

GamePLAN Capital Project Prioritization Program

In 2025, Council adopted GamePLAN, established Making Waves as the service level for public recreation facilities and amenities in Calgary and directed Administration to return to Council with a Capital Project Prioritization List including recommendations for the next budget cycle (CD2025-0047).

The following:

- describes how GamePLAN capital projects are prioritized,
- explains the delivery approach for implementing GamePLAN through a phased, program-level budget, enabling allocation based on established prioritization criteria and
- highlights Wave 1: System Stabilization and its implications for near-term capital planning and upcoming budget deliberations.

Background

Calgary's public recreation system is made up of publicly accessible facilities, amenities and programs that support and encourage active living, health, well-being and community. The City owns, operates and delivers programs from over 50 publicly accessible recreation facilities and partners operate another 200+ facilities or amenities on City-owned land. Access to recreation shapes neighbourhood choices, supports employee attraction and retention across Calgary's business community, drives investment and diversifies the economy, boosting its resilience.

Investments in public recreation have not kept pace with population growth, changing demand, evolving standards or the increasing impacts of aging facilities. As a result, the system is not positioned to remain responsive to the diverse needs and interests of Calgarians.

GamePLAN

GamePLAN acknowledges the benefits of a system-wide approach to service planning and establishes the first city-wide service standards for public recreation facilities and amenities (indoor aquatics, ice sheets, fieldhouses and athletic park fields). The GamePLAN service standards create consistent benchmarks for service delivery and prioritization, providing a foundation for transparent decision-making and impactful investment across the public recreation system.

GamePLAN ensures capital investments are targeted for greatest impact, including safeguarding service continuity and growth. Facilities will optimize operational efficiency and pursue revenue opportunities wherever possible while maintaining affordability.

Capital project prioritization methodology

The Recreation 10-year Capital Infrastructure Needs Assessment and methodology (Figure 1) respond to Council's expectations for a transparent, data-driven capital planning process that addresses system-wide service standards and long-term financial implications.

GamePLAN uses population-based ratios to determine if the number and types of recreation facilities city-wide is adequate to serve Calgarians. Catchment areas (travel distance by road networks), the age and suitability of existing facilities (i.e., condition, sustainability, programmability and accessibility) and demand (i.e., utilization, sport development trends and sport tourism potential) help to determine areas of over- or under-supply.

Program-level funding model

Capital projects to implement GamePLAN are planned and delivered as a program of work sequenced over time. Rather than seeking funding approvals on a project-by-project basis, Administration will seek Council approval for an overall capital funding envelope each budget cycle to advance the highest-priority work.

Within the approved envelope, Administration will allocate funding to individual projects based on the Capital Project Prioritization List, project readiness, risk, delivery considerations and market conditions. Administration will continue to report through established budget reporting and governance processes and will return to Council where required.

Funding for GamePLAN capital projects is expected to include a range of sources over time, including municipal funding, development-related contributions, partnerships and other orders of government, as available.

Implementation waves: project priority and funding over time

To implement GamePLAN, capital projects are organized into three implementation waves. The waves serve two related purposes: they identify the relative priority and sequencing of capital projects across the recreation system and they structure how funding is planned and allocated over time through the program-level approach. Together, the waves determine which projects are advanced first and how investment is staged across budget cycles.

Wave 1: System Stabilization (2026-2030)

- Addresses the most urgent needs first, including rebuilding and upgrading aging aquatic and arena facilities at risk of failure and addressing critical service gaps in both growth and established areas.
- Prioritizes highly executable projects due to being either funded or partially funded and on City-owned land.
- Significantly increases service levels for fieldhouses and athletic parks — currently the most undersupplied amenities in Calgary given the growth of field sports.
- Builds on projects initiated prior to the adoption of GamePLAN, under the revised Calgary Recreation Capital Investment Strategy (C2021-0911) and through additional Council budget approvals (CPS2021-0748 and C2023-0911). The projects are currently in progress and will play a critical role in advancing GamePLAN objectives. Projects include:
 - Soccer Centre Dome and Artificial Turf Upgrade (complete)
 - Rocky Ridge Athletic Park (targeted completion 2026)
 - Glenmore Twin Arena (targeted completion 2027)
 - MNP Community & Sport Centre Leisure Expansion (targeted completion 2027)
 - Belmont Fieldhouse and Library (targeted completion 2027)
- Builds on \$93.7 million approved through the 2026 Budget Adjustment Process to advance priority projects (C2025-0901). The total investment required to complete Wave 1 projects will be \$1.7 billion, including \$691 million needed for the 2027 to 2030 budget cycle. The Recreation 10-Year Capital Infrastructure Needs Assessment, Appendix B also reflects the start of Wave 2: Ramping Up in 2031.

Wave 2: Ramping Up (2031-2035)

- Addresses service gaps at existing facilities at (or near) end of life by modernizing aging infrastructure.
- Considers the appropriate size and strategic location of the facilities to support accessibility, respond to evolving community needs and effectively serve Calgarians over the long term.

Wave 3: Equitable Service (2036-2050)

- Focuses on creating an equitable level of service across the city, particularly in new communities where service gaps are anticipated to emerge with continued growth.
- Prioritizes facilities in Calgary's fastest-growing communities to respond to current and anticipated demand.
- Identifies unfunded facilities and suitable land parcels to create community hubs with the desired complement of community assets, such as recreation facilities alongside schools and libraries. Other implementation timing factors include:
 - availability of land,
 - projected growth and densification,
 - system capacity and
 - funding (prioritization may be impacted if private funding becomes available).

Risks

- **Service continuity:** Delays in investments will increase the risk of facility failures and loss of service. Existing service gaps will become more acute, facilities will close, sport organizations will have to cap registration and parents will continue facing difficulties registering their children for swimming lessons, soccer and other fundamental recreation opportunities.
- **Growth funding:** Currently, consultation with industry on the Off-Site Levy Bylaw update is underway. The current Off-Site Levy only includes recreation funding based on indoor aquatic facilities. If additional amenity types (ice sheets, fieldhouses and athletic parks) are not incorporated into the 2026 Off-Site Levy Bylaw update, The City will be required to absorb a greater share of capital costs for public recreation infrastructure in growth communities, increasing financial pressure on municipal budgets.
- **System accessibility:** With any prioritization process, there is a risk some needs could seem underrepresented. GamePLAN focuses on the most urgent infrastructure needs first while still considering the long-term health of the entire public recreation system.

Figure 1: Capital Project Prioritization Methodology

