportunities. Swim lessons tend to offer municipalities with the greatest potential for revenue, while drop-in swim rates are more heavily subsidized.

From a capital development and design perspective, the sizes of indoor pool enclosures are becoming much larger than in previous eras. This is due in part to the increased floor areas required for AODA barrier-free spaces, as well as demand for multiple-tank aquatic centres, larger deck spaces, larger and more change rooms, etc. Larger pool buildings are correlated with higher capital costs, which are also being impacted by rapidly escalating market costs at this time.

As a result of these economics, it is important for municipalities to maximize their existing indoor pool spaces and times before building new facilities. Programming pools with multiple users and uses at one time (e.g., length swimming and lessons, etc.) is necessary to optimize operations and make the best use of taxpayer dollars and user fees.

3.3.2 Market Demand

Children and youth are the primary users of swimming pools. This age cohort generally participates in instructional programs (which generate the highest revenues for municipal pools) and generally surpasses adult participation rates for recreation swims. Industry studies frequently indicate that youth engage in swimming activities three to five times more often per year than adults. The number of children and youth in St. Thomas can be anticipated to increase as new employment opportunities emerge and the city grows, suggesting that this will be an important programming demographic. Design and operational considerations such as warmer water and shallower pools can help to support family fun and relaxation.

St. Thomas' population is also aging, and older adults and seniors comprise a notable portion of pool users – many are seeking activities within warmer water, shallower pools. As the city grows, fitness and warm-water swimming is projected to increase.

Population thresholds are an important indicator of potential project viability for an indoor aquatics centre and minimum levels should be met before giving serious consideration to

project advancement. Targets used in Ontario tend to be in the range of one pool per 40,000 to 45,000 persons or even higher (the planning target used for the City of London is one aquatic centre per 65,000 persons). Unique community needs related to access and program requirements, along with considerations of facility age, condition, and functionality should be at the forefront when assessing service requirements.

For St. Thomas, this means considering the primary (City), secondary (Central Elgin and Southwold), and tertiary (Aylmer and Malahide) markets as any indoor pool within St. Thomas would have a likelihood of drawing from these communities, especially residents within a 20- to 30-minute drive time and/or residents seeking unique amenities not provided elsewhere. Together, these communities had a population of 79,716 in 2021 and are projected to grow to 133,660 people by 2051.

At one indoor pool per approximately 50,000 persons, this would be sufficient to support the existing Family YMCA pool and another aquatic complex, potentially as part of the proposed Community & Aquatic Centre.

Within the region, additional service is available through outdoor pools, and municipal and non-profit pools in the City of London, Town of Aylmer, and Town of Tillsonburg. These services would be supplementary to any pool provided in St. Thomas and help to address peak needs.

Beyond general demand indicators, the City should be interested in understanding what size and arrangement of pool tanks would best accommodate anticipated needs. The following speaks to the importance of understanding the market to be served and designing a multi-tank facility to address priority uses:

- For most municipalities, **recreational and leisure swimming** comprises about half of all pool visits. Recreational and leisure swimming has the fewest barriers to participation and has the widest appeal to users. For these activities, water temperatures of between 28-30 degrees Celsius and water less than 1.5 metres deep is most appropriate.
- Furthermore, the primary market for **skill development** is children between the ages of 4 to 12, but there are also adults that are interested in honing skills. Water temperatures around 32-34 degrees Celsius are most appropriate for children under 4 years.
- **Therapeutic aquatics** can occur one-on-one with an instructor, via drop in, or through rentals where a third party provides instruction. Warm water in the range of 32-35 degrees Celsius and shallow water (less than 1.5 metres).
- Higher level **sport training** – which is available in nearby communities such as London – requires specialized amenities such as timing systems, scoreboards, underwater acoustic systems, dive tanks, and large spectator viewing areas. Cooler water temperatures in the range of 25-28 degrees Celsius are preferred for sport training activities, including fitness swimming.

3.3.3 Modern Pool Design

Through public investment in leisure facilities following the Second World War, public pools have proliferated in communities across Canada and continue to be one of the most sought-after facilities given their benefits. Noted as one of the most popular leisure activities in Canada, swimming is an essential life skill. Public pools offer a range of programming opportunities and also serve as a venue for neighbours to gather and form community bonds, going well beyond what can be offered within private backyard pools and area lakes.

However, many aquatic facilities across Canada are nearing end of life and require significant reinvestment to meet changing user expectations and provide safe and relevant environments for aquatic activities. The 2019 Canadian Infrastructure Report Card found that 22% of 25-metre indoor pools in urban communities were in poor or very poor condition[12].

Traditional pool layouts were generally limited to a rectangular shape with a length of 25-metres (or in some cases 25 yards). However, recent trends in pool construction and retrofitting have seen an evolution in public pool design that offers more variety and that accommodates a growing diversity of users (often supported by multiple tanks with different water temperatures), thereby raising the bar in facility quality. Cities across the Province are responding to demands for modern amenities, including (but not limited to) installing universal change rooms, improving accessibility (e.g., ramps and zero depth entry, etc.), providing warmer pool temperatures, adding waterplay features, incorporating natural light to view the outdoors, and updating viewing galleries, washrooms, and showers.

Research suggests that many residents are interested in high quality aquatic facilities that offer recreational swimming opportunities (often characterized by warm water tanks, water park features, spacious decks and change facilities, etc.). In some larger communities, requests have also been received for salt water pools (replacing chlorine or ozone), wave pools, platforms and deep wells for competitive diving, and 50-metre (Olympic) pools for training and competitive swimming.

New aquatic centres typically have multiple tanks, allowing for different water temperatures and a greater variety of programming under the same roof.

In modern aquatic facility designs, a secondary tank is commonly paired with the traditional rectangular pool to expand leisure and recreational opportunities, while still accommodating land and/or competitive swimming. Though usually smaller and shallow, the secondary tank may have no predefined shape or size and many are uniquely designed from one location to another. This tank can serve a number of purposes including a leisurely lounge tank with associated water slide and spray features, a warm water tank to facilitate

[12] http://canadianinfrastructure.ca/en/index.html

programming for children, older adults, and those with disabilities, or a tot-teaching tank that provides a safe and comfortable environment suitable for younger learn-to-swim users. Moveable floors and/or bulkheads can help to customize rectangular or leisure tanks for a variety of activities, including lessons and aqua-fitness programs. The most successful indoor aquatic centres include a variety of features that are designed to accommodate all ages and abilities.

Some other recent trends in modern pool design components include:

- Entry ramps or wide stairs in place of ladders;
- Universal change rooms;
- Warmer water pools with jets and benches to support therapeutic benefits;
- Larger shallow area and/or teaching steps; and
- Increased natural lighting.

Figure 8: Aquatic Centre (8-lane 25M pool), City of Orillia

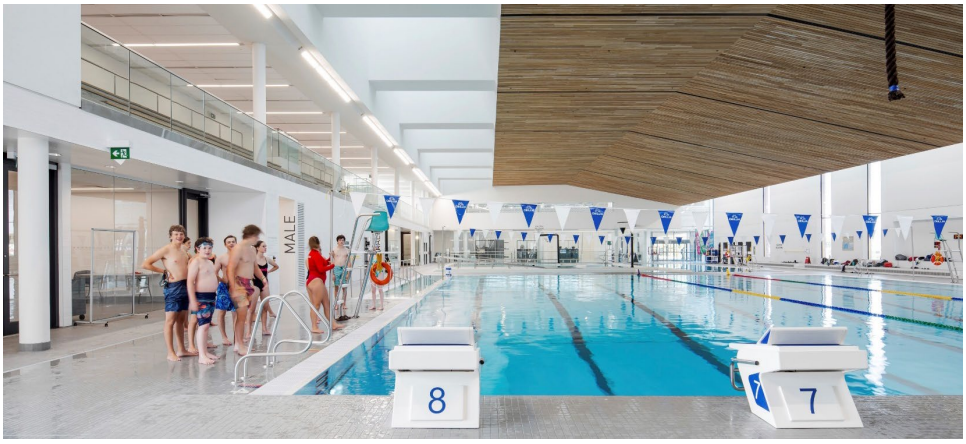


Figure 9: Wellesley Community Centre (leisure/tot pool), City of Toronto



Today's pools are designed to accommodate a larger number of bathers than the traditional rectangular pool layout, better suiting recreational swimming (particularly amongst children), learn to swim programs, and aquatic therapy to some degree. The trade-off is that many of these designs are unable to accommodate the full needs of competitive aquatic clubs and athletes.

The range of typical pool design types are identified below, followed by a table illustrating the minimum requirements for common aquatic activities.

Table 2: Typical Municipal Pool Designs

Pool Type	Description
Competition Pool	Large rectangular tank pool, potentially supported by separate warm-up pool. Provincial and national competitive swimming meets require a 50m tank with 8 or more lanes and higher technical standards, while sport training and local competitive swimming meets require a 25m tank with 6 or more lanes (at minimum). Deeper tanks can accommodate synchronized swimming, water polo, diving, etc. Water temperature is cooler (e.g., 25 to 28 degrees Celsius or 76 to 82 degrees Fahrenheit). *Local example: Canada Games Aquatic Centre (London)*
Community Pool (25m)	Rectangular tank (25m) that can be used for instruction, recreational swimming, and training. May be used for regional or invitational competitions. Rectangular tank with a minimum depth of 1m (deeper at starting blocks). Water temperature can vary depending on programming (e.g., 28 to 29 degrees Celsius or 82 to 84 degrees Fahrenheit . *Local example: Family YMCA of St. Thomas-Elgin*
Fitness Pool	Used predominantly for length swimming, a fitness pool would be up to 25m in length, but only 3 or 4 lanes wide (not suitable for competition), possibly with a separate pod for recreational swimming. Water temperature is at most 28 degrees Celsius or 82 degrees Fahrenheit. *Local example: None*
Teaching Pool	Variable design that accommodates swimming lessons and classes, as well as casual play. May have movable floor to accommodate different depths. Water temperature is around 28 to 30 degrees Celsius or 82 to 86 degrees Fahrenheit. *Local example: Startech.com Community Centre, small pool (London)*
Leisure Pool	Typically, free-form tank intended for recreational play by children and families. Water depth may range from 0m to 1m or more. May incorporate features such as beach entry, sprayers, water umbrellas, bucket dumps, slides, climbing walls, etc. May be stand-alone or combined with fitness or therapeutic pool to create hybrid design. Water temperature is typically around 31 to 33 degrees Celsius or 88 to 92 degrees Fahrenheit. *Local example: South London Community Pool (London)*

Pool Type	Description
Wave Pool	Rectangular or free-form tanks with mechanically generated waves. Depth typically ranges from 0m (beach entry) to 1m or more. Often developed as part of larger aquatic or entertainment complex intended to attract children and families. Water temperature is typically around 30 to 32 degrees Celsius (86 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit). *Local example: None*
Therapy Pool	Modestly-sized tanks used largely for self-administered rehabilitation or therapeutic purposes. Design can also accommodate older adult aqua-fitness classes and tot swim lessons. Water temperature is typically around 32 to 35 degrees Celsius (or 90 to 95 degrees Fahrenheit), depending on programming. Accessible entry is a must. *Local example: St. Thomas-Elgin General Hospital (pool closed)*
Hot Tubs / Whirlpools	Small tanks (generally with capacities of 12 people or less) with very warm aerated water (up to 40 degrees Celsius) intended for relaxation. Generally not suitable for children. *Local example: Family YMCA of St.Thomas-Elgin (hot tub)*

Source: Adapted from City of Greater Sudbury, Therapeutic Pool Study (2014)

Table 3: Typical Pool Types for Common Aquatic Activities

Activities	Pool Type (minimum requirement)	Other Considerations
Recreational Swimming and Aquafit	Fitness Pool, Teaching Pool, Leisure Pool, Therapy Pool	Warmer water temperatures (28+ degrees Celsius) are preferred; may be supported by hot tubs/whirlpools
Instruction (lessons and aquatic leadership)	Fitness Pool, Teaching Pool, Leisure Pool	Warmer water temperatures (28+ degrees Celsius) and variable depths are preferred
Sport/Club Training	Competition Pool: 25m tank with 6+ lanes (preferred)	Provision of starting blocks, timing systems, etc.
Swimming – Regional Competitions	Competition Pool: 25m tank with 6+ lanes	
Swimming – Provincial Competitions	Competition Pool: 25-50m with 8+ lanes	Spectator seating, deck space, and support spaces increases with the level of competition
Swimming – National Competitions	Competition Pool: 50m with 10 lanes and 25M 8 lane warm-up pool	
Artistic/Synchro Swimming Competitions	Competition Pool: 50m with 8+ lanes (provincial); 50m with 10 lanes and 25m 8 lane warm-up pool (national)	Deeper water required

Activities	Pool Type (minimum requirement)	Other Considerations
Water Polo Competitions	Competition Pool: 50m with 8+ lanes	Deeper water required
Lifesaving Sport	Competition Pool: 25m tank with 6+ lanes (preferred)	Deeper water required
Diving Competitions	Competition Pool: 50m with 8+ lanes	Diving boards and/or platforms required, along with appropriate depth

Sources: Adapted from Aquatic Sports Council (Ontario) – see **Appendix A** – and Swimming Canada Guidelines; reference should be made to source documents for additional details and technical requirements.

Various **sectors** are involved in the provision and operation of indoor aquatic facilities and certain aquatic facility designs are common within each sector. For example:

- **instructional and recreational pools** are typically provided by municipalities (consistent with program mandates that focus on introductory activities, children/youth, and seniors);
- **therapeutic pools** are often associated with the health care sector;
- **wave pools and indoor water parks** more often provided by the hospitality and private entertainment sector; and
- **specialized training and competition pools** are more frequently provided by post-secondary institutions and larger municipalities that can absorb their higher costs, although they can also be used for municipal recreation programs and activities when not in use for other activities (noting that the pool depth and temperature may be less than satisfactory for some uses/users).

3.3.4 50-metre Indoor Pool Demand

Note: In August 2025, the City of St. Thomas Community and Aquatic Centre Steering Committee directed that consideration be given to the need and potential impact of a 50-metre competition pool. While this study does not identify a 50-metre pool as a priority at this time, further research has been completed and is included as an Addendum to this report.

In January 2025, the Aquatic Sport Council of Ontario released a white paper titled "Building More Aquatic Centres in Ontario", indicating an urgent need for Ontario to invest in more and larger recreational aquatic facilities, such as 50-metre pools. The report finds that Ontario is falling behind other Canadian provinces in the delivery of long-course training and competition opportunities, and that 50-metre pools can enhance economic (sport tourism), health, and community outcomes.

There are approximately nineteen 50-metre indoor pools in Ontario, about half of which are owned by municipalities and half that are owned by universities. Of this, only three 50-

metre pool venues have been built since 2000, all with the help of senior government funding to support international games bids.

No Ontario municipalities have built 50-metre pools on their own in at least the last 25 years due in large part to their high capital and operating costs. While 50-metre pools can accommodate many local needs alongside those for higher-level training and competition, their design and cooler water temperatures do not appeal to swimming lessons for younger children, aquafit programs for older adults, family recreational swims, and therapeutic uses.

Recognizing that municipalities cannot afford to build facilities of this magnitude on their own, the report calls for the Province of Ontario to establish a fund to support the construction of 50-metre pools. However, a large regional market is required to sustain such a pool. With two 50-metre indoor pools in the region (the Canada Games Aquatic Centre and Western University pools in London) and others located in southwestern Ontario (Windsor, Waterloo, Guelph, Brantford, etc.), the area is already well served by long-course pools.

Given the current availability of pools, the Aquatic Sport Council of Ontario has not identified southwestern Ontario as one of its eight key focus areas for 50-metre pool construction.

Overall interest from the St. Thomas community in a 50-metre pool has been low, although letters of support for a new pool complex have been received from some adjacent municipalities and user groups. The top aquatic activities that residents are interested in (recreational swimming, lessons, and aquafit) are all best accommodated in 25-metre pools and warmer-water leisure tanks. Local swim teams lack the membership to support a long-course pool and would be better served by a new 25-metre tank that can be properly designed to support an annual regional/invitational meet, should there be interest in hosting one.

One potential vision for a 50-metre pool in St. Thomas is for the facility to serve as a regional training centre and sport tourism destination, along with offering the community programs that would typically be provided within a 25-metre tank. Part of the rationale for this was the concern expressed about the long-term viability of other pools in the area (such as the Ontario Police College, Terrace Lodge, YMCAs, Aylmer outdoor pool, etc.) and that these will not be able to serve the community reliably going forward. Achieving this vision would mean securing additional funding and usage above what would typically be included in a 25-metre, multi-tank pool. This may include government grants for initial construction, initial and ongoing funding sponsorships from area businesses, and opportunities to attract long-term tenants (such as swim teams, health and wellness services, and other community partners). This vision would likely only be pursued if unique and non-traditional partnerships and sustainable funding options are able to be established to the City's satisfaction; if not, scaling back to a more traditional municipal aquatic centre design would be necessary.

Currently, within the region, opportunities to train within a 50-metre environment are offered by the London Aquatic Club, a larger organization that has trained several athletes for national and international competition. The City of London's Canada Games Aquatic Centre hosts regional and provincial meets for swimming, diving, water polo, and artistic swimming, but does not get many requests for national and international meets. These higher-level competitions are held at facilities such as the Toronto Pan Am Sports Centre (which contains two internationally-sanctioned 50-metre pools, a separate diving well, and dryland training centre; this facility is home to several provincial aquatic sport teams) and the Windsor International Aquatic and Training Centre (which contains a 71-metre 10-lane pool with moveable bulkheads, as well as an indoor water park).

While 25-metre and 50-metre pools can support many local to regional meets and activities, sanctioned events (especially those at the provincial, national, and international levels) have more specific requirements relating to pool depths/dimensions, deck space, technical supports, and the availability of additional warm-up tanks (25 to 50-metre). Sport hosting capabilities beyond the pool (e.g., nearby accommodations, tourism infrastructure, proximity to transportation networks, etc.) are among other considerations for major event hosting. It is for these aforementioned reasons why pools in Toronto, Windsor, and Ottawa are chosen to host the majority of major meets in Ontario.

A listing of standards and programming considerations by pool type are contained in **Appendix A**. These and other relevant specifications should be considered as the City moves forward with the design of the proposed facility.

Municipalities typically provide pools to support community participation, including instructional and recreational swimming activities. Conversely, facilities focus on performance – such as athletic training and competition activities – are most often delivered by other sectors, sometimes in partnership.

On this basis, a "sport-friendly" 25-metre (with 8 lanes) and warmer-water pool complex capable of accommodating community and sport use is the minimum component that should be considered by the City. The potential to expand the scope of this project to include a 50-metre pool (along with a warmer-water pool and potentially a warm-up pool) would require unique/non-traditional partnerships and sustainable long-term funding options. Options for a 50-metre pool have been examined through an addendum to this report should the City decide to further consider this possibility.

3.3.5 Therapeutic Pool

The St. Thomas-Elgin General Hospital (STEGH) therapy pool, which recently closed, has left many residents wanting a replacement. While therapeutic pools are not considered a core municipal service due to their connection to the health sector, a new warm-water pool can be designed as a barrier-free facility that can accommodate children's swim lessons, aquatic fitness, and post-rehabilitation programs for the general population. This pool

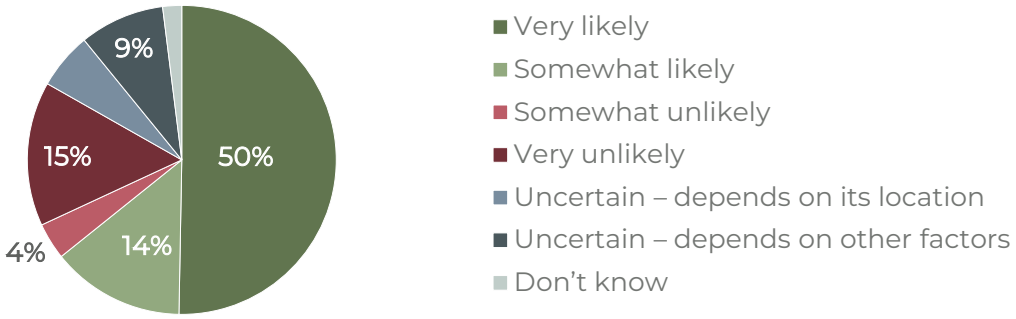
would require shallow-water (less that 1.5 metres) and a water temperature of 32 degrees Celsius (90 degrees Fahrenheit) or more.

Community input supports the provision of a warm-water pool similar to the STEGH therapy pool that can offer programming and activities to priority populations. Contemporary pool design practices suggest that such a pool should be designed for broad use and be included within a future multi-tank aquatic centre. Consideration of partnerships in the programming of this tank should be considered and evaluated to ensure that it is achieving its desired outcomes, including but not limited to therapeutic recreation.

