



Community Services *Staff Report*

REPORT NO: CS-2025-02

TO: Council

SUBMITTED BY: Chris Catania, Director of Community Services

PREPARED BY: Amber Schenck, Community Services Project Coordinator

REVIEWED BY: Greg Clark, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: March 3, 2025

SUBJECT: New Hamburg Arena Preliminary Study Update

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report CS-2025-02, New Hamburg Arena Preliminary Study Update be received for information and:

THAT Council direct Staff to develop a plan for alternative uses at the New Hamburg Community Centre based on the financial implications in this report.

SUMMARY:

This report serves as the second update to Council regarding the ongoing progress of key preliminary tasks undertaken by Community Services personnel to advance the New Hamburg Arena Reconstruction/Multi-Use Facility project. These tasks encompass the collection and analysis of feedback received from Stakeholder Groups as well as Regulatory Agencies following their review of the initial Concept Designs, which were circulated in November 2024. The insights gathered have informed a series of modifications, now reflected in the current Schematic Designs, distributed in December 2024.

This report underscores the interconnections between various project components, identifies critical dependencies, and presents a clear, comprehensive, and transparent overview of the

project's progress to date. Additionally, it highlights the strategic efforts made to ensure that the design aligns with the community's needs and the project's overarching objectives.

The Schematic Designs, developed by Invizij Architects Inc., integrate architectural, mechanical, and electrical elements at a high level. Subsequent design specifications assisted in preparing the Class D Construction Cost Estimate. This estimate, which provides a preliminary assessment of anticipated project costs based on the current design phase was developed to provide clarity regarding project viability. The financial implications with proceeding including use of the ICIP/SPIF grant is not viable and that long-term need for additional investment is required beyond this scope of work.

BACKGROUND:

The New Hamburg Arena Reconstruction/Multi-Use Facility project, co-funded by the Ontario government through the ICIP and SPIF-SCR programs, is intended to transform the aging New Hamburg Arena into a versatile, year-round recreational space. This initiative was guided by the recommendations of the 2019 New Hamburg Arena Recommissioning Report, which highlights the facility's outdated and inaccessible design/limitations which prevent it from being fully utilized to its intended capacity. The project intends to modernize the space, ensuring it meets current community needs, aligns with regulatory agency standards, and satisfies the ICIP Grant requirements.

Key milestones achieved to-date include extensive stakeholder engagement to reassess and address project priorities, as well as structural and regulatory assessments to ensure compliance with accessibility, safety, and jurisdictional standards. These efforts culminated in a comprehensive preliminary report that evaluated the project's scope and feasibility while identifying additional work required to bring the vision to fruition.

Constructed in 1948, the New Hamburg Arena served as a vibrant community hub for ice sports and events until its decommissioning in 2008. While the facility continues to host community events, the original 'natural ice' design severely limits program expansion. 'Natural ice' design intentionally omits fundamental building envelope features such as wall and roof insulation, air and vapor barriers, weatherproofing sealants, window glazing, etc. to facilitate the formation and maintenance of ice surfaces during the winter months. Though ideal at its conception, these design choices have significantly constrained the building's potential to be used for recreation beyond ice sports, as fluctuating ambient temperatures render the facility unsuitable for use during the extreme temperatures of both winter and summer seasons.

The construction of the bowl seating presents several safety concerns, including steep and uneven risers, inadequate railings, and gapped, uneven floorboards that pose tripping and fall hazards. Beneath the seating, user groups continue to face challenges with insufficient and undesirable storage spaces. The absence of climate control, combined with a poorly sealed building envelope, allows for moisture infiltration, vermin infestations, and other environmental challenges such as insects, dust, and dirt. These conditions frequently result in stored items becoming mouldy and unusable, further reducing the arena's functionality and appeal.

In response to these challenges, Invizij Architects Inc. conducted comprehensive site inspections to observe existing conditions, assess the building envelope, review infrastructure systems, evaluate accessibility, analyze the surrounding grounds, assess utilities, etc. These observations informed the initial concept designs, which were distributed for review. Feedback and comments were carefully considered and, where feasible, integrated into the schematic designs, which were also shared for further review and input. The proposed schematic designs not only meet the criteria outlined in the ICIP grant application but also address stakeholder needs and ensure compliance with modern accessibility, life safety, fire, and building standards.

