

Youth  
STRATEGY





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## 1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Coquitlam Parks, Recreation and Culture Services wishes to acknowledge the following for their contributions to the Youth Strategy development process:

- › The members of the Coquitlam Youth Council and Poirier Leadership Committee in 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 for their ideas, suggestions, and generous trust in sharing the challenges that they and their peers are facing;
- › The members of the Council Advisory Committees;
- › The community agency and school district youth workers who participated in the interviews;
- › The City's service delivery partners: Place Des Arts, Evergreen Cultural Centre, the Coquitlam Library, Coquitlam Heritage Society, and Place Maillardville;
- › The nearly 1000 community youth, young adults, parents and influencing adults who took the time to complete the surveys, provide honest feedback, and offer many insights and suggestions.



## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**In the fifteen years since the development of original Youth Strategy in 2004, the world has changed dramatically.** The need was identified for a comprehensive research and consultation process to understand how these changes have shaped the experience of growing up, and the role that Parks, Recreation, and Culture Services (PRC) can play in helping youth and young adults navigate the challenges, and live healthy lives now as they pursue goals for the future.

In the research phase of the process, participation and demographic statistics, current studies on youth health, development, and participation, as well as promising practices in program and service delivery were explored. The consultation phase – comprised of workshops, focus groups, interviews and surveys – engaged approximately a thousand youth, young adults, parents and other influencing adults, as well as cultural partners, youth-serving agencies, District school staff and students, and community advisory members.

**The results of the research and consultation were revealing: finding a healthy life balance has become increasingly difficult for youth and young adults facing a myriad of societal pressures, expectations and distractions.** Crammed schedules, over-use of technology and other factors have left many youth feeling exhausted and stressed. Close to 20% of Canadian youth have a mental health issue, and likely many more are lacking the levels of sleep, exercise, and activity outdoors strongly recommended in the adolescent health research.

**It may be time to consider new ways to support young people and their families.** Approximately 25% of the Community Survey respondents have found a life balance they feel good about, and it seems they have made intentional choices to achieve this. But 75% of respondents said their life balance was either lacking or in need of improvement. The challenge for Coquitlam PRC and other service providers is finding ways to contribute to the current and long-term well-being of youth without adding burden to already overburdened schedules.

As described in the ‘Service Strengths’ section, there are many community programs and services available for young residents. The problem is that barriers – some obvious, others more subtle and systemic – may limit or prevent many youth from taking advantage of these opportunities. Lack of knowledge about, or familiarity with, facilities and programs, even the structure of a program can be a barrier. Most



require a commitment, not only by the young participant but also by the parents: to find the program, plan, register and pay, and then provide the transportation. Some parents may not have the time or other resources to do this; additionally, older youth generally want and need more independence and control over their recreation time.

**When asked how more youth can be encouraged to participate, hundreds of survey respondents said: make recreation easier, more accessible, more affordable, more social and attractive.** Older youth also indicated that they want more leadership and

career exploration opportunities. Additionally, respondents said to tailor communication and promotion specifically to young audiences, with messaging that is relevant and meaningful to them, using the media and networks they use.

**The aim of the PRC Youth Strategy is to meet these goals, which are broadly described as: Healthy Life Balance; Active Participation; Positive Connections; and Engagement and Leadership.**

Achieving the Strategy Goals will require a shift in the way that the Parks, Recreation & Culture Department delivers programs and services for, and with, youth and young adults. The work will begin with three critical priorities:

- Recognition of the need to shift how youth services are delivered, which now requires staffing specifically dedicated to youth and young adult programs and services;
- A process to ensure collaboration, with all PRC divisions and service delivery partners working together to advance the Goals and Actions; and
- A system identified and adopted by all divisions to measure and report on the progress of the PRC Youth Strategy.



### 3. INTRODUCTION

The focus of the PRC Youth Strategy is the delivery of park, recreation and culture programs and services for youth and young adults. While its purpose is not to resolve specific socio/economic issues outside the direct influence of the City, it is important to recognize that the ability of youth to participate in recreation can be significantly impacted by these issues. In the Strategy Goals and Actions, potential barriers are addressed with the aim to increase equity, inclusion, access and affordability for all young residents.

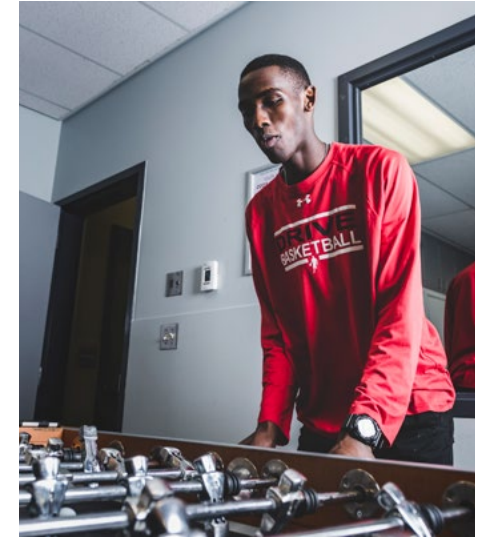
#### 3.1 CONTEXT

##### Background

The original version of the Strategy, *The Coquitlam Leisure & Parks Youth Strategy*, was developed in 2004, and with some minimal revision, was endorsed by Council in 2006.

Through a departmental reorganization in 2007/2008, the recreation staffing structure changed from a specialist to a generalist model: Youth Services Coordinators became general Program Coordinators whose teams provided programming for preschoolers, children, youth and families. The newly created Community Services division took the lead in the Youth Strategy implementation along with delivery of other PRC programs and services. The responsibility for the Youth Strategy was later brought under the umbrella of the recreation programming area but there was a reduced capacity for periodic updates. Through the development of the PRC Master Plan in 2016, the need for a review and revision of the Youth Strategy was identified.

While the generalist service model was felt to be best practice at the time, the lack of direct focus on youth services and programs has slowed the advancement of key objectives in this area. In the absence of a dedicated youth section, the PRC Department has been challenged to keep up with youth service delivery needs, and the current model has resulted in a reduced capacity for staff to receive focused training and explore new opportunities and relationships.



## Related Department Plans

The update to the PRC Youth Strategy was developed within the context of the Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan and other departmental service and facility plans.



### **Our Story: Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan 2015 - 2029**

Each of the Master Plan's Strategic Directions directly or indirectly supports the well-being of youth and young adults and aligns with the goals and actions of the Youth Strategy. The following directions are particularly relevant:

**Define Core Service**, by providing recreational and cultural services and programs with priority given to the largest number of residents and secondary priority to target groups such as children and youth; offering low or no cost and introductory level opportunities through a variety of delivery models; and providing staff to coordinate and program the core services, including planning, policy development, facility allocation and volunteer management.

**Enhance Service Delivery through Partnerships**, by working with sport organizations and community groups to facilitate opportunities for learning experiences for all

ages and skills; and exploring sponsorship partnerships to fund facilities, programs and service enhancements.

**Optimize the Use of Public Amenities**, by designing new facilities as flexible multi-use spaces; and investigating operational changes such as extending days and hours of operation and reviewing subsidy rates.

**Recognize the Evolving Role of Recreation**, by providing opportunities to be active on an individual, informal basis; improving “learn-to” sport and physical literacy programs; embracing opportunities for emerging sport and activities; considering facility and park design to foster physical activity, social gathering, and connection; and reviewing and revising the Youth Strategy.

**Enhance Outdoor Recreation Opportunities**, by improving opportunities to connect with nature and outdoor recreation close to neighbourhoods through a network of park-oriented developments; improving walking and cycling opportunities to schools; and linking arts, culture, health and fitness with outdoor recreation in program development.

**Provide Greater Leadership and Investment in Arts, Culture and Heritage**, by examining the delivery of introductory programming in all arts, culture and heritage service areas.



## Arts, Culture & Heritage Strategic Plan 2015 – 2030

This Plan includes a variety of youth and young adult focused goals:

**Engage youth as participants and in program development and review**, by devoting a Cultural Summit to youth interests; engaging youth on Boards; adopting a collective approach to recruiting volunteers; and ensuring youth participation from diverse communities.

**Challenge Coquitlam’s “conservative” culture**, by supporting festivals that attract youth and young adults and addressing the evening cultural and entertainment interests of young adults.

**Encourage the delivery of school-based cultural programming**, by supporting and working with educators.

**Improve Coordination, Collaboration and Communication**, by convening regular meetings with cultural programmers to address evolving community needs, programming gaps and overlaps, as well as strengthening collaboration across the Tri-Cities.

## Facility Strategies

- The current and projected service needs of all age groups, in organized community sport, skill development and learning programs, recreation level and casual use participation have been addressed in recent PRC Department strategies such as: the Coquitlam Sports Field Strategy 2013 – 2023; the Arena Services and Facilities Strategy 2016 – 2030; the Aquatic Services & Infrastructure Strategy 2015 – 2040; and Tennis and Pickleball Services and Facilities Strategy 2017 – 2037.



### 3.2 PROCESS

When the Youth Strategy update was initiated in 2018, nearly fifteen years had passed since the development of the original Strategy. The cultural, social, economic and particularly, technological landscape, had changed dramatically for young residents. A comprehensive research and consultation process was required to understand how the needs and interests of youth and young adults had evolved over this time. The development of the Youth Strategy update has included the following phases:

**Background Research (April– August 2018)** included a demographic review of young Coquitlam residents; an internal audit of PRC youth program and service provision and participation; a literature review of current youth related issues; and a municipal scan of good ideas and promising practices.

**Internal Consultation (April – August 2018)** was comprised of PRC staff workshops, focus groups with the youth committees, and a PRC Youth Participant Survey that was conducted at many of the City’s indoor and outdoor facilities and included three questionnaires – one for program participants, another for volunteers and a third for casual park users. More than 300 youth responded.

**External Consultation (Oct 2018 – Feb 2019)** included focus groups with specific stakeholder groups; interviews with youth serving community agency and school district staff; and an online Community Survey for the general youth population, parents and other influencing adults. A total of 636 individuals responded to the Community Survey, of which 44% were youth and young adults. In late February, noon-hour visits to middle and secondary schools were organized to test program-specific findings with the students.

**Presentation of the Key Findings (Feb 2019 – May 2019)** to Council-in-Committee on February 25th followed by presentations to the Cultural Advisory Committee, the Sports Advisory Committee, the Universal Access-Ability Committee, and the Multiculturalism Advisory Committee.

**Development of the PRC Youth Strategy and Implementation Plan (Summer 2019).** Staff will present the Draft Strategy to Council for adoption in the summer and follow with development of a concise, youth-friendly version. The Implementation Plan will go into effect in 2020.

### 3.3 FRAMEWORK

The development of the PRC Youth Strategy includes the following four documents:

**The Youth Strategy Key Findings Report**, presented to Council-in-Committee and the Council Advisory Committees, provides an analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data collected through the research and consultation process.

**The PRC Youth Strategy (this document)**, provides a summary of the key findings and trends, and articulates the principles, goals, action steps, and critical priorities developed to guide the delivery of programs and services.

**The PRC Youth Rec Plan**, will be a concise, graphically-rich, youth-friendly version of the Strategy.

**PRC Youth Strategy Implementation Plan 2020 – 2024** is an operational plan that describes the goals and actions in detail, with roles, resources, timelines and key performance indicators identified.





## 4. TRENDS

### 4.1 DEMOGRAPHICS

The Youth Strategy focuses on young residents 11-24 years of age. While “youth” is often defined as age 13-18 years, this Strategy also includes the perspectives and interests of the pre and post-teen age groups. As both groups are “in between,” moving quickly from one stage of life to another, they have unique concerns, needs and aspirations. The 11-13 age group is generally included in the youth programming category as most middle-schoolers want more independence than children’s programs provide, and many are seeking pre-leadership opportunities. The young adults, in the 19-24 age group, are also uniquely situated. As many are still students, with increasing responsibilities but limited time and financial resources, their recreation must also be convenient, affordable and responsive to their immediate needs.

According to the 2016 census, there are approximately 13,320 youth (11-18 years) and 11,640 young adults (19-24 years) in the city – combined they make up 25,000 or 18% of Coquitlam’s residents. Between the 2011 and 2016 census, the number of youth remained consistent with a small decrease. The young adult group increased by 6%.<sup>1</sup>

Coquitlam’s young resident population is culturally diverse and includes many recent and new immigrant youth and young adults. Almost half, 41% of older youth age 15-24, were born outside of Canada. In the age 10-24 age category, the top languages other than English spoken at home are Mandarin, Korean, Farsi and Cantonese, followed by Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Arabic and Japanese.<sup>2</sup>

### 4.2 SERVICE STRENGTHS

In many ways, Coquitlam is a youth-friendly community, with a range of quality programs, services and facilities, beautiful parks and natural areas, many caring, supportive adults, and the young residents themselves who contribute their energy, ideas, and talents. The overview to follow highlights the strengths in park, recreation and culture service delivery for youth and young adults in the City.

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada, Census Profile, 2016 Census

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada, 2016 Census, Immigrant status and period of immigration; Statistics Canada, Census Profile, 2016 Census

## 4.2.1 Parks, Recreation & Culture: Youth Programs & Services

### *Registered and Admission Programs*

A significant number of youth, primarily in the younger age category, continue to enjoy registered, instructed programs through PRC or at a partner facility. These include camps, visual and performing arts, health & fitness, sport & active play, and learning programs which generally span four to eight sessions but may be longer in length for some specialized activities. The number of registered PRC program participants in the 11-14 age group has remained consistent; however, as youth get older, they are less likely to commit to a traditional registered program.

The most popular way youth and young adults participate in PRC programs is through drop-ins, which may be instructed, such as fitness classes, or independent activities such as skating, swimming, gymnasium sports, and weight room visits. For convenience and savings, youth and their families can purchase a PASS which provides access to independent drop-in activities at any City recreation facility.

In the PRC Youth Participant Survey, youth who had attended either a drop-in or registered program rated their experience as generally very positive in terms of enjoyment, feeling welcomed and included, understanding expectations, learning new things, and improving skills. When asked if they met some new friends, the response was lower, an issue that will be addressed in sections to follow.

### *Youth Centres*

Coquitlam currently offers an after-school youth space at Place Maillardville and two dedicated spaces through PRC: the Getaway Youth Centre located in the Centennial Pavilion adjacent to Poirier Community Centre and the Landing Youth Centre in Pinetree Community Centre. These staffed spaces offer social support, information, group activities and games such as table tennis, foosball, and pool. Young visitors also enjoy special events and programs such as the weekly lunch at the Getaway Youth Centre.

The PRC youth centres serve relatively small but regular groups of teens, with an average ratio of approximately 65% boys to 35% girls. While not heavily used, the centres provide a valued service for youth who are seeking a safe, positive space in the afternoons and evenings.



“The Youth Centre really helped me out with a place to be in my teenage years.”  
— Young Adult Survey Respondent



### **Volunteering**

PRC offers a variety of volunteer opportunities for youth: in children’s camps, arts & crafts, sport and swim programs; at City events; in environmental, Park Spark and Inspiration garden programs; as recreation buddies and animal shelter assistants; and as members of a leadership committee. The Poirier Youth Leadership Committee, Coquitlam Youth Council, and a project-focused group at the aquatic centre provide opportunities for youth to plan and implement events and initiatives for their peers and the wider community.

The number of youth volunteering with the City has continued to increase. In the PRC Youth Participant Survey, the majority of youth who responded to the Volunteer Questionnaire said they felt good about what they did as a volunteer; they also felt welcome, learned new things and improved their skills. More volunteers than fee program participants said that they had met new people and made some new friends, but there is potential to enhance this element of volunteering as well.

### **Casual Park Use**

Many youth and young adults use and value Coquitlam’s 70-plus active parks and trails. In the PRC Youth Participant Survey, the youth who responded to the Park Casual User Questionnaire were generally positive about their experience in the park they most recently visited, agreeing that it was easy to get to and around, comfortable and safe, it had amenities they like and was a good place to hang out

with friends. They particularly appreciate the hiking and bike trails, running and walking paths, seating areas, and opportunities to play casual sports and games.

### **Events**

The PRC Department does not currently host large-scale youth-focused events but many young residents participate in the City’s popular festivals as attendees, support staff, volunteers, and in some cases, performing artists. Additionally, Place Des Arts, Evergreen Cultural Centre and the Coquitlam Heritage Society offer events, and young performers are featured at various venues throughout the region. Smaller events, offered through the recreation centres and the Park Spark program attract youth with specific interests. In May of each year, the PRC Youth Council hosts “Youth Week” – seven days of activities, such as free barbecues, classes and contests, all planned and developed by youth for youth in the community.

### **PRC & School Partnership Programs**

In partnership with the School District, PRC offers several programs and initiatives in middle and secondary schools. In 2018, for example, a successful initiative was piloted to educate youth about options for staying physically active outside of traditional sport. Twelve PE classes, more than 300 students, received weight room orientations and coaching on proper fitness technique and program design. Another partnership program called “More Sports” is based on a mentorship model where students mentor their younger peers.

## 4.2.2 External Organizations & Partners: Youth Programs & Services

### *Organized Community Sport*

If youth are interested in community organized sport, there is a range of sport types, leagues and clubs from which they can choose: hockey, figure and speed skating, ringette or lacrosse in the arenas; speed swimming, diving, synchronized, or polo in the pools; athletics on the tracks; softball, baseball, rugby, field hockey, lacrosse or soccer on the sports fields; tennis, volleyball, or basketball on the courts or gymnasiums. Many adult volunteers dedicate their time, energy and skills to organizing, scheduling, coaching, and mentoring these young athletes.

### *Service Delivery Partners*

The City's cultural partners, which deliver programs on behalf of the City, include the Coquitlam Library, Place Des Arts, Evergreen Cultural Centre, and the Coquitlam Heritage Society. These facilities provide a variety of literary, visual and performing art programs and events, heritage experiences, volunteer and leadership opportunities for youth. Additionally, Place Maillardville, a community centre in Southwest Coquitlam, provides a friendly neighbourhood space, drop-in programs, camps, and school programs for young residents in Maillardville and surrounding areas.

### *School Programs*

Middle and secondary schools offer a variety of recreational opportunities for their students during the school year. For youth attracted to team sports, most schools offer a variety of field, court, gym, and track opportunities, and several schools also organize noon-hour intramurals. Other interests can be pursued through clubs and groups focused on drama and music, games, leadership and community awareness and action.

Through the Pinetree Partnership, Douglas College provides wellness programs, fitness drop-ins, intramurals and competitive sport opportunities for its students at the Coquitlam campus.

### *Private and Non-Profit Organizations*

Coquitlam is also home to a number of private businesses offering sport, movement and cultural opportunities for youth: martial arts and dance studios, gymnastics and fitness centres as well as a climbing facility. Also, the City receives and purchases time from Planet Ice to support ice sports and has lease agreements with organizations that offer activities such as archery, fencing, parkour, and rhythmic gymnastics at the recreation facilities.

Additionally, faith groups and other non-profit organizations in the community provide camp and leadership opportunities for their youth members. In 2021, the YMCA facility will be constructed in Burquitlam which will serve all age groups including youth and young adults.





## 4.3 CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

While there are many assets and strengths in current program delivery, there are also gaps, deficiencies and areas for potential improvement. Every youth-focused organization is striving to respond to the diverse and changing needs of the youth they serve, and encountering some significant challenges in the process. Several of these challenges arose in the development of the Youth Strategy, such as:

- › how to encourage youth and young adults to use online media wisely, recognizing that while these tools are useful and engaging, they cannot replace the value of in-person time with friends and family, experiences in nature, and active play;
- › how to assist young residents to achieve a healthier life balance in a social/cultural environment that is over-busy, over-consuming, and over-filled with demands and distractions;
- › how to develop recreation programs and services that contribute to the mental and physical well-being of youth and young adults without adding burden to already overburdened schedules;
- › how to bring the true concept of “play” back into all levels of sport and recreation; and
- › how to remain vigilant in identifying and addressing potential barriers to participation.

Through efforts to address these challenges, opportunities for more responsive and creative approaches to program development and delivery are emerging.

### 4.3.1 YOUTH AND MEDIA

**Over the last decade, the advancements in mobile technology, online entertainment and social media have profoundly impacted the lives of youth and young adults.** With wise and balanced use, these tools and platforms clearly provide many social, learning and creative opportunities. However, a literature review confirmed that this constantly evolving media has also created some significant risks and challenges, particularly for young people who may lack the experience to discern true from false or exaggerated information and whose use of the media is excessive and unmonitored. In such cases, it is more likely to lead to addictive behaviours, cyber bullying, and negative impacts to privacy, identity, and mental health. Most youth are dealing with issues of identity, image and belonging – online media is now playing a significant role as they negotiate this terrain.

### 4.3.2 YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND THE ROLE OF RECREATION

Close to 20% of young Canadians has a mental health issue and likely many more are feeling stressed.<sup>3</sup> The results from the focus groups reflected these findings, an experience that some youth described as “the spiral of increasing stress and anxiety.” Many youth and young adults are struggling with school and social pressures, and worries about their future. Some are dealing with specific issues related to identity, inclusion/exclusion, substance use and other high risk behaviours among their peers.

**Recreation, however, can play an important role in helping to keep youth mentally healthy or improve existing conditions.** The adolescent health research<sup>4</sup> shows that youth who believe they are good at sports were more likely to report feeling self-confident; youth who exercise 5-7 days a week were most likely to feel happy; youth who participate regularly in wellness activities, such as yoga and meditation, had less anxiety and handled stress more effectively; youth who engage in active outdoor play in natural environments showed increased resilience and coping skills; and youth who participate in community-based arts programming demonstrate enhanced problem-solving skills and self-esteem.

Additionally, recreation programming can facilitate positive connections with both peers and adults. When youth have close friends as well as adults in or outside of the family who they trust and can go to for help, their mental health is significantly enhanced.



3 Canadian Mental Health Association -- 3.2 million Canadian youth between 12-19 years are at risk of depression. Canada's youth suicide rate is the third highest in the industrialized world. Suicide accounts for 24% of deaths among 15-24 year olds.

4 (Sport & exercise) - “Unspoken Thoughts & Hidden Facts: A Snapshot of BC Youth’s Mental Health,” McCreary Centre Society, 2015; (Outdoor Play) - “Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play,” International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 2018; (Yoga & meditation) – Harvard Health Publishing, Harvard Medical School; (Creativity and the Arts) - studies cited in “Personal and Social Development of Children and Youth,” the Creative City Network of Canada, 2005.



