



THE CITY OF CALGARY

# Social Return On Investment (SROI) Beltline Aquatic and Fitness Centre

## Fast Facts

The Beltline Aquatic and Fitness Centre (BAFC) is a Tier 1 recreational asset owned and operated by the City of Calgary.

- The facility is accessed by various users more than 62,330 times a year.
- 2011 BAFC programming generated more than \$250,000 in revenue
- More than 1,200 seniors live in the Beltline area, of whom, approximately 62% are at-risk of social isolation.
- Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary access 1,875 hours of gym, cardio and weight room time annually
- Elementary schools use BAFC for 'gym & swim' with children would otherwise have no chance to learn
- 13 adults groups use the gym weekly for basketball and roller derby, and have been for years
- In 2011, 53 adults participated in 518 hours of ethnic dance at BAFC
- BAFC partners with the Carnat Centre to support psychiatric day care programming for adults

### For more information:

Rebecca Newlove  
Office of Sustainability

Phone: 403.268-1034

[www.calgary.ca](http://www.calgary.ca)

**“Recreation leads to healthier communities by reducing the amount of physical and mental distress experienced by individuals, which in turn lowers costs associated with other community services, including health care, social services and justice.”**  
~Recreation Master Plan, City of Calgary, p 13.~

## Case Study Background

The City of Calgary has been a triple bottom line (TBL) organization since 2005. As such, the City has been building systems to gather information across all three areas of value creation (financial, social, environmental) in order to be confident that its TBL objectives will be achieved over time.

While all City of Calgary operations are jointly based upon the philosophies of Triple Bottom Line, Integrated Risk Management and Lifecycle Costing, this SROI project was an opportunity to integrate thinking about social value into overall asset value and then to assess how internal perception of asset value and potential future options changed as a result.

## Background on the Beltline Aquatic and Fitness Centre

The Beltline Aquatic and Fitness Centre (BAFC) is a severe-looking building on 12th Ave SW, in the heart of the Beltline neighbourhood, which is in Calgary's

downtown core.

BAFC is one of 12 City-owned recreational properties with pool facilities. Constructed in 1954, the building had an original lifecycle expectancy of 50 years. By 2011 standards, the building has important deficiencies that prevent universal access and limit overall functionality. These deficiencies need to be addressed by the City of Calgary's asset management team.

Due to the lifecycle stage of the building and ongoing changes to technology and equipment, BAFC will require significant lifecycle system

investment in order to continue operations in the coming years.

Despite the above challenges, BAFC routinely attracts a loyal downtown office crowd that appreciates the building's unique ambience and the friendliness and attentiveness of the staff.

BAFC facilities are well-used before 8:30 AM, over the lunch hour, and between 3 and 6 PM on weekdays. While some BAFC users access the facility on a drop-in basis, the majority of regular customers are pass

## Theory of Change Summary Statement

*If residents of Calgary's city-centre at-risk of social isolation, financial exclusion and poor health, have access to a quality, affordable and welcoming recreational and community hub, they will be more likely to reduce their risk-factors and to participate in a vibrant, sustainable centre-city community alongside the general population.*



# SROI: Beltline Aquatic and Fitness Centre

holders.

There is also a significant portion of customers that register in fee-based programming (9%) or participate in an activity that requires some form of rental booking (28%).

In 2011, BAFC earned income was equivalent to approximately 22% of its total operating budget. Despite an increase in use in recent years, and earned revenues of more than \$250,000 annually, it has been difficult to construct a clear business case for a major BAFC upgrade when user numbers are generally below those of other City facilities. Lower user numbers translate into a higher per user operating cost in relation to other City-owned facilities.

### Network of BAFC Stakeholders

In addition to adults, the Beltline Aquatic and Fitness Centre is the hub for programming activities organized by the Calgary After School (CAS) program and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Calgary's Beltline Youth Centre (BYC).

