

District of Wells

Facilities, Parks & Recreation Master Plan.

2026

WHAT WE LEARNED

Public Engagement Round 1

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Introduction

The District of Wells is creating a new Facilities, Parks and Recreation Master Plan to shape the future of its recreation and parks services over the next decade. The new Master Plan will help the District set goals, strategies and priorities for facility and amenity investment, potential new programming and other key aspects of service delivery. The Master Plan will be used by District Staff and Council to inform decision making and resource allocation.

Engaging with residents, user groups and community partners was critical to understanding the diverse perspectives on the state of recreation and parks in Wells. At the outset of this project, an engagement plan was developed with the District of Wells to guide the phases of engagement and ensure alignment with practice, including IAP2.

How do we define recreation and parks?

According to the Framework for Recreation in Canada:

“Recreation is the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community well-being.”

Using this definition, recreation includes sports, casual activities, arts and culture, and other leisure-based pursuits.

For the purpose of this project, parks are formally designated, publicly managed spaces that include playgrounds, spaces with sports fields and sport courts, open fields, trails and similar types of amenities.

Phase 2: Engage

Community engagement was undertaken during Oct 2025/Jan 2026, to help inform the creation of a vision, goals and overall priorities for Well's Facilities, Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

WHY WE ENGAGED

Community engagement is integral to the Master Plan process as these long range planning documents are built for the community, by the community. Community members are experts in their own lived in experiences and therefore have inherent expertise to share. Further, the community's input strengthens the Master Plan and the overall planning process.

HOW WE INFORMED

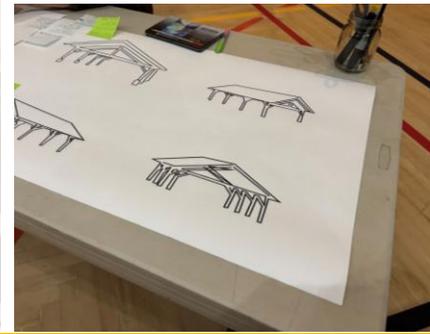
Social Media

Social media posts were shared across Facebook announcing and promoting the project launch, the Open House, and the online survey.

Mail-Outs

Information about the Open House, and online survey were hand delivered to every home located in Wells. Invitations to the Open House were also distributed to local businesses.





HOW WE ENGAGED

Neighbourhood Open House

On November 5th, 2026, an informal Open House was held at the Wells Community Hall from 5:00 pm to 8:30 pm. The purpose of the Open House was to provide residents with an opportunity to learn more about the Master Plan process, to connect with fellow residents and the project team and to provide their feedback on their priorities and vision for the future of facilities, parks and recreation in Wells. The Open House included a table for food and refreshments provided by the Wells Hotel, information boards outlining more information about Master Plan, a project timeline and a live sketching station where residents provided ideas on what the existing pavilion could be used for in the future. Interactive comment boards were also provided where residents could leave their written comments using sticky notes. Residents were encouraged to place a blue dot beside sticky note comments that they agreed with. The L&M Planning Team were available to answer resident questions, to facilitate the interactive stations and to hand out printed copies of the online survey. A kids section was set up in the middle of the Open House and included colouring sheets, books, and toys. Approximately 30 residents attended the Open House.

The following is a summary of the comments recorded through the interactive poster boards at the open house:

What are your favorite indoor parks and recreation activities in Wells?

Residents were asked to let us know in their own words what their favorite indoor activities are in Wells. Initial findings identified that **community hall activities (yoga, pickleball, etc)**, **the fitness gym** and **live music and indoor movies at Sunset Theatre** were the top indoor activities. The most common responses have been summarized below:

- Community Hall Activities (yoga, pickleball, attending large events, dance classes, etc)
- Fitness Gym
- Live music & indoor movies at the Sunset Theatre
- Going to the IMA gallery
- Curling
- Live music and events at other locations (Wells Hotel and Sarras)

What are your favorite outdoor parks and recreation activities in Wells?

Residents were then asked to let us know in their own words what their favorite outdoor activities are in Wells. The top responses included **skiing (both cross-country & backcountry)**, **hiking on nearby trails** and **snowshoeing**. The most common responses have been summarized below:

- Skiing (both cross-country and backcountry)
- Hiking on nearby trails
- Snowshoeing
- Disc Golf
- ATVing
- Snowmobiling
- Biking
- Swimming
- Playground

How do we improve parks and recreation in Wells?

The most common responses have been summarized below:

- Boardwalk to Moose Island from Silver Bridge, from Moose Island to 1 Mile and a trail for walking/biking between Wells and Barkerville
- Investment into organizations charged with maintaining facilities and trails so that operations can be maintained in perpetuity
- Let a local invest in renovating the curling club
- Skateboard/Bike Park zone
- Protect the local ecology and create a nature walk with signage (in the community forest)
- Restoration and decontamination of mining impacted areas
- Trail maps, books and brochures
- Finish the development of the park spaces at Pooley Street/Bridge/Jack
- Improve recreational space and park space in South Wells to make living there more attractive

What words or phrases should be considered in the vision for this Master Plan?

The most common responses have been summarized below:

- Recreation in every direction
- Unplugged
- Peaceful, quiet, scenic, wildlife, healthy lifestyle
- Community pride
- Way more than mining is in store here

What types of program & activities would you like to see more of in Wells?