### Many Youth Lack Balance ...

“... I often have too much schoolwork to focus on my physical and mental health.”

“(I) could do with more exercise and wellness, and way less screen time.”

“I have an average of 4 hours sleep on weekdays ... I have filled up my entire schedule with commitments, and I really can’t cancel (even for health) because people depend on me.”

“Lack of sleep, lack of exercise, lack of wellness. Mostly just goals and survival.”

### ... Some Parents Agree

“My kids definitely have too much screen time and very little wellness/outdoor activities/family and friend (time).”

“My kids are always doing homework and school projects, thus they don’t get much time for recreational activities ...”

“A little more social time and a little less work. They are young and should be experiencing more face-to-face social time unplugged.”

### 4.3.3 YOUTH AND BALANCE

In the youth focus groups, the issue of “life balance” emerged frequently, with the participants expressing concern that their mental and physical health was compromised due to their overloaded schedules. Several said that they need more balance in their lives but don’t know how to achieve it. To understand this issue more fully, a question about life balance was included in the Community Survey based on the *ParticipACTION Report Card 24-hour Movement Guidelines for youth*.<sup>5</sup>

Youth and young adults were asked to consider their own schedules, with the amount of time they spend sleeping, exercising, and in front of a screen, as well as in activities related to goals (school, work) and wellness (family and friend

time, fun activity outdoors). Parents and other influencing adults were also asked to rate the overall life balance of the youth they support.

**It appears that only 25% of young residents have found a life balance that they feel good about.** The youth and families who are achieving a healthy lifestyle appear to be doing so with intention: “*Striking the balance between school, home, sports, and family activities is a major focus in our household.*”

**The majority of respondents however, 75%, acknowledged that their life balance could be improved.** Some youth identified schoolwork as their primary challenge; others admitted to an excess of screen time; and some young residents are so overscheduled in general they can’t find time for wellness, or even sleep.

<sup>5</sup> www.participaction.com : Report Card 24-hour Movement Guidelines for youth: SWEAT 60 min, STEP outdoors, SLEEP 8-10 hrs, and SIT no more than 2 hours social/entertainment screen time.





#### 4.3.4 YOUTH AND FRIENDS

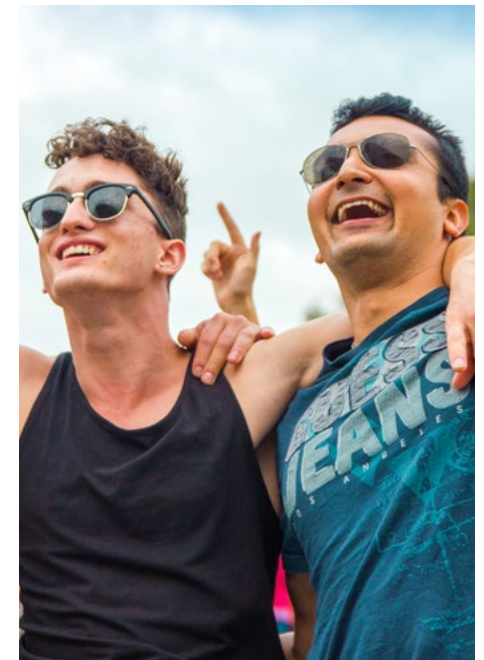
Many youth and young adults now recognize there is a significant difference between the online definition of “friends” and the experience of having quality friendships.

The adolescent health research shows that the more close friends that youth have, the more likely they are to report good mental health.

In the focus groups, the youth talked about friendship issues – finding a confidant, learning how to make connections that are healthy and beneficial, and overcoming toxic relationships. They also suggested getting more people involved in social activities to prevent loneliness and isolation.

When asked what they liked most about a program, a third of the survey respondents said: meeting new people, making new friends or being with their friends.

Some respondents said that programs would be improved “if others could invite people who were alone to participate in the activity,” and “if staff helped introduce us to different people.” And a volunteer requested more interaction between volunteers. Social connections can be facilitated more intentionally with programs structured to ensure that this is a fundamental component.



“My (youth) are extremely introverted. So if they are interested in some activity, they immediately drop the idea as the confidence level (needed) to attend solo is quite overwhelming.”

“Some youth are spending too much time idle and alone.”

— Survey Respondents

### Have sports become too demanding?

“Too many team sports are excessively demanding of time with numerous intense practices in addition to games ... This eliminates the opportunity to engage in multiple sports, either organized or informal. The coaches ... don’t recognize that young people need to enjoy a variety of pastimes ...”

– Parent Survey Respondent

“I love sports, but now they are starting to add to my stress even though they used to be an outlet for it.”

– Youth Survey Respondent

## 4.3.5 YOUTH AND SPORT

**By about age 14 many youth in North America have left organized sport – 70% quit before entering high school, and girls drop out earlier than boys.** With the trend in early sport selection and specializing, many young players believe they’re not “good enough” and soon feel discouraged – cut from a team and separated from friends, they leave the sport. And youth on elite teams may become overwhelmed as they and their families struggle to meet the financial and time commitments demanded of them.<sup>6</sup>

### Is it too late to join?

“Often people who have quit a sport earlier in their life feel that they can’t go back to it because it’s too late. Having a wider range of skill levels would be helpful.”

“I would love to go to a workshop class to get an idea of it instead of having to dive head first into a team ... having Intro classes for older youth is good because sometimes you feel like it’s too late to start because everyone is already so good, so it seems impossible to get on a team.”

– Youth Survey Respondents

**Once they leave a sport, some youth stop participating in any kind of regular physical activity.** Daily exercise is essential for the healthy development of children and youth, but only 35% of 10-17 year olds are meeting the guidelines.<sup>7</sup>

Some survey respondents advocated for more recreation level opportunities that would support skill development – and many of the other benefits of sport participation – without the time, cost and performance pressures.

## 4.3.6 EQUITY, ACCESS AND INCLUSION

The adolescent health studies suggest that youth from certain gender, social, cultural and economic groups are at higher risk than their peers. The research and consultation findings confirmed that there is continued need to work toward accessible, inclusive and equitable environments that help to mitigate vulnerabilities and promote health and belonging for all youth.

### Gender Equity

In 1999, the City initiated the Gender Equity Special Program with the goal to move toward the attainment of gender equity in the context of sport and physical activity programs, services and facilities. In the ten years of the Special Program, the City achieved the short-term goals, increasing female child and youth physical activity participation in all levels of programming.

However ten years later, while participation has increased overall, there remains a considerable gender gap in several program areas. While the male to female participation ratio is much closer to even in the 0-12 age group, the gap increases significantly in the 13-18 age group, with twice as many males as females purchasing admission passes and participating almost three times as often.

The need for continued attention on, and resources allocated to, gender initiatives have been identified at the federal level with the aim to achieve gender equality at all levels of sport by 2035.<sup>8</sup> Such an ambitious goal can be realized only if equity initiatives continue at the local level, ensuring that all genders are consulted, encouraged and supported in the development and delivery of programs and services for them.

6 Vital Signs & True Sport Foundation Study cited in “No more joiners: Why kids are dropping out of sports,” CBC, 2016; Farrey, T. “Have adults ruined children’s sport?” BBC News – US & Canada, 2017; Mulcahy, Glen, Paradigm Sports: “Why Sports Participation in Canada is Declining,” 2017.

7 Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth (2014/2015 CHMS, Statistics Canada), cited in “the ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth,” 2018.

