

# Consultant Summary

## Categories of Public Good used to Justify Public Subsidy

### Introduction

Parks, recreation, and culture services provide many benefits to the community and to the individuals within a community. The consultants would like to help develop a process that aligns fees and subsidy levels with the amount of benefit the community and individuals receive. If a particular service provides a large amount of benefit, then more subsidy can be justified for that service. This document attempts to articulate a variety of these benefits in order to inform subsequent discussions on justifying subsidy levels.

For the Council session, the consultants will highlight a few of the benefits described herein and explain how they can be used to help justify subsidy levels. It is also important to note that the Fees and Charges Update project is also guided by the foundations outlined in Council's Strategic Plan and the PRC Master Plan.

### Goal of Public Leisure Services: Community and Individual Benefits

The overall goals established for the delivery of public leisure services may differ from community to community and may alter through time. There is neither a right goal nor a wrong one. The point is that the overall goal(s) must be agreed to and supported by the Municipal Council and must reflect the interests of the entire community. They must also be consistent with the accepted philosophical foundation. Council support must be clear and total, because in some cases (although hopefully only in isolated cases), achieving the social goals may not entirely parallel the meeting of short term public demand. If a Council bows to public demand by always giving small but vocal groups what they want, simply because they say they want it, then Council will not be protecting the overall public interest. It will, instead, be taxing all citizens to subsidize the interests of a few, simply because those few want help to finance their recreation pursuits.

Two goals considered appropriate for the City of Courtenay are as follows:

- 1. Use the delivery of public leisure services to foster the health and wellness of our community.**  
*(i.e. through first establishing a broadly felt community identity and then developing a widely held community spirit and, finally, to the evolution of a community culture.)*
- 2. Use the delivery of public leisure services to further the health and wellness of individual citizens.**  
*(i.e. the social, emotional, moral, academic and physical growth of each member of the community.)*

## Service Objectives

The following 21 Service Objectives are consistent with the two Goals described in the previous section. (They may be considered as specific public leisure service categories for achieving the goals.) All Municipal activities directed toward achieving the two goals could be categorized under one or more of these objectives.

## Community Benefits

### 1. **Special Events:**

Special events (e.g. carnivals, markets, fairs, etc.) can contribute to a feeling of community identity and spirit. Therefore, the local authority should be involved in sponsoring special events to the extent necessary to ensure promotion of this objective.

### 2. **Support to Local Groups:**

Local clubs, groups and agencies are and will be organizing and sponsoring leisure opportunities. The "people doing things for themselves" aspect of such groups is socially worthwhile and desirable. The community recreation agency should support such groups in their efforts. Support may occur in a number of ways, including subsidized access to facilities, assistance in leadership training, provision of specialized equipment or the provision of operating grants.

### 3. **Exposure to Sporting Events:**

Community identity, spirit and culture can be fostered through the environment generated by spectators at athletic events. In such events, sport can be closely linked with community identity and pride. Because of this, opportunities should be provided for spectator experiences at athletic events.

### 4. **Exposure to Culture:**

Artistic endeavors (both performing and visual) represent one of the most significant aspects of developing a culture in any community. Through exposure to the arts, local residents should develop a better understanding and appreciation of the cultural aspects of a community.

### 5. **Social Functions:**

Because social functions are a valuable vehicle to use in developing community cohesion and identity, the public sector should ensure that such opportunities exist.

### 6. **Protecting Community Natural Resources:**

The protection of natural aesthetic features, vistas, natural phenomenon and features of historic significance and the provision of public access to such features will contribute to a greater understanding of and pride in the community and, therefore, contribute to community growth.

**7. Beautify the Community:**

The extent to which a community is seen by its residents as being visually pleasing is directly related to the potential for creating community identity, spirit and culture. Therefore, to make a community more beautiful is a worthwhile social objective worthy of tax support.

**8. Family Oriented Leisure Services:**

The family unit is an integral building block of community growth. Opportunities should be provided for families to pursue leisure as a family unit.