Feedback indicated that there is interest in **reopening the curling club** and having a dedicated **pottery studio** in Wells. Residents further indicated interest in **outdoor tennis and pickleball courts**. The most common responses have been summarized below:

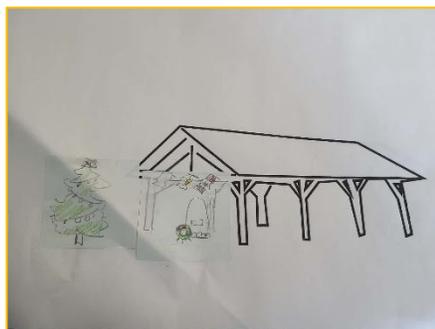
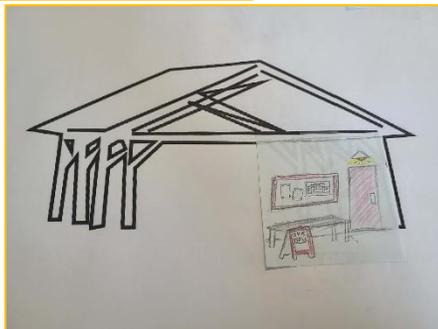
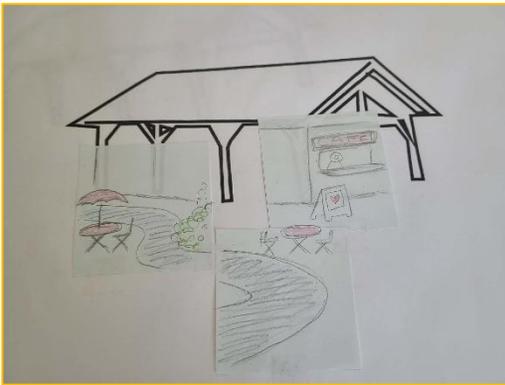
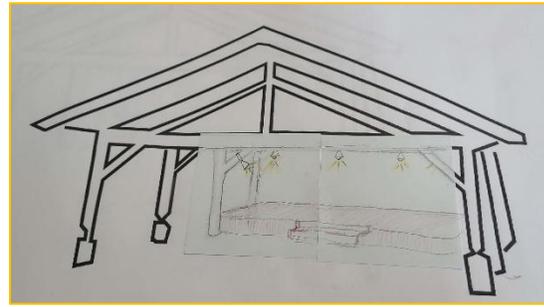
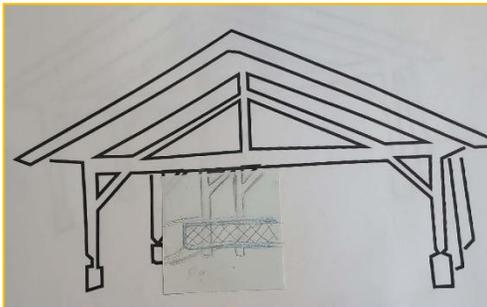
- Reopen the curling club
- Dedicated pottery studio
- Outdoor tennis & pickleball courts
- Organized recreation activities (slow pitch, soccer, volleyball, floor hockey, etc)

- Courtyard for gathering
- Outdoor kitchen/BBQ
- Cross country ski & snowshoe rental
- Mini golf

Share your ideas on how to use the covered area near the school!

The common ideas included:

- Accessible washroom
- Stage for performances and weddings
- Lighting/electricity
- Basketball Hoop
- Jam area
- Outdoor kitchen
- Pop-up café
- Pickleball/tennis
- Outdoor garden
- Chit-chat area/plaza
- Cenotaph with flagpole



Youth Engagement

Our team worked with staff at the Wells-Barkerville Elementary School and the WILDways high school to assist us with the youth engagement component of the project. Students were given a large blank aerial map of the school grounds, were split into small groups and then asked to draw and/or write out how they would like to see the lands developed in the future in terms of parks and recreation.

A summary of some of the thoughts and ideas gathered through the youth engagement can be found below:

- Add basketball hoops and pickleball lines to the ice rink
- Upgrade the playground with better equipment but keep it generally the same as it was (children liked the bridges and overall layout of the current playground), with some new swings added.
- Add a separate playground for little kids that is safe
- Remove the current greenhouse structure and place it in the community garden space
- Bike park/pump track
- Big hill for tobogganing and climbing
- Designated cross country ski track
- Remove the gravel in the pavilion and add picnic tables and play stuff
- Move tether ball poles to the other side