3.3.6 Community Input

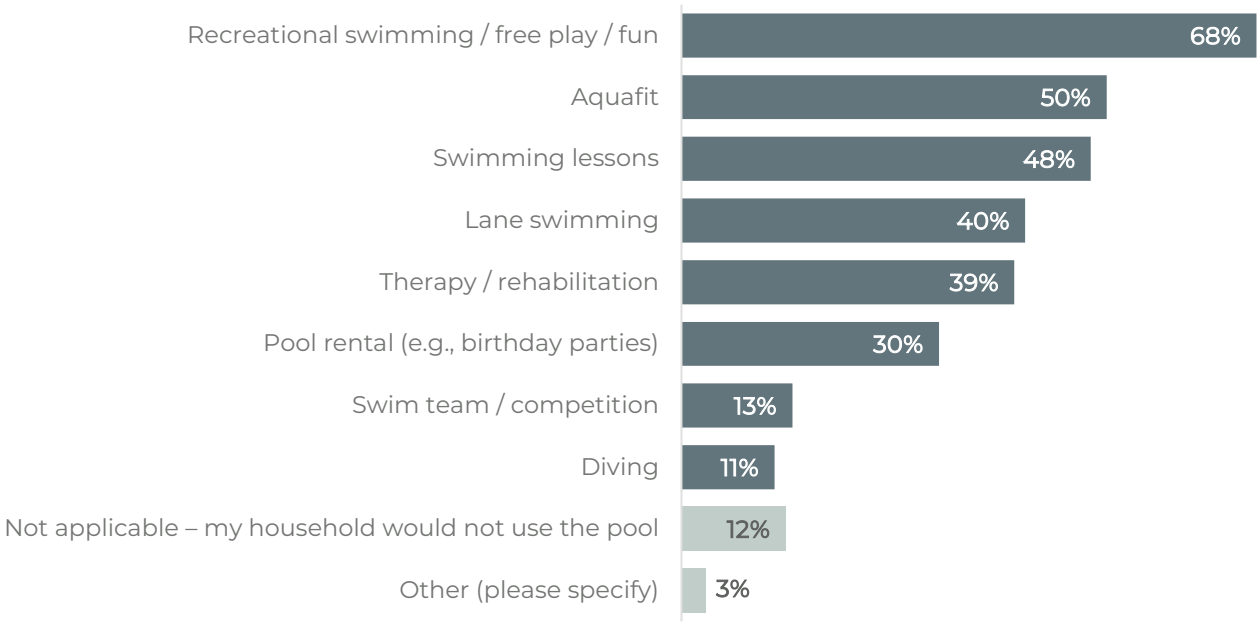
The majority of respondents (64%) indicated that they would be very likely or somewhat likely to use a new indoor pool, suggesting that this facility would be well utilized if it were developed. Findings also suggest that a new indoor pool in St. Thomas has the potential to significantly increase participation amongst current pool non-users. Nearly half (45%) of respondents whose households have not used an indoor pool in the past 12 months indicated they would likely use a municipal indoor pool if one were built. A high percentage (85%) of Family YMCA pool users also indicated interest in using a future City indoor pool.

Figure 10. If the City were to develop an indoor pool, how likely would you and your household be to use it on a regular basis (once a month or more)? (n = 2215)



The activity that most respondents (68%) indicated their household would use a new indoor pool for were recreational uses (e.g., free play, fun, casual swimming). The top 'structured' activities respondents would use an indoor pool for would be aquafit (50%) and swimming lessons (48%). Swim team / competition uses ranked much lower at 13%.

Figure 11. If the City were to develop an indoor pool, what activities would you and your household use it for? (select all that apply) (n = 2216)



Additionally, there is interest among area swim clubs for a new pool they can call home. Participation in these clubs is currently low, but could grow alongside the community, especially if a new facility designed for training and competition was available. Specifically, the St. Thomas Jumbo Jets swim clubs suggests that consideration be given to a pool that can support competitions through the following design elements:

- competition-grade racing blocks and lane infrastructure (the club indicated a willingness to assist with funding for equipment);
- timing technology;
- appropriate depth; and
- dedicated spectator viewing areas.

Having operated outdoor pools for decades, aquatic facilities are not a new line of business for the City. But new year-round facilities are needed to serve growth. A public indoor pool represents the next logical step for a community that is growing to nearly 80,000 residents by 2051.

Based on industry benchmarks and ranges, a "sport-friendly" 25-metre (with 8 lanes) and warmer-water pool complex capable of accommodating community and sport use is the preferred minimum approach for meeting community needs in St. Thomas and will be considered within the concepts advanced through this feasibility study. Further feasibility assessment may still be required, particularly concept plans as the program and site becomes more defined. Timing of facility provision will be influenced by financial capacity and land securement, but should generally be targeted for the next 5 to 10 years.

3.4 Community Centre Components

Modern community facilities require a variety of common, multi-use spaces that can deliver broad benefits across the entire population. Examples include welcoming lobbies with spaces for gathering and activation, flexible rooms for community meetings and programs, larger-format spaces that can accommodate a range of activities and sports, and even the ability to serve as response centres in times of emergency.

3.4.1 Gymnasiums

Public and stakeholder input through this Feasibility Study and the Parks and Recreation Master Plan found considerable interest in new municipal gymnasium spaces. The current space at the Joe Thornton Community Centre (JTCC) is under-sized and over-subscribed, while school gymnasiums are unable to keep up with the demand for community volleyball, basketball, pickleball, etc. on top of school functions. Further, the City's provision level is below the Ontario average of one municipal gymnasium per 35,000 residents[13]. On this basis, the Master Plan Update finds a need for 1.8 additional gymnasiums by 2051, with indications that the City is currently in a deficit situation.

A gymnasium is a high priority need in the city to accommodate local sports and expanded programming. Gymnasiums should be considered as part of any future recreation centre, and may be delivered within the proposed sport dome and/or community centre, depending on timing and desired configuration.

At minimum, it is recommended that the City provide a double gymnasium (high school size; 1 full or 2 cross-court basketball, 2 volleyball, 3 pickleball/badminton). Depending on the selected option, there may be the potential to offer additional court space to increase this to 2 basketball, 4 volleyball, 6 pickleball/badminton courts.

Co-locating a gymnasium with other community spaces would allow for cross-programming opportunities and create a hub for local activities, including children's summer camps and sport/fitness options. The gymnasium(s) should have appropriate dimensions (e.g., court space, playouts, ceiling height, etc.), infrastructure (e.g., storage, etc.), and lining to support the court sports most commonly played in St. Thomas, along with the potential to be used for events, gatherings, and other recreational activities as necessary.

A gymnasium should be included in the proposed Community & Aquatic Centre, but may also be considered within a sports dome setting if this option is pursued by the City. The latter option would allow for year-round activity under an air-supported dome shared with

[13] Statistics Canada. Table 34-10-0067-01. Inventory of municipally owned culture, recreation and sport facilities, by urban and rural, and population size, Infrastructure Canada. https://doi.org/10.25318/3410006701-eng

indoor turf/soccer at a lower capital cost than conventional construction. Sample photos are included below.

Figure 12: East Lions Community Centre, City of London



Figure 13: Indoor Courts (dome), Pickering Soccer Centre



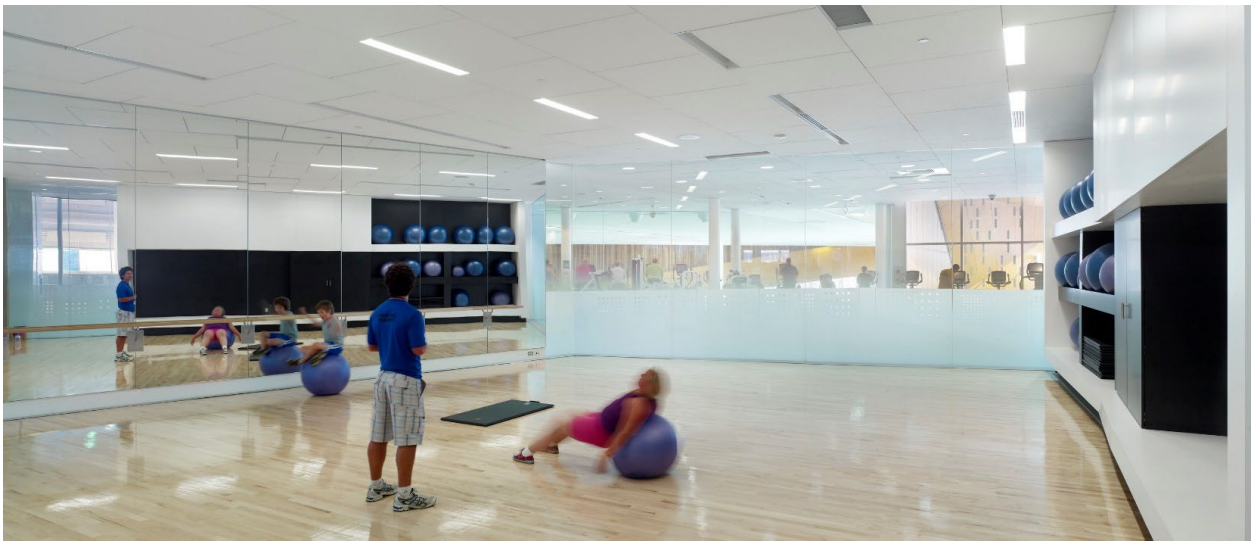
Should the City pursue both building options, the gymnasium at the Community & Aquatic Centre should be oriented and sized to support community programming, camps, and complementary activities, while the gymnasium at the sports dome would be best suited to rentals and league play. Together with high school gymnasiums, these venues could be designed to support tournaments and larger events.

3.4.2 Wellness Centre

In St. Thomas, personal fitness services are primarily delivered by membership-based providers such as the Family YMCA of St. Thomas-Elgin, private fitness operations, and the St. Thomas Seniors Centre. Together, these providers are addressing most needs in the community for organized fitness. However, the consultation program found growing demand for affordable wellness activities, including group fitness classes.

It is recommended that the Community & Aquatic Centre offer multi-use program spaces that can accommodate group fitness activities. Aside from maintaining the modest member-focused fitness area at the Seniors Centre, the Master Plan Update does not recommend that the City directly enter into the equipment-based fitness centre market. There are other capable providers already operating in this space (including the YMCA, which also has a financial assistance program to help keep costs down for those in need). Future partnership opportunities may be considered to ensure that community fitness services remain available in St. Thomas, but any dedicated fitness spaces should operate under an appropriate cost recovery model.

Figure 14: Commonwealth Community Recreation Centre, City of Edmonton



3.4.3 Indoor Ice Pads

The City of St. Thomas has a long history of supporting community ice arenas for area hockey and ice sport teams, figure skating, and recreational skating. While participation in organized ice sports is slowly declining across the country, registration with local minor sport organizations is strong, with many managing waiting lists and turning players away. These groups expressed a need for additional ice time to support their growing programs, offer additional practice time in order to remain competitive with other centres, and reduce their reliance on arenas in surrounding areas. Approximately 35 hours of additional time per week were requested, equivalent to approximately two-thirds (0.66 pads) of an arena. Demand is greatest for prime time hours, especially Monday to Thursday.

Conversely, input from the community supports the provision of an indoor aquatic centre, gymnasium, and associated multi-purpose space as a higher priority than the provision of new ice rinks given the current availability of arenas in St. Thomas and surrounding areas. On the basis that the current facilities are at capacity, population growth will be the primary driver of future demands.

The Master Plan Update finds a need for 2.3 additional ice pads by 2051, with a need for the first ice pad prior to 2036 (assuming that the popularity of these sports and current participation rates continue into the future). Arenas are best delivered in multiples of two (e.g., twin pad, quad pad) in order to achieve economies of scale in operation and support league and tournament play. The City should plan for a space that can accommodate two (2) community rinks as part of the new Community & Aquatic Centre, potentially to be delivered as part of a second phase of construction.

It is anticipated that the City will continue to maintain the three pads at the Joe Thornton Community Centre (2) and Memorial Arena (1) into the future; closure or re-purposing of these assets is not contemplated within the Master Plan's projection period. As adding one or more ice pads to either location is not feasible, any additional ice rinks would need to be part of a new complex, either delivered by the municipality or through a partnership with another provider. Although two ice pads are being recommended in the longer-term as part of a future construction phase, the St. Thomas Minor Hockey Association has requested that one rink be delivered in the first phase of construction to address short-term needs.

Figure 15: Arena, Cavan Monaghan Community Centre



3.4.4 Multi-use Program Spaces

The lack of municipal multi-use program spaces is currently limiting the City's ability to expand recreation and community programming, such as children's programs and camps, fitness classes, arts activities and performances, meetings, and much more. These needs will only become more acute as St. Thomas grows. All new or expanded community and recreation facilities should include multi-purpose spaces that can support a variety of uses ranging from direct programming to rentals.

For the proposed Community & Aquatic Centre, a minimum of two medium to large multi-purpose spaces should be provided to complement other facility components. Additional space may be required should the City meaningfully expand its breadth of recreation programming and/or if partnered spaces are included in the facility. These spaces should be designed with flexibility in mind and may include amenities such as, but not limited to, durable hardwood flooring, partition walls, mirrors, storage, kitchenette, etc.

Figure 16: Churchill Meadows Community Centre, City of Mississauga



3.4.5 Library Branch (partnership opportunity)

In September 2025, the St. Thomas Public Library (STPL) Board approved a Scoped Addendum to the 2022 Library Master Plan to update long-term space requirements. This report was intended to provide the City with direction around library facilities as it examines options for a future community centre. The Scoped Addendum and this Feasibility Study both utilize same updated population forecasts and have benefited from public engagement program undertaken as part of this broader initiative.

STPL supports the inclusion of a library branch as part of any new community centre project undertaken by the City of St. Thomas and has expressed interest in continued involvement in facility planning.

The Addendum to the 2022 Library Master Plan recommends that library services continue to be delivered out of the downtown 'main' branch, but that one or more new physical locations be provided to serve growth in the south and north of St. Thomas. This includes:

- a 10,000 to 15,000 square foot library branch by the year 2031, ideally as part of a future community centre; a location along or south of the Elm Street corridor is preferred; and
- a second 10,000 to 15,000 square foot library branch between the years 2031 and 2036, subject to a future update to the Library Master Plan and confirmation of residential growth trends.

On this basis, this Feasibility Study provides for a 10,000 to 15,00 square foot library branch as an optional component within the future Community & Aquatic Centre.

Figure 17: Audley Branch, Ajax Public Library



3.4.6 Other Spaces

As the proposed capital projects move closer to detailed design, consideration should be given to other, complementary spaces that support community needs. Examples identified to date include (but may not be limited to):

- **Indoor Walking Track** – may be an option in either the Community & Aquatic Centre and Sports Dome, but not likely required for both;
- **Outdoor Park Amenities and Spaces** – depending on the location of the facilities, there may be a need for outdoor plazas, seating areas, and a playground (at minimum), and potentially other outdoor park amenities that can benefit from the

shared site services such as washrooms, parking, security, etc. Outdoor amenities will be site-specific and overall needs are considered as part of the City's Master Plan Update;

- **Seniors/Youth Space** – the proposed multi-use spaces are expected to address the majority of broad and age-focused activities; however, a centralized space for youth and/or seniors (e.g., day-use space for Valleyview respite programs, etc.) may be necessary to support the chosen service delivery model;
- **Indoor Playground** – these spaces are increasingly being included within community centres in order to expand activities for pre-school and young children in a year-round setting;
- **Community Kitchen** – may be considered if demand grows beyond the kitchens at the Horton Street Farmers Market;
- **Culture/Theatre Space** – some interest in a performance space has been expressed by the local arts community, noting that existing spaces (mostly schools) are not able to support growing needs and may not be long-term options; the City's role in supporting this sector should be evaluated in more detail, informed by an assessment of local needs;
- **Child Care** – there may be a need for additional child care space in St. Thomas as it grows; while not a municipal responsibility, consideration may be given to a partnership involving leased space within the proposed community centre; and
- **Adventure Recreation** (e.g., rock climbing wall, etc.) – these spaces are not considered to be core required elements, but may be considered further as appropriate.

3.4.7 Support Spaces

Consistent with the planned occupancy of the proposed facility, the Community & Aquatic Centre should also contain the following support spaces at a minimum:

- lobby area and reception
- spectator viewing areas with seating (where appropriate)
- concession and/or vending
- public washrooms
- change rooms (with washrooms and showers)
- staff office and work space
- storage
- off-street parking and pick-up/drop-off area
- separate entrance/drive for service/work vehicles

Greater detail regarding these spaces will be considered at the design stage.

3.5 Sports Dome Components

Indoor artificial turf fields accommodate enhanced sport and recreation experiences that complement outdoor facilities and respond to increasing demand for year-round play and training. While the primary appeal of most artificial turf fields is for soccer, these facilities can also accommodate other field sports such as baseball, rugby, lacrosse, football, team conditioning and training, camps, and fitness pursuits. Many sports can play on smaller fields indoors through modified rules.

In addition to providing consistent access for minor sports associations, indoor fields also allow municipalities the option of delivering their own programming, leagues, and/or camps while serving sports associations and related programs, as well as those seeking occasional rentals (e.g., pick-up games, birthday parties, etc.).

Table 4: Potential Uses for Indoor Turf Fields

Field Sport Uses	Other Uses
• Soccer • Football/Flag Football • Ultimate Frisbee • Baseball practice • Cricket (modified) • Rugby • Field Hockey • Field Lacrosse • Dodgeball • Registered leagues (youth, adult) • Drop-in activities	• Day Camps • Kinderplay/Family turf time • After-school programming • Fitness and wellness activities (various) • Carpet bowling • Archery • RC/Drone flying • Track and field activities • Athletic training • Birthday parties • Events (various)

All other factors being equal, indoor turf facilities require a leaner staff team and have the potential to generate net revenues on a year-to-year basis, but can be challenged to maximize usage during the summer and daytime hours. They also have a lower capital cost and can be installed faster than traditional steel structures.

Indoor fields can be owned and/or operated by municipalities, private sector, community groups, or a combination of the three to share financial and operating responsibility. Partnership agreements between municipalities and community-based operators are typical where an air-supported structure (bubble) encloses the field. Many municipalities that have constructed permanent structures have tended to do so by integrating them with other municipal recreation facilities and usually operate such facilities autonomously given that there are already municipal staff onsite to schedule, maintain, and provide access to the fields while overhead costs are usually built into the entire facility budget.

The size of indoor turf fields varies considerably, although most usage occurs on small-sided fields that support 5v5 or 7v7 play, similar to the size of an ice pad. The number of small-sided fields offered in any one location will depend on several factors but should be driven by local demand and facility functionality considerations. For comparison, a full-size soccer field that one would see outdoors could support four indoor small-sided fields.

The consultation program identified a need for more year-round activities, including indoor sports within the winter. Gymnasiums will help to address many of these needs, but the hard-court surfaces are not appropriate for field sports such as soccer, baseball, football, etc. Input from these sports associations indicate a growing need for space particularly for soccer, as local groups are currently renting time outside of the city and cannot expand their winter programs further without additional space. Furthermore, there is considerable demand for indoor field rentals within the broader region, particularly in London where the BMO Centre (already Canada's largest indoor soccer facility) is seeking to expand.

The Master Plan Update recommends that the City work with local organizations and partners (e.g., minor sports clubs, schools, etc.) to pursue the development of an indoor sports dome with a minimum of two small-sided fields (with a total playing surface around 200 by 260 feet, for example). A larger facility may be considered depending on the size of the selected site and partnership details.

This dome could also be expanded to include indoor court sports, separated by netting, and potentially an indoor walking/fitness track encircling the space at grade. Due to the size of this facility and nature of construction, it is not necessary that it be associated with the proposed Community & Aquatic Centre and, in fact, would be better suited to a separate site that has nearby outdoor playing fields and/or other synergies.

Figure 18: Indoor Turf Field, Pickering Soccer Centre



There are various pros and cons to choosing an air-supported dome over pre-engineered steel beam construction. This option is being advanced largely due to its lower price point and future flexibility, recognizing that the City will be pursuing the Community & Aquatic Centre as its priority signature project. Notably, domes:

- are significantly less expensive to build than permanent structures;
- can offer greater flexibility as the field can be covered in the winter and be converted to an outdoor field in the summer (if appropriate);
- offer a cooler playing environment due to the lower insulation value, which some users prefer and others do not;
- offer a lower quality exterior aesthetic and are not typically well received within residential areas;
- are less attractive for use during the summer months and generally have higher operating costs due to utility usage;
- require replacement of the fabric approximately every 15 years.

4 Provision Options and Concept Plans

Based on the preceding analysis, this section identifies preliminary facility provision options and concepts for further consideration. Land and site requirements, along with costs and partnership considerations are contained in subsequent sections of this report.

4.1 Facility Provision Options

The previous sections of this report contributed to a needs assessment that supports the following components to serve a community of 79,500 persons (plus regional residents) by 2051. Future facilities should be designed to accommodate a wide range of community, recreation, and wellness activities through a variety of multi-purpose spaces that emphasize versatility.

It is recommended that these spaces be delivered within two facilities – a Community & Aquatic Centre and a Sports Dome, either on the same or separate sites. The proposed program was designed to address the guiding principles set forth in this report and to respond to the highest priority needs of the community, both now and into the future.

To provide the City with options for further consideration, two preliminary concepts have been prepared for each facility, differing in their size, breadth of components, and/or operational model. Phasing of construction will be necessary to align with funding capabilities and community needs.