The CAS program is a City-run initiative offering 'critical hours' programming. CAS addresses the need for quality, safe and affordable after school programs for youth ages six to 16 between 3 to 6 p.m. CAS programming ranges from sports, arts and cultural activities, to homework clubs. While more than 70 youth (11-16) are registered in CAS programming at BAFC, on average, 24 CAS youth access the facility daily.

As a result of regular participation in CAS, youth are much less likely to hurt themselves, be victimized, or to find themselves at-risk of teen pregnancy during the 'critical hours' after school is finished and before working parents return home. Research supporting the ongoing provision of a critical hours programming across Calgary suggests that 24% of all youth involvement with police, fire and EMS occurs during this time period<sup>1</sup>.

In addition to CAS, the Beltline Youth Centre offers evening and weekend programming for immigrant youth and young men who are at significant risk of street life and gang involvement. The youth accessing Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary BYC programming are at-risk of social isolation as a result of linguistic and cultural barriers. Many are living in poverty.

*Beltline Youth Centre staff build relationships with youth on the basketball court. As these relationships develop, opportunities to provide other forms of support are uncovered. Every week, more than 300 youth travel across Calgary to access BYC programs and play basketball in the BAFC gym. Some are at BYC every day.*

In a year, access to more than 1875 hours of BAFC gym, cardio equipment and weight room time is part of BYC programming. Access to the facility is provided for free. Every week, more than 300 youth aged 14-24 use the BAFC gym. Youth travel from across Calgary to participate.

Most often, the opportunity to play basketball in the BAFC gym is the initial attraction to BYC programming. While youth can participate in a wide range of activities that range from homework support and resume writing to job search, counseling and assistance

with immigration issues, BYC staff confirm that the relationship built on the basketball court is the crucial first step. Once the relationship is established, youth are more likely to be open to suggestions to pursue the resources offered in the various programming options listed above.

In 2009 the Boys and Girls Club did an SROI on the Beltline Youth Centre program<sup>2</sup>. Results illustrated that the value of the program was clearly linked to youth

**Table 1: One-Year SROI, B&GC's of Calgary, Beltline Youth Centre (2008)**

<b>Social Value Created (per 290 participants)</b>	\$1,047,980
<b>Total program investment</b>	\$216,539
<b>Investment per youth</b>	\$747
<b>One year SROI ratio</b>	<b>4.84</b>



## SROI: Beltline Aquatic and Fitness Centre

avoiding street-life and gang involvement, their increased likelihood of graduating high school and of finding and maintaining part and full time work. This value was incorporated into the BAFC SROI.

Access to BAFC facilities is a key factor contributing to BYC's effectiveness in addressing the risks that might lead to street life and gang involvement, regularly faced by youth. If the youth were not able to access BAFC facilities, they would likely participate less regularly in the program, if at all.

### Older Adults

Another key stakeholder of the Beltline Aquatic and Fitness Centre is the older adult population (65+) that accesses the facilities during non-peak hours. At the moment, this group of stakeholders is quite small, i.e. about 20 people.

This stakeholder is primarily a female client who uses the BAFC pool on a semi-regular basis. The three or four men within that group come to BAFC to use the weight room and cardio equipment. While there are fairly regular users of the facilities, some older adults will limit their use of BAFC during the winter months, particularly when the sidewalks are slippery due to ice.

*"I attend the aquabics class which I think is very well done and the other participants are friendly and enthusiastic."*

*Older adult, commenting on her BAFC experience*

While some older adults will travel from other communities to exercise at Beltline, there are currently more than 1,000 seniors living within the Beltline area. According to neighbourhood-based profiles done by the City of Calgary, 61.7% of this group are at-risk of social isolation<sup>3</sup>, a key risk factor impacting the physical and mental health of older adults. If designed to address financial, transportation and other barriers to their participation, BAFC programs could make an important contribution towards improving the physical and mental health of older adults beyond the 20 individuals who are currently using the facility.