8 “Historical Federal Announcement,” in Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity, February 2018.

### Gender Identity

The adolescent health research suggests that youth who identify at LGBTQI2S are at a higher risk of experiencing mental health issues. A key part of creating accessible recreation environments is to ensure that youth and young adults who identify as LGBTQI2S feel safe and welcome in programs and facilities.<sup>9</sup> When asked what types of clubs or activity groups would be most appealing to youth, nearly a quarter of the Community Survey respondents indicated an LGBTQI2S & Friends group. A respondent observed that there needs to be “*more accessible spaces for trans and gender non-confirming (youth).*”

### New Young Immigrants

In the research, youth born abroad reported better mental health than youth born in Canada, but the longer that immigrant youth lived in Canada, the less likely they were to report positive mental health.<sup>10</sup> There could be multiple reasons for this decline. A positive sense of cultural identity and belonging may be compromised over time as youth experience increasing stress in their efforts to reconcile the different values and expectations of their families and culture of origin with those of the broader community and society.<sup>11</sup> Refugee youth and international students may be particularly vulnerable. There is potential to connect and partner with Immigrant Services and other agencies to better understand and respond to the challenges, recreation needs and interests of new young immigrants.

### Youth at High Risk

Interviews were conducted with community social service agency staff and a school district youth worker to understand more about the barriers that may prevent their youth clients from accessing recreation, and the kinds of programs and services that would meet their needs. When asked about the primary issues their youth are facing, agency and district staff confirmed that online bullying and mental health issues are significant, intersecting with poor self-care and substance use: overuse of

9 Among the goals of the PRC’s Code of Conduct Policy is to promote positive, safe and supportive environments in facilities.

10 Unspoken Thoughts and Hidden Facts: A Snapshot of BC Youth’s Mental Health,” McCreary Centre Society, 2015.

11 “Newcomer Youth: Challenges and Strengths,” AMSSA of BC, Issue 35, 2016; Shenfield, Dr. T, “Understanding the Challenges Faced by Immigrant Children,” in *Advanced Psychology*, 2017; Christmas, B & B. “What are we doing to protect newcomer youth in Canada, and help them succeed?” in *Journal of Community Safety & Well-Being*,” Vol. 2, No 3, 2017; “10 challenges facing refugee youth,” Report from Norwegian Refugee Council, World/ReliefWeb, 2018.



### Agency Staff Asked:

“Are your staff welcoming or just policing the rules? Friendliness of front line staff ... does everyone know how to talk to youth or only the youth staff?”

technology/gaming and lack of sleep contributing to poor school performance, and the increasing “normalization” of vaping and cannabis.

Several themes emerged in the interviews: that youth are looking for places to hang out, mainly late night, with minimal structure; that free food is always a draw, particularly as a consistent service; that vulnerable youth need to feel welcome in facilities and connect with positive leaders; and that any administrative requirements for participation, such as registering for a membership card, is a barrier.

Agency staff are aware of the constraints in recreation, both in terms of the service mandate and capacity, especially in large recreation facilities; however, they see potential for collaboration to address some service gaps, such as the need for more therapeutic recreation/art programs and the introduction of on-site youth agency support workers at key times and events.

### **Youth with Differing Abilities**

Youth with chronic health conditions and other challenges are also vulnerable. A third who participated in the adolescent health survey said their condition prevented them from doing things their peers could do.<sup>12</sup> Embracing the principles of inclusion, PRC strives to reduce barriers and provide support to facilitate the level of integration that individuals want and need. The Department can assist young participants with adapted equipment and increase their comfort by providing a “Recreation Buddy.” This service, which pairs volunteers with children or youth who may require some additional support<sup>13</sup>, is currently being revised to ensure programs are tailored for an individual’s needs, and training for the volunteers is enhanced.

As noted in the research, lack of staff training is often a gap area, especially related to Autism Spectrum Disorders and other neurodevelopmental and mental health conditions. The BC Recreation & Parks Association (BCRPA) and Canucks Autism will be providing training for program leaders who work with children and youth on the autism spectrum. Several community organizations access PRC facilities to provide programming for children and youth who are differently-abled. There is potential to expand partnerships, to reach out to more youth and families to understand their needs and interests, and increase para sport opportunities in the local community.

### **Youth with Low Income**

A significant percentage of Coquitlam’s children and youth between 6-17 years were identified as living in low income households according to the census 2016 LIM-AT (22%) and LICO-AT (19%) measures. The percentage is just as high for young adults between 18-24 years (22%).<sup>14</sup>

In the surveys, some respondents said that the cost of living in Coquitlam is a barrier to participation. Program fees were mentioned often, with the young respondents suggesting various options, such as bring “a friend for free” and extending the Youth Summer PASS to year round.

Youth membership in the City’s financial assistance program, Get Connected/Get Active, has increased in recent years due, in part, to outreach efforts engaging

<sup>12</sup> “Balance and Connection in BC: The Health and Well-Being of Our Youth - BC Adolescent Health Survey,” McCreary Centre Society, 2018.

<sup>13</sup> Free access is provided for a (personal care) support person who attends with a participant.

<sup>14</sup> Statistics Canada, 2016 Census, Data Tables, low income measure and low income cut-offs, after tax

alternative schools and other organizations. However, over half of survey respondents had no awareness of the program; they were more aware of no and low cost programs such as the \$2 skates and swims, the Youth PASS, and the City’s free festivals and events.

When residents from a young age can access core services, regardless of their ability to pay, they are more likely to gain a sense of familiarity and connection with community recreation that may lead to lifelong healthy habits and experiences.



## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The goals and action steps of the PRC Youth Strategy will be achieved through:

- › **Coordination and Collaboration:** Facilitate regular opportunities to communicate, collaborate and coordinate services across the PRC Department and with partners to advance the goals of the Youth Strategy.
- › **Existing Partnerships and New Relationships:** Maximize the potential of existing PRC partnerships, including the Tri-City tables, School District 43, Douglas College, the City's cultural partners, and sports organizations. Identify and connect with community allies, such as youth-serving agencies, potential business sponsors and supportive youth and adults.
- › **Focus on Accessibility:** Intentionally consider how barriers might be minimized or eliminated in the development of each new opportunity, and design programs with a diversity lens.
- › **Continual Youth Engagement:** Keep kids interested and involved as they progress from childhood to adolescence to young adulthood – as participants, volunteers, leaders, mentors and potentially City staff. Facilitate decision-making opportunities and seek youth and young adults' input in all program and service areas, apply their ideas where possible, and report back on the results.
- › **Creativity & Experimentation:** Foster a culture of ideas, experimentation, and creativity in the development of new programs, services and opportunities. Allow new or unique programs and services to develop and gain momentum over time; follow a process to consult, collaborate, develop, evaluate, adjust and improve.





## 5.2 CRITICAL PRIORITIES



When the needed people and processes are identified early in the implementation, there is much greater likelihood of long-term success. This is the aim of the PRC Youth Strategy critical priorities.

### › *Service Shift*

Realign current resources to support the shift from a generalist model to a youth-focused service delivery model, identifying additional resources as required.