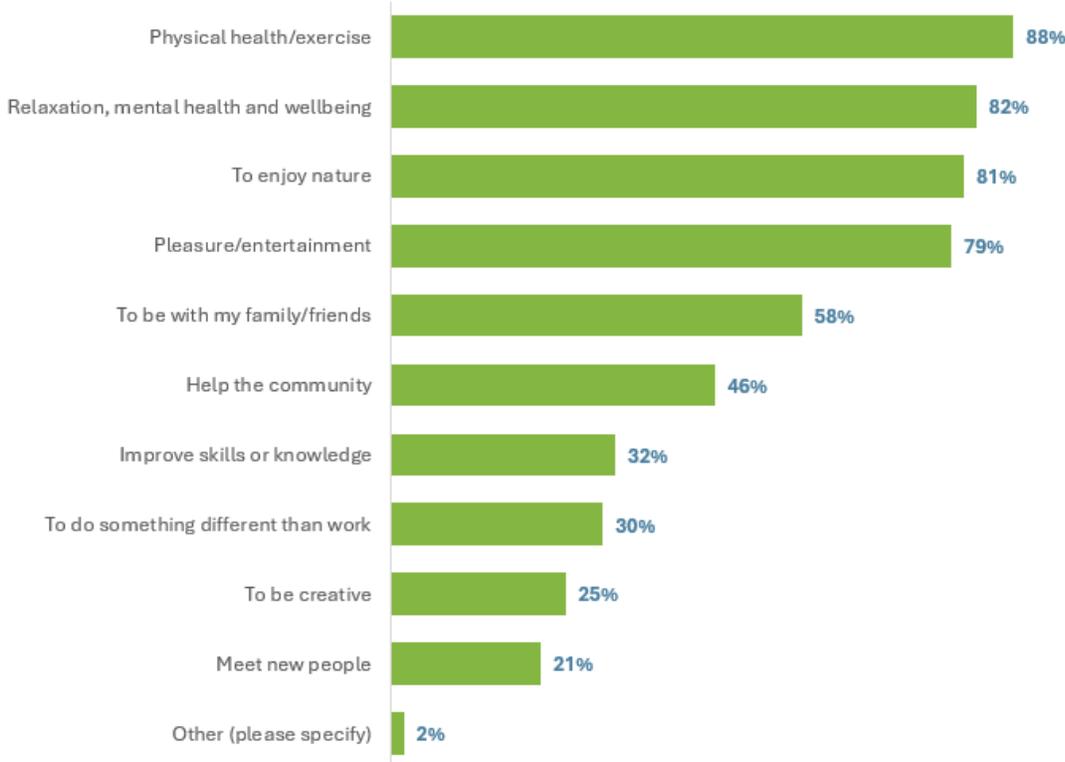
Youth Engagement Feedback

The community survey was available online via SurveyMonkey. It opened on October 21st, 2025, and closed on December 16th, 2025. To inform community members about the survey, we distributed hand delivered invitations with a QR code to access the survey and the District utilized existing local distribution channels such as social media pages. Paper copies of the survey were available at the Open House and at the District office. The survey received a combined total of 57 responses.

Top of Mind Thoughts

To begin the survey, respondents were asked to indicate the reasons that they participate in recreation. The most prevalent responses were for **physical health/exercise (88%)**, **for relaxation, mental health, and wellbeing (82%)** and to **enjoy nature (81%)**. For those that chose “Other” and wrote their reason, the most prevalent response was that there was nothing else to do in Wells.

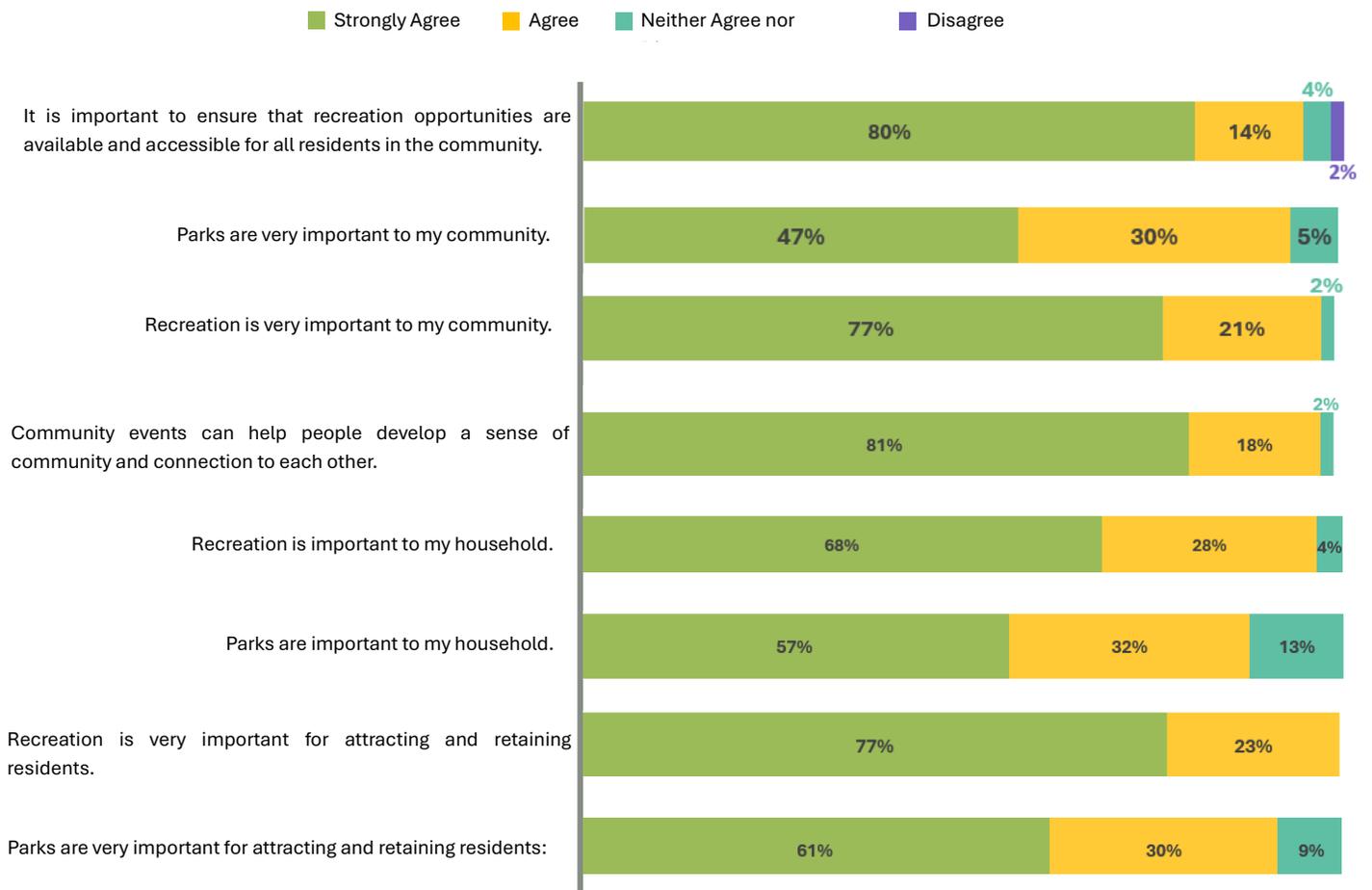
Figure 1: Reasons to Participate in Recreation and Parks Activities



Next respondents were asked about their level of agreement or disagreement with several statements about recreation and parks opportunities and their significance. In general, the

responses received were positive, with 100% of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing that recreation is very important for attracting new residents, 99% of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing that community events can help people development a sense of community and connection to each other and 98% of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing that recreation is very important to their community.