Table 5: Community & Aquatic Centre

	Concept 1a: Baseline Facility	Concept 1b: Enhanced Facility
Comparison	East Lions Community Centre, London ON	StarTech.com Community Centre, London ON
Aquatic Spaces	2 tanks: 25M pool (with 8 lanes) and leisure pool	3 tanks: 25M 8-lane pool, leisure pool, and therapy pool
Community Spaces	Double Gymnasium Multi-Purpose Rooms (2-3) Indoor Playground	Double Gymnasium+ Multi-Purpose rooms (3+) Indoor Playground Fitness Centre Walking Track Youth Space
Potential future phases	Twin Pad Arena – may ultimately be on separate site Library Branch	Twin Pad Arena – may ultimately be on separate site Library Branch

Table 6: Sports Dome

	Concept 2a: Turf-only	Concept 2b: Turf and Courts
Comparison	Com Dev Indoor Soccer Park, Cambridge ON	Pickering Soccer Centre, Pickering ON
Turf Fields	2 Small-sided Turf Field	2 Small-sided Turf Fields (minimum)
Other Spaces	Support Building	Sports Courts (2 basketball, 4 volleyball, 6 pickleball courts)* Perimeter Walking Track Support Building

* note: sport courts may not be required if double gymnasium is included in proposed Community & Aquatic Centre; alternately, this space could be used to add an additional small-sided soccer field

The following spaces are excluded from all concepts as the needs assessment did not support their inclusion at this time; additional study would be required to consider these items further:

- 50-metre indoor pool (see **Addendum**)
- Water park
- Adventure recreation (e.g., rock climbing wall, laser tag, etc.)
- Cultural or theatre space
- Childcare

4.2 Building Type: Conventional vs. Membrane Structure

There are two primary building systems that may be considered by the City for the proposed Community & Aquatic Centre: conventional building construction; and tensioned membrane structures. These two building types are described below, followed by a table summarizing and comparing information for each of these building systems. Key variables have been highlighted to assist the City in choosing between various construction options.

> **Conventional buildings** typically refer to permanent structures built using customary construction methods and standard materials such as steel, concrete, brick, and wood. For decades in Canada, architects and engineers have refined and streamlined these building systems to enhance their functionality, flexibility and environmental sustainability. In a recreation setting, these buildings are frequently designed to meet a spectrum of needs ranging from sport, wellness or leisure activities, community or neighborhood events, or acting as neighborhood gathering places to promote community building. Over the past two decades, designers and contractors have developed these buildings for long-term multi-purpose use, that promote high functionality, and that integrate facility components responding to the multiple and varied needs of regional markets or the local communities.

Tensioned membrane structures are applicable to several development scenarios including rapid facility and operational deployment, semi-permanent facility needs or with increasing regularity, permanent applications. Simply, an exterior membrane is stretched and secured over a lightweight aluminum frame skeleton, that is then demised, outfitted and equipped to fulfill its intended use. Existing applications include sports facilities, warehouses, military operations, emergency response or disaster relief shelters, and temporary event spaces. One relatively local example of this system is a structure that houses the Centennial Aquatic Centre in Collingwood, Ontario – this structure was erected over an existing outdoor pool to create a year-round venue.

For the purpose of this study, it is anticipated that the proposed Community & Aquatic Centre will be a conventional building, which is the typical standard for permanent municipal recreation facilities in Canada. The City may consider other building models – such as an air-supported dome – for an indoor sports facility.

Table 7: Summary of Advantages and Drawbacks, Conventional vs. Tensioned Membrane Structure

Criteria	Conventional Build	Tensioned Membrane Structure
Development Cycle	• Longer development cycle – depending upon site conditions and design complexity, could be 24 to 36 months. • Assume that site servicing and basic landscape (parking, walkways and planting/seeding directly adjacent to building would be similar between both options.	• Relatively short development cycle – depending upon site conditions and design complexity, could be 6 to 12 months. • Assume that site servicing and basic landscape (parking, walkways and planting/seeding directly adjacent to building would be similar between both options.
Capital Cost	• Blended average for a pool/multi-purpose facility: $850 to $1,200/sf – depending on GFA and program, site, complexity. • Component costs: gym/multipurpose spaces: $700 to $800/sf; 2-basin aquatic facility: $900 to $1,200/sf (higher due to mechanical, waterproofing, HVAC complexity).	• Blended average for a pool/multi-purpose facility: $400 to $500/sf – could increase if sport specific specs. for multi-purpose spaces are equivalent to conventional build. • Tension membrane structures may not qualify for grants or subsidies offered by governments or government agencies. • This building type has a shorter life cycle and therefore will require replacement sooner than a conventional building.

Criteria	Conventional Build	Tensioned Membrane Structure
Operating Costs	• Typical to any traditional building of a similar calibre • Lots of comparable metrics for forecasting purposes • Increasing number of new technologies to contain costs (e.g. utility recapture, video surveillance, etc.). • Design flexibility can help facilitate surveillance sight lines to reduce staffing costs. • Conventional buildings require constant reinvestment to maintain the facility in a state of good repair.	• "Optional" high-performance insulation and light-colored membranes can have utilities performance like conventional construction but will add to capital costs. • Only a few comparable examples for business plan projection purposes. • No remedial painting required. • Although materials resist mold, and rust, surfaces must be scrubbed and rinsed to enhance appearance.
Operating Considerations	• Traditional facility type has well known operational implications – no learning curve. • Able to achieve high-performance standards (e.g., LEED, Net Zero Ready). • Capital cost reflects unique structural requirements for gyms and pools (e.g., one time cost for long-span beams, etc.). • Enables enhanced HVAC and dehumidification for natatoriums that maximize customer experience. • Able to apply geothermal technology for cost conservation.	• Limited comparable examples – learning curve required. • Susceptible to condensation buildup on interior surfaces.

Criteria	Conventional Build	Tensioned Membrane Structure
Customer Experience	• Properly executed, these buildings can achieve landmark status and become symbols of civic pride. • With modern building techniques, enhanced visitor experience can be achieved. • Can become a community hub or neighbourhood gathering place even for patrons not interested in building's primary function (e.g., community meetings in an aquatic centre multi-purpose room). • Modern conventional facilities are multipurpose thereby appealing to the interests of multiple family members who may wish to visit the facility at the same time to pursue different activities or programs. • Many inherent options such as acoustic treatments, etc. to enhance the customer experience.	• Less flexibility in variable design (e.g., span width is limited; multi-level construction may be complicated or limited by inherent design limitations). • More utilitarian than a conventional building and may be viewed by the public/political decision makers as a second-tier facility. • May not have the same architectural appeal as a permanent building and while durable, generally looks like a temporary facility. • Less prone to viewed by users as a neighbourhood gathering place. • Acoustics are often substandard in tension membrane structures.
Risks	• Construction cost overruns. • Timing delays due to construction materials supply line issues.	• Susceptible to vandalism. • High humidity compromises electronic equipment like computers. • If the project is a partnered facility, the value of the tensioned membrane structure will have less residual value at the conclusion of the partner relationship.
Expansion Potential	• Lots of flexibility in design and delivery of additions and expansions, especially if a phased project is envisioned at the initial design stage.	• Have expansion potential if the plan dimensions and framing geometry is replicated linearly. Additions that connect to the existing system, that intersect the geometry of the existing module, or that add or modify loading on the system can be difficult to connect. • Work must be completed by approved contractors to modify, renovate or expand building. • Following appropriate site works, certain parts of the facility can be relocated to another location.

Criteria	Conventional Build	Tensioned Membrane Structure
Environmental	• Depending upon design and equipment choices these buildings can be highly energy efficient and potentially contribute energy to the civic system. • Roof structures can be 'green' to minimize urban heat island effects, support biodiversity for pollinators, birds and native species and absorb and retain rainfall, reducing the strain on municipal storm systems. Rooftop photovoltaic systems provide zero emission energy generation and lower GHG emissions from building operations. • Structural systems using mass timber construction have a significantly lower carbon footprint, with a carbon sequestration performance that can store 1 ton of CO2 in 1 m3 of wood. • High performance building envelopes reduce heating and cooling demand and maintain stable interior temperatures. Advanced construction details that reduce thermal bridging, provide continuous air and vapour barriers and conform to new OBC benchmarks for insulation and airtightness help civic building meet Ontario sustainability mandates for future-proofing.	• The structure's lightweight components result in lower transportation costs, foundation systems and shorter construction timelines resulting in less emissions. • The aluminum frames can be disassembled and reused or recycled. • The membrane structures are often repurposed for other bulk storage or industrial purposes. • Recycling options for the coated membrane are limited and incineration may emit harmful pollutants. • The membrane is petroleum based and difficult to re-purpose. Membrane structures lack thermal mass and have a different energy use profile than buildings. • Membrane structures have limited LEED and ZCB (Zero Carbon Building) compatibility compared to mass timber construction.
Partner Potential	High – either from an operating of sponsorship/naming perspective.	Limited – from a sponsorship/naming perspective.

4.3 Preliminary Concept Plans

Preliminary concept plans have been prepared for the proposed Community & Aquatic Centre and Indoor Sports Dome in St. Thomas. As locations have not yet been selected for these facilities, the future layouts are conceptual only to show massing and inform future site selection. These and other options should be more fully explored during the detailed design stage.

4.3.1 Community & Aquatic Centre

Figure 19: Community & Aquatic Centre (Concept 1a, Baseline Facility – Phase 1)

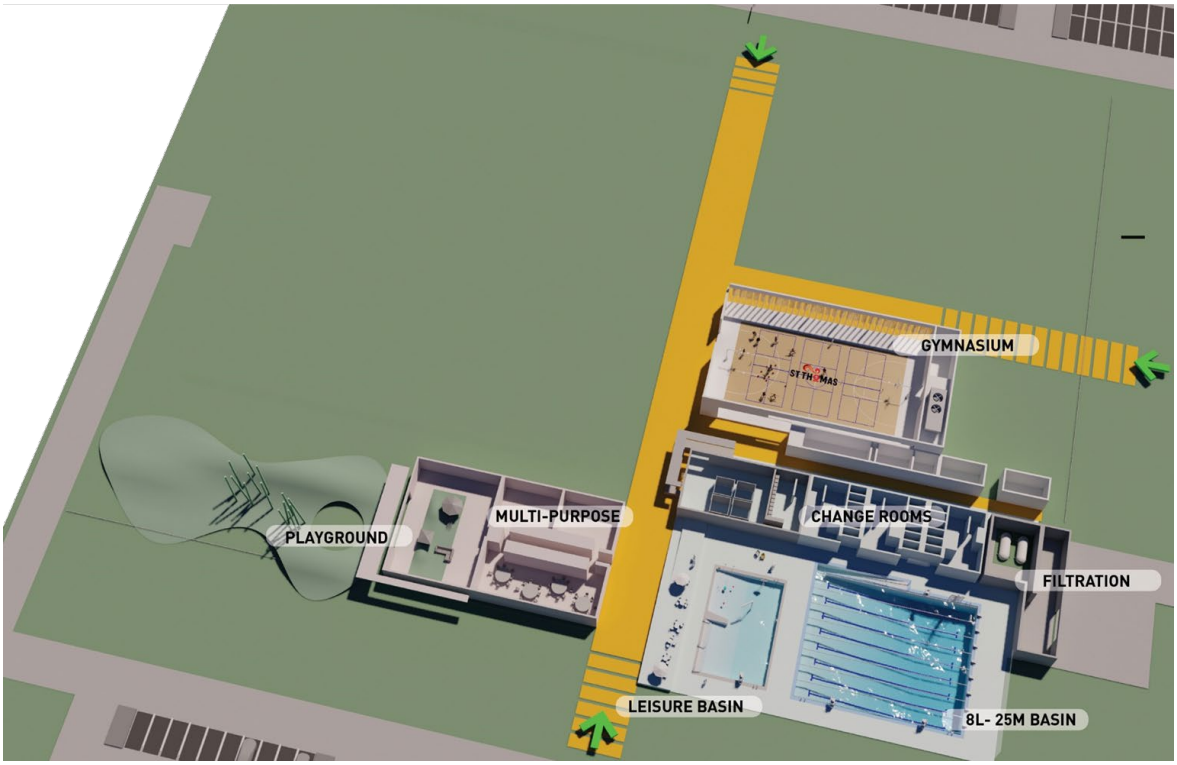


Figure 20: Community & Aquatic Centre (Concept 1a, Baseline Facility - All Phases)

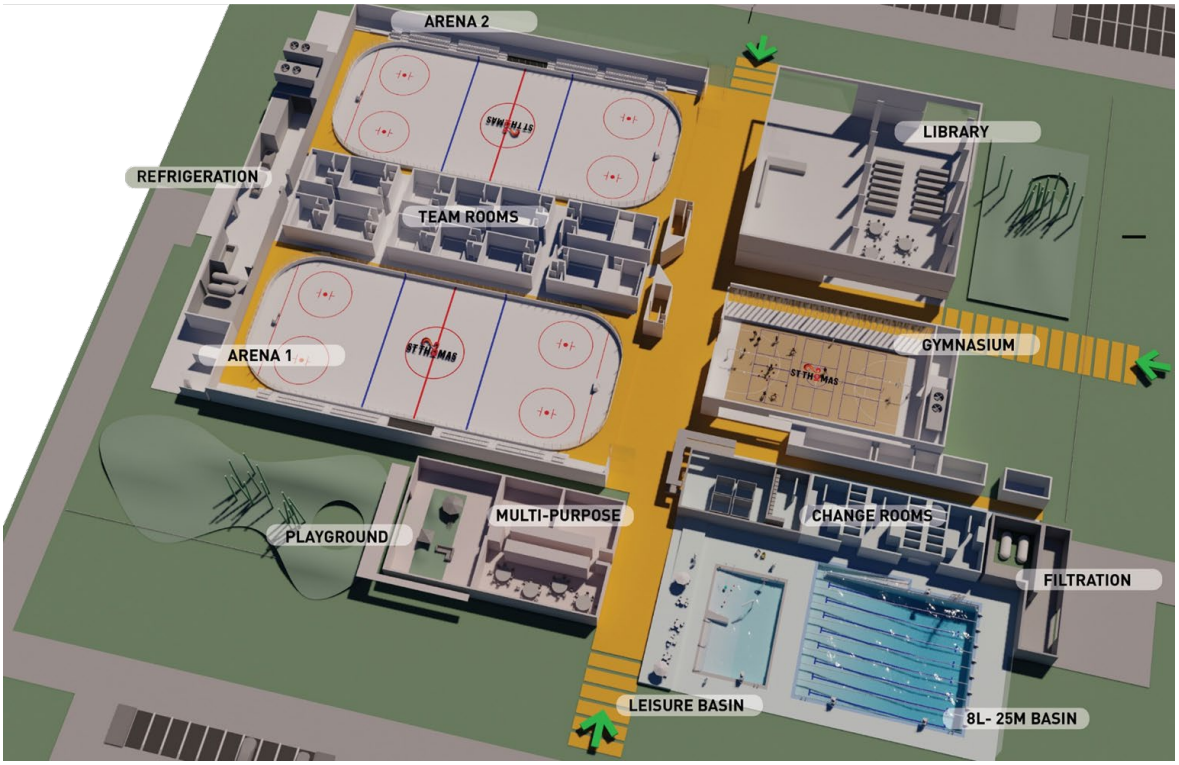


Figure 21: Community & Aquatic Centre (Concept 1b, Enhanced Facility – Phase 1)

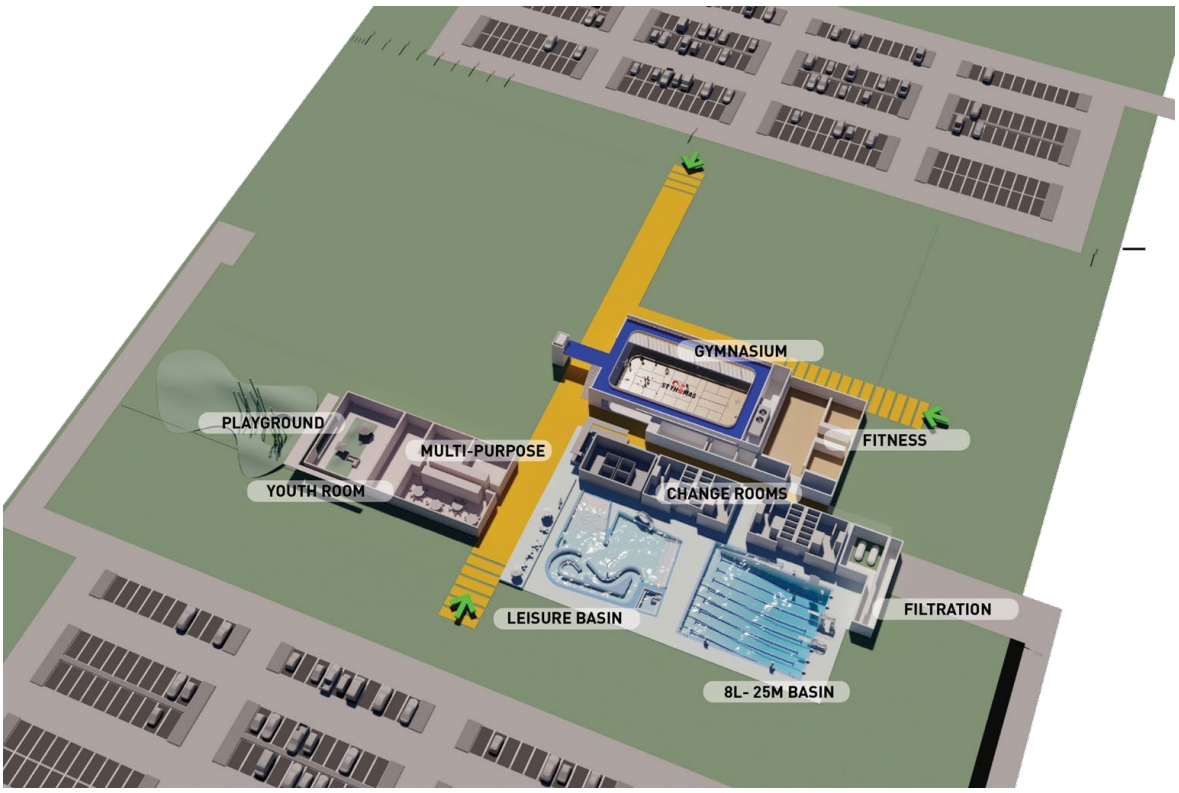
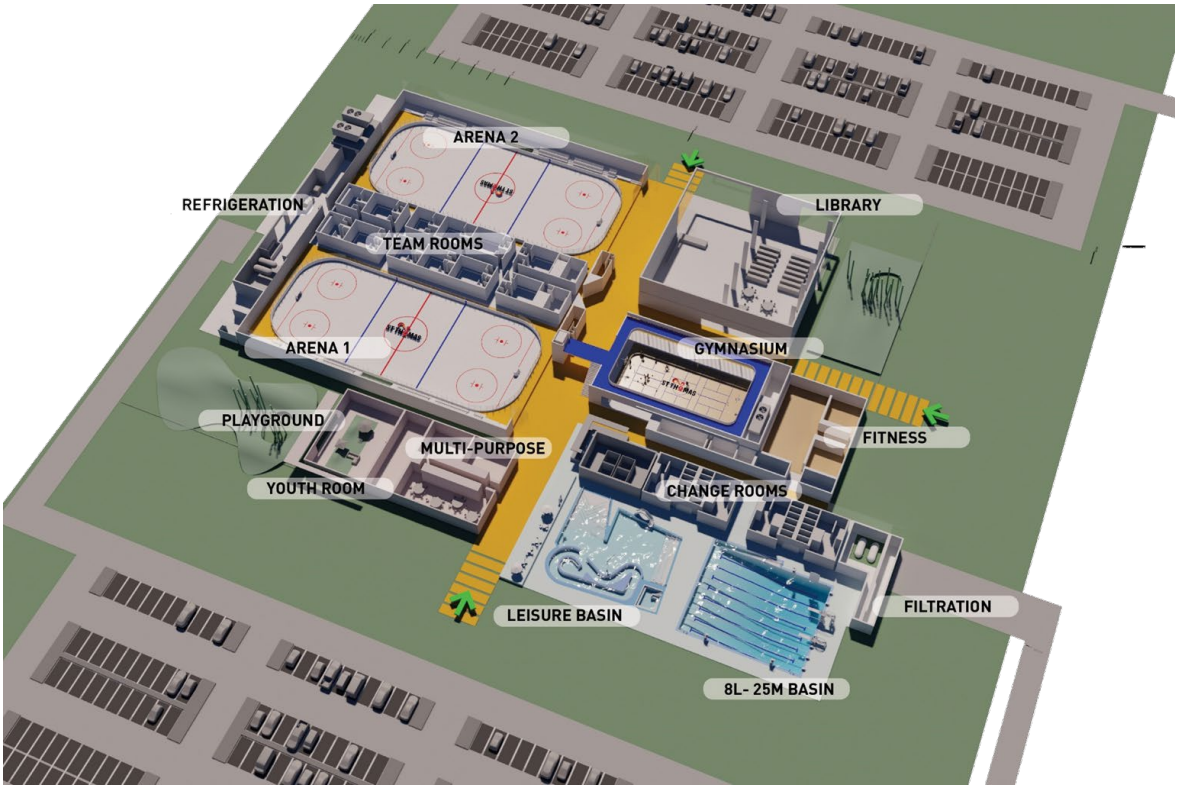