## BAFC Case Study Background

Investment in the BAFC is currently limited to life-cycle maintenance and mandatory upgrades. The last major upgrade of the facility occurred in 1991, which included electrical work, plumbing, fire protection, water process and filtration and HVAC system upgrades, each with an anticipated lifespan of 15 years. In addition, investment was made in upgrades to walls, facia, ceilings and doors. In 1998, work was also completed on the roof. Today, there are several known functional deficiencies with the facilities, primarily with respect to universal access and functional layout. There are also forecasted lifecycle requirements in coming years<sup>4</sup>.

*"Once a Beltliner, always a Beltliner."*

*Common phrase among members of the Beltline Aquatic & Fitness Centre*

In commencing work to address these functional deficiencies and forecasted system requirements, there is the potential that additional major renovations would be required to ensure the building is compliant with current Building Codes. It is anticipated that this would be costly to address, dependant upon the renovation options. As an indication of cost, Calgary construction costs averaged \$268 per

square foot for swimming pools and \$207 per square foot for recreation centres. While use of the BAFC has been increasing in recent years, it is difficult to build a clear business case for a major upgrade when user numbers are generally below those of other City facilities<sup>5</sup>.

The purpose of this SROI was to gain insight into the current and potential value experienced by various stakeholders using the BAFC facility. This would enable policy and asset planners to identify options for the facility given its physical and functional condition, in relation to this value. The aim was to inform a more complete business case for upgrading, maintaining or replacing the BAFC, in the future.



# SROI: Beltline Aquatic and Fitness Centre

## Access to Recreation and Older Adults

Through desk research and members surveys, the project team decided that the two stakeholders that would most directly experience improved health as a primary benefit were older adults and a portion of the daily workout crowd that would exercise less frequently if Beltline were not so convenient to their home or office.

Research has shown that one in three older adults will fall every year, as a result of poor balance<sup>6</sup>. This research indicates that increased falling as an older adult is often a direct result of a lack of exercise. Lack of exercise contributes to weakened core strength and decreased ability to maintain balance<sup>7</sup>. Not only will falling trigger costs to the provincial health care system, an older adult will often require home care for a recovery period, should a fall result. This will either be an individual or system-wide health care cost, depending upon individual circumstances.

Research has also shown that regular exercise can help to manage, even postpone, many health conditions<sup>6</sup>. For seniors, one of the most common conditions is diabetes<sup>8</sup>. The Canadian Diabetes Association reports that one in nine Canadian adults are managing some form of diabetes.

This research emphasizes that regular exercise will contribute to effective disease management, regardless of whether the person begins to exercise regularly at a young age, mid-life, or in their later years. While there are costs to the health care system for every Canadian managing diabetes, individual personal costs also range from \$1,000 to \$15,000 per year, depending upon the severity of the individual case<sup>9</sup>. The value of improved health among older adults and avoided medical costs from falling and early onset of diabetes were used to express a portion of the value of their ongoing access to and use of BAFC facilities.

Table 2. Value of Improved Outcomes Experienced by Vulnerable Older Adults using BAFC (highlights)

Stakeholders	Valuing Outcomes						
	Outcomes	Indicator	Financial Proxy		Proxy Value (\$)	Proxy Indicator Code	Proxy Value Per Year
Vulnerable Seniors	Improved health and fitness	better balance, fewer falls	1	fracture wrist/hand/ankle/foot	\$8,100	H58	\$8,100
			2	reduced need for supported living or homecare	\$52	H37	\$1,886
		Individual health care cost of diabetes	3	average case of diabetes	\$4,361	H58	\$4,361
		Personal cost of managing diabetes	4	personal medication and supplies	\$2,500	Canadian Diabetes Association	\$2,500
	Maintain healthy cognitive function	level of development of cognitive skills	5	reduced need for supported living or homecare	\$52	H37	\$13,619

For more information on SROI, visit [www.simpactstrategies.com](http://www.simpactstrategies.com)





## SROI: Beltline Aquatic and Fitness Centre

Finally, social isolation is a significant risk for all people as they age, particularly when they have demographic characteristics that increase their vulnerability. These characteristics include poor health, living alone, reduced or limited mobility and living in poverty.