Figure 2: Importance of Recreation and Parks

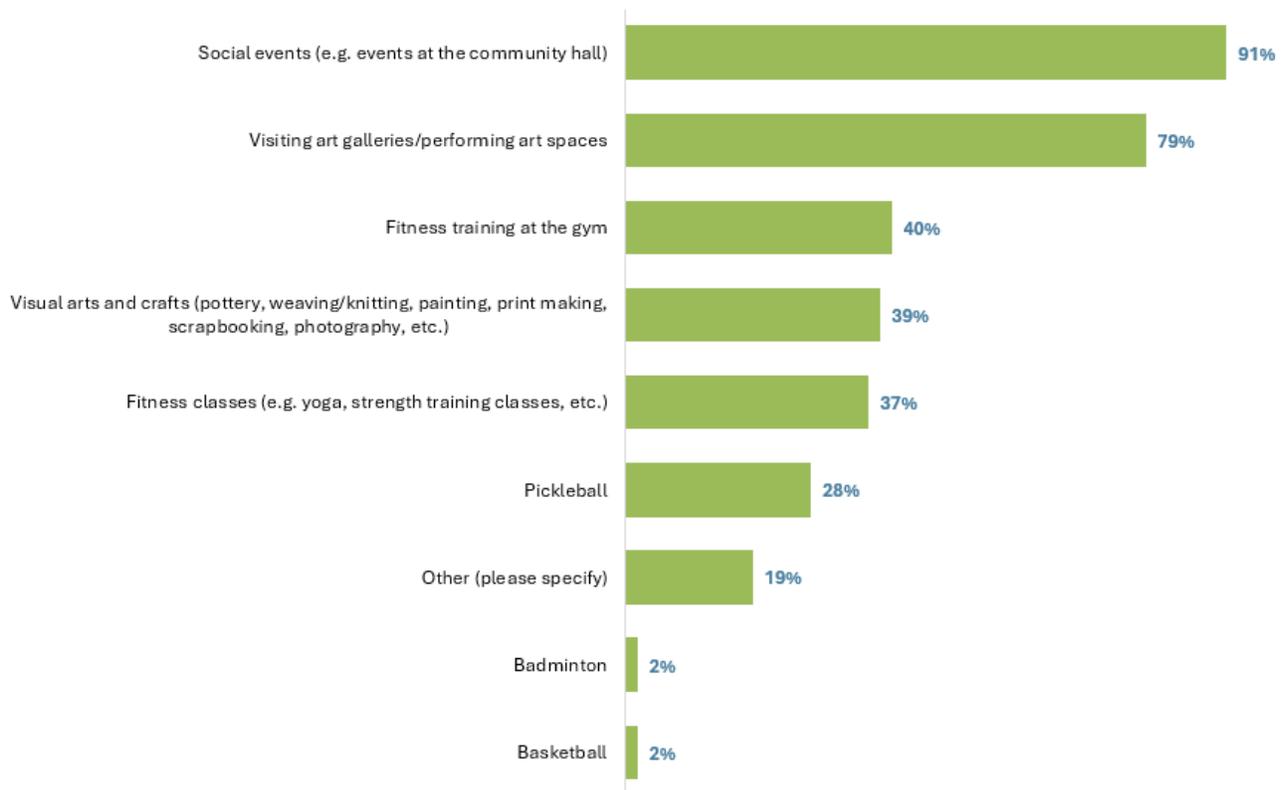


Current Facility Usage

Respondents were provided with a list of indoor and outdoor activities and were asked to select those activities that they have participated in on a regular basis over the past 12 months.

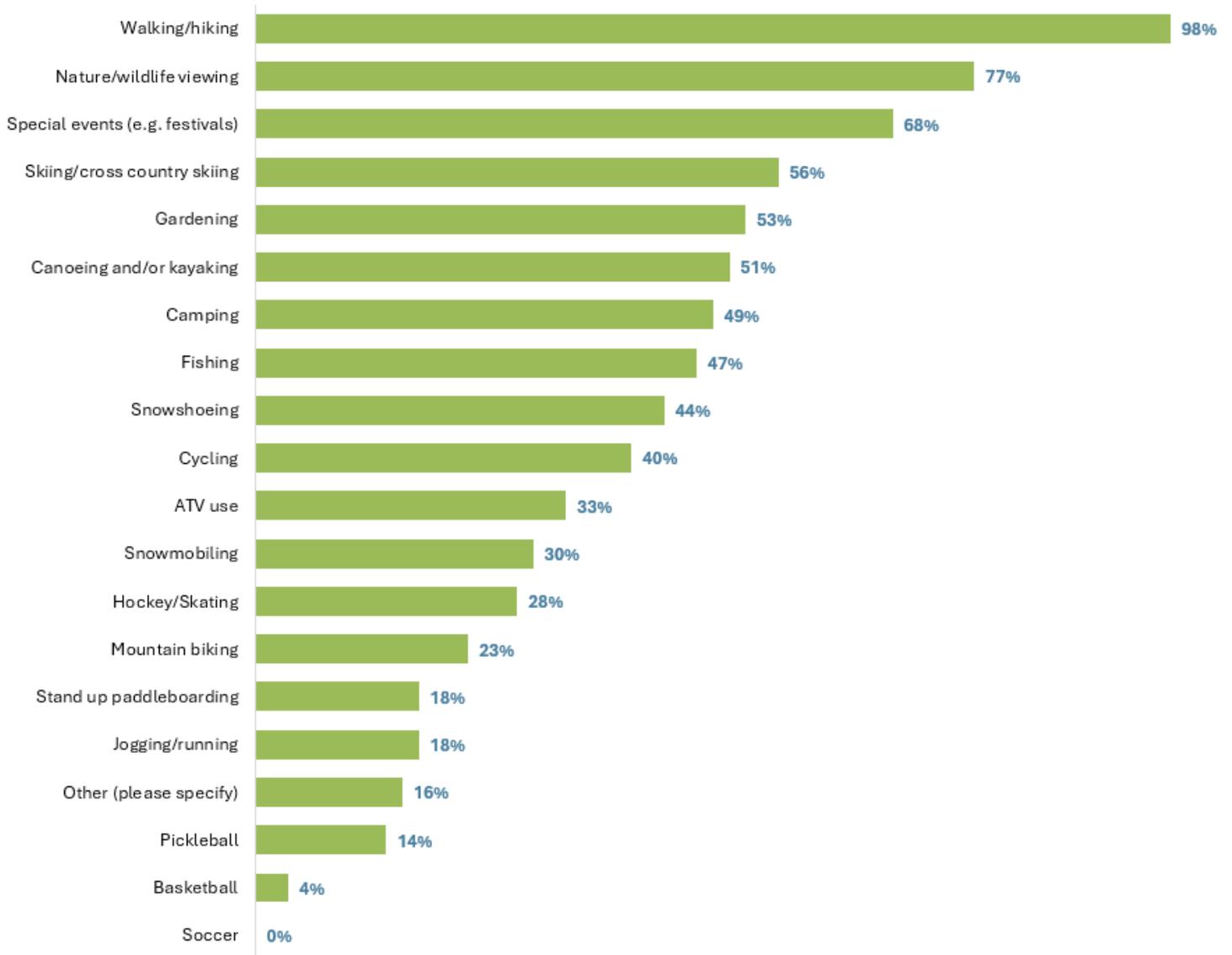
In terms of indoor activities, **91% of respondents indicated that they participate in social events, 79% participate in visiting art galleries/performing art spaces** and **40% participate in fitness training at the gym**. When respondents selected 'Other', they were provided with a space to write in other activities that they participate in on a regular basis. A number of respondents indicated that they participate in performing arts and live music productions.

Figure 3: Indoor Activities



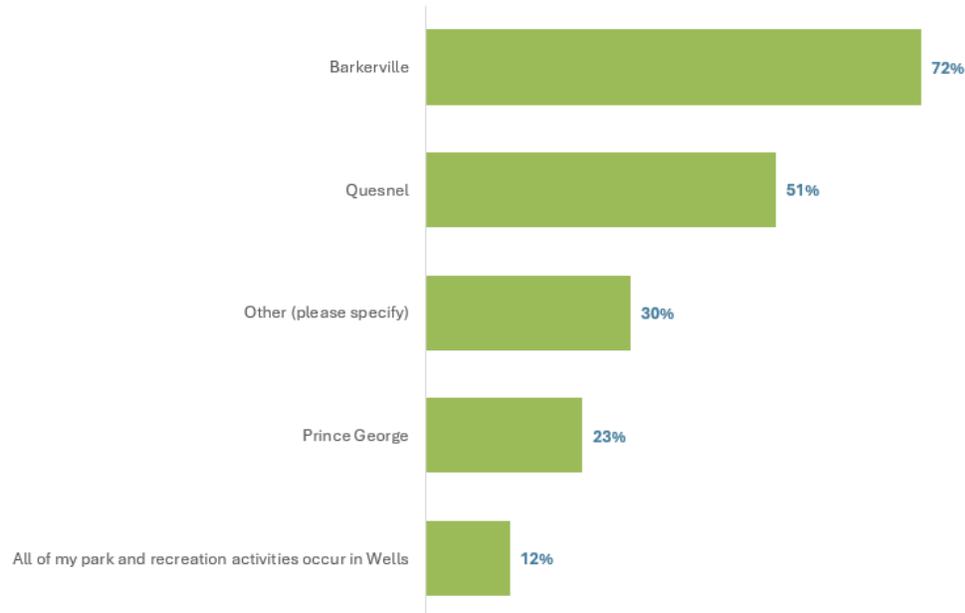
For outdoor activities, **98% of respondents indicated that they have participated in walking/hiking**, **77% of respondents indicated that they have participated in nature/wildlife viewing** and **68% have attended outdoor special events (festivals)**. The 'Other' responses included disc golf, dog walking , hunting and berry picking.

Figure 4: Outdoor Activities



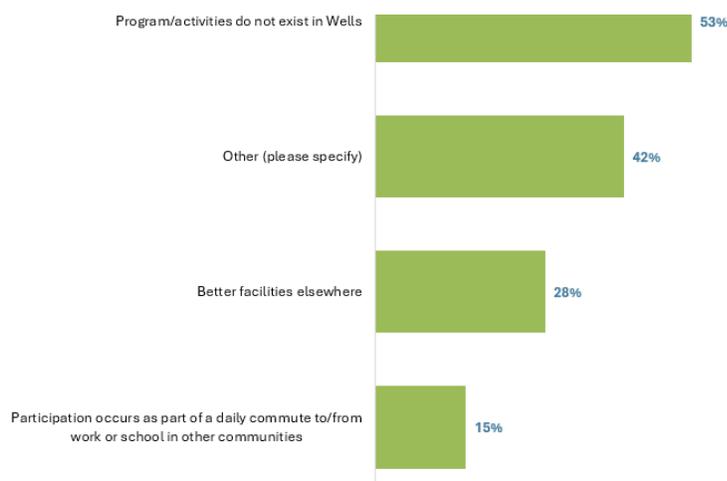
Respondents were asked about where else their recreation and park activities take place. **72% of respondents indicated that they recreate in Barkerville**, **51% indicated that they recreate in Quesnel** and **30% of respondents indicated 'Other'** the majority of which included Bowron Lake and Troll Mountain.

