

2021



Strathroy-Caradoc PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

December 2021



Prepared by:



In association with:



Project Team

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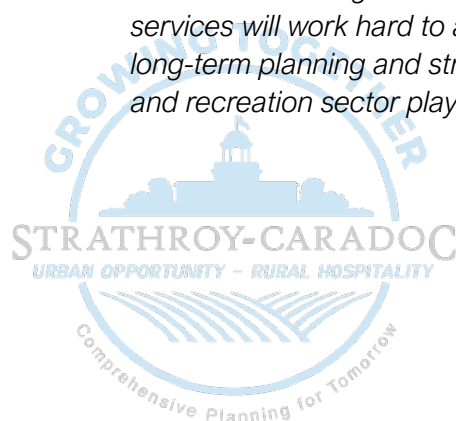
Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of those who contributed to the development of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. This strategy is a product of the vision and dedication of the community, the Master Plan Project Team, and Municipal Council. We also extend our thanks to the many residents and community groups of Strathroy-Caