

Submission No: 134.



# Clare County Development Plan Review 2022-2028

Observations on behalf of the  
Clare Badgers Inline Hockey Club



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## Introduction

Sport has always been a cornerstone of Irish communities, with the GAA being at the forefront of all town and cities throughout the country. Over the last number of years, with the influx of immigration to this country, came with it the cultures of other nations, including sport.

Ice hockey has been around, globally, for more than a century with inline hockey coming in in the last number of decades as a way to play hockey year round or in countries that are not suitable for winter sports; one of the reasons this sport has taken off so fast here in Ireland. Another reason inline hockey has exploded in Ireland is its similarities to hurling, both in speed of the game and the skill set needed to play. It is this specific skill set that means Ireland has a considerable advantage as the majority of children growing up in Ireland, has developed these skill sets at some level. Inline hockey offers a new, exciting sport for both children and adults to delve into, having already a skill set needed to play.

This development is evident as in the last two years alone, **Inline Hockey Ireland** (IHI), the governing body, has doubled the leagues to accommodate the interest by all age groups. The league now register players for: Elite Senior, Senior Leagues 1 & 2, Under 18, Under 14, Under 12 as well as Men's National Team, Woman's National Team and Junior National Team.

The Clare team - the **Clare Badgers Inline Hockey Club** - competes in three of these leagues; U14, U12 and Senior League 1.

In the last four years, the **Clare Badgers** have had a number of great successes, just last season the Senior team secured the **All-Ireland League 2 Championship**. As well, the Junior team are also going from strength to strength, as two of the junior players have been invited to participate in the IHI National Development Programme. One is even training with the Junior National Team, as a reserve, with the hopes of travelling to France to represent Ireland next year.

With the sport growing so rapidly, the country, as a whole, lacks facilities. Currently, the majority of IHI league matches and championships are played in Longford and Portadown. In the whole of the country, these are the only locations with the facilities that meet the regulations of the sport. Due to this lack of facilities, it means all of the **Clare Badgers** 'home' matches are played outside Clare. This constant travelling puts pressure on all players as well as their families, and does not allow the club to develop it's fanbase that it deserves, especially considering the club won an All-Ireland medal in March 2020.

Over the last number of years, the **Clare Badgers** club and committee have researched a variety of possible facility types that would be an ideal home base, not just for the club, but for other sports as well; including badminton, indoor soccer, volleyball, boxing, ping pong, rock climbing, and basketball. One such possibility, outlined below, is from CLstructures who work with a Canadian company, Sprung, who have built this exact structure before in Canada and other similar structures in Ireland. Because of this, CLstructures have the necessary experience and expertise needed for this project.

The club feels that by developing a world-class base in Clare, would provide not only the necessary facilities needed for a variety of sports as well as events; but also provide a massive economic boost to the region. The Development Plan outlines the need for these specific types of projects, one that checks a number of boxes that the County is looking to achieve; by providing a sport and leisure facility that meets the demand of the community, by creating a key-economic driver which is diverse enough to increase tourism to the country, and lastly, job creation and a sporting jewel in the crown of Ennis town.



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## Current Situation

*While this facility would be able to provide ideal amenities for a number of sports, as listed above, the **Clare Badgers** feel that by highlighting the clubs' situation, it reflects, as well, on the situation of many sporting clubs throughout Clare.*

For the last number of years, the **Clare Badgers** have divided their training location between Corofin's GAA hall and Inagh's Community Centre, as both of these locations provide a semi-central base for players travelling from all over the county and neighbouring counties, and also a cheaper alternative to training in Ennis.

Both halls provide a very rudimentary training surface and changing facilities, neither being ideal for progressing the club or enticing new players to join. As well, neither locations meet the standards Inline Hockey Ireland recommend in order to host league or championship games, which means the club constantly travels to Longford or Portadown to play league games.

These lack of facilities have become even more evident during the recent lock-downs, as the GAA hall and community centres have been unable to open to the club, even when restrictions were lifted enough to allow training on a basic level. This meant that the club missed out on vital training both for the senior and junior teams. By having a purpose-built facility, all the clubs in Clare would be able to continue the training under the current government restrictions.

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## Future Plans

In response to the Clare County Council's Development Plan 2022-2028, the **Clare Badgers** would like to put forward a clear plan to enable the county to successfully and effectively facilitate this rapidly growing sport, in partnership with other similarly growing sports, within the county.

In line with the overall development, the **Clare Badgers** feel that this plan would fall under the following headings:

1. Social, Community and Cultural Development

- How can the Plan facilitate the demand for sports and leisure facilities within the county?