Figure 5: Where else does your recreation and parks activities take place?



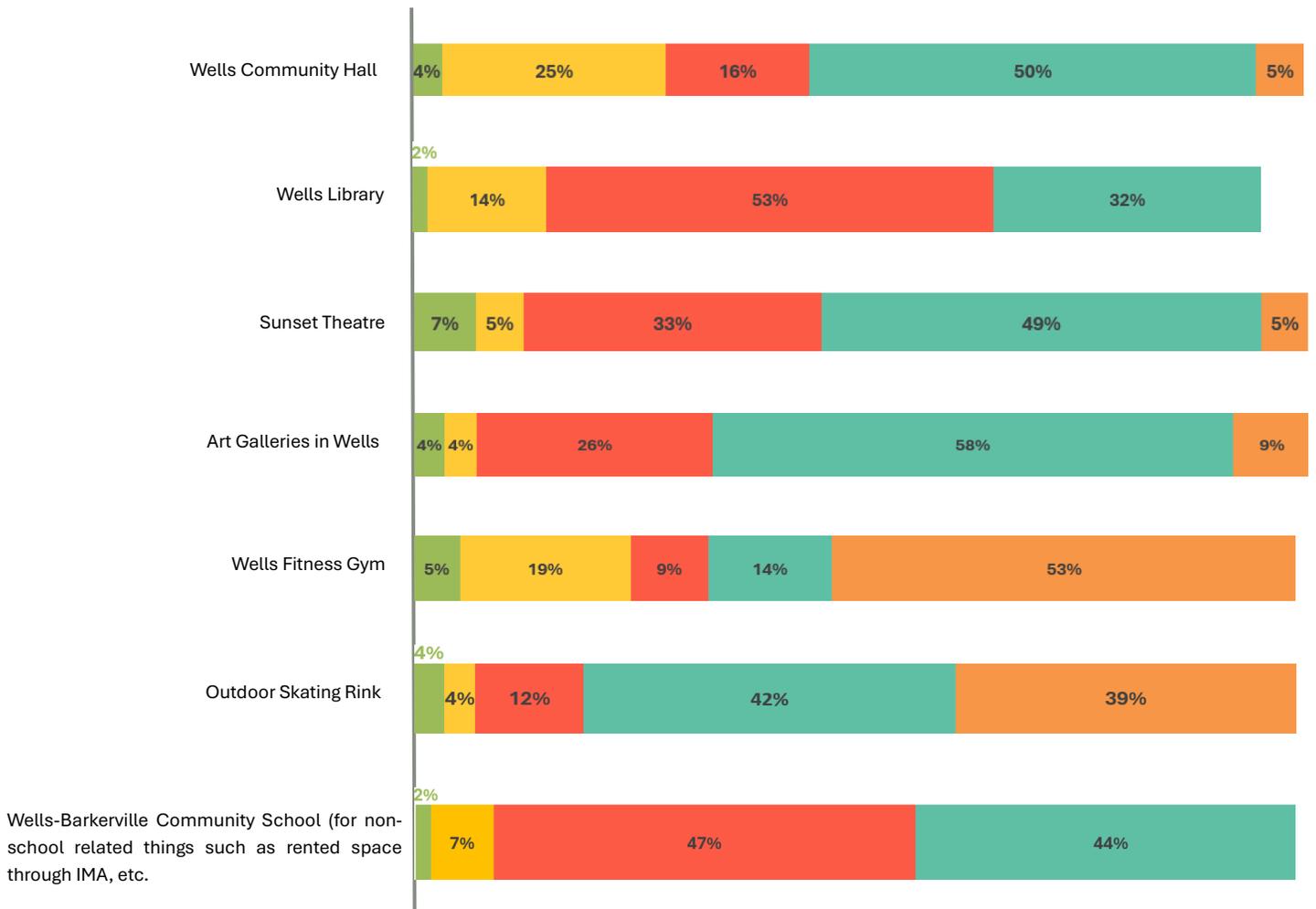
Next respondents were asked why their parks and recreation activities take place outside of Wells. **53% indicated they recreate elsewhere because programs/activities do not exist in Wells**, **42% indicated 'Other'** and **28% indicated because there were better facilities elsewhere**. The majority of the 'Other' responses included that respondents just enjoy recreating outside of Wells for the sake of something different and to participate in activities in different settings to meet new people and broaden their skills.

Figure 6: Why do your parks and recreation activities take place outside of Wells?



Respondents were asked to indicate how often they visit indoor and outdoor recreation facilities and spaces.

Figure 7: Frequency of Visits to Indoor and Outdoor Facilities



Respondents were asked if there are any indoor recreation and park facilities and amenities that they would like to see in Wells. The following are the most common responses:

- Swimming pool
- Curling
- Indoor playground/rock climbing wall
- Bowling
- Enhance/improve existing facilities
- More use of the Community Hall
- Drop-in sports (floor hockey, tennis, basketball, etc)
- Community socials
- A rental business for ATV and side by sides
- Better maintenance of fitness gym/ expansion of gym
- Dance classes
- Year round greenhouse
- Pottery space

Respondents were then asked if there are any outdoor recreation and park facilities and amenities that they would like to see in Wells. The following are the most common responses:

- Better maintenance of walking trails in the summer
- A plan for the school/rink grounds
- Expansion of the boardwalk
- More mountain bike trails
- Zipline
- Skating rink maintenance in the summer
- Park in South Wells
- Updated playground at school
- Outdoor pickleball/tennis courts
- Outdoor basketball area
- Toboggan hill
- Dock at Jack of Clubs Lake

Respondent Profile

The following set of questions were asked to understand respondent demographics information and to support the overall survey analysis.