REPORT:

Schematic Design

The New Hamburg Arena Reconstruction/Multi-Use Facility project has successfully completed its Preliminary Design Phase. The attached Schematic Designs (**Appendix I**) and Class D Construction Cost Estimate (**Appendix II**) reflect thoughtfully developed designs that align with the requirements of the ICIP Grant while addressing key community and operational needs.

The designs accommodate the immediate demand for additional ice sport overflow space and provide climatized exhibition and performance space, conditioned storage solutions tailored to the needs of current facility user groups while prioritizing compliance with accessibility, life safety, fire, and building codes, along with jurisdictional regulations.

Incorporating enhancements to the building envelope and HVAC systems, the proposed designs promote year-round usability, enabling program expansion and greater community engagement, including during winter and summer months. The designs also collocate mechanical and electrical services, optimize panel locations, and include the addition of a universal washroom, private multi-purpose spaces, and an open, naturally lit, and welcoming ambience.

Additional features include necessary structural repairs on the west wall, designated warm and cold spectator viewing areas, a centrally located passenger elevator and convenience stair, enhanced Wi-Fi capabilities, demountable dasher boards, retrofitted refrigeration plant, new ice resurfacers room, intermission/crush space, infrastructure upgrades, etc. These improvements ensure that the facility meets modern standards and expectations while remaining within the boundaries and environmental considerations set forth by the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA), which governs the surrounding grounds.

The preliminary phase of the New Hamburg Arena Reconstruction/Multi-Use Facility project has provided greater clarity on the assumptions that informed the ICIP Grant Application. These assumptions were based on the New Hamburg Arena Recommissioning Study, which served as a key reference for early planning. However, the study presented a high-level cost analysis using best-case scenarios and 2018-dollar values, without factoring in certain complexities such as approvals from authorities having jurisdiction, site constraints, building limitations due to soil conditions, designated substances, access challenges, or the intricacies

of integrating upgrades within the existing structure. For example, while the study may have identified the need for a new elevator, it did not extend to evaluating the full scope of retrofitting the building to accommodate this change. Those who used the study to develop the ICIP Grant Application did so with the best intentions and the information available at the time. As the project has progressed, a more detailed understanding of these factors has naturally led to refinements in scope and further budget implications.

The current Class D Construction Cost Estimate for the New Hamburg Arena Reconstruction/Multi-Use Facility project was prepared by A.W. Hooker Associates Ltd., a leading Canadian firm specializing in independent quantity surveying and cost consulting. Their comprehensive report provides a broad assessment of the hard construction costs, laying the groundwork for more detailed budgeting as the design potentially progresses. A Class D estimate is preliminary in nature. Its accuracy ranges between -20% to +30%. The Class D Construction Cost Estimate for the New Hamburg Arena Reconstruction/Multi-Use Facility project is approximated at: \$16,100,000.00. This estimate reflects hard construction costs and consulting services only. This does not reflect future capital replacements (roof) nor operational costs associated with transforming the facility into a year-round multi-use venue. Specifically, it does not account for the costs related to staffing, supplies, utility expenses, or other ongoing yearly operational needs that are essential for the facility to function as a standard arena. For example, staffing requirements would include full-time and part-time personnel for ice maintenance, facility operations, customer service, and event coordination. Utility costs would also significantly increase as the facility transitions to a multi-seasonal space. Additionally, daily operations, including scheduling, programming, equipment maintenance, and general upkeep, are critical to ensuring the facility operates efficiently and effectively within the standard arena operating hours of Sunday – Saturday / 6 am to 11 pm. It is estimated that an additional \$500,000 annually would be required to support these operational demands which includes cost recovery for permitted use.

Detailed Design

With the Schematic Design and Class D Cost Estimate complete, Council would have to authorize proceeding to a Detailed Design phase that would advance the development of the Schematic Designs into fully detailed Permit- and Tender-Ready designs.