2. Economic, Enterprise, Tourism and Retail Development

- How will Ennis 2040 plan be integrated into the County plan -- this plan is looking at making Ennis a key economic driver, diversify their economic growth, and have major tourist attractions.
- How can we promote major tourist investments and job creation and where should it be located?

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The facility that the **Clare Badgers** are suggesting would serve a variety of purposes within the community, including a meeting centre, special events lounge, retail units, and world class sporting venue to accommodate a variety of sporting events.

This arena would be world-class, with seating for 360 spectators, as well as concession stands throughout. It would be owned and operated by the Council, and provide endless possibilities in terms of both financial reward and community benefit.

**Some examples of such possibilities;**



- Friday and Saturday Game Nights, multiple county, national or even international matches - paying spectators enjoying an exciting day/evening of sport, year round
- County, national, and international tournaments - players and fans traveling to the county for multiple day tournaments, providing an economic boost to the region
- County clubs training centre - multiple sports having the arena as their home-base with yearly lease agreements with the council for allotted training times and home games/tournaments
- Fully accessible arena for both sport and spectators, with a seamless PVC floor running throughout the entire building, lending well to both wheelchair sport and sports for the elderly
- Simultaneous matches, tournaments, or training available due to size of the arena  
(ie 4 badminton courts, 2 basketball courts, 4 volleyball courts, 4 boxing rings, 8 pingpong tables, 1 indoor soccer pitch, 1 inline hockey floor, as well as room for a climbing wall, and roller derby)

The arena would become the focal point of the county, particularly in conjunction with the John O'Sullivan Park (Lees Road Sports and Amenity Park), where together, this dual complex would become the gold standard for amenity parks both in Ireland and abroad.

This arena ticks many of the boxes put forward by the overall Council's Development Plan. A world-class, multi-sport & leisure facility providing massive and ongoing economic growth for the region and bringing a boost in international tourism with tournaments and matches year round.





# Innovative Building Solutions

Engineered & Manufactured by Sprung Instant Structures



## CENTRAL PARK ARENA

Collingwood, Ontario  
Ice Rink

### Project Report:

Collingwood now has a second ice rink for year-round use, located in Central Park, to complement the Eddie Bush Arena.

The new rink is a full size, 85ft by 200ft ice surface, complete with premium dasher boards and glass. There is interior spectator seating for 390 people, and a mezzanine lounge for viewing. The lounge can be rented for special events and presentations.

There are six dressing rooms for players, including a dedicated female dressing room. As well, the referee room is capable of accommodating eight referees.



## Mayor's Message – Central Park Arena

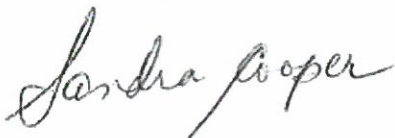
The Town of Collingwood is growing, and as a municipality we need to ensure that our infrastructure and facilities meet the needs of our current and future residents, at a cost we can afford.

In our community we have an historic, downtown arena, however we heard from our residents and visitors that an additional ice surface was needed.

Sprung Structures was a great solution: a unique, patented, energy efficient, ready to use structure to house a full-size ice-pad allowing us to double our available ice time.

A state-of-the-art refrigeration system and a high-insulation factor in the roof and walls ensure that the building is energy efficient. Our users have said the ice surface is of exceptional quality!

The Sprung Company has provided Collingwood with a showcase, state-of-the-art facility, which is the envy of many communities.