Figure 8: Age

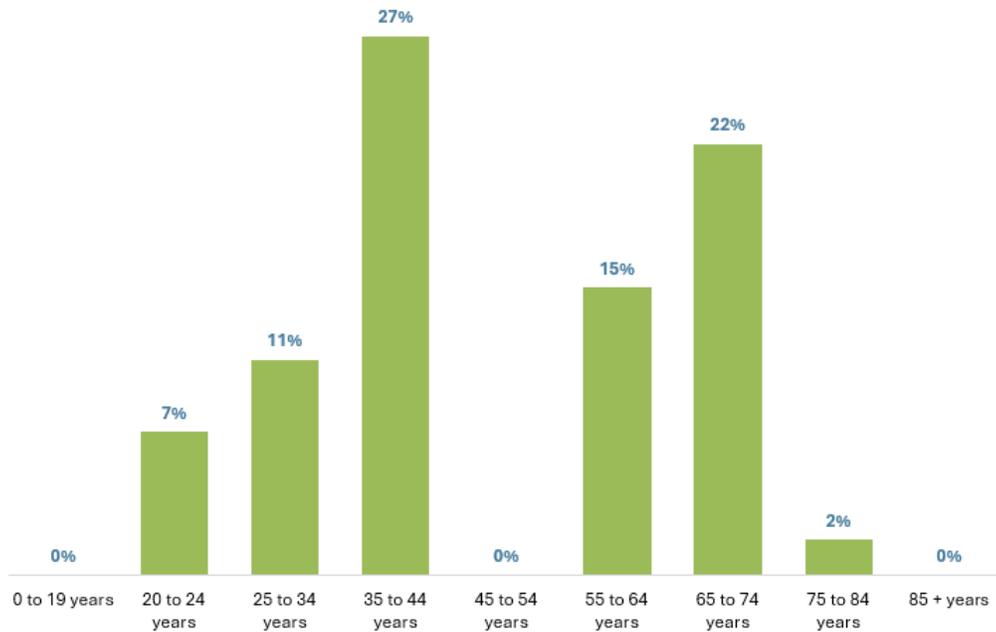
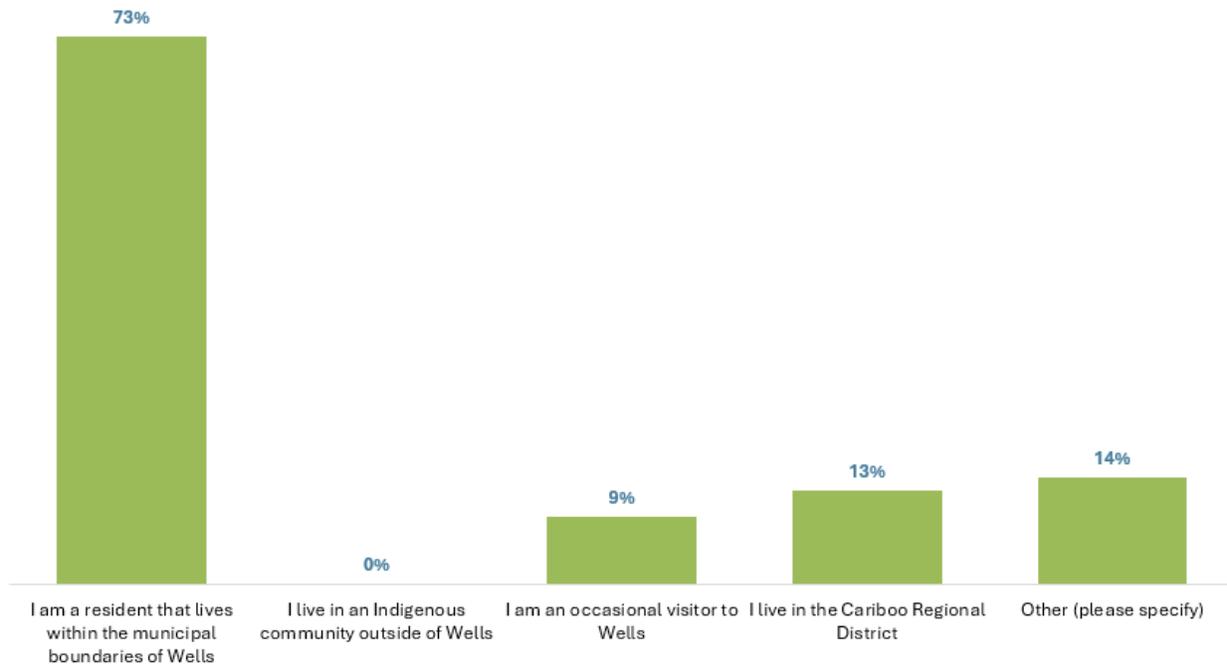


Figure 9: Connection to Wells



'Other' responses included Bowron Lake and living seasonally in Wells.