Figure 22: Community & Aquatic Centre (Concept 1b, Enhanced Facility – All Phases)



4.3.2 Sports Dome

Figure 23: Proposed Sports Dome – Comparison of Concepts 2a and 2b

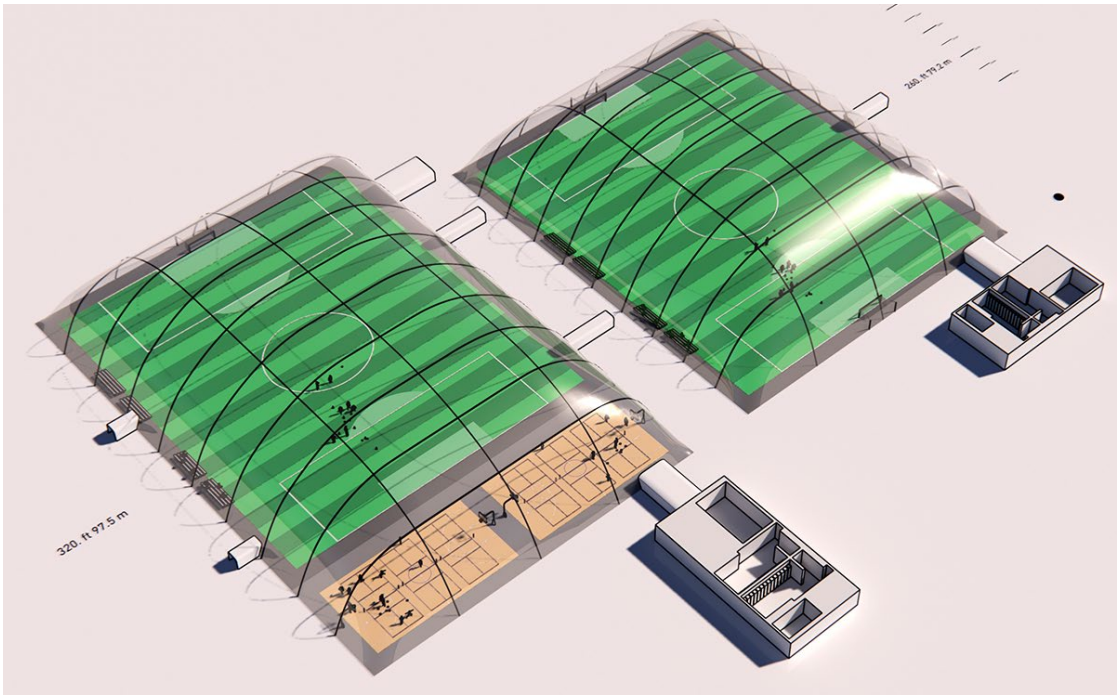
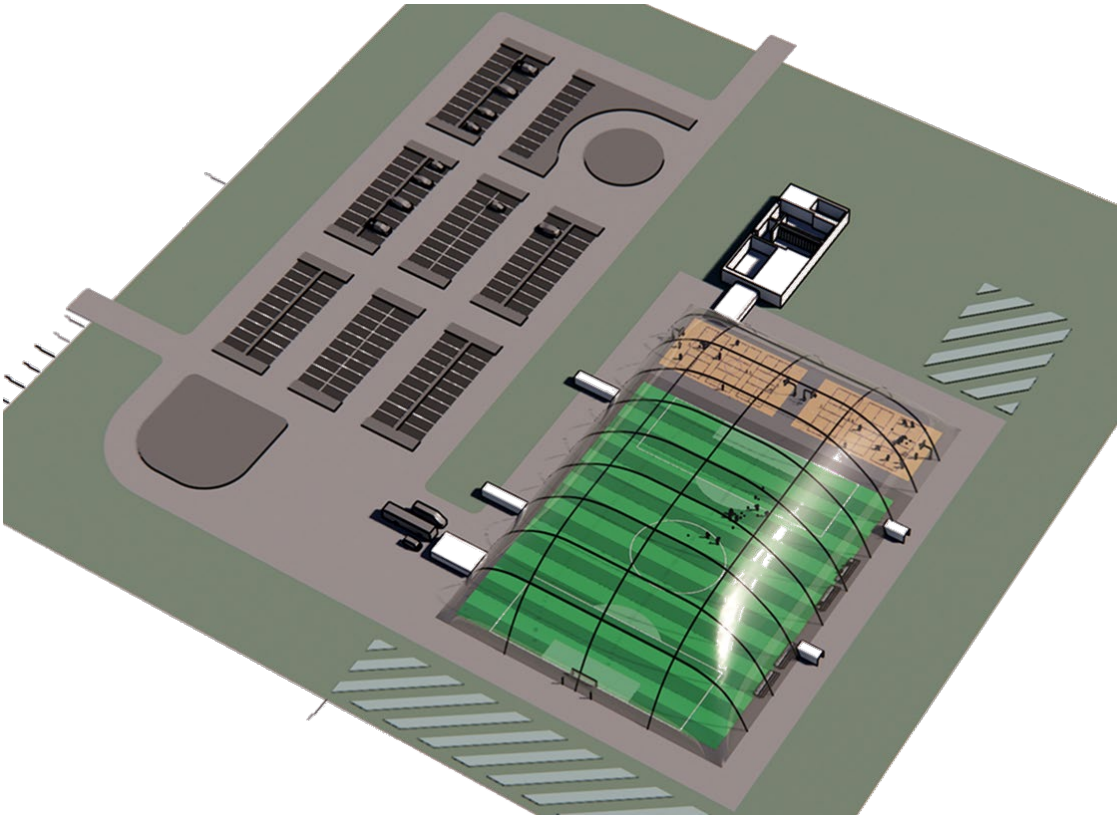


Figure 24: Proposed Sports Dome – Site Plan for Concept 2b (with courts)



5 Capital and Operating Costs

This section of the report contains a business plan for the recommended facility models, including high-level concept plans, operational plans, order of magnitude cost estimates, and funding considerations.

5.1 Capital Cost Estimates

Preliminary space programs (gross floor areas) have been prepared for the proposed facilities. Sizes are approximate and to be confirmed at the design stage. All concepts include necessary staff areas and space storage, mechanical equipment, etc.

Order of magnitude capital costs for each building option are also presented, built off the component sizing. All budget estimates contained in this report are in 2025 Canadian dollars and are reflective of current market rates. Budgets for future years should be increased to account for such factors as inflation conditions in the construction industry. While the amount of this increase is speculative, we suggest a minimum of 5% per year for budgeting purposes. Cost estimates should be regularly revisited through the facility planning cycle, becoming more specific and more accurate as project evolves from conceptual to more detailed design.

Costs include construction, site development, fees, and contingencies (total project costs). Unless otherwise noted, the cost estimates exclude land acquisition, environmental remediation, geo-thermal/heat recovery, project management, inflation/escalation, and capital financing.

It bears noting that construction costs can vary significantly due to instability of material costs, labour costs, and other economic factors. The estimates in this report represent a basic level of building construction and finishes. These budgets are based on very preliminary concepts and should be considered as Class D budgets (+/- 20%). As a result of these factors, sizable contingencies have been applied which, depending on the City's expectations and external pricing factors, may be able to be refined at the next stage of the process.

Community & Aquatic Centre Components & Design Considerations

The proposed **Community & Aquatic Centre** is intended to offer flexible spaces to address changing demographic and recreation trends. Two concepts have been presented that vary in size, scope, and (potentially) management. The projects may be delivered in two or more phases, with timing directed by need and funding capabilities.

Table 8: Community & Aquatic Centre

Phase	Concept 1a: Baseline Facility	Concept 1b: Enhanced Facility
Phase 1	• Aquatic Centre: 2 tanks: 25M pool (8 lanes) and leisure pool • Double Gymnasium • Multi-Purpose rooms (2-3) • Indoor Playground	• Aquatic Centre: 3 tanks: 25M 8-lane pool, leisure pool, and therapy pool • Double Gymnasium-plus • Multi-Purpose rooms (3+) • Fitness Centre • Walking Track • Indoor Playground • Youth Centre
Phases 2/3 (tbd)	• Twin Pad Arena • Library Branch	• Twin Pad Arena • Library Branch

Phase 1 of the proposed Community & Aquatic Centre (Concept 1a) is estimated to be approximately **55,800 square feet** in size (gross), with a total project cost (construction plus site costs, fees, and contingencies) of **$69.9 million** in current year dollars.

Table 9: Estimated Capital Cost for Community & Aquatic Centre, Concept 1a (Baseline) (construction and project costs)

Phase 1 Components	Area (sf)	Estimated Cost
Aquatic Centre (2 tanks: 25M 8-lane pool and leisure pool) and support spaces	20,250	$24,300,000
Gymnasium, Walking Track and support spaces	8,200	$5,740,000
Multi-Purpose Rooms and Indoor Playground	6,150	$4,920,000
Public Areas, Washrooms and Administration	10,100	$8,080,000
Mechanical and Service	1,800	$900,000
Gross-up Factor (20%)	9,300	$7,440,000
Construction Total	**55,800 sf**	**$51,380,000**
Construction Contingency (6%)	n/a	$3,082,800
Site Works and Soft Costs (30%)	n/a	$15,414,000
Project Total	**n/a**	**$69,876,800**

Notes: Figures shown in 2025 dollars.
Net program areas include interior walls and shafts. Gross-Up factor includes exterior walls and columns, service, support and communications rooms. HVAC, dehumidification assumes roof top units. Includes LEED designation above Silver. Assumes Stipulated Sum Tender.
Specific exclusions: Land Costs, Legal Costs, Environmental Remediation, Geo-thermal/Heat Recovery, Project Management.

Phase 1 of the proposed Community & Aquatic Centre (Concept 1b) is estimated to be approximately **81,960 square feet** in size (gross), with a total project cost (construction plus site costs, fees, and contingencies) of **$99.5 million** in current year dollars.

Table 10: Estimated Capital Cost for Community & Aquatic Centre, Concept 1b (Enhanced) (construction and project costs) – Phase 1

Phase 1 Components	Area (sf)	Estimated Cost
Aquatic Centre (3 tanks: 25M 8-lane pool, leisure pool, and therapy pool) and support spaces	24,850	$29,820,000
Gymnasium and support spaces	13,800	$9,660,000
Fitness Space	6,900	$5,520,000
Multi-Purpose Rooms and Indoor Playground	7,550	$6,040,000
Public Areas, Washrooms and Administration	12,050	$9,640,000
Mechanical and Service	3,150	$1,575,000
Gross-up Factor (20%)	13,660	$10,928,000
Construction Total	**81,960 sf**	**$73,183,000**
Construction Contingency (6%)	n/a	$4,390,980
Site Works and Soft Costs (30%)	n/a	$21,954,900
Project Total	**n/a**	**$99,528,880**

Notes: Figures shown in 2025 dollars.
Net program areas include interior walls and shafts. Gross-Up factor includes exterior walls and columns, service, support and communications rooms. HVAC, dehumidification assumes roof top units. Includes LEED designation above Silver. Assumes Stipulated Sum Tender.
Specific exclusions: Land Costs, Legal Costs, Environmental Remediation, Geo-thermal/Heat Recovery, Project Management.

Pricing for two optional components – being a library branch and twin pad arena – has also been provided. The City may elect to include both, one, or none of these components. Together, these spaces are estimated to be approximately **83,760 square feet** in size (gross), with a total project cost (construction plus site costs, fees, and contingencies) of **$90.2 million** in current year dollars. These figures assume that these optional components would be constructed at the same time as the base program to benefit from economies of scale and efficiencies.

Table 11: Estimated Capital Cost for Optional Components (construction and project costs)

Optional Components	Area (sf)	Estimated Cost
Twin Pad Arena	58,700	$44,025,000
Library Branch	11,100	$11,100,000
Gross-up Factor (20%)	13,960	$11,168,000
Construction Total	**83,760 sf**	**$66,293,000**
Construction Contingency (6%)	n/a	$3,977,850
Site Works and Soft Costs (30%)	n/a	$19,887,900
Project Total	**n/a**	**$90,158,480**

Notes: Figures shown in 2025 dollars.
Includes LEED designation above Silver. Assumes Stipulated Sum Tender.
Specific exclusions: Land Costs, Legal Costs, Environmental Remediation, Geo-thermal/Heat Recovery, Project Management.

A peak use parking capacity plan is recommended to determine the amount of parking spaces required for the facility. Efforts should be made to connect the facility/site to the downtown St. Thomas area via public transit and active transportation routes (e.g., trails, sidewalks, bike lanes, etc.). Depending upon the amount of space at the preferred site, outdoor recreation amenities such as playgrounds, sport courts, etc. could be added.

Sports Dome Components & Design Considerations

The proposed **Sports Dome** is intended to offer flexible spaces to address changing demographic and recreation trends in a year-round setting. Two concepts have been presented that vary slightly in size and scope. The projects should be delivered in one phase, with timing directed by need and funding capabilities.

Table 12: Proposed Sports Dome

Concept 2a: Turf-only	Concept 2b: Turf and Courts*
• 2 Small-sided Turf Fields • Support Building	• 2 Small-sided Turf Fields (minimum) • Sports Courts (2 basketball, 4 volleyball, 6 pickleball courts)* • Perimeter Walking Track • Support building

* note: sport courts may not be required if double gymnasium is included in proposed Community & Aquatic Centre; alternately, this space could be used to add an additional small-sided soccer field

There are several building options for covering the indoor turf field, most notably an air-supported dome (recommended due to its significantly lower initial construction cost and other related benefits) and a pre-engineered steel frame building. The proposed indoor turf

field and sports courts should be designed for maximum flexibility in use. Potential activities include (but should not be limited to) basketball, volleyball, badminton, pickleball, fitness and wellness, soccer, baseball training, rugby, football, lacrosse, cricket, day camps, pre-school play groups, etc.

A peak use parking capacity plan is recommended to determine the amount of parking spaces required for the facility. Efforts should be made to connect the facility/site to the downtown St. Thomas area via public transit and active transportation routes (e.g., trails, sidewalks, bike lanes, etc.). Depending upon the amount of space at the preferred site, outdoor recreation amenities such as playgrounds, sport courts, sport fields, etc. could be added.

The proposed Sports Dome (Concept 2a) is estimated to be approximately **55,800 square feet** in size, with a total project cost (construction plus site costs, fees, and contingencies) of **$10.8 million** in current year dollars.

Table 13: Estimated Capital Cost for Sports Dome, Concept 2a (construction and project costs)

Components	Area (sf)	Estimated Cost
Dome and Installation	52,000	$1,400,000
Turf and Site Preparation	n/a	$2,900,000
Administration and Change Building	3,800	$3,230,000
Construction Total	**55,800 sf**	**$7,530,000**
Site Costs	n/a	$750,000
Soft Costs (30%)	n/a	$2,484,000
Project Total	**n/a**	**$10,764,000**

Notes: Figures shown in 2025 dollars.
Specific exclusions: Land Costs, Legal Costs, Environmental Remediation, Project Management.
The scope of work includes the dome membrane installation, athlete and vehicle airlocks, lighting fixtures, heating and inflation mechanical units. The perimeter concrete grade beam and utility connections are installed by the General Contractor. The Administration and Change Building houses an office, meeting room and 2 change rooms, connected to the dome with a single airlock.
Soft costs can include site assessments (Geotechnical, Environmental, Hydrological and Archeological), Traffic studies, Testing and Inspection allowances, Exterior and Interior signage, AV equipment, Security. Professional Fees (Architectural, Landscape Architecture, Structural, Mechanical & Electrical, Signage & Graphics, external Project Management), FFE, SPA and Building Permit Fees, Construction and Project Contingencies.

The proposed Sports Dome (Concept2, with indoor courts1) is estimated to be approximately **69,000 square feet** in size, with a total project cost (construction plus site costs, fees, and contingencies) of **$14.0 million** in current year dollars.

Table 14: Estimated Capital Cost for Sports Dome, Concept 2b (construction and project costs)

Components	Area (sf)	Estimated Cost
Dome and Installation	64,000	$1,650,000
Turf, Court and Site Preparation	n/a	$3,875,000
Administration and Change Building	5,000	$4,250,000
Construction Total	**69,000 sf**	**$9,775,000**
Site Costs	n/a	$1,020,000
Soft Costs (30%)	n/a	$3,238,500
Project Total	**n/a**	**$14,003,500**

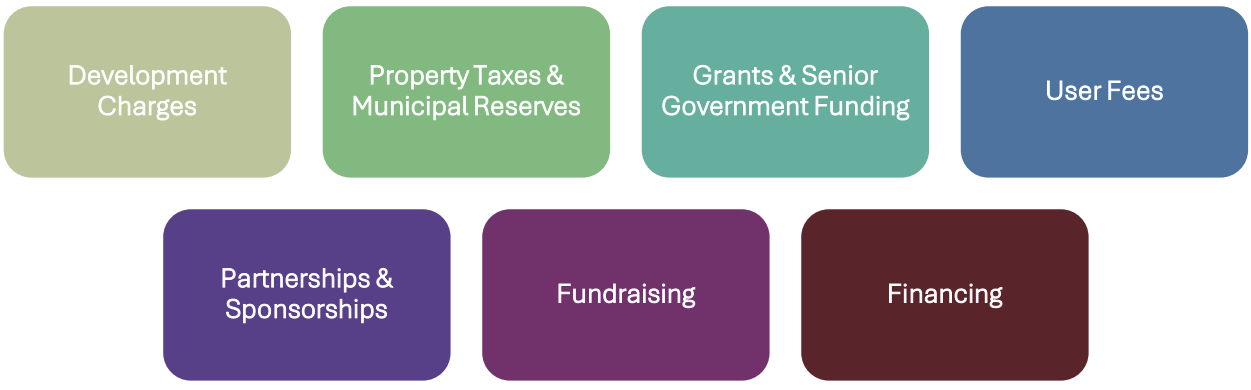
Notes: Figures shown in 2025 dollars.
Specific exclusions: Land Costs, Legal Costs, Environmental Remediation, Project Management.
The scope of work includes the dome membrane installation, athlete and vehicle airlocks, lighting fixtures, heating and inflation mechanical units. The perimeter concrete grade beam and utility connections are installed by the General Contractor. The Administration and Change Building houses an office, meeting room and 4 change rooms, connected to the dome with a single airlock.
Soft costs can include site assessments (Geotechnical, Environmental, Hydrological and Archeological), Traffic studies, Testing and Inspection allowances, Exterior and Interior signage, AV equipment, Security. Professional Fees (Architectural, Landscape Architecture, Structural, Mechanical & Electrical, Signage & Graphics, external Project Management), FFE, SPA and Building Permit Fees, Construction and Project Contingencies.

5.2 Capital Funding Considerations

At this time, the City does not currently have sufficient financial reserves to implement all of the options presented in this report. In order to move forward, a financial strategy that leverages a range of funding sources will be required, the scope of which will depend on the option(s) that the City endorses. Several of these funding tools are discussed below.

Development charges, property taxes and reserves, and grants are likely to be relied upon to fund the majority of new facility development. Stability in these streams is essential for covering new debt service obligations while sustaining current operations.

Figure 25: Potential Capital Funding Sources



5.2.1 Development Charges

Development charges (DCs) collected from new developments can be applied towards recreation facilities required to meet growth-related needs. DCs cannot be used to fund replacement infrastructure offering the same level of service.

A future community/aquatic centre and indoor turf facility are identified as part of the growth-related capital program in the City's 2025 Development Charges Background Study, although they will only be partially funded through the benefit period. These charges are critical for ensuring new developments contribute to the City's expanded infrastructure needs.

5.2.2 Property Taxes and Municipal Reserves

New and/or expanded recreation centres are sizable capital projects. The Town's existing capital reserves are limited and largely allocated to other planned projects. This constraint underscores the importance of leveraging alternative funding sources and ensuring the project aligns with long-term capital plans.

As part of its funding strategy, the City is encouraged to establish a capital reserve – outside of the existing Infrastructure Reserve and funded from local taxes, gaming revenue, vacant land tax, and/or other sources of income – to fund municipal contributions to the projects, so that funds can accrue in the years leading to facility development.

5.2.3 Grants and Senior Government Funding

Major municipal capital projects often receive financial support from senior levels of government. In 2019, the Provincial and Federal Governments launched a grant program for municipalities seeking capital assistance with recreational and other forms of infrastructure (Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, ICIP). The Province of Ontario is also administering a $200 million Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund over a three year period (with two years remaining). This feasibility study will play a large part in supporting successful applications to these or other funding programs.

The Federal Gas Tax Fund (now the Canada Community-Building Fund) also offers biannual, population-based funding for eligible infrastructure projects, allocated at the discretion of the municipality.

5.2.4 User Fees

User fees for individual drop-in and organized activities represent a small portion of revenue generation for most community facilities, and typically accrue to the operating budget. Occasionally municipalities will establish a capital surcharge added to the rental terms in order to offset higher-order facility improvements (e.g., scoreboards, etc.) or long-term capital replacement projects. In this way, those that benefit directly from the facility's operations can contribute to its maintenance and/or improvement. As rental rates typically

remain within a range influenced by facilities in the surrounding region, surcharges (if employed) are typically nominal, but can accrue over time.