Mayor Sandra Cooper  
Town of Collingwood



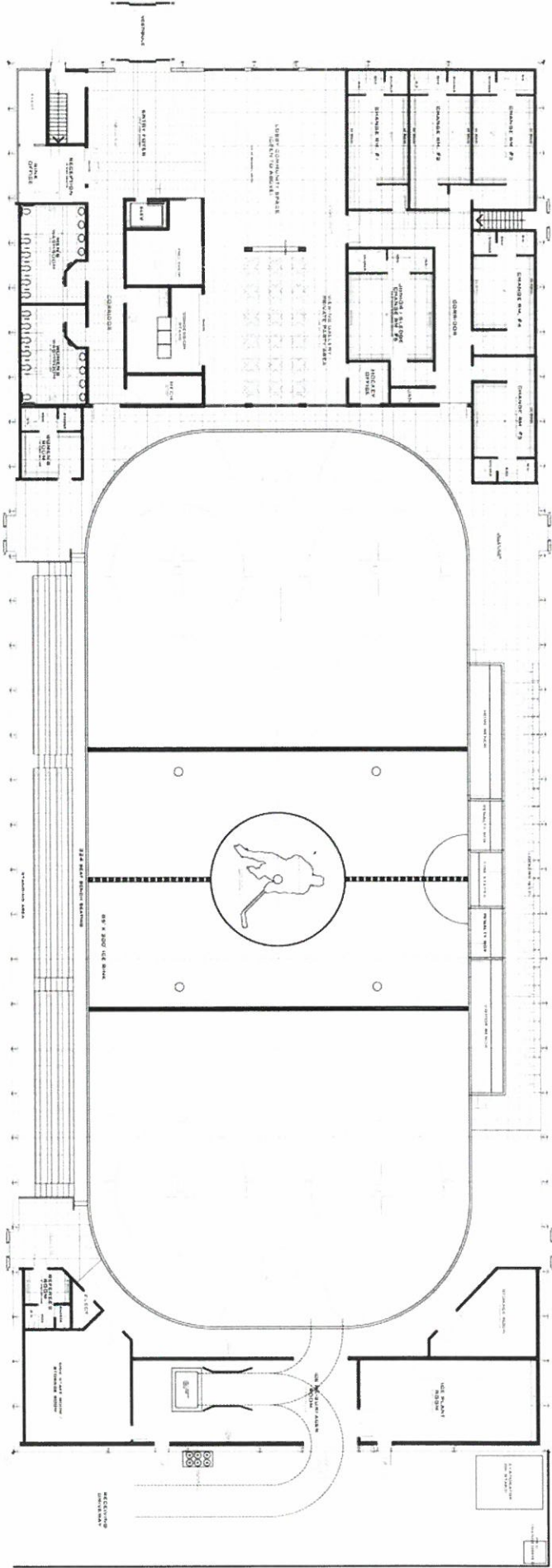
*Town of Collingwood Council at the grand opening of the new Central Park Arena – A Sprung Structure!*