Figure 10: Time Living in Wells

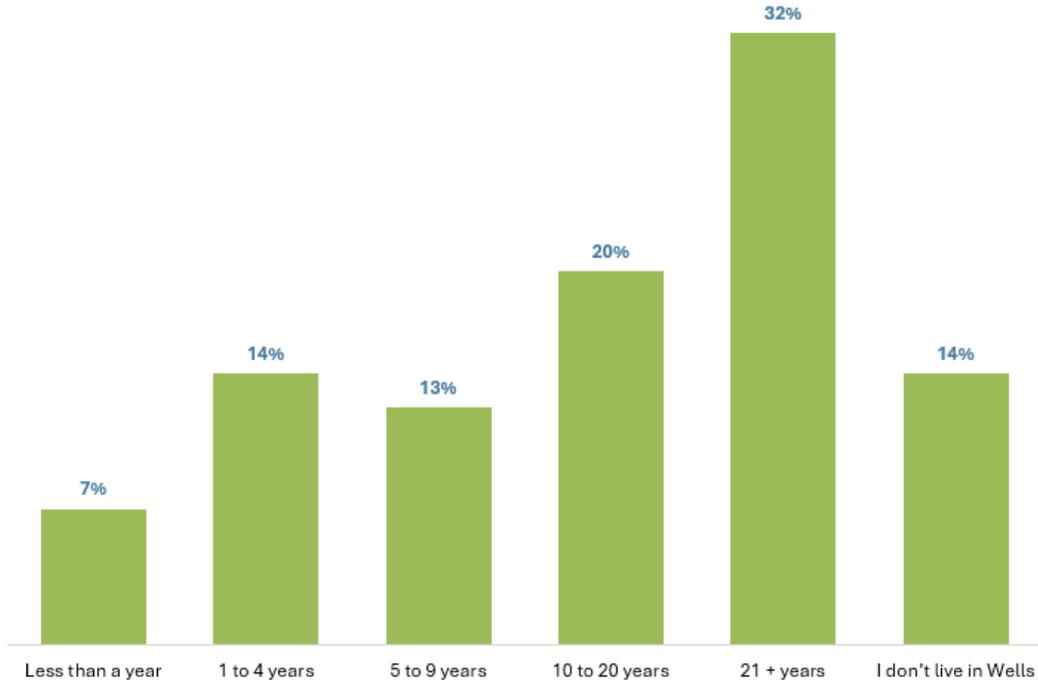
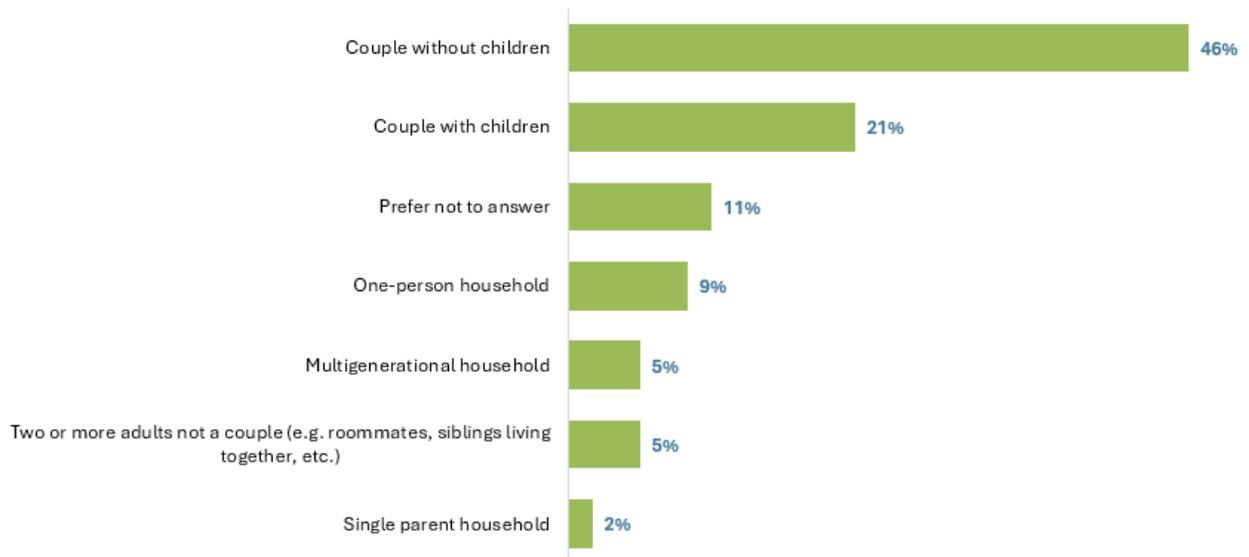


Figure 11: Household Composition



Targeted Group Discussion

The primary objective of the targeted group discussions was to engage directly with recreation providers, service organizations, partners and other identified entities to explore the current state of parks, recreation and arts and culture, observed changes and trends in the community as well as gaps, opportunities and priorities. In total, there were three discussion sessions hosted with the Wells Community Buildings & Lands Select Committee, staff at the Wells-Barkerville Elementary School and Island Mountain Arts.

The following summary provides high level key points that emerged from the discussion sessions:

- **People:** All participants highlighted the essential service community members and organizations deliver when it comes to recreation programs and community activities in general. These individuals and organizations are one of Wells's key recreation assets; therefore, they must be invested in so they can continue to deliver to the community without the risk of potential volunteer burnout.
- **Amenities/Facilities:** Participants identified the need to manage facilities properly and ensure a coordinated effort on facilities planning is made as there are many user groups and organizations that utilize the school and the community hall. There was a common theme of concern due to the aging facilities and increased maintenance costs combined with the lack of tax base to enhance profitability of future amenities/facility renovations. There was also a trend that emerged that indicated that what Wells currently provides in terms of programming and recreation is working such as the fitness gym, pickleball, disc golf, and the community's close proximity to outdoor recreation. In general, it was expressed that protecting existing assets through maintenance and sustainable planning was a key priority.
- **Natural Assets:** The surrounding community forest is a large outdoor recreation asset in Wells and some participants indicated the opportunity to leverage it even more for recreation by improving accessibility at some locations (expansion of the board walk), expanding the walking/hiking trail system and to consider mining impacted areas, such as the Jack O Clubs Lake, as a future recreation asset.

Next Steps

Thank you so much to every single person that participated in the first round of public engagement for the District of Wells Facilities, Parks and Recreation Master Plan. All input received will guide the Master Plan policies and objectives to ensure that the finalized outcome is a document that has been built for the community, by the community. The next steps will be to draft the Master Plan. Once the draft has been reviewed and approved by District Staff, a second round of public engagement will commence. After that round of engagement concludes and the Master Plan is finalized, it will be presented to Wells Mayor and Council for final approval.