5.2.5 Partnerships and Sponsorships

Some municipalities have had success in creating partnership or sponsorship agreements with organizations that see benefit in being associated with a particular municipal facility or service. These options and benefits are generally driven by local circumstances and are discussed throughout this report.

5.2.6 Regional Collaboration

Cooperation between municipalities can be an option in smaller communities that rely on shared services to maximize efficiencies and levels of service while minimizing service duplication. This is particularly true for multi-use recreation centres and aquatic facilities that often rely on drawing users from beyond municipal boundaries in order to remain viable.

There are many approaches and structures that could be considered further by the City of St. Thomas and its municipal neighbours. The most common would be direct funding to cover a portion of the construction and/or operating costs, tied to population and/or anticipated usage levels. Through an initial capital and/or annual operating contribution, adjacent municipalities can ensure that their residents are afforded equitable access to the facility(ies) at the same user fees charged to City residents. The potential for a capital contribution from adjacent municipalities – formalized through an inter-municipal cost-sharing agreement – would require further discussion. For example, a Joint Municipal Service Board with seven participating municipalities has recently been created to manage the development and operation of the Tamarack North Centre (YMCA-operated centre with indoor pool) in West Parry Sound.[14]

5.2.7 Fundraising

The capital and ongoing operational costs associated with the recommended projects are substantial and will place pressure on the municipal budget. Seeking assistance from the community to contribute resources towards facility improvements and/or construction can be an effective way to provide services and spaces that are truly desired by residents. The City should determine what portion of the project costs it can fund and what portion should be contributed by the fundraising campaign.

[14] https://wpspoolandrec.ca/

5.2.8 Financing

The final funding option would be to finance the development – however, this is the most expensive alternative and will depend on the municipality's borrowing capacity. Responsible debt management is crucial to ensure the City maintains flexibility for future needs. Currently, most of the City's debt capacity is allocated to other projects (e.g., new Water Reclamation Facility), thus any options for project financing will be highly limited and alternative funding streams considered.

5.3 Operating Cost Estimates

The scope of this study calls for an examination of the operational and financial implications of the facility options available to the City in developing a Community & Aquatic Centre and Indoor Sports Dome. Two concepts have been developed for each.

This section summarizes the operational and financial impacts of the proposed Phase 1 capital projects, including functions of the various building components, the likely use profile of each component, the major operating assumptions that will influence the facilities' financial performance, and the order of magnitude of revenue and cost projections. **Potential future phases (such as an arena and library) are excluded from these estimates.**

Note: Expense and revenue projections are based on industry averages for similar facilities and are presented in 2025 dollars. These forecasts reflect ranges, not precise figures, due to uncertainty between projection and facilities' opening dates.

5.3.1 Community & Aquatic Centre – Concept 1a

Facility Components and Programming

Concept 1a of the proposed Community & Aquatic Centre includes a municipal-style aquatic facility, a secondary school-sized gym, two to three multi-purpose rooms, large public and reception areas, mechanical and support spaces, and adequate circulation. This business plan assumes the City will oversee the management and programming for the Centre, representing a new level of municipal services.

As the largest component of the Centre, the pool would feature a use profile including open swims, a lesson program, and pool rentals. Open swims would accommodate a variety of pool users including family fun swims, lane swimming, self-directed water activities for training purposes, etc. The City's newly acquired aquatic staff (or contractors) could offer aqua fitness programs on a weekly and seasonally-scheduled basis – sometimes in conjunction with open swims although more often in the pool on an exclusive basis.

It is assumed that the pool's lesson program would comply with the Ontario Lifesaving Society standards and take advantage of the Society's training and support materials. Ramping up the lesson program – often in conjunction with local school boards – is an

excellent method of self-generating a reserve of qualified lifeguards and aquatic instructors that are essential to the delivery and maintenance of a robust pool program.

Pool rentals are also popular with various user groups such as swim clubs, kayak and canoe organizations, scuba divers or other water-based groups that operate locally. Generally, renters have exclusive access to the pool in exchange for an hourly rental fee.

The gymnasium would be utilized (and rented) by various basketball, volleyball, pickleball, and other groups or leagues on a rental basis. Additionally, the gym is an excellent open space in which program staff can organize a host of activities consistent with the needs of the local community. Or, via day passes, community members would be able to drop in to "shoot hoops", walk the gym floor or engage in a wide variety of other self-directed activities.

The multi-purpose rooms will be used for several different programs and activities including meetings, events and social gatherings, often organized by local community organizations.

Business Plan Assumptions

The business plan for the Community & Aquatic Centre is based on operating standards from similar Ontario venues plus locally relevant cost circumstances such as applicable utility rates.

The Centre is expected to operate about 100 hours per week, with 54% of those hours considered "prime time" that will accommodate peak programming and most self-directed participation. Revenue projections use conservative estimates for participation rates, rental occasions, and user fees. Gymnasium and room usage is assumed at moderate levels to avoid overestimating income. Operating costs are calculated using a mix of facility-specific assumptions and industry data from comparable sites.

Staffing Plan

Consultants conferred with the City to establish applicable salaries and wage levels for staff who will be required to operate the new Centre. The City reviewed the consultant's staff chart and applied salary/wage levels and applicable benefits percentages for positions like existing roles in St. Thomas' current staff roster.

The key Community & Aquatic Centre staff positions and basic responsibilities are as follows:

Community Centre Manager

- The Manager would oversee operations, hire supervisors, monitor levels of customer service and manage service delivery. It is assumed that this position would be filled by an existing staff and therefore would not add to the overall staff cost burden to the municipality.

Aquatic Centre Staff

- An Aquatic Supervisor would run pool operations – hiring staff, coordinating lessons, and organizing aquatic events as well as schedule guards and instructors, while coordinating sufficient pool supervision based upon Ontario's Public Health guidelines.
- The aquatic team includes three Senior Guards, part-time Lifeguards/Instructors, and some Lifeguards in Training, all scheduled by the Aquatic Supervisor.

Dryland Staff

- A Facility Booking Coordinator would handle all bookings of the Centre's components (pool, gym, & multi-purpose rooms), schedule all facility rentals, coordinate lesson registrations and reserve space for City programs. It is assumed that this position would be filled by an existing staff and therefore would not add to the overall staff cost burden to the municipality.
- The Service and Desk Coordinator would manage reception desk, train and supervise Customer Service Support staff and handle various administrative tasks. Customer Support staff will oversee the service desk during all hours of operation.
- A full-time Maintenance Supervisor would ensure proper upkeep during prime hours. The Supervisor would be supported by two full-time and up to four part-time Maintenance Staff, with staffing adjusted as per programming, general utilization and facility rental levels.

Utility and Operating Costs

Utility costs are estimated using industry standards for similar indoor community centres and the City's 2025 utility rates, applying per-square-foot charges for hydro, gas, and water/sewer to each facility component. Pools are notorious for heavy utility consumption and therefore it is very advisable to introduce the most up-to-date energy conservation technology when the new aquatic centre is added to the City's inventory of facilities.

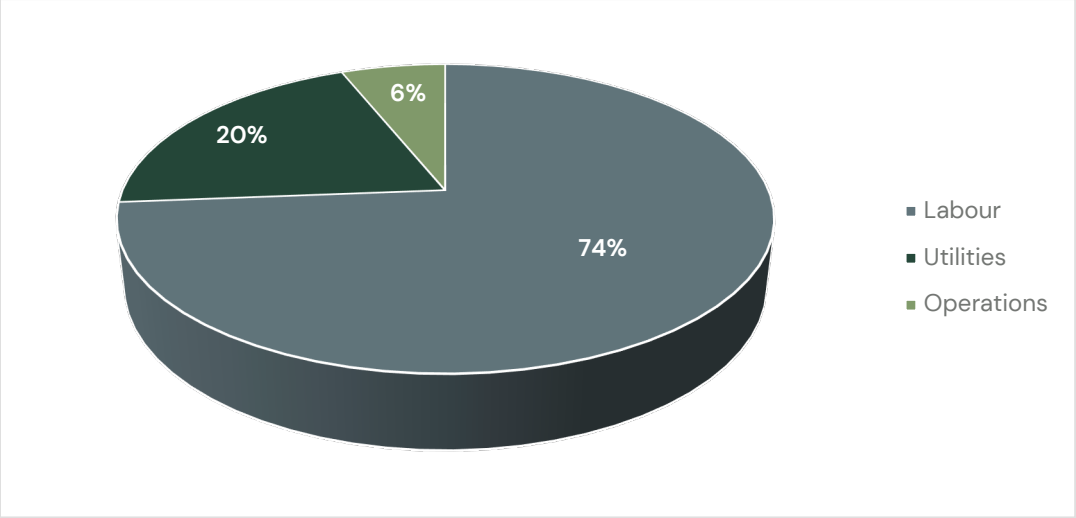
Operating cost projections cover pool and programming specific expenses (such as pool supplies, chemicals, and equipment, sports equipment, etc.), as well as operating and janitorial supplies, phone, facility repairs and maintenance, technology, landscaping, and snow removal.

Cost Projections and Expense Composition

Operating costs attributed to the proposed Community & Aquatic Centre is expected to be between $1.4M and $1.7M annually. Labour accounts for 74% of all expenses, in accordance with the staffing plan and applicable salary/wage rates and benefits percentages.

Utilities make up about 20% of the total operating costs. It is assumed that the Centre will use modern energy conservation technologies to help manage its expenses. Conservation efforts in the aquatic centre are very important because pools are habitual "energy hogs" and utility unit prices are rising year-over-year. In short, efficient utility management is and will be essential to controlling the Centre's cost burden to the municipality, especially as the rising costs of hydro, gas, and water will likely persist throughout the life of the Centre.

Figure 26: Community & Aquatic Centre (Concept 1a) – Proportion of Operating Costs

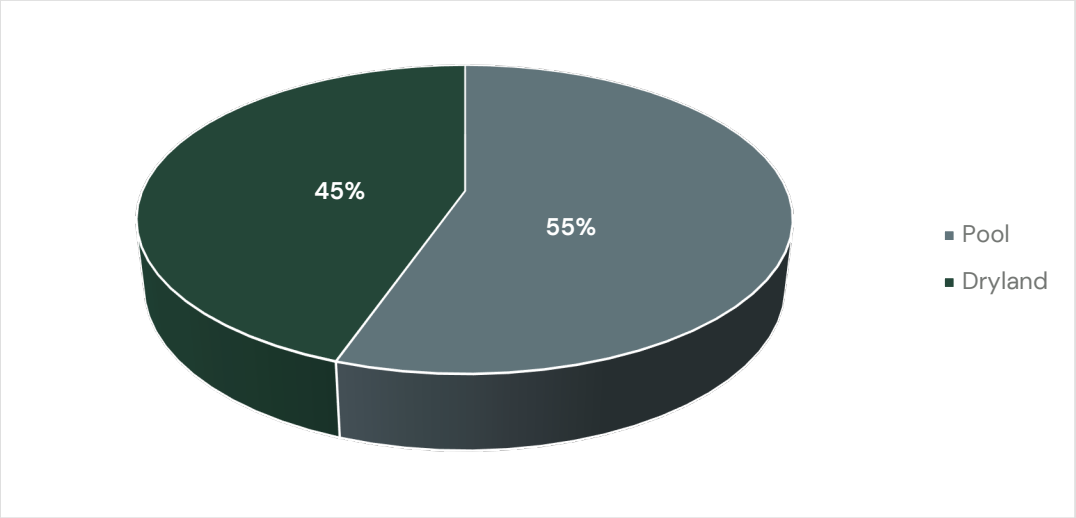


The remaining costs of the Centre's total operating budget (6%) will pay for the operating items listed above. These are reasonably modest expenses on a per budget line-item basis and predictable on a year-over-year basis.

Revenue Production

Slightly more than half of the revenue produced by Concept 1a of the Community & Aquatic Centre will be from the pool – 55% of which will arise from swimming lessons. General admissions and pool rentals make up the balance of revenue produced by the pool. Dryland activities are expected to generate approximately 45% of total revenue which will be produced by gymnasium rentals, multi-purpose room rents, program fees, and pay pass user fees.

Figure 27: Community & Aquatic Centre (Concept 1a) – Proportion of Revenues



Given the importance of swim lesson revenue stream, the Centre's senior leadership team should be keenly focused on maximizing the quality and variety of instruction to all potential participants. Creative programs are often connected to and promoted through local schools, service clubs, or other organizations catering to children and youth. Utilizing the instructional program to train aspiring lifeguards and instructors helps to offset periodic downturns in the inventory of available talent required to operate all aspects of the aquatic operation.

Income produced by the pool also includes general admissions attributable to free swims, family swims, lane swimming, and other individual aquatic occasion. Additionally, revenue will be produced through pool rentals by local groups. Revenue produced by both income categories conforms to pool examples in communities of comparable size to St. Thomas.

Revenue produced by gymnasium usage reflects a blend of user group rentals and open play. It is anticipated that casual users would gain access to the facility through the purchase of day passes, for example, to shoot hoops during open gym time, participate in self-guided exercise. Day pass fees, multi-purpose room rents and participation numbers are purposefully conservative to guard against overly ambitious revenue estimates.

Employing the estimate methodologies described above, the annual projected income from all sources of the Community & Aquatic Centre will be between $490,000 and $600,000.

Net Annual Performance

Based on the foregoing revenue and cost projections, the City's annual investment to support the operations of the proposed Community & Aquatic Centre would be between $0.9 million and $1.6 million per annum, not including a recommended contribution to reserves for future capital replacement.

Table 15: Summary of Estimated Operating Expenses and Revenues – Community & Aquatic Centre (Concept 1a)

Concept 1a	Low Range	High Range
Estimated Expenses	$1,400,000	$1,700,000
Estimated Revenues	$490,000	$600,000
Profit (Subsidy)	**($910,000)**	**($1,100,000)**

Note: figures exclude capital replacement contributions

5.3.2 Community & Aquatic Centre – Concept 1b (Enhanced/Partnership)

The additional facility components contemplated for Concept 1b plus larger overall space allocations results in the more robust concept being 68% larger than Concept 1a. Given the size and complexity of this bigger development, it is assumed that Concept 1b of the Community and Aquatic Centre would only be pursued if it did not conflict or compete with existing facilities or services in St. Thomas. Therefore, a condition of the City considering Concept 1b would be that the Family YMCA of St. Thomas-Elgin (YMCA) is removed from service. The closure would result in a larger service gap for City residents which could be mitigated by the development of Concept 1b and which may also trigger the City's interest in exploring partnership opportunities determined through a competitive RFP process. This possibility is consistent with one of this study's guiding principles, which is to foster partnerships that create synergies, leverage resources, and protect public interests.

This section contains a discussion about partnership opportunities that the City might consider through the study's implementation. The following sections describe parameters and important partnership considerations when the City deliberates about partnerships not only for the larger Community and Aquatic Centre, but also future relationships with outside interests wishing to partner with the City for the development and delivery of facilities and services.

Partnerships between Municipalities and External Entities

Strategic partnerships between municipalities and external entities are useful strategies if the alliance can generate synergies, optimise resources, while safeguarding the public's interests.

The City of St. Thomas works with various service providers - both formally and informally - to deliver accessible parks, recreation, and culture services. Notable partnerships include (but are not limited to):

- a pilot program with the Family YMCA for municipal-rate aquatics; and
- annual funding for the St. Thomas-Elgin Public Arts Centre.

The City also collaborates with clubs and organizations on specific projects. Most community survey respondents (80%) support partnerships for indoor recreation facilities.

Several local service providers are interested in collaborating on new amenities (e.g., the YMCA, School Boards, St. Thomas Public Library, EarlyON Child and Family Centres, and the St. Thomas Soccer Club, etc.). This section offers guidance for exploring partnerships for future indoor recreation facilities.

Partnering with External Entities

Throughout Ontario, municipal recreation departments are increasingly required to provide and maintain top quality facilities, services, and programs within defined budget envelopes. And as financial pressures mount and the need for cost containment rises, many departments are examining new and creative service provision methodologies including developing relationships with outside entities.

There are three types of relationships that are generally available to municipalities interested in pursuing alternative approaches to deliver, operate, or program recreation and sport infrastructure:

- **A Public/Private Partnership (P3)** – a relationship between the municipality and a private sector entity;
- **A Public/Public Partnership (P2)** – a relationship between the municipality and public sector agency such as another municipality or a school board; and
- **A Public/NFP Partnership** – a relationship between the municipality and a not-for-profit organization such as a YMCA or a local sports organization.

Some municipalities are gradually shifting from a traditional direct delivery model to one of these structured relationships. Within certain jurisdictions creative approaches have resulted in:

- the development "core facilities" that would not have been possible had the municipality addressed the project on its own (e.g., Vaughan's arrangement with the Ontario Soccer Centre);
- the provision of "non-core" facilities that represent new levels of service available to residents (e.g., Mississauga's arrangement with the Mississauga Gymnastics Club);
- operating results that are beyond the usual performance thresholds of a municipally delivered service (e.g., Hamilton's arrangement with a private arena operator); and
- the transfer of operating liabilities to a third-party service provider (e.g., London's arrangement with the YMCA).

Types of Potential Relationships

Although there are numerous forms of partnership structures available to St. Thomas, research suggests that most municipal arrangements can be grouped in one of the following categories:

- **Strategic Alliance** – a relationship that involves the municipality and one or more organizations, in collaborating on planning and delivering select facilities, services or programs.
- **Management Contract Agreement** – management services contracted by the municipality to a partner organization, whereby the contracting partner delivers services consistent with predetermined specifications.
- **License or Lease Agreement** - facilities rented from the municipality by a partner, where the licensee or leasee licenses or leases a public facility for its own - and sometimes its exclusive - use (although usually with provisos for public access guarantees).
- **Service Agreement** - services provided through an agreement between the municipality and one or more partner organizations, where services are jointly controlled, managed and operated by the partners as specified in an agreement.
- **Facility Development (Equity) Agreement** - facilities that are mutually planned and jointly funded, and where constituents of the participating partners would have access to the facilities in accordance with an agreement governing facility use and operations.

Cooperation between Municipal Neighbours

In smaller communities, cooperation between municipalities is common and sometimes necessary to maximize the use of community facilities, particularly for rentals that are not bound by residency requirements. This is particularly true for sports facilities that rely on drawing users from beyond municipal boundaries to remain viable. In certain instances, smaller municipalities work together with adjacent municipalities for the provision of sports centres to manage regional usage and capacity while minimizing service duplication. Consequently, the cultivation of a P2 with one or more neighbouring municipalities to maximize sport facility utilization may represent the most significant opportunity to reach acceptable financial and operational thresholds. Note: Additional information and examples are contained in Section 5.2.6.

Our consulting team has developed the following filters or “necessary conditions” that are minimum requirements for effective facility development relationships between municipalities:

- **Community need** – there must be mutual (and preferably equal) need for the contemplated service or facility.
- **Location** – there should be a location that is preferred by each municipality that is unencumbered by development restrictions; it should also be reasonably convenient to all potential users.

- **Governance, management, and ownership** – all potential participants in the relationship must reach consensus and mutually agree on an acceptable governance, management, and ownership model before deciding to proceed with the project.
- **A mutually agreeable space program** – the needs of each municipality must be met by the space program; given that there may be differing needs, certain spaces may be deemed as dedicated to a particular municipality and therefore outside of the partnership funding envelope.
- **Capital cost-sharing formula** – participating municipalities must reach agreement on an acceptable capital cost-sharing formula before deciding to proceed with the project.
- **Operating cost-sharing formula** – participating municipalities must reach agreement on an acceptable formula before deciding to proceed with the project.
- **Benefits-based value** – each municipality will have its own criteria to evaluate the benefits of the project compared to the value of the municipal contribution; the examination of a preliminary feasibility analysis and business plan that provides an indication of the cost and benefits associated with the project will help in determining the benefit returned to each participant compared to their respective investments.
- **Political support** – it is imperative that a partnered project is viewed favourably by elected officials.
- **Readiness** – each potential partner must be in a reasonable state of readiness to participate in the project.

Realistic Expectations

Effective partnerships must be well conceived to be successful in creating cost-effective solutions to capital and operating challenges. However, partnerships are not a cure-all for every problem currently facing the public leisure sector. Too often, expectations are beyond the capacity of a partnership to deliver and consequently the relationship can eventually be perceived as a failure. Also, a partnership must be mutually beneficial and therefore there will likely be considerable give-and-take in terms of the project's outputs. It is therefore advisable to establish clear and attainable objectives at the outset of the project and to tie the expectations directly to the anticipated results of the relationship. Common misconceptions include the following:

All risks will be transferred.

While certain risks may be shared between the partners, the municipality will always be exposed to certain operational and financial risks. For example, taxpayers often look to the municipality to resolve disputes or other operational problems even though an outside entity is responsible for facility. Additionally, it is impossible to transfer risk without also transferring control over the elements that will influence risk. For instance, a municipality will not likely be successful in transferring revenue risk while retaining control over setting fees. Even though a municipality might decide to contract-out the delivery of certain services, it is likely it will still be on the

hook for any complaints or criticisms associated with facility standards, service quality or service interruption. There have been cases in Canada where third-party providers have abandoned projects that were valued by the community forcing the municipality to step in to resurrect the service. These situations are troubling because they are often unforeseen which means municipal staff must respond in an emergency fashion. Also, municipalities have had to deal with financial fallout from situations where former third-party providers have received advance payment for services that were not delivered.