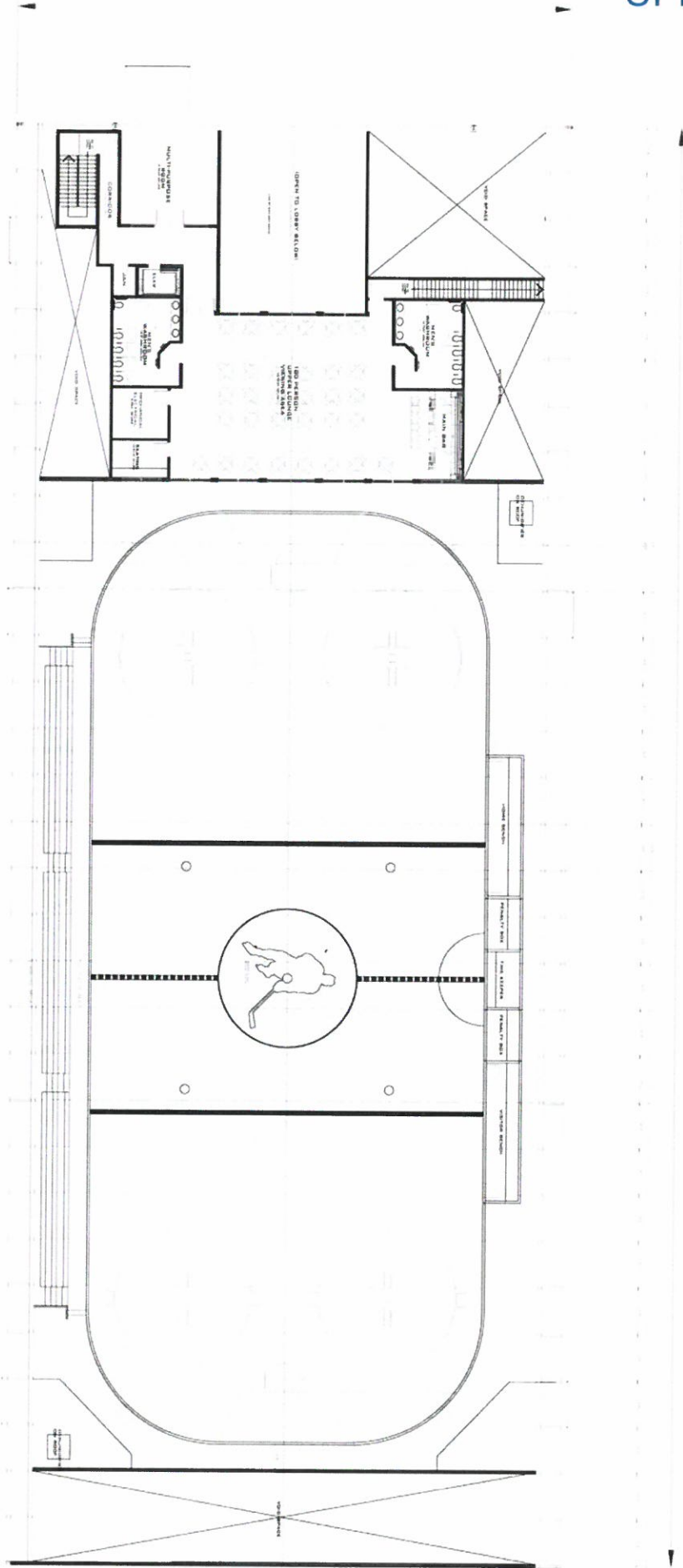


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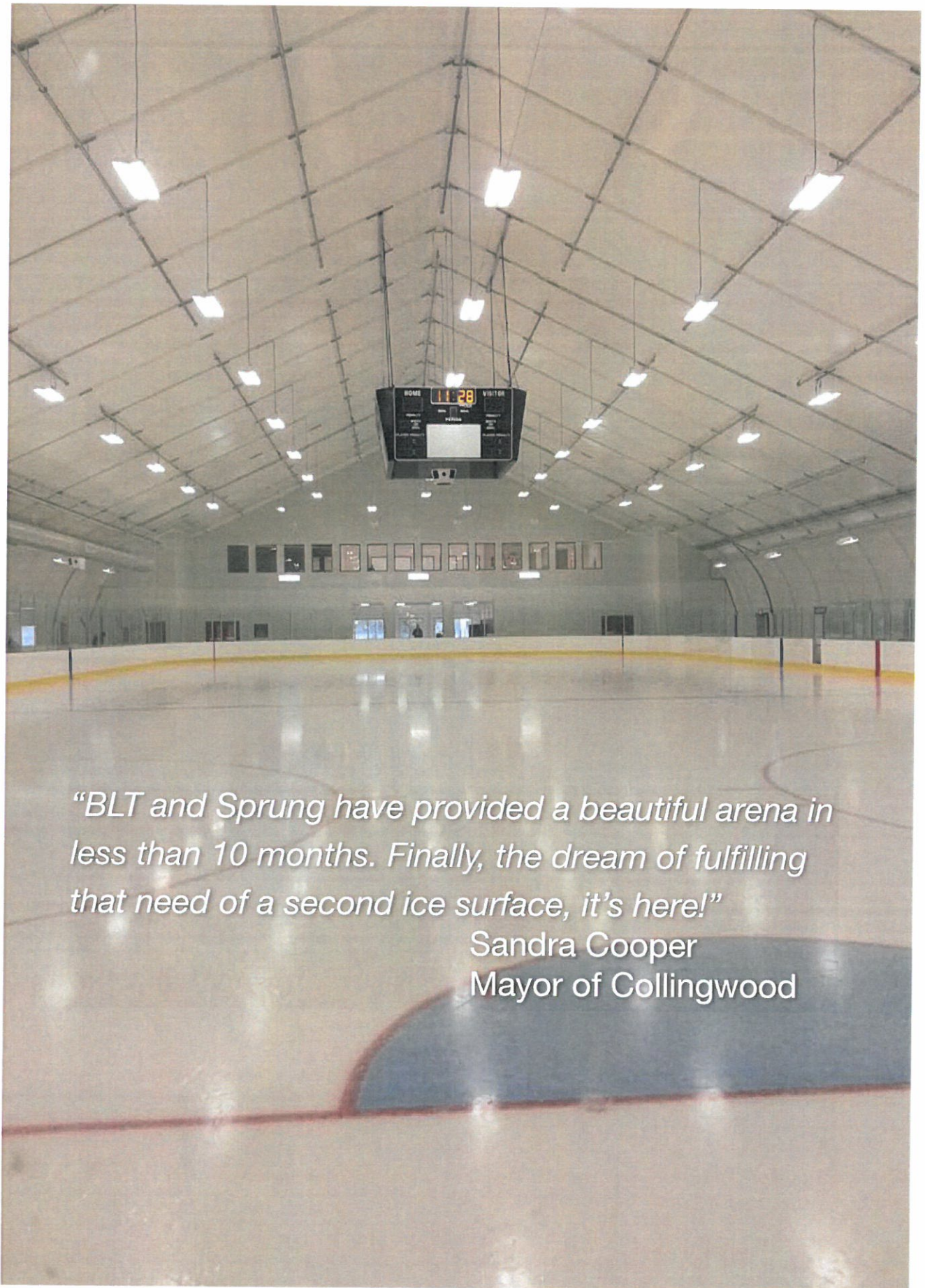




3/32" = 1'-0"







*“BLT and Sprung have provided a beautiful arena in less than 10 months. Finally, the dream of fulfilling that need of a second ice surface, it’s here!”*

Sandra Cooper  
Mayor of Collingwood