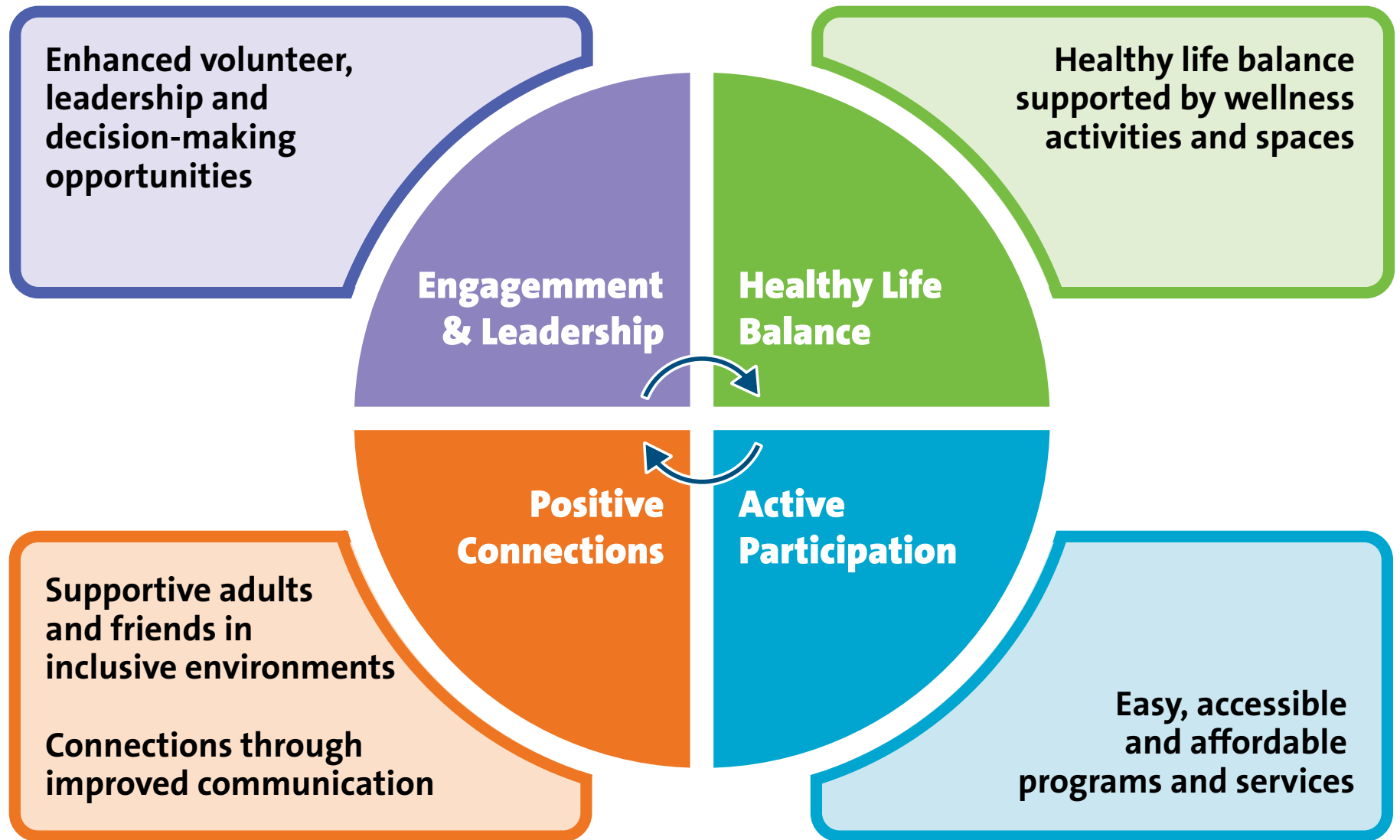
### › *Collaboration*

Develop a more effective process to facilitate collaboration and coordination ensuring that program offerings across the City are consistent or complementary, that overarching principles are shared, key project information is communicated, and that divisions, sections, and partner organizations can connect regularly to share ideas, learn from, and support one another.

### › *Progress Measured*

Through development of the Implementation Plan, identify key performance indicators to include quantitative data – the statistics and trends, and qualitative data – the feedback, input, and degree of engagement. Using these measures, assess and report on progress of the Strategy annually.

### 5.3 GOAL AREAS





## 5.4 ACTION STEPS

### 5.4.1 GOAL #1: HEALTHY LIFE BALANCE

Life Balance is about feeling positive and healthy most of the time while pursuing life goals. It is not surprising that many youth and young adults are instead feeling exhausted and stressed: the majority is not getting enough sleep, exercise, or activity outdoors. The City can play a role in helping youth and their families achieve a healthier balance by increasing awareness and offering ideas and solutions, providing activities that support wellness, and creating spaces where young residents can gather, connect, and participate in ways that work for them.

#### *Awareness*

Awareness campaigns for youth, and the adults who support them, will focus on achieving a healthy life in fun and engaging ways. Wellness themes, highlights of the adolescent health research, ideas for incorporating activity into daily life, and examples illustrating there are many paths to a happy, successful life will be shared.

#### *Activities that Support Wellness*

Wellness programs will be designed for and with youth and young adults, including opportunities to learn effective strategies for time and stress management.

#### *Youth-Friendly Spaces*

In the Community Survey, respondents advocated for “Activity Destinations”: friendly, inclusive environments where a variety of low and low cost activities are available. Youth will be consulted in the creation of indoor spaces – where they can do homework, socialize, have a snack, relax or participate in a drop-in program – and outdoor spaces that will include social areas, innovative amenities, learning and creative opportunities. Whenever possible, transportation challenges will be considered, with activities offered throughout the city and within walking distance of neighbourhoods.



## GOAL #1: HEALTHY LIFE BALANCE – Action Steps

### AWARENESS

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#### 1.1. Create an Awareness Campaign for Youth & Young Adults

Key messages, wellness themes, role models who have achieved a balanced, successful life, critical thinking about personal health; health information and resources.

#### 1.2 Increase Influencing Adults' Awareness of Healthy Balance

**For Parents:** Importance of life balance for their youth and families – current and future health and long-term success; many paths to a good life.

**For Parents & Coaches:** SportMedBC led workshops on concussion and injury awareness, prevention, recognition and management.

### ACTIVITIES THAT SUPPORT WELLNESS

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#### 1.3 Provide Time/Stress Management Support for Youth and Young Adults

Engaging, interactive sessions on managing time and stress; ideas and suggestions shared on social media.

#### 1.4 Expand Wellness Programming

Drop-in wellness programming for youth and young adults, as well as programs for youth and their parents.

### YOUTH-FRIENDLY SPACES

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#### 1.5 Create Additional Youth-Friendly Areas in Existing Indoor Facilities

Designated areas to study, socialize, and relax, with low and no cost healthy and appetizing food & beverages where possible; potential youth spaces identified in existing buildings, possibly after-hours; youth space needs considered in lease agreement reviews and updates; youth engaged in the planning and creation of the spaces.

#### 1.6 Create Youth and Young Adult Spaces in the Design of New Facilities

Dedicated, flexible use that can be adjusted for evolving interests; youth/young adult focused spaces and amenities for study, fitness, arts/creativity, performance/exhibition, video/technology; youth and young adults engaged in the planning.

#### 1.7 Create Additional Youth-Friendly Areas in Outdoor Facilities

Challenging/unique play structures and social areas in park design; pop-up parks with ability to borrow equipment, food & beverages, music, learning opportunities, games, and innovative amenities.

#### 1.8 Consider Local/Neighbourhood Spaces for Youth

When possible, programming and casual use opportunities offered where youth already gather; community design that includes opportunities for self-directed activity; under-used neighbourhood spaces identified and utilized to become activity/social spots.



## 5.4.2 GOAL #2: ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

Opportunities to be physically active, to try new things, be creative, and take some positive risks are important elements of a healthy, balanced life. However, when youth are asked why they don't participate regularly in recreation, the reason most often cited is: "lack of time;" the second reason is "cost." In response, PRC youth programs and services will be easy to access, dynamic and engaging, and affordable.