Partners with similar mandates will have a solid and successful relationship.

Frequently this is not the case because of conflicts in styles, branding issues or differing approaches to certain aspects of the business. For example, some municipalities that have entered into recreation facility operating agreements with not-for-profit groups have later discovered that the municipality's brand has all but disappeared from the facility. In other cases, under the operating agreement, municipal recreation clients are required to pay higher than expected fees to access the facility or participate in a program.

Once the relationship is struck, the municipality has little to do.

To be successful, partnerships need to be effectively managed. It is not sufficient for the municipality to nurture a relationship and then leave the partner to its own devices. It is the municipality's obligation to maintain an ongoing relationship with its partner to ensure that service standards are maintained; contractual obligations are met; required supports are provided; and potential problems are addressed through joint planning and action. A balance must be struck between the municipality's responsibility for audit and oversight and the partner's right to conduct business with minimal interference. Each party should appoint one person to be the main contact on all matters relating to the administration of the agreement. They should meet on a regular basis to stay abreast of emerging issues, resolve potential problems and identify opportunities where additional resources are required to enhance the success of the relationship.

Municipal Comparator

As mentioned above, there is mounting evidence that partnerships between municipalities and external entities can result in win-win results for both project participants. In response to the growth in the volume of partnerships, some local governments are developing tools to create partnerships with the best chance of positive results for both the municipality and its partner. For the development of infrastructure by outside partners, these tools are specifically aimed at government administrators who need to assess options and make

decisions which result in the most effective and efficient deployment of public monies, bearing in mind both financial and non- financial considerations.[15]

What is required to create successful partnerships has been well studied in numerous jurisdictions. Organizations responsible for partnership development recognize the importance of addressing the key policy issue of how to ensure that value for money is achieved when a partnership is developed. These investigations have concluded that the development of a "comparator", based on the fair and accurate valuation of internal or in-house costs, establishes a benchmark against which options can be compared and decisions can be made with respect to ensuring value is achieved for the taxpayer.

A Public Sector Comparator (PSC) can be used by government to make decisions by testing whether a non-government investment proposal offers value for money in comparison with the most efficient form of public sector delivery. In this way, the comparator assists government in determining whether to use internal public resources for the development of infrastructure and ancillary services or to pursue alternative delivery methodologies involving a partner.

Typically, this begins with an examination of the "in-house" costs of implementing the project. The development of a "comparator" results in a benchmark against which options are compared and value for money is assessed. Therefore, the PSC is a critical piece of the puzzle when embarking on an assessment of partnership options for infrastructure and/or service delivery.

Municipal Cost of Concept 1b

To assist in determining the most appropriate path forward in terms of a potential relationship with an external partner, the consultants created a threshold like a Public Sector Comparator to determine the financial implications of the larger Concept 1b facility. At a minimum, this threshold provides the municipality with a baseline from which it could begin discussions with a potential partner.

As mentioned earlier, Concept 1b proposes a 68% increase (compared to Concept 1a) in total building square footage. Notably, approximately 21% of this expansion is due to the inclusion of a 6,900 square foot fitness centre, with the remaining area increases allocated across other facility components according to various escalation factors. The overall size of the building and the distribution of space among its components significantly influence operational costs, particularly to staff supervision, utilities, and cleaning and maintenance requirements.

Payroll costs will increase in Concept 1b because three new positions would be required to administer the larger facility. Additionally, utility costs are expected to increase in direct

[15] The Public Sector Comparator, Best Practices Guide, Industry Canada, 2003

proportion to the overall escalation in square footage of the larger building footprint. Other operating cost items are expected to mirror the expense profile described in Concept 1a.

Employing the same estimate methodologies described in the earlier sections, the annual projected cost to operate the enhanced Concept 1b Community & Aquatic Centre will likely be between $2.2 million and $2.7 million.

Estimated annual revenue generated by the larger Centre operated by the municipality is anticipated to be between $900,000 and $1.1 million. The Centre's dryland operation – including Wellness Centre memberships and programs, drop in passes, gym programs & muti-purpose room rentals is projected to produce more than 70% of all income generated at the Centre. It is anticipated that Concept 1b managed by an experienced third part operator may produce more significant revenue through a membership-based client relationship. During the City's planning and implementation process, staff will determine if this relationship structure is consistent with the municipality's imagined future for its new asset as well as its commitment to being dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for residents and visitors.

Based on the foregoing assumptions for Concept 1b, the City's annual investment to support the operations of the larger Centre would be between $1.3 million and $1.9 million per annum, which does not include an annual capital replacement contribution.

Table 16: Summary of Estimated Operating Expenses and Revenues – Community & Aquatic Centre (Concept 1b)

Concept 1b	Low Range	High Range
Estimated Expenses	$2,200,000	$2,700,000
Estimated Revenues	$900,000	$1,100,000
Profit (Subsidy)	**($1,300,000)**	**($1,600,000)**

Note: figures exclude capital replacement contributions

5.3.3 Indoor Sports Dome – Concept 2a

Due to its significantly lower initial construction cost and other related benefits, an air-supported dome building is recommended for the indoor sport field facility. Concept 2a would be a 260 feet by 200 feet artificial turf facility (52,000 square feet under the air-supported dome) supported by a 3,800 square foot amenity building that would accommodate a reception area, changing rooms and a small gathering space. While the field turf would be suitable to accommodate multiple uses and demands of various user groups, it is anticipated that most of the time will be allocated to soccer groups. Input received during the consultation process suggests that a host of local soccer players are likely Sports Dome users, and any time not allocated to local soccer clubs could

accommodate unmet demand of soccer groups from nearby communities be used for other activities.

Business Plan Assumptions

As was the case for the Community and Aquatics Centre, the business plan for Sports Dome is based on operating standards from similar venues in Ontario plus locally relevant cost circumstances such as applicable utility rates.

The Sports Dome is expected to operate about 100 hours per week, with 54% of those hours considered "prime time" that will accommodate peak facility traffic which will largely be derived from field rentals by soccer and other sport groups such as Ultimate, baseball, rugby, cricket, etc. Revenue projections use conservative estimates for rental occasions and user fees.

Staffing Plan

Staffing costs are based on the same salary, wage, and benefits rates that were supplied by the City for the Community and Aquatics Centre. The key Sports Dome staff positions and basic responsibilities are as follows:

Dome Supervisor: Would oversee operations, hire program other support staff, and manage service delivery. Additionally, the Supervisor would coordinate field rentals, conceive and schedule programs during non-rented times, plus work with user groups and potential partners using the facility.

Programmers: These part-time staff would work with user groups and potential partners to deliver the programs developed by the Supervisor.

Customer Service Support Staff: These part-time personnel will oversee the service desk during all prime-time hours of operation during the winter season.

Maintenance Supervisor: Would ensure proper upkeep during prime hours. The Supervisor would be supported by full and part-time Maintenance Staff, with staffing adjusted as per programming, general utilization, and facility rental levels.

Utility and Operating Costs

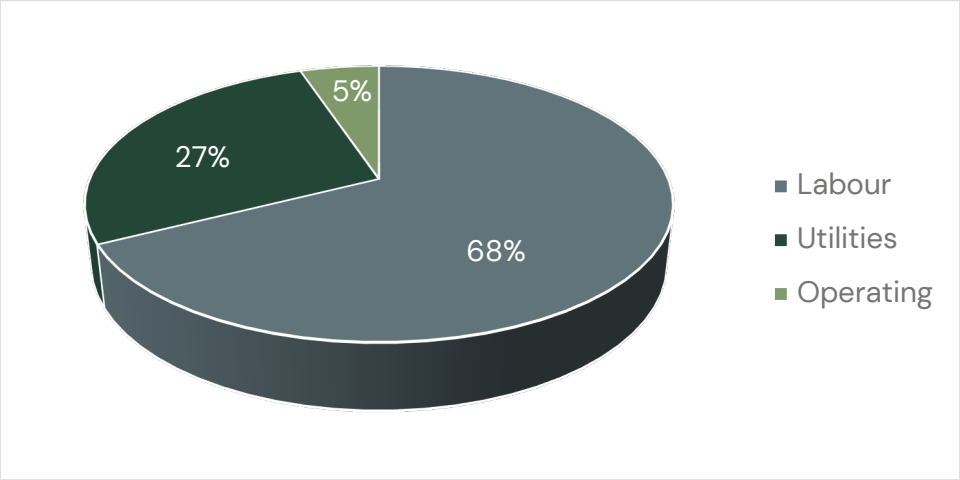
Utility costs are estimated using industry standards for Sports Dome structure and support buildings plus the City's 2025 utility rates, applying per-square-foot charges for hydro, gas, and water/sewer to the facility components. Operating cost projections cover program specific expenses (such as supplies, program, and sports equipment, etc.), as well as operating and janitorial supplies, phone, facility repairs and maintenance, technology, landscaping, and snow removal.

Cost Projections and Expense Composition

Operating costs attributed to the Sports Dome are expected to be between $495,000 and $598,000 annually. Labour accounts for 68% of all expenses, in accordance with the staffing plan and applicable salary/wage rates and benefits percentages.

Utilities make up about 27% of the total operating costs. The remaining costs of the Sports Dome's total operating budget (5%) will pay for the operating items listed above. These are reasonably modest expenses on a per budget line-item basis and predictable on a year-over-year basis.

Figure 28: Sports Dome (Concept 2a) – Proportion of Operating Costs

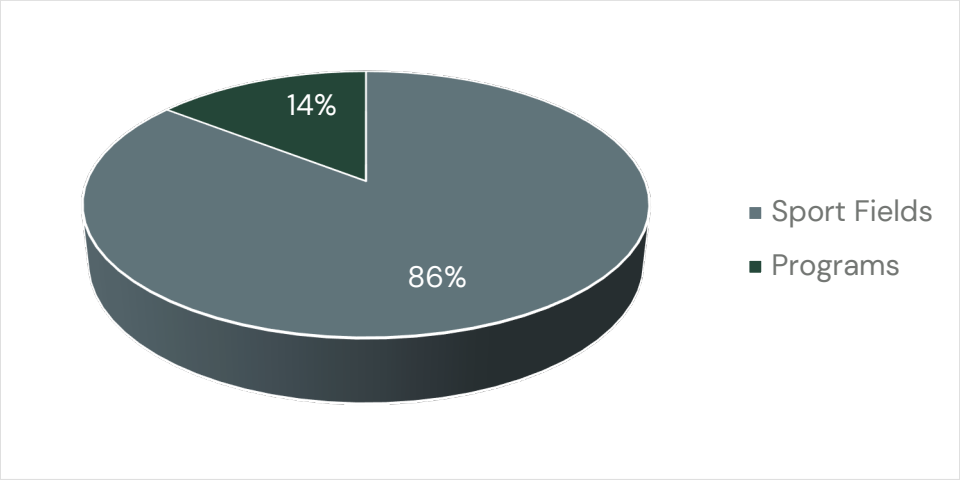


Revenue Production

The largest proportion (86%) of revenue produced by the Sports Dome will be from turf field rental fees collected from community sports groups – the majority of which are assumed to be soccer clubs. Proposed field rental rates are based on a fee structure that is similar to fees charged by municipal or private turf field operators in comparable and relatively proximate markets. To avoid producing overly ambitious income estimates, both rental prices and anticipated occupancies have been established at the approximate midpoint of comparable fee and rental metrics at comparable facilities.

General programming income makes up the balance of revenue produced by the Sports Dome. These activities are expected to generate approximately 14% of total revenue which will be produced by programming fees and day pass user fees.

Figure 29: Sports Dome (Concept 2a) – Proportion of Revenue



Summary – Concept 2a

Based on the foregoing revenue and cost projections, the City's net income from the operations of the proposed Sports Dome would be between $126,000 and $159,000 per annum, not including a recommended contribution to reserves for future capital replacement.

Table 17: Summary of Estimated Operating Expenses and Revenues – Concept 2a – St. Thomas Sports Dome

Concept One	Low Range	High Range
Estimated Expenses	$495,000	$598,000
Estimated Revenues	$621,000	$757,000
Profit (Subsidy)	$126,000	$159,000

Note: figures exclude capital replacement contributions

5.3.4 Indoor Sports Dome – Concept 2b

Concept 2b contemplates an indoor turf field configuration (like the earlier Concept 2a) plus sports courts designed for maximum the facility's appeal and flexibility. The Sports Dome of this larger concept would be a 320 feet by 200 feet to accommodate the artificial turf fields and the multi-use courts (64,000 square feet under the air-supported dome). A 5,000 square foot amenity building would support the Sports Dome operations by offering a reception area, changing rooms, and gathering spaces.

In combination, the turf fields and sport courts would accommodate activities such as basketball, volleyball, badminton, pickleball, fitness and wellness, soccer, baseball training,

rugby, football, lacrosse, cricket, day camps, pre-school play groups, etc. Operating hours would be similar to those presented for Concept 2a.

Staffing Plan

Staffing costs described for Concept 2a are applicable to this larger concept. But the size difference and the addition of the sport courts requires some adjustment to the staffing plan. Therefore, personnel deployment in Concept 2b will be modified as follows.

> Dome Program Coordinator: The Coordinator would assume the responsibilities undertaken by the Dome Supervisor in Concept 2a. These include coordinating field rentals, conceive and schedule programs during non-rented times, plus work with user groups and potential partners using the facility.
>
> Programmers: The PT programmer hours would increase in accordance with the number of programmed hours due to the addition of the new sport courts.

Utility and Operating Costs

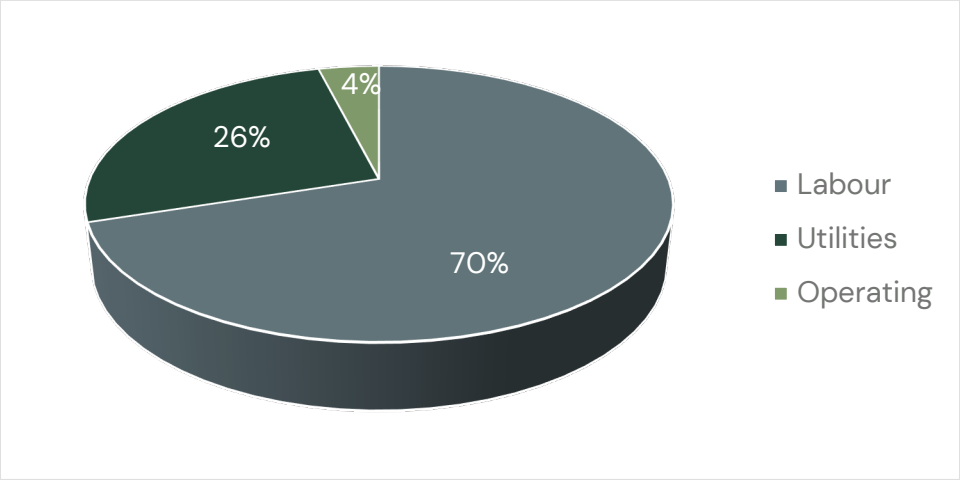
As in Concept 2a, utility costs are estimated by applying per-square-foot charges for hydro, gas, and water/sewer to the larger facility footprint both under the Sports Dome and for the amenity building. Operating costs will be comparable to Concept 2a.

Cost Projections and Expense Composition

The total costs to operate the larger Sports Dome are expected to be between $637,000 and $780,000 annually. Labour costs are expected to amount to 70% of total expenses – due to a more robust staffing plan.

Utilities are expected to make up about 26% of the total operating costs. The remaining costs of the Dome's total operating budget (4%) will pay for the operating and program supplies.

Figure 30: Sports Dome (Concept 2b) – Proportion of Operating Costs

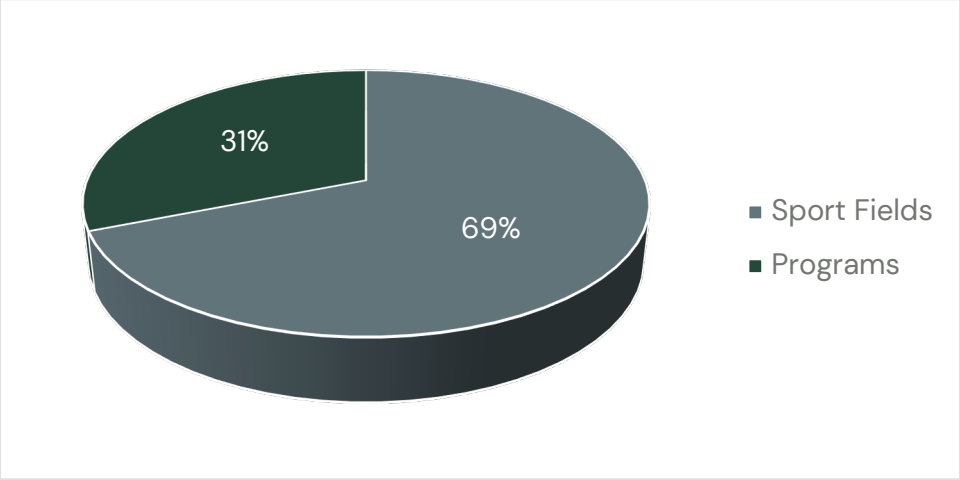


Revenue Production

Turf field rentals and programming are expected to reflect that same user mix as Concept 2a and as such, will produce similar income. Revenue generated by gymnasium usage reflects a blend of user group rentals, open play, and drop-in participation. It is anticipated that casual users would gain access to the facility through the purchase of day passes (e.g., to shoot hoops during open gym time) or participate in self-guided exercise. Day pass fees and participation numbers are purposefully conservative to guard against overly ambitious revenue estimates.

Employing the estimate methodologies described above, the annual projected income from all sources of the Sports Dome will be between $770,000 and $940,000.

Figure 31: Sports Dome (Concept 2b) – Proportion of Revenue



Summary – Concept 2b

Based on the foregoing cost and revenue projections, the proposed Concept 2b Sports Dome would generate between $131,000 and $161,000 per annum of net income.

Table 18Summary of Estimated Operating Expenses and Revenues – Concept 2b – St. Thomas Sports Dome

Concept One	Low Range	High Range
Estimated Expenses	$637,000	$780,000
Estimated Revenues	$770,000	$940,000
Profit (Subsidy)	$131,000	$161,000

Note: figures exclude capital replacement contributions

5.3.5 Capital Maintenance Reserve

The 2016 Canadian Infrastructure Report Card (CIRC) reported that many sport and recreation facilities in Canada require increased capital investment. The Report Card indicated that current reinvestment levels may lead to a decline in the condition of these facilities over time, noting that their physical condition was the lowest among all asset categories surveyed in 2016. This assessment was reaffirmed in 2019 when the data was updated.

Discussions regarding the recreation infrastructure deficit and funding options have taken place at various professional summits and planning forums, such as the 2011 Lake Louise National Recreation Summit. Participants identified several related issues contributing to infrastructure challenges, including:

- Approximately half of municipally owned sport and recreation facilities in Canada are nearing the end of their useful lives and will need to be replaced.
- Facilities that are mid-way through their lifecycle often require renovations or upgrades according to their age.
- Deferred maintenance is significant among facility owners.
- Facilities built before 1990 may need retrofitting for improved customer appeal, accessibility, and energy efficiency, or to address building standard concerns.
- Evolving public expectations are increasing demand for a greater variety and higher quality of facilities.
- Additional facilities are necessary to balance current supply and demand.
- Further facilities will likely be required to accommodate population growth.

As facilities continue to age, operational and maintenance costs tend to increase. Without substantial capital redevelopment or retrofits, older facilities often experience escalating

maintenance needs and associated expenses, which can put additional strain on both capital and operating budgets.

The CIRC advises an annual reinvestment rate between 1.7% and 2.5% of a facility's replacement value. Municipalities that establish dedicated reserve accounts for this purpose sometimes contribute less than the recommended amounts, resulting in account balances below suggested levels. Consequently, major required repairs must be funded from sources other than the capital reserve account.

We recommend that the City create a capital reserve account dedicated specifically to the proposed facilities and to annually contribute no less than 1% and up to 1.5% of the capital construction cost of the building portion for capital facility maintenance throughout the useful life of the buildings.

This capital reserve should also be used for the repair and replacement of the proposed Sports Dome. Based on input from a leading dome supplier, the bubble fabric would require replacement in approximately 15 to 20 years. Based on these assumptions, the project should contribute funds annually to amass a reserve amount equivalent to the cost of the fabric replacement.

6 Location Review

This section includes a high-level review of key criteria and potential sites for the proposed facilities. A preferred site for the Community & Aquatic Centre is not identified due to a shortage of readily available and suitable sites in municipal ownership – further study and evaluation will be required to select and secure a suitable site. Local options may exist for the proposed Sports Dome, but will be subject to further validation and municipal direction.

6.1 Land Requirements and Site Criteria

This feasibility study advances two potential capital projects: a Community & Aquatic Centre and a Sports Dome. These facilities may potentially be provided on the same or separate sites. However, given the scale of development and shortage of large land blocks in St. Thomas, for the purposes of this study, it is assumed that these facilities will be accommodated on different sites.