**9. Integrating Generations and Sub Groups:**

Community growth can be fostered through increased contact between people of varying age groups within the community. The more contact and interchange between seniors and younger adults and children, the greater the potential for community growth. Therefore, in the provision of leisure services, attempts should be made to provide such contact and interchange between seniors and younger residents with a view toward transmitting cultural heritage across the generations.

Community growth can further be fostered through an integrative mixing of various ethnic groups so that each better understands and appreciates the differences and strengths of the other. Multicultural recreation services can be used as a vehicle in making the community more cohesive.

Community growth can also be fostered by integrating various groups of people with special needs into mainstream programming. Whether individuals have physical, emotional or mental special needs, recreation can be used as a leveling and integrative force.

## Individual Benefits

**10. Fitness (Well Being):**

Fitness, in this context, is used broadly as a synonym for wellness, and refers to mental and emotional, as well as physical fitness. The fitness level of every resident of the community should be increased at least to a pre-determined minimum level with opportunities available for progress beyond this point.

**11. Pre-School Leisure Opportunities:**

An opportunity should exist for every pre-school aged child to participate with other children in a variety of leisure experiences, in order to:

- a) Expose the child to social settings
- b) Foster gross motor development
- c) Provide a generally happy and satisfying atmosphere where growth can occur

d) Teach basic safety skills and attitudes.

**12. Basic Leisure Skill Development for School Aged Children:**

A wide variety of leisure pursuits in such areas as sport, performing arts, visual arts, outdoor nature-oriented skills, and hobbies, should be identified, and basic skill level instruction in each should be provided for school aged children in order to:

- a) Provide exposure to skills which may form the basis for enjoying lifetime leisure activities
- b) Contribute to gross motor and fine motor physical development
- c) Provide social settings in which social, moral and emotional growth can be fostered
- d) Provide the basis for leisure education (i.e. the teachings of the benefits of and wise use of leisure time).

**13. Advanced Leisure Skill Development for School Aged Children:**

Opportunities should be provided for those children who wish to further develop their interest and skills in a wide variety of leisure pursuits beyond the basic level.

**14. Social Opportunities for Youth:**

The maturing from youth to adult which occurs during teenage years is often a critical time in the life of an individual. It is also a time when individual difficulties may result in severe social problems. Hence, opportunities should be provided for teens to:

- a) Learn about themselves and how they will react to various social settings and pressures
- b) Develop positive social/emotional/moral skills, principles and convictions
- c) Develop positive leisure lifestyle patterns which will remain with them through adulthood.

**15. Basic Leisure Skill Development for Adults**

Opportunities should be provided in a wide range of leisure endeavors and hobbies for adults who wish to be exposed to such endeavors and learn some basic skills in each.

**16. Advanced Leisure Skill Development for Adults**

Opportunities should be provided for those adults who wish to further develop their interests or abilities in a wide variety of leisure pursuits.

**17. *Opportunities for Seniors***

Opportunities should be provided for senior citizens to participate in the leisure activities of their choice in order to:

- a) Maintain overall fitness levels
- b) Maintain social contacts and continue to be involved in social environments
- c) Provide a continuing sense of worth and meaning of life through continuing personal growth.

#### 18. **Interpreting the Environment**

Opportunities should be provided for every local resident to learn about, understand, relate to and experience all aspects of his/her environment.

#### 19. **Reflection/Escape**

Often growth can occur through escape, reflection, contact with nature and relaxation in a serene natural environment. Because of this, opportunities should be provided for residents to experience nature.

#### 20. **Leisure Education**

All residents should be generally educated as to the best use of leisure time and the benefits (e.g. growth and fulfillment) that accrue therefrom.

#### 21. **Communication System**

A communication/information system should be established and maintained whereby all residents are made aware of the availability of access to all leisure opportunities in the community.

The rationale as outlined above does not determine how much money the local government allocates to the delivery of public leisure services. Instead, it provides a framework within which to make decisions no matter what level of service is supported by Council. *The ultimate objective is to make the most effective use of limited available resources by providing services in a rational, consistent, equitable manner that can be clearly justified and defended to all local residents.*