### *Easy*

As youth get older and face increasing demands and pressures, they are much less likely to register for programs that require a commitment over weeks or months. Youth and young adults are seeking flexible, low-commitment opportunities such as drop-ins, short-term instructed programs, and introductory/try-it programs, offered at various times throughout the day and week at multiple locations.

### *Dynamic & Engaging*

A key principle of the Youth Strategy is to foster a culture of ideas, experimentation, and creativity in the development of new programs and services. Opportunities will be piloted such as Late Night Fridays and Saturdays at the recreation complexes; youth and young adult focused events; 'Creative Nights' and community art projects; and incentive programs, such as a participation points reward system and fun fitness challenges.

### *Affordable*

Processes to reduce cost and administrative barriers will be initiated, including an assessment of the youth pricing model and Youth PASS, a continued focus on potential sponsorships to support existing and pilot programs, and increased outreach to organizations to promote the financial assistance program and low cost opportunities.



## GOAL #2: ACTIVE PARTICIPATION – Action Steps

### EASY

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#### 2.1 Expand Youth & Young Adult Focused Drop-in Programs

Review of current drop-in programs across the Department; popular programs offered at additional times and facilities.

#### 2.2 Develop New or Enhanced Drop-In, Pop-Up and Meet-Up Activities for Youth 15+

Teen skate/swim, fitness and wellness programming; outdoor activity meet-ups.

#### 2.3 Offer One-Day and Short-Term Programs

Life skills; post-secondary and career exploration for older youth and young adults; youth out-trips; other short-term programs of interest.

#### 2.4 Consider Potential Noon-Hour Opportunities

Intramurals, fitness and wellness programming at facilities adjacent to schools.

#### 2.5 Offer/Expand Programs at/with Middle and Secondary Schools

Continued programs offered to PE classes; after-school programming explored.

### DYNAMIC & ENGAGING

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#### 2.6 Explore Potential for New Outdoor Youth Experiences

Opportunities and partnerships explored to offer youth-focused nature activities and adventures.

#### 2.7 Ensure Recreation-Level Play Opportunities in a Variety of Sports

PRC and community sport organizations ensuring allocation and scheduling allows for recreation level participation; short-term sports skill development, try-it and multi-sport programs; opportunities tailored for older youth and for young adults; social leagues that allow for flexible participation with reduced cost and time commitments.

#### 2.8 Pilot “Late Night” Friday & Saturday for Youth 15+

Late night opportunities at the recreation complexes with simultaneous swim, skate, multi-purpose room and dry floor space activities.

#### 2.9 Pilot Youth & Young Adult Focused Events

Unique competitions, movies, games, creative and cultural events.

#### 2.10 Expand Accessible Arts & Culture/ Creative Opportunities

Initiatives explored with cultural partners; Creative Nights programming piloted with opportunities to sample a variety of visual, design, performing and literary art activities; all levels welcome with focus on building confidence and connections; activities potentially leading to performances or exhibits; community art projects, such as street art and murals, explored.

#### 2.11 Develop Incentive Programs

Potential considered for a Youth PASS reward system with points credited with regular use; engaging fitness challenges.

### AFFORDABLE

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#### 2.12 Review Program Processes to Reduce Cost Barriers

- a. Youth pricing model review to ensure subsidization of the appropriate service areas.
- b. Sponsorships for funding to support pilot and ongoing programs
- c. The Youth PASS enhanced.

#### 2.13 Review Program Processes to Reduce Administrative Barriers

- a. Potential for Youth PASSES to be processed for students directly through the schools.
- b. Continued outreach to agencies/alternative schools to promote low and no cost programming and facilitate Get Connected/Get Active memberships.

#### 2.14 Create a Program Evaluation Process

Effective, simple process to ensure existing and pilot programs are meeting Youth Strategy Goals.

### 5.4.3 GOAL #3: POSITIVE CONNECTIONS

Supportive relationships are fundamental to health and well-being. Youth who have close friends and trustworthy adults in their lives are much more likely to report good mental health. PRC can play an important role by providing opportunities for youth to develop friendships, as well as connect with positive adult leaders in environments that are welcoming and inclusive of all cultures, genders and abilities. These efforts will be enhanced by a communication plan that will enable staff to reach more youth, and in turn, encourage more young residents to connect with their City.

#### **Supportive Adult Leaders**

The feedback from program participants highlights the importance of investing in staff development: youth value and remember good leaders who engage positively with them; they also notice when staff seem uninterested or distracted. Staff with the capacity, skills and knowledge to communicate effectively with a diverse young population, and to understand and respond to their range of needs and interests, can make a real and lasting difference. It is important that program leaders reflect participant diversity where possible and appropriate. Relevant training and consistent opportunities for staff to share ideas with co-workers across the Department and with service partners are also necessary to achieve this goal.

#### **Youth Making Friends**

Opportunities to spend time with friends and make new friends are an important part of youth programming. Staff can facilitate social connections more intentionally, and some programs, such as activity clubs and fun team challenges, can be structured to ensure social connection is a fundamental component. The social labels and hierarchies that youth may experience at school or in other contexts can quickly dissolve in the more neutral environment of a community centre where common interests and goals are discovered.

#### **Equitable & Inclusive Programs & Spaces**

Achieving equity and inclusion are long-term goals requiring work at all program and service levels. It begins with recreation environments that intentionally promote respect and belonging, an awareness and understanding of the challenges and barriers experienced by some youth, and the knowledge and tools to respond in ways that are most beneficial. Designing programming to engage and support youth who may be under-served requires a focused commitment to reach out and connect with current and potential participants and, and where needed, with

agencies and other groups who can offer support and expertise.

#### **Youth Connecting with their City**

Many youth are unaware of the range of opportunities available to them. There is a need for a youth and young adult focused communication plan that includes updated tools, processes, and networks to reach more young residents and inspire them to connect and engage with the City.

#### *Youth value & remember positive leaders:*

- › “Really fun, great instructors.”
- › “I love working with the instructors...”
- › “Trainers are nice and patient.”
- › “The instructor treated us like adults and gave us guidance when we needed it.”
- › “I felt really appreciated for putting in effort in the class.”
- › “How well the instructors taught us. It made me feel more confident...”
- › “The inclusiveness from the staff and their patience to deal with us.”
- › “The teachers were encouraging.”
- › “The instructors are kind.”

#### *They also welcome opportunities to make friends:*

“It was fun and the other kids let me join in their game of 3 on 3.”

“I really liked how I made many new friends from the program. It is a great opportunity to meet new people.”

“I made a new friend.”

## GOAL #3: POSITIVE CONNECTIONS – Action Steps

### SUPPORTIVE ADULT LEADERS

#### 3.1 Provide a Variety of Opportunities for Staff Learning and Development

- Incorporate into existing staff training: “working effectively with youth”.
- Hold regular youth-focused meetings for Department staff to share ideas and strategies and report on progress of the Youth Strategy implementation.
- Facilitate specialized youth-focused training related to specific issues and needs.
- Leverage best municipal practices in staff training and development.

### YOUTH MAKING FRIENDS

#### 3.2 Develop Consistent Procedures for Youth Services

For Pinetree and Poirier youth centres (and future facilities), and other youth programming; procedures shared with service delivery partners.

#### 3.3 Facilitate Positive Peer Connections in All Youth Programs

- Increased opportunities for social connection in drop-in programs.
- Short-term active team challenges.
- Activity clubs.

### EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE PROGRAMS & SPACES

#### 3.4 Develop with Partners Programming That Reflects Diversity

- New Canadian Youth: relevant and desirable programming for youth with varied cultural interests.
- LGBTQI2S Youth: PRIDE events, intergenerational programming with the LGBTQI2S Group at the Pavilions; LGBTQI2S & Friends Club.