6.1.1 Policy Scan

Community and recreation facilities are permitted in **all residential, commercial, and employment designations** and are intended to be located and function as focal points within the greater community. The City's Official Plan supports **collaborative approaches** to facility and service delivery, including cooperation with boards of Education and other agencies (Section 3.7.2). The Official Plan encourages the City to design recreational facilities to **serve multiple purposes** and to locate them on **suitably-sized parcels** (Section 7.3.2).

More broadly, Section 7.2.1 of the City's Official Plan includes the following **goals for parks and recreation facilities** in St. Thomas:

i) to provide recreational opportunities for all residents in St. Thomas through the provision of both active and passive parkland and indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities;

ii) to blend parkland and recreation facilities in a manner consistent with the natural environment;

iii) to provide municipal programs for the effective utilization of park and recreation facilities;

iv) to achieve the coordinated use of all public facilities that can be used for recreational purposes.

6.1.2 General Criteria

To provide a basis for identifying prioritize site evaluation criteria, the following high-level objectives have been set for the proposed Community & Aquatic Centre and Sports Dome.

1. **The site(s) should have sufficient space and servicing for the preferred building design(s).**

   Minimum land areas for the proposed Community & Aquatic Centre and Sports Dome are identified below. These land areas would accommodate the proposed footprint, parking, and associated buffers. They are unable to accommodate any substantial future expansion potential or space for outside partners, hence they are identified as "minimums" – as St. Thomas is a growing community, the City is strongly encouraged to secure additional land above these amounts.

   Table 19: Minimum Land Areas – Proposed Facilities

Proposed Facility	Minimum Site Area
Community & Aquatic Centre (Concept 1a)	3.0 ha (Phase 1) to 5.0 ha (all Phases)
Community & Aquatic Centre (Concept 1b)	4.0 ha (Phase 1) to 6.0 ha (all Phases)
Sports Dome (Concept 2a)	2.5 hectares
Sports Dome (Concept 2b)	3.0 hectares

   The sites should also be connected to (or capable of being connected to) municipal services, with relatively flat grades. Larger well-configured sites are preferred over smaller sites so that in future years, additional construction could be phased in to expand the complex to support future growth and/or to accommodate outdoor recreation amenities.

2. **The site(s) should be development-ready and cost-effective.**

   The sites would ideally be located on lands that can be made development-ready in relatively short-order. Site readiness is an important factor due to current and anticipated senior government capital grant programs. Sites not in municipal ownership may be considered, but should be able to be acquired at reasonable cost and be made suitable for development in a timely manner. Readiness also means that the site should be connected to (or capable of being connected to) municipal services and not encumbered by any unnecessary environmental or legal restrictions.

3. **The site(s) should be situated in a centralized location to maximize accessibility for all residents.**

   Proximity is one of many factors that can increase one's physical activity. Based on input from stakeholders and our experience in similar communities, it is believed that most St. Thomas residents will have a willingness to travel to make use of a facility

generally located within the municipal boundary, although a preference – particularly for the Community & Aquatic Centre – is for a location in a centralized area that is accessible to major transportation corridors serving. Typically, it is our experience that most persons are willing to travel about 15 minutes to access the activities that they participate in the most, with longer travel times (25 minutes or more) tolerated for regular participation in competitive activities and regional-level facilities. The type of facility/activity and the level of competition/skill will affect catchment areas, with people being generally more likely to travel greater distances to participate in more unique and elite activities.

Equity, physical accessibility, and convenience are key considerations to ensuring that the facilities are well utilized. This includes ensuring that the locations are accessible (or able to be accessible) by public transit and active transportation choices (e.g., walking, biking, etc.), and that they have suitable parking options for users that choose to drive. The City may also wish to prioritize access for under-served populations that may have unique barriers in accessing services (e.g., low income, youth, seniors, etc.).

4. **The site(s) should have user group and wide community support.**

   A city-wide lens should be applied to the site evaluation as the proposed facilities will serve a city-wide market and beyond. The project's objectives and recommendations may be used to guide site selection and facility design, but these are decisions that need to be made with the benefit of public and stakeholder engagement. Ultimately, the provision strategy and location(s) need to make sense for those living nearby, potential users, and taxpayers. This includes (but is not limited to) sites that have compatible surrounding land uses, locations that have the potential to be a community focal point, and designs that fit with the neighbourhood.

5. **The site(s) should support strategic investment opportunities and offer valued-added benefits, including partnership potential and proximity to outdoor spaces.**

   The City is encouraged to consider sites that offer value-added benefits to the community. This may include (but is not limited to):

   - community revitalization and economic development;
   - prominent and convenient locations that offer potential to serve as tourist attractions or attract a regional market;
   - adjacencies that leverage economic spin-offs, such as for the hospitality sector;
   - outdoor spaces and connected public realm for extended activity and program opportunities;
   - partnerships that maximize public access, affordability and service; and
   - alignment with the objectives and outcomes of other civic projects.

6.1.3 Specific Criteria

Evaluating and selecting preferred sites for the proposed Community & Aquatic Centre and Sports Dome is vitally important to the ultimate success of these spaces and service to the community. The locations must be chosen with care, so as to embody as many key characteristics as possible. Maximizing accessibility to as many residents as possible (both now and in the future) is a key objective; however, there is also a need to ensure that the sites (and the facilities) can be properly serviced, are compatible with adjacent land uses, can be cost effectively developed, and so on. The sites can also have a dramatic impact on overall construction costs. Servicing potential, stormwater management, traffic and road access, soil conditions, available infrastructure, etc. can all have significant implications on the budget.

Beyond specific site characteristics, there are several qualitative considerations that may contribute to the success of one location over another. The importance of the following considerations will depend on the objectives established for the facilities, as well as the proposed facility components, uses, and markets.

The following criteria provide a strong rational basis for evaluating potential sites and have regard to the project objectives. While it is preferable for the selected sites to demonstrate all of the criteria, it is possible that they all may not be able to be met. Weighting of the criteria may differ between the sites to be evaluated for the Community & Aquatic Centre and Sports Dome.

a) **Location and Access**
   - The site is centralized or within reasonable proximity to existing and future residential areas.
   - The site can be accessed from an arterial or collector road, is in the vicinity of a regional public transit route and connected trail network, and has barrier-free access.
   - The site is at a visible location (active frontage with strong street presence) and has the potential to be a community focal point.

b) **Constraints and Development Potential**
   - The site area and shape are sufficient for the proposed use and provide a reasonable level of flexibility in design.
   - The site can accommodate enough on-site and/or nearby/shared parking for both patrons and staff.
   - Suitable infrastructure exists (e.g., sewers, water, etc.) on the site or can be reasonably extended to the site.
   - The site is not unduly impacted by a geographic barrier (e.g., watercourse, rail line), is not restricted by easement/man-made obstructions, does not require site decommissioning (e.g., brownfield), and is relatively flat.
   - The site does not require the demolition of a heritage-designated building or elimination of necessary parkland, parking, or other vital land use.

c) Availability, Compatibility and Planning Status

- The site is owned by the City or can be acquired for a reasonable price.
- The facility would be compatible (in terms of building design, scale, landscaping, setbacks, etc.) with the surrounding area/buildings.
- The site can comply with applicable planning policies.

d) Expansion and Amenity Opportunities

- The site possesses long-term expansion potential for necessary civic uses, as well as outdoor parkland/features.
- The site could enhance and support other facilities, accommodate potential partners, encourage sport tourism (with proximity to hotels), and generate increased usage due to proximity to other locations.
- The site offers the potential for economies of scale in construction and/or operation due to the co-location of other municipal and/or community services.

6.2 Preliminary Site Investigation

In December 2021, the City completed a preliminary investigation of potential sites for a Community & Aquatic Centre. At the time, the following criteria were used:

Exclusionary criteria:

- properties with existing industrial buildings
- hazard land or natural heritage zones
- 1200m from the existing library

Mandatory criteria:

- Availability of municipal water and sanitary services
- Only publicly owned properties that are a minimum area of 2.5 hectares; note: further research through this study indicates that a minimum of 3.5 hectares is now the preferred size

Additional criteria:

- Within 800 metres of a bus route
- Within 800 metres of a park
- Within 800 metres of a multi-use trail
- Within 400 metres from residential zones
- Within 1,200 metres of a high school
- Within 800 metres of City-owned social housing units
- Within 800 metres of seniors housing and services

Based on the aforementioned criteria, several properties were large enough and most of the evaluation criteria; however, most had existing uses and could not feasibly accommodate a new facility. At the time, the short-listed sites included:

- Central Elgin High School (5.5 ha) and YMCA (1.2 ha); lands are currently in use
- Vacant lands west of the Joe Thornton Community Centre (3.3 ha); private ownership
- Optimist Park (2.8 ha); lands are currently in use
- Vacant lands adjacent to Fire Station No. 2, Silver Street (2.5 ha)
- Centennial Park / Sauve Diamonds (2.5 ha); lands are currently in use

Through this feasibility study, input was sought from municipal staff and officials, stakeholders, and the public regarding potential sites and desired criteria. A scan of municipally-owned properties did not yield any additional sites. **To date, we have been unable to identify a suitable site for the proposed Community & Aquatic Centre, being a location that is 3.5 hectares or greater and in municipal ownership.**

The proposed Sports Dome may be more easily sited in the community given its smaller land base (2.5 to 3 hectares) and potential adjacencies to parks, school yards, or industrial areas. The artificial turf field at 1Password Park is not a suitable candidate for a winter dome as this was not part of the initial design. **However, the proximity of the vacant lands adjacent to Fire Station No. 2 offer promise for the Sports Dome, in part due to its proximity to the soccer hub at 1Password Park. This property meets the minimum size requirement for Sports Dome Concept 2a and may be investigated further for this use.**

Figure 32. Potential Sports Dome Site – Vacant Land north of Fire Station No.2 (Silver Street)



6.3 Location Summary

At present, there are no municipally-owned lands of suitable size, configuration, and availability to accommodate the proposed Community & Aquatic Centre. However, by approving this report, Council signals to the community that this is a viable project and there is a willingness to move forward once a site and adequate funding are available. This has the potential to pique the interest of potential landholders and partners.

The City's search should be expanded to include serviced vacant or under-utilized non-municipally-owned parcels of an adequate size, ideally within city limits. This includes continued discussions with potential partners, including school boards and owners of other large landholdings. In particular, future high schools may have the potential to support a seasonal dome over a sports field, in partnership with others. The possibility of purchasing or entering into an agreement with a third-party landowner may be necessary, depending on the priority that the City places on current ownership.

For the Sports Dome, the City is encouraged to earmark the vacant lands (2.5 ha) north of Fire Station No. 2 (Silver Street) for this facility, subject to further validation and municipal direction. Should they emerge, other partnered locations may also be investigated further using the criteria identified in this report.

7 Implementation and Next Steps

Implications of Report Acceptance

Acceptance of this Community & Aquatic Centre Feasibility Study is intended to confirm the scope of subsequent planning work and to direct staff to proceed with further investigations consistent with the findings of the study. Specifically, acceptance of this report directs that future work related to site evaluation, preliminary design considerations, partnership exploration, and funding strategy development be based only on a 25-metre, three-tank aquatic facility within a conventional permanent building form.

For clarity, acceptance of this report does not support or authorize further investigation of a 50-metre pool configuration or a membrane structure. These options have been reviewed at a high level for comparative purposes only and are not recommended for advancement within the scope of this project.

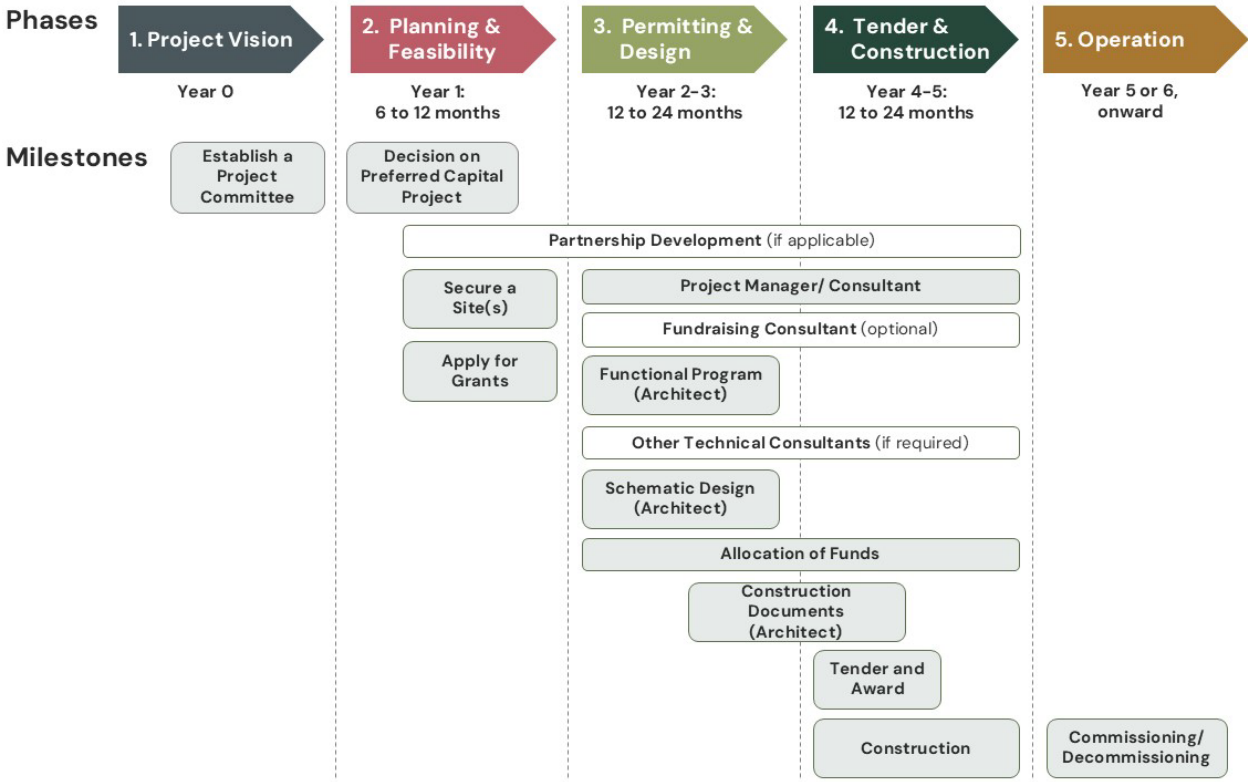
Facility development is a complex process that can be broken down into phases from vision to opening and operation. Progressing from one phase to another may only be possible if previous phases have concluded with positive results, and commitment on behalf of all stakeholders has been made to move forward. Depending on the complexity of the project and the financial and political context that surrounds it, the entire development process can span several years.

An objective of the Feasibility Study was to produce concept options that have been guided by public input, tested by careful analysis, and that are programmatically, functionally, and financially supportable. The information contained within this report can be used to make key decisions for the future progression of major capital recreation projects and should be used as the basis for finalizing the funding model, securing a site(s), and initiating more detailed design.

The ordered tasks below are intended to guide St. Thomas in the development of the proposed facility using a conventional Design-Bid-Build (DBB) delivery methodology. DBB is the most common project delivery method, though other approaches may be considered by the municipality such as design-build, integrated project delivery, etc. Due to the complexity of the project and range of technical skills required, it is recommended that the City engage specialists and experienced personnel during the various phases of the project. This will support the timely implementation of the project, according to the standards, budget, and objectives set for the project.

Key next steps include ongoing outreach to neighbouring municipalities and partners, finalizing the funding model, securing a site(s), and initiating more detailed design.

Figure 33: Key Phases and General Milestones Involved in the Facility Development Process



Phase 1: Project Vision – complete

Phase 2: Planning and Feasibility – largely complete with this Feasibility Study

1) Establish a Project Committee – Establish a Committee to provide oversight, guidance, and facilitate community input throughout the planning, design, and construction phases. The Committee should be comprised of selected elected officials, senior municipal staff (recreation, finance, planning, etc.), and eventually the project manager. Consideration may also be given to inclusion of neighbouring municipalities should there be interest in adding a municipal partner to the project. The Committee will act in an advisory capacity to Council and staff, ensuring that the project reflects community needs, aligns with municipal goals and standards, and is delivered in a fiscally responsible and timely manner. The Committee will be dissolved upon the successful completion of the facility's construction and commissioning, or at the discretion of Council
2) Decision on Preferred Capital Project – The Project Committee will conduct additional due diligence on the proposed project, including community consultations, tours of similar facilities in other communities, and research as appropriate. On the recommendation of the Project Committee, Council will select a preferred option (building components, structure type, etc.), establish a project timeline, and include an order of magnitude cost estimate in its long-term capital

forecast. Interim asset management and financial management decisions will reflect this decision. **Preliminary discussions with potential partners may also be initiated and advanced as appropriate**; development of a shared Memorandum of Understanding is recommended should the partner have a significant interest in the project.

3) Secure a Site – The City will acquire a site suitable for meeting, at minimum, the current requirements of the preferred capital project. Consideration should be given to the mandatory and preferred site criteria established in this study, including space for potential future expansion.
4) Apply for Grants – The City will actively apply for senior government grants as part of an overall funding strategy.

Phase 3: Permitting and Design

5) Project Manager/Consultant – Assuming a DBB method, an RFP may be issued for a project manager to provide services through the life of the project. The project manager would develop a procurement strategy and lead the procurement of other consultants, including an architect for preliminary design (and possibly a fundraising consultant).
6) Functional Program – The general recommendations of this study will be further elaborated to define the specific requirements for the facility. Typically defined by an architect with input from the community and stakeholders. Consideration should also be given to the net zero/green building standards to be achieved through the development. There are also numerous technical studies that may need to be completed around this time, such as legal and topographical surveys, geotechnical study, environmental assessment, a transportation impact assessment, etc.
7) Schematic Design – Includes floor plans and elevations and shows the character and materials to be used in the building. Additional site evaluation should also be done at this phase, which may require the retention of engineers or technical consultants. Additional public engagement could offer a final opportunity for resident input.
8) Allocation of Funds – The project budget is re-assessed to make a determination of how and when to proceed. This is an appropriate stage to commence fundraising efforts.
9) Construction Document Preparation – Includes design development and the preparation of tender documents sufficient for preliminary site plan approval. On completion of the tender documents a pre-tender Class B estimate to within 10% of the contract cost can be developed.

Phase 4: Construction

10) Tendering and Award – Tender documents are issued and interested general contractors (or pre-qualified bidders) develop submissions and pricing, which are formally evaluated by the City and its project manager. The lowest-priced bid that meets the tender requirements may be awarded the contract.

11) Construction – The successful bidder will construct the project in accordance with the construction documents, with significant oversight from the City and its project manager.

Phase 5: Operation

12) Commissioning – This process ensures that the City's requirements are incorporated into the design, are built, and are configured to produce the required result (often achieved with the assistance of a Commissioning Agent). Move-in follows, which can require considerable advance coordination.

Pending Council approval, it will be possible for the Sports Dome project to proceed more quickly than the Community &Aquatic Centre project due to project complexity.

For the proposed Community & Aquatic Centre, the implementation process is likely to take a minimum of five to ten years from inception given the need to receive final approval, secure funding, identify and/or secure sites, establish partnership parameters (if applicable), complete the design and tender process, and complete construction. A significant government grant and successful community fundraising campaign may have the ability to shift the timeline; however, other factors such as funding, site readiness, and partner requirements could impact project timing.

The City is encouraged to consider the findings of this report and identify potential sequencing and target dates for initiation of the recommended project.

The City should engage neighbouring municipalities and other potential partners regarding their interest in partnering on this project.

The City should aggressively seek infrastructure funding and capital grants from government and non-government sources to assist with capital development costs.

APPENDIX A: Standards and Programming Considerations by Pool Type

Pool Standards for Sport Training and Regional Competitions

To meet the broadest range of aquatic sport needs, the Aquatic Sport Council (Ontario) recommends that new pools be designed to the following minimum specifications, with consideration of an adjacent second tank with warmer water and shallower depth to help accommodate the full range of recreational and instructional activities:

- Width: 8-lanes (20 metres) and outside lane rope buffer
- Length: 25 metres plus the width of a bulkhead and timing equipment
- Depth (shallow end): 1.5 to 2.0 metres (depending on availability of teaching pool or movable floor)
- Depth (deep end): 2.5 metres (no diving) to 5 metres (with diving)

The following are minimum standards recommended by the Aquatic Sport Council (Ontario) for local club training and regional competitions.