More than 1,200 seniors live in the Beltline area, of whom, 61.7% are considered at-risk of social isolation as a result of some or all of the demographic characteristics listed above. As such, the potential to create value by reducing social isolation among local seniors was incorporated into this SROI case study. As mentioned earlier, there are 20 seniors who regularly exercise at BAFC. The six that responded to surveys commented that they feel 'stronger', 'more energized' or 'happier, because I have enjoyed myself' as a direct result of their time at the facility. Their responses were used to project the value of a partial increase in the number of local seniors using Beltline facilities and enjoying/benefitting from the experience.

### Adult Members—Convenience to Home or Office

The City of Calgary tracks facility use in the form of pass scans (members), admissions (drop-ins), program attendance (registered classes) and regular rental bookings. In 2010, average monthly entries was 5,194, based upon a 12-month cycle and a monthly low/high range of 3,893/6,006 throughout the year. In November 2011, regular BAFC customers were asked to respond to a survey to inform this SROI case study.

Of the 191 people who responded, 49% responded that convenience to their home or office was a very important factor influencing their ability to exercise frequently. A further 13% stated that convenience to their home or office was somewhat important. Within those two groups of respondents, 12% said they would exercise less frequently if BAFC was not available, and would not exercise elsewhere. Five respondents (2.5%) stated that they would not exercise at all, if access to BAFC was not an option to them. Significantly, all respondents had the option to choose 'would exercise elsewhere', as there are at-least three alternate facilities in the Beltline area<sup>11</sup>.

In the same survey, 49% of respondents also reported that the cost of accessing BAFC facilities was a very important factor in their decision to use the facilities, with a further 38% of respondents stating that cost of access was somewhat important. Both this and the responses reported in the paragraph above indicate that a portion of BAFC users may value access to BAFC more highly than the value of their annual membership, as they would not choose or be able to afford to exercise at another facility.

While the value of regular exercise has many short and long term health benefits, the primary indicator of value creation for regular members was associated with stress management, thereby reducing health issues and absenteeism that often result from exposure to stress. Based upon research indicating the frequency of absenteeism due to stress<sup>12</sup>, this value was applied to approximately 25% of regular user/adult pass holders.

### Figure 1—Comments from Stakeholder Survey

*The people who come here, the atmosphere is not competitive, we are here to support each other...*

*Hope this place stays open forever....*

*Great place, keep it functioning well! Great people!*

*The City of Calgary Parks and Recreation has a winner with Beltline.*

*It is a well run facility, keep up the good work.*

*I find the amenities very clean and staff is very friendly.*

*The staff are incredibly friendly, supportive and address me by name. Love it!!*

*It is one of the rare recreation facility opened to regular public after work hours, keep it!! :)*

*This is a great little hidden gem!*

*Nope, except thanks for supporting ATP artists.*

*Thank you!!!!*



# SROI: Beltline Aquatic and Fitness Centre

## Other Stakeholders

Other key stakeholders considered were a small group of adult users that were at high-risk of poor mental health. It is important to note that no survey of this stakeholder group had been done in the past, and it was not possible to survey this stakeholder profile for this case study. For this reason, the value of their access to the Beltline facility will be considered in the future.

## The Social Value of BAFC—Preliminary Results

Before taking the current social value of the Beltline Aquatic and Fitness Centre into account, the asset is typically valued in relation to the annual operating costs invested by the City, the likelihood and cost of future investment in building maintenance and upgrades, and its potential to earn revenue.

When only considering operating costs and earned revenue, the ‘best case’ BAFC value ratio would be **1: 0.27**. This illustrates that for every dollar invested, the facility generates a return of 27 cents. Seventy-three cents (**\$0.73**) of value per dollar invested is not recouped .

However, when the current social value of BAFC to stakeholders is also considered in relation to operating costs and earned revenue, the value ratio increases to **1: 0.99**. This value includes the value of improved health and reduced social isolation for the current youth, seniors and adult members using the facility.