#### 3.5 Explore Ways to Increase Female Participation in Sport & Movement Programs

Girls’ Only programming where appropriate; positive female leaders and role models; girls and young women engaged in the review of programming content and structure.

#### 3.6 Identify Programming Gaps and Opportunities for Youth and Young Adults with Differing Abilities

Potential to increase para sport opportunities locally; recommendations for adapted equipment; staff and volunteer training; review of the ‘Recreation Buddies’ volunteer program.

#### 3.7 Connect with Community Agencies to Support Youth at Risk

Community service gaps and training opportunities examined and addressed.

#### 3.8 Assist Youth in Finding and Getting to Parks & Facilities

Potential for a “Getting around Coquitlam on Transit” initiative, such as a tour for middle-schoolers, new Canadian and other interested youth.

### YOUTH CONNECTING WITH THEIR CITY

#### 3.9 Develop a Youth and Young Adult Focused Communications Plan

- Youth webpage on the City website enhanced.
- Potential for a Youth Instagram page explored.
- Access issues in promotion reviewed.
- Connections with community youth influencers and allies.
- Young adults encouraged to join “Viewpoint”.
- A youth leadership committee network where committees across Coquitlam (and possibly the Tri-Cities) have opportunities to connect and collaborate.





#### 5.4.4 GOAL #4: ENGAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP

In addition to the many health and social benefits that recreation provides, PRC can support youth as they set out on the path to achieving their goals. Volunteers, young leaders and decision-makers gain confidence and competencies that are transferable to a wide range of academic and career endeavours. Not only do the participants benefit but the value to the City is immeasurable. Youth and young adults bring their energy, talents, and ideas, as well as the potential to contribute in a variety of meaningful ways, as advisory members, mentors, community allies, and potential employees.

##### ***Volunteering***

Staff will review the Volunteer Program, with the aim to keep current volunteers engaged and attract new volunteers through a streamlined application process, more clearly defined roles, enhanced training, and incentives. Additionally, programs will be identified that are suitable for short-term, flexible and drop-in volunteer participation, as well as opportunities for outdoor experiential learning with community mentors.

##### ***Leadership and Decision-Making***

When asked how the youth committees could be improved, members said they would like more involvement in the community with opportunities to connect with other youth groups. Interest was also expressed in developing committees that focus on specific issues or service areas, short-term youth project groups, and a small grant for youth-initiated events and programs.

Although the Youth Council and other youth have been involved in some planning initiatives, consistency in this area has been lacking. A process will be developed to ensure youth are engaged in park and facility development as standard practice, with opportunities for young adults to stay connected as mentors, advisors and potential employees. Additionally, staff will explore the potential to bring “CityStudio” to Coquitlam, an initiative that engages secondary and college classes in developing creative solutions to civic challenges.

##### ***Youth Leadership to Employment***

Youth committee members expressed a strong interest in job shadowing, mentorship and internship opportunities – a career exploration group was among the top requests. Staff will explore existing models and best practices to create processes to support interested youth in progressing from volunteer to leader to potential employee.

## GOAL #4: ENGAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP – Action Steps

### VOLUNTEERING

#### 4.1 Review the PRC Volunteer Program

Youth awareness of opportunities increased; volunteer registration/screening process simplified/streamlined where possible; volunteer roles reviewed and clarified; strategies to keep current volunteers engaged.

#### 4.2 Expand Short-Term and Drop-in Volunteer Opportunities

Programs identified that would be suitable for volunteer drop-ins with a process developed.

#### 4.3. Enhance Outdoor Volunteer Opportunities

Such as trail building and park hosting.

### LEADERSHIP & DECISION-MAKING

#### 4.4 Explore the Potential of the Youth Council and Poirier Leadership Committee

Access to and appeal of youth committees enhanced; opportunities to be more engaged with the community and collaborate with other youth committees on events and initiatives; committees consulted in facility and park planning processes on a consistent basis.

#### 4.5 Pilot New Youth Leadership Committees

Such as: community action; environmental/sustainability; youth programming & event planning; health & wellness; and an arts & culture group.

#### 4.6 Explore Leadership Opportunities for Young Adults

Previous members of the Youth Council invited to return as mentors/advisors; promotion of Council Advisory Committee opportunities to young adults.

#### 4.7 Expand “Process is the Program” Opportunities for Youth

- a. Project Groups - continuing initiatives such as “CCAC’s Youth Project” where youth volunteers are convened for several months to plan and implement an event of their choosing at the facility.
- b. A Youth Grant - potential of a small youth grant through the Spirit Grant process for which organized or informal youth groups can apply to lead a project or initiative.

#### 4.8 Involve Youth and Young Adults in Decision Making

- a. Youth consistently engaged in the park and facility development processes.
- b. Potential to engage secondary and college classes in the development of the “CityStudio” initiative in Coquitlam.

### YOUTH LEADERSHIP TO EMPLOYMENT

#### 4.9 Support Youth Leadership to Employment

Explore: leader-in-training program for youth to progress from participant to volunteer; existing models and best practices to support interested youth in progressing from leader to potential employment; job shadowing, short-term internship opportunities, and PRC participation in career fairs.

#### *What Youth Council Members Liked Best about the Experience:*

- › “Trying things you’re passionate about – it sets the path for the future.”
- › “Independence, freedom and flexibility.”
- › “The power to do things.”
- › “Sharing perspectives and genius ideas – some ideas were crazy but we were able to execute them.”
- › “Getting our ideas to work!”

“People in the Youth Council have more in common with each other than other people in our own schools (because) we have similar goals ... there are a lot of different hierarchies within the school, so it was cool that that everyone (in the Youth Council) is in the same group and treated as equal.”

– Youth Council Members



## 6. IMPLEMENTATION

*The PRC Youth Strategy Implementation Plan 2020 – 2024* is the operational blueprint that describes the Strategy Goals and Actions in detail, from the staff roles to the key performance indicators. Over the five year span of the Implementation, staff will assess and report on the progress of the Strategy annually.

### **In five years' time, how will the PRC Youth Strategy have improved the experience of young Coquitlam residents?**

- › More youth, and the adults who support them, will be aware of the importance of life balance to health and well-being and inspired to make some positive changes that can make a big difference over time.
- › More young residents will know about the many opportunities available to them, and be providing ideas and feedback through improved City communication tools and networks.
- › More young residents will be participating in programs, services and events that are easy to access, engaging and affordable in youth-friendly indoor and outdoor spaces; they will inspired to try new things – from creative projects, to fun team challenges.
- › More youth and young adults will be participating in sport, movement and creative programs at the levels that work for them.
- › More youth and young adults will think park, recreation and culture facilities are great places to spend time with friends and meet new friends.
- › More young volunteers will be inspired and encouraged to become young leaders – on youth committees, in planning processes, as advisory members, City employees, mentors and community allies.
- › And more youth may echo the enthusiasm of a young participant describing a PRC program: *“The exciting energy and positivity of the instructor and group – felt like we were all in it together!”*





An aerial night photograph of Coquitlam, British Columbia. The city's lights are visible against the dark sky, with a prominent cluster of high-rise buildings on the left. In the foreground, a large outdoor festival is taking place on a grassy area next to a lake. A large crowd of people is gathered around a central stage area illuminated with warm lights. The lake reflects the city lights and the festival's glow. The overall scene is vibrant and captures the community spirit of the city.

# Coquitlam

**City of Coquitlam**

Parks, Recreation and Culture Services

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