Pool Standards (selected) for Local Club Training and Regional Competitions – Swimming

Specification	Club Training	Regional Competition
Number of Pool Tanks	1 tank	1 tank, with preference for an adjacent warm-up pool with a minimum of 3 lanes by 25m
Main Tank Dimensions	25m minimum length 8 lanes (10m) width (though 6 lanes may allow for some local competitions) 1.35m minimum depth at ends	25m minimum length 10 lanes (25m) width 1.35m minimum depth at ends
Deck Space	450 sqm minimum	550 sqm minimum
Spectator Seating	not specified	retractable bleachers or upper gallery to accommodate 300 people (280 sqm)
Technical, Mechanical, Design Features	Toe-hold grip on side wall, where water is 1.5m or deeper Flowover gutter systems Flat walls at turning ends Option to be able to adjust pool temperature Capacity to be able to add additional fresh air Bottom return lines preferred	
Fittings and Equipment	Lane ropes secured with recessed anchor brackets Starting blocks Scoreboards at each end Sound System	
Changerooms	Both Male and Female, minimum 150 square metres (capacity to process up to 200 competitors)	

Specification	Club Training	Regional Competition
Support Spaces (selected)	Washrooms, including off-deck washroom for officials Boardroom for 30-60 people First Aid Room Kitchen Hospitality (dining) space for 60-100 people Space for ticket sales, sale of programs, cash handling Space for admitting large groups Storage	

Source: http://aquaticsportontario.ca/poolstandard.php

Notable standards for other forms of aquatic competition are listed below (note: national and international level competition requirements typically require larger tanks and support amenities):

Diving (regional competitions):

- Springboards: One 3m springboard and two 1m springboards, ideally mounted on concrete stands. All springboards should use Durafirm shortstands and be situated a minimum of 2.75m apart.
- Tank Depth: 4m optimum, 3.65m minimum for 3m spring board. Maximum slope in deep end 17%.
- Tank Length and Width: 25m long (using deep end) and 6 lane minimum (18m) wide.
- Other Spaces: Dryland training area.

Synchro/Artistic Swimming (regional competitions):

- Tank Depth: At least 12m of water 2.75m deep.
- Tank Length and Width: 25m long (using deep end) and 8-lane (20m).
- Other Requirements: Underwater speakers (required) and underwater lights (desirable). Good quality acoustics. Water clarity is paramount. Attention should be paid to windows on the pool deck and the creation of glare on the water surface.
- Other Spaces: Judges platforms with at least 12 high chairs. Space for medal ceremonies, spotlight platform, etc. Dryland training area.

Water Polo (regional competitions):

- Tank Depth: 2m depth for regional competition pool, minimum 1.5m for 8 lane pool.
- Tank Length and Width: 25m long (using deep end) and 8-lane (20m).
- Other Requirements: Sufficient space to install a temporary referee catwalk for competitions.
- Other Spaces: Storage (for nets).

Guidelines for sanctioned provincial, national, and international competitions are available from Swimming Canada (2023). Notable differences include (but may not be limited to):

- A preference for starting pool depths of 2.0 metres (extending from 1 to 6 metres from end wall);
- A requirement for an additional 25 or 50-metre warm-up pool for sanctioned national competitions; and
- A requirement for a 50-metre competition pool (with 2.5-metre lane widths) and an additional 50-metre warm-up pool for sanctioned international competitions;
- Additional deck space, spectator seating (minimum 750 people), and meeting space;
- Other technical requirements (e.g., video backup system, video board, lighting, etc.).

Pool Features Options Based on Facility Type

	25 Metre Lane	50 Metre Lane	Diving Pool	Leisure Pool	Teaching Pool	Warm Pool	Therapy Pool	Hot Tub	Sauna
Accessible Lift	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Bulkhead*		●							
Diving Springboard*	●	●	●						
Diving Tower*		●	●						
Headwalls*	●	●							
Hot Water								●	
Hydro Jets						●	●	●	
Inflatables*	●	●	●	◐	◐				
Moveable Floor*		●							
Ninja Cross*	●	●	●	◐	◐				
Ramp	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	
Spectator Viewing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Tarzan Rope*	●	●	●						
Underwater Camera	●	●	●	●	●		●		
Warm Water						●	●		
Waterslide	●	●	●	●	●				

Source: Aquatic Sport Facility Infrastructure Report (2023) commissioned by the Aquatic Sport Council – Ontario

Legend

◐ school aged children, non-swimmers and swimmers with limited swimming skills

● all ages

program could be delivered but not in an ideal setting based on depths, water temperature, accessibility, etc.

Programming Options Based on Facility Type

	25 Metre Lane	50 Metre Lane	Diving Pool	Leisure Pool	Teaching Pool	Warm Pool	Therapy Pool	Hot Tub	Sauna
Aquafit	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		
Aqua Cycle	●	●		●	●	●	●		
Aqua Jogging	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		
Aqua Circuit Training	●	●		●	●	●	●		
Artistic Swimming	●	●	●	◐	◐				
Canoeing	●	●	●	●	●	●			
Competitive Swimming	●	●		◐	◐				
Diving - Springboard	●	●	●						
Diving - Tower		●	●						
Learn to Swim	●	●	●	◐	◐	●	●		
Lifeguard / Instructor / Leadership	●	●	●	●	●				
Lifesaving Sport	●	●		◐	◐				
Rowing / Paddling	●	●	●	◐	◐				
SCUBA Diving	●	●	●						
Snorkelling	●	●	●	○	◐				
Therapy	○					●	●	●	
Underwater Rescue e.g., Pilot / Oil Rig / Coast Guard / Military	●	●	●						
Underwater Sports e.g., Hockey	●	●	●	◐	◐				
Water polo	●	●	●	◐	◐				

Source: Aquatic Sport Facility Infrastructure Report (2023) commissioned by the Aquatic Sport Council – Ontario

Legend

◐ school aged children, non-swimmers and swimmers with limited swimming skills

● all ages

○ program could be delivered but not in an ideal setting based on depths, water temperature, accessibility, etc.

Addendum

50-metre Indoor Pool Tank Option

DRAFT

February 2026

Overview

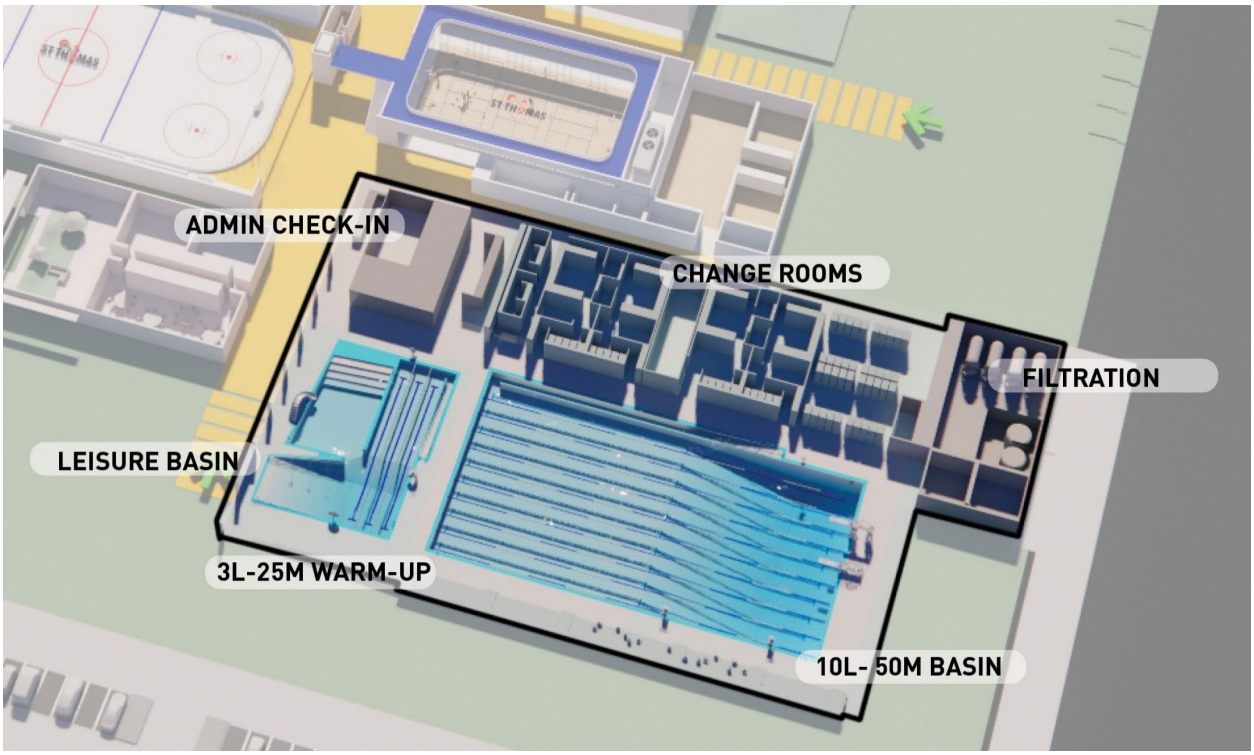
In August 2025, the City of St. Thomas Community and Aquatic Centre Steering Committee directed the project consultants to consider the need and potential impact of a 50-metre competition pool as an adjunct to the Aquatic Centre Feasibility Study. While this study does not identify a 50-metre pool as a priority at this time, further research has been completed and is included as an Addendum to the Study report.

Capital Costs

A preliminary concept plan has been prepared to illustrate how a 50-metre pool (with 10 lanes) and 25-metre warm-up/leisure tank (with 3-lanes and leisure components) could be integrated into the proposed Community & Aquatic Centre in St. Thomas.

This layout is conceptual only to show massing and inform future site selection. The model and subsequent pricing assumes conventional construction (not a tensioned membrane structure).

50M pool and 25M warm-up/Leisure Tank (Concept 1c)



February 2026

Estimated Capital Cost for Community & Aquatic Centre, Concept 1c (construction and project costs) – AQUATIC CENTRE ONLY

Components	Area (sf)	Estimated Cost
Aquatic Centre (2 tanks: 50M 10-lane pool, 25M 3-lane warm-up/leisure pool) and support spaces	52,350	$62,820,000
Gross-up Factor (10%)	5,235	$6,282,000
Construction Total	**57,585 sf**	
Construction Contingency (6%)	n/a	$4,146,120
Site Works and Soft Costs (30%)	n/a	$20,730,600
Project Total	**n/a**	**$93,978,720**

Notes: Figures shown in 2025 dollars.
Net program areas include interior walls and shafts. Gross-Up factor includes exterior walls and columns, service, support and communications rooms. HVAC, dehumidification assumes roof top units. Includes LEED designation above Silver. Assumes Stipulated Sum Tender.
Specific exclusions: Land Costs, Legal Costs, Environmental Remediation, Geo-thermal/Heat Recovery, Project Management.

Comparison of Aquatic Centre Options (excludes Community Centre components)

Characteristics	Concept 1a	Concept 1b	Concept 1c
Aquatic Centre Description	2 tanks: 25M 8-lane pool and leisure pool	3 tanks: 25M 8-lane pool, leisure pool, and therapy pool	2 tanks: 50M 10-lane pool, 25M 3-lane warm-up/leisure pool
Aquatic Centre Size	24,300 sf	29,820 sf	62,340 sf
Building Cost (including 20% gross-up)	$27,540,000	$33,796,000	$69,102,000
Total Project Cost (including contingency, site works, and soft costs)	**$37,454,400**	**$45,962,560**	**$93,978,720**

Notes: Figures shown in 2025 dollars. Figures exclude other community centre components (e.g., gymnasium, wellness centre, arenas, etc.).

As noted above, at 62,340 square feet and a cost of $93.98 million, 50-metre pool Option 1c is more than twice the size and cost as the largest 25-metre pool Option 1b.

For comparative purposes, replacing the aquatic centre in Option 1b with the aquatic centre in Option 1c (including the 50-metre pool) would increase the project cost for the full Community and Aquatic Centre from $99.5 million to $147.5 million.

Operating Profile

This Feasibility Study presents business plans for two concepts for the proposed St. Thomas Community and Aquatic Centre. The report provides individual business plan summaries for the two facility concepts to provide the City with a comparison of operational and financial implications for both facility models. For consistency, the business planning assumptions contained in this Addendum are an extension of Option 1c, with a 50-metre (long-course) pool in place of a 25-metre tank. The consultants considered conceptual and financial details from the following sources:

- the consultant's database, including numerous 50-metre pool operations across Canada;
- interviews with municipal staff focusing on organizational, operational and financial details from two 50-metre pools in Ontario (London and Markham);
- information from Aquatic Sport Council of Ontario; and
- information from the Royal Life Saving Society.

Financial Implications of a 50-metre Tank

Note: Expense and revenue projections are based on industry averages for similar facilities and are presented in 2025 dollars. These forecasts reflect ranges, not precise figures, due to uncertainty between projection and facilities' opening dates.

Building on the information presented in the Feasibility Study, the consultants adjusted the financial details of Concept 1b by replacing the 25-metre pool with a 50-metre tank and enlarging the secondary tank to provide greater utility for meets (e.g., warm-up) and community use. The assumptions employed to produce the financial projections for this modified concept reflect those employed in previous analysis.

While the larger pool tank provides several programmatic advantages – such as enhanced aquatic sport and fitness training, increased simultaneous programming opportunities, and additional special events capacity – it also presents staffing cost challenges. Guarding requirements legislated by the Ontario Government Provincial Pools Regulations (#565) use a combination of water surface area and bather load to determine the number of guards required to provide a safe swimming environment. These recently updated regulations[16] dictate that at least double the number of guards be on the deck of a 50-metre tank compared to a 25-metre tank for the same number of swimmers. This requirement elevates the labour costs of the long-course tank because of the relative surface areas of the pools.

[16] Lifesaving Society. 2025 Guide to Ontario Public Pools Regulation Updates. www.lifesavingsociety.com/media/485043/january%201,%202025%20insert%20for%20guide%20to%20ontario%20public%20pool%20regs%20approved%20aoda%20web%201.pdf

Payroll costs will also be increased by the need for additional full and part-time facility operators to maintain the larger facility. Additionally, utility costs will increase in direct proportion to the increase in water volume plus overall escalation in square footage of the larger building footprint. Other operating costs are expected to rise modestly compared to Concept 1b.

Employing the same methodologies described in the Feasibility Study, the annual projected cost to operate the Community and Aquatic Centre with a 50-metre pool will likely be between $2.96 million and $3.62 million.

While potential aquatic patrons from outside the city were considered in the business plan for the 25-metre pool, a new a 50-metre tank in St. Thomas would likely attract a higher proportion of aquatic participation by residents from surrounding areas – including potential swimmers from the secondary markets of Central Elgin and the Township of Southwood. Whether these potential aquatic participants are attracted by more variety and convenient aquatic instruction possibilities or long-course training, it is likely they will be willing to travel a little further to access this new level of service. Additionally, residents from the more distant tertiary market – Township of Malahide or the Town of Aylmer and beyond – may also be willing to travel further than usual norms to access the larger pool's programmatic offerings. With the population growth forecast for the entire region over the next 30 years, monitoring the market size of all areas within the region is important in predicting potential future utilization.

Annual admissions to an aquatic facility, across all participation types, represent a ratio of the number of swim occasions per capita over a 12-month period. In our experience, a ratio of 1.0 to 2.0+ swims per capita is common in Ontario, except for certain regional variations. The business plan for the 25-metre pool assumed a swimming rate per capita of about 1 annual swim per capita for residents within the primary and secondary markets. The 50-metre facility is expected to attract 1.45 swims per year for residents living in all three markets (primary, secondary and tertiary). Revenue projections and guarding requirements expressed in the operating costs above are based on these pool activity levels.

Estimated annual revenue generated by the Centre with a 50-metre tank is anticipated to be between $1.02 million and $1.24 million. The larger pool offers more tank space for instructional programs to meet demand arising from within the city as well as potential lesson users from outside the city. Income generated through general admissions (recreation swims, etc.) and sport group rentals have been revised reflecting the long-course pool's ability to accommodate more bathers for family swims, and fun events plus its capacity to independently or simultaneously accommodate sport group rentals.

Based on input from 50-metre pool operators as well as information from the Aquatics Sport Council of Ontario, it is anticipated that a long-course pool in St. Thomas would have only limited ability to attract competitive meets, largely due to the number of other rental options in Southern Ontario. Further, our consultations suggest that most potential meet organizers would be looking for 25-metre facilities rather than long-course competitions. In

view of this input, the financial projections include annual rental revenue reflecting four (4) competitive yearly rentals at rental rates consistent with current market conditions.

The Centre's dryland operation – including Wellness Centre memberships and programs, drop in passes, gym programs & multi-purpose room rentals – remain the same as projected in the business plan for Concept 1b.

Based on the foregoing assumptions for Concept 1b inclusive of a 50-metre pool, the City's annual investment to support the operations of the larger centre would be approximately $1.9 million and $2.4 million per annum, which does not include an annual capital replacement contribution. This compares to an annual subsidy of $1.3 to $1.6 million per year for Option 1b (full Community and Aquatic Centre).

Estimated Operating Expenses and Revenues – Community & Aquatic Centre: Concept 1c (50-metre pool)

Concept 1c	Low Range	High Range
Estimated Expenses	$2,960,000	$3,620,000
Estimated Revenues	$1,020,000	$1,240,000
Profit (Subsidy)	**($1,940,000)**	**($2,380,000)**

Background Supporting Business Plan Assumptions

50-metre Pool Provision in Ontario

Note: the following is excerpted from Section 3.3.4.

In January 2025, the Aquatic Sport Council of Ontario released a white paper titled "Building More Aquatic Centres in Ontario", indicating an urgent need for Ontario to invest in more and larger recreational aquatic facilities, such as 50-metre pools. The report finds that Ontario is falling behind other Canadian provinces in the delivery of long-course training and competition opportunities, and that 50-metre pools can enhance economic (sport tourism), health, and community outcomes.

There are approximately nineteen 50-metre indoor pools in Ontario, about half of which are owned by municipalities and half that are owned by universities. Of this, only three 50-metre pool venues have been built since 2000, all with the help of senior government funding to support international games bids.

No Ontario municipalities have built 50-metre pools on their own in at least the last 25 years due in large part to their high capital and operating costs. While 50-metre pools can accommodate many local needs alongside those for higher-level training and competition,

their design and cooler water temperatures do not appeal to swimming lessons for younger children, aquafit programs for older adults, family recreational swims, and therapeutic uses.

Recognizing that municipalities cannot afford to build facilities of this magnitude on their own, the report calls for the Province of Ontario to establish a fund to support the construction of 50-metre pools. However, a large regional market is required to sustain such a pool. With two 50-metre indoor pools in the southwest region of Ontario (the Canada Games Aquatic Centre and Western University pools in London) and others located in southwestern Ontario (Windsor, Waterloo, Guelph, Brantford, etc.), the area is already well served by long-course pools. Given the relative availability of long-course pools in this region, the Aquatic Sport Council of Ontario has not identified southwestern Ontario as one of its eight key focus areas for 50-metre pool construction.

Context for Pool Use and Operations

Public indoor pools typically offer seven distinct categories of aquatic services:

- **Recreational swimming,** for general enjoyment;
- **Skill development**, encompassing both learn-to-swim lessons and other aquatic skill advancement programs;
- **Fitness swimming**, which includes lane swimming as well as organized water-based fitness classes;
- **Special events**, ranging from large-scale competitions such as swim or dive meets to smaller gatherings like birthday parties;
- **Sport training**, provided by organizations such as swim or dive clubs;
- **Rehabilitation and therapy,** delivered through exercises conducted in an aquatic environment;
- **Leadership training**, including certifications such as Bronze Medallion, Bronze Cross, and National Lifeguard Service (NLS) courses.

Within most Canadian communities, the distribution of swim occasions across these categories is proportionally represented below.

Typical Proportion of Swims in Each of the Aquatic Service Categories

Category of Aquatic Services	Approx. Proportion of Swims
Fun/recreational swimming	50%
Skill development classes	20%
Fitness swimming	15%
Sport training	10%
Special events/swim meets	~2%
Rehabilitation and therapy	~2%
Leadership training	~1%

Despite increased use of public indoor pools in recent years, the proportion of swim occasions has stayed relatively consistent. On a regional basis, recreational swimming may have increased more rapidly with the introduction of one or more leisure pools. Various versions of pool tanks and operating conditions influence the seven services categories based on factors like water depth, temperature, and tank configuration.

Pools meant for sports training and competition differ significantly from those used for other activities – especially in water temperature. Athletes prefer cooler water to enhance competitive performance, while most other users favour warmer water. On the other side of the spectrum – rehabilitation or therapy – require warmer temperatures.

Another key distinction lies in water depth. When designing a pool tank for aquatic sports, increased depth is generally advantageous. Certain disciplines, such as diving, water polo, and artistic swimming, necessitate deeper water for optimal performance. In competitive swimming, deeper water contributes to faster pool conditions, making it preferable for hosting elite events. However, for most other users, shallow water is favoured and may be essential to ensure accessibility and safety.

Another way they differ is in the percentage of the community's population that uses the pool. Generally, only a small segment of the community is involved in aquatic sports, however, aquatic clubs members tend to swim far more often than the general public. This means that, while aquatic club swimmers represent a fraction of overall pool users and a very small slice of the population at large, they account for a surprisingly high share of total swim occasions. In contrast, other types of pool visits reflect a much wider variety and more representative portion of community members.

Lastly, there is a difference in pool capacity and by how it is programmed and utilized. Pools designated for aquatic sports training or competitions generally accommodate fewer users at one time. For instance, during a swim club's hour-long rental of an eight-lane short course pool, there may be up to 80 swimmers present. However, the same pool may hold over three times as many swimmers during a public swim session.

In summary, the net public subsidy per visit is typically greater for sport training and competition – which is a primary use for a 50-metre pool – than for the average of other swimming categories. Overall, visits classified under sport training and competition receive the highest level of subsidy among all pool usage types.