This ratio also includes value to the local, municipal and provincial services that these individuals would likely otherwise consume should they not have access to BAFC. Additional sources of value to stakeholders such as adults managing their mental health through regular programming, staff valuing their work and new Calgarian families using BAFC facilities as the destination for family outings was not included, due to an inability to survey these stakeholders. This is a future research opportunity as well as support to the argument that the current value of BAFC is likely understated.

**Table 3: Beltline Social Value Current and Future Opportunity**

Stakeholder	Social Value Current Programming	Social Value Future Programming
Vulnerable Seniors	6 of 20	60 of 200
At-Risk Youth (CAS)	Daily Average 24	no change
At-Risk Youth (BYC)	250 participants	no increase
Adults At-Risk of Poor Mental Health	3 of 10	6 of 20
Adult customers, pre-work, post work, lunch	250 regulars	325 regulars
All Beltline Customers	62,330 entries	72,330 entries
Environment	TBC	TBC
SROI Ratio	1 : 0.99	1: 2.39

## The Potential Future Value of BAFC

With a preliminary perspective on current value to stakeholders, the SROI project team began to explore BAFC’s potential to create more value in the future. A key feature of BAFC’s potential is its location in Calgary’s city-centre, at the core of the Beltline community.

The Beltline neighbourhood’s recent designation as a revitalization zone is contributing to new construction of condominiums designed for an urban lifestyle. While a significant portion of the Beltline population is at-risk of social isolation, there is a growing population of more affluent baby-boomers moving to the neighbourhood due to the attraction of downtown living.<sup>12</sup>

One opportunity for BAFC to increase social value in the future is to attract working, newly retired and older residents to the variety of exercise options offered. As discussed earlier, the value of exercise to this future group



## SROI: Beltline Aquatic and Fitness Centre

of customers will include prolonged good health, decreased risk of accident and injury due to falls, reduced social isolation, improved stress management and stress reduction.

The experience of Beltline staff is that older adults exercises seek environments that are safe and age-appropriate. The opportunity to attract new Beltline residents to BAFC for exercise an important way to support a long term approach to improved health and fitness.

At the same time, low income households remain a large proportion of the Beltline population (27.9%)<sup>13</sup>. Within Beltline, 845 (61.7%) are considered vulnerable, due to risks of social isolation, poverty and poor health<sup>14</sup>. Thirty-nine (39.1%) of Beltline residents are spending more than 30% of their monthly income on rent, which is thought to be the threshold at which housing is at-risk of being unaffordable and unsustainable<sup>15</sup>. Many of the people living in or close to poverty are seniors living within a short travel distance to BAFC.

From this perspective, there is potential for BAFC to create significant value for the City, Calgarians and Alberta. If BAFC was renovated and equipped to grow its current older adult clientele from 20 regular members to, for example, 200 older adults (16% of local older adult population), the opportunity to create value is significant. As described earlier, value will be created by reducing social isolation, health benefits from improved fitness, and avoiding injuries and falls. This is a realistic opportunity for BAFC to create value given that there are more than 1300 older adults living in the vicinity.

Assuming that a similar proportion of a larger older adults membership group would experience the physical and mental health benefits described in this document, the annual SROI ratio for BAFC can be forecasted to grow to **1: 2.39**. The change in this ratio also includes an estimated additional annual investment of \$250,000 to account for increased operating costs as a result of additional programming.

If BAFC incorporates other needed local services, such as affordable foot clinics or social events that bring older adults together for discussion and interaction<sup>16</sup>, the social value of BAFC would grow even further. In the course of developing this case study, several other opportunities for BAFC to collaborate with other local service providers to improve the overall health of seniors were discovered.

## Conclusion

The aim of this SROI case study was to integrate thinking about social value into examination of overall asset value, and then to assess how the internal perception of asset value and potential future options changed as a result. As internal perception of the value of BAFC changed from a **1: 0.27** ratio, to **1: 0.99**, and then evolved to include the initial estimate of the potential future value of **1: 2.39**, the discussion on potential options for BAFC as a community hub also evolved.