The detailed design phase would focus on addressing key elements of the design, wherein the Architects would collaborate with a diverse team of sub-consultants to ensure the integrity and comprehensiveness of the final designs. The Architects would lead detailed assessments of existing structural components to ensure they meet current safety and performance standards. Necessary reinforcements or modifications would be identified, along with a comprehensive investigation into infrastructure capacities, capabilities, and potential upgrades required to support the new designs. Environmental assessments would also be conducted to identify and manage designated substances and ensure compliance with health and safety regulations.

In a detailed design phase, close coordination with stakeholders, consultants, and regulatory agencies would ensure that all aspects ranging from structural considerations to compliance

with codes, regulations, and standards are thoroughly evaluated and seamlessly integrated into the final designs.

Alternatives to the ICIP Grant

Consideration of alternatives to the existing schematic design presents an opportunity to explore different approaches to the facility's future. However, any modifications or redevelopment would need to align with jurisdictional standards and regulations. To better understand the parameters of alternative design opportunities - such as divesting the facility or repurposing it as a warm-floor-only centre, Community Services personnel have consulted with the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA). GRCA has indicated that any new development within the floodplain must align with specific criteria. While commercial re-use of the existing arena may be permitted, any reconstructed facility must not encroach further into the floodplain. Additionally, the facility must incorporate floodproofing measures above the Regulatory Flood Elevation (RFE), involve only minimal grading around the structure, and exclude basement construction. It is important to note that new development in the floodplain would not be permitted if undertaken by a private owner.

New Hamburg Arena Dry Floor Space

The Township of Wilmot can continue its current role of supporting the delivery of recreation, culture and events for the community with no impact to existing users. Additional partnership options should be explored to enhance participation and increase revenue. As such, Staff will continue to pursue grant opportunities that are scoped appropriately to make the New Hamburg Arena a continued viable space for year-round warm floor space. This option would address indoor dry floor activities suitable pickleball, baseball training, lacrosse etc. and as a performing arts facility as required but does not alleviate the immediate demand for additional ice.

Further Links to the Community Services Master Plan

Ice demands and unmet needs still exist for Township ice users. The feasibility of reconstructing the New Hamburg Arena into a Multi-Use facility that addresses ice usage is currently not financially feasible, even with the inclusion of the ICIP/SPIF grant. Staff will continue to investigate site selection for an additional facility that includes sound financial and business plan addressing long term needs.

In lieu of additional infrastructure, immediate needs are being investigated through potential shared use agreements with neighbouring municipalities. This, along with revisiting the current ice allocation and affiliation policies, will allow for enhanced ice priorities.

Staff will continue to identify funding sources to support new infrastructure and/or re-investment. This includes grants applied for the long term, reserves, and engaging user groups to assist with fundraising and sponsorship campaigns.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE TOWNSHIP OF WILMOT STRATEGIC PLAN:

- Expanding healthy living and recreation opportunities through creating a plan and potential funding options to rehabilitate the New Hamburg Arena
- Expanding healthy living and recreation opportunities through establishing timelines and viable funding options to move forward with enhanced recreation amenities in alignment to the Community Services Master Plan.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Capital Costs

The current ICIP/SPIF Grant funding contribution for the New Hamburg Arena Reconstruction/Multi-Use Facility project is \$4,201,032.00. Following consultations with the Grant Representative Team, the Ministry of Infrastructure has confirmed that **NO** additional funding will be provided for this initiative. Consequently, of the estimated \$16,100,000.00 consulting and construction costs, the Township of Wilmot will be responsible for securing at minimum, the remaining \$11,898,968.00.

Furthermore, it is important to note that **NO** extensions to the project timeline will be permitted, and the project must be completed by the established deadline of March 31, 2027 to be provided the \$4,201,032.00 in reimbursement. Furthermore, the Township would be required to provide funding for the full amount upfront.

Annual Operating Costs

It is estimated that an additional \$500,000 annually would be required to support operational demands. This would include staffing, supplies, utility expenses, or other ongoing yearly operational needs that are essential for the facility to function as a multi-use facility. These operating costs would be offset with cost recovery for permitted use.

ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix I – New Hamburg Arena Reconstruction/Multi-Use Facility Schematic Design

Appendix II – New Hamburg Arena Reconstruction/Multi-Use Facility Class D Construction Cost Estimate Table