As result of current use by older adults, CAS program youth and youth involved in the Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary's Beltline Youth Centre, BAFC creates tangible social value in its current form. With an achievable target to increase BAFC usage by older adults living locally, and by attracting new adult Beltline residents interested in maintaining a healthy lifestyle, there is a real opportunity for the BAFC to create increased and ongoing value for people living in the Beltline area, for Calgary , Calgarians and Alberta. There are many options to be considered for the Beltline Aquatic and Fitness Centre's role as a vibrant and accessible community hub.



## References

1. City of Calgary, Community and Neighbourhood Services, *Critical Hours: A Plan to Invest in Calgary's Children*, Children and Youth Services, 2008.
2. URL Link to BYC SROI
3. The City of Calgary, Community and Neighbourhood Services. *Community Social Statistics: BELTLINE*, 2010 City of Calgary, Community and Neighbourhood Services, Social Planning Division. <http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/CNS/Pages/Social-research-policy-and-resources/Community-profiles/Community-Profiles.aspx>
4. Interviews, City of Calgary , Infrastructure and Information Services, 2011
5. Culthbert Smith, Consulting Partnership Inc. Construction Cost Guideline 2010 for Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and British Columbia (Okanagan)
6. Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Falls/adultfalls.html>
7. Examiner.com—the importance of core strength for seniors— <http://www.examiner.com/la-in-los-angeles/core-strength-exercises-for-seniors>
8. [http://www.medicinenet.com/senior\\_exercise/article.htm](http://www.medicinenet.com/senior_exercise/article.htm), <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/exerciseforseniors.html>
9. <http://www.diabetes.ca/search/results/?cx=003094135815696782263%3Azxn5luxyt0g&cof=FORID%3A11%3BNB%3A1&ie=UTF-8&q=elderly>
10. <http://www.diabetes.ca/diabetes-and-you/what/prevalence> or Gettman, Larry 'Economic benefits of Physical Activity, National Health Call Centre Group, or Active Travel Information Sheet, Active Travel and Healthy Workplaces, FH06, [www.activetravel.org.uk](http://www.activetravel.org.uk).
11. [www.heavensfitness.com](http://www.heavensfitness.com), [www.anytimefitness.com/gyms/2317/calgary-ab-t2r-0v4](http://www.anytimefitness.com/gyms/2317/calgary-ab-t2r-0v4), [www.bankershallclub.com](http://www.bankershallclub.com)
12. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/health/story/2007/12/19/stress-report.html> , Indicator H16, SROI Canada Proxy List—[www.sroi-canada.ca](http://www.sroi-canada.ca)
13. 'Best Case' refers to an approach currently used by many assets managers, i.e. on that does not take into account social value, only stage of asset life and anticipated maintenance, upgrade and replacement costs.
14. City of Calgary. "[Beltline - Area Redevelopment Plan](http://www.calgary.ca/DocGallery/BU/planning/pdf/centre_city/beltline/beltline_plan_one.pdf)" (PDF). [http://www.calgary.ca/DocGallery/BU/planning/pdf/centre\\_city/beltline/beltline\\_plan\\_one.pdf](http://www.calgary.ca/DocGallery/BU/planning/pdf/centre_city/beltline/beltline_plan_one.pdf). Retrieved 2007-09-28
15. [http://www.calgary.ca/\\_layouts/cocis/DirectDownload.aspx?target=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.calgary.ca%2FCSPS%2FCNS%2FDocuments%2Fhomelessness%2Frs-01\\_affordable\\_rent\\_ownership\\_limits.pdf&noredirect=1](http://www.calgary.ca/_layouts/cocis/DirectDownload.aspx?target=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.calgary.ca%2FCSPS%2FCNS%2FDocuments%2Fhomelessness%2Frs-01_affordable_rent_ownership_limits.pdf&noredirect=1)
16. City of Calgary, Family and Community Support Services, *Outcome: Positive Social Ties and Vulnerable Populations*, Calgary, AB, FCSS Calgary Research Brief, Calgary, AB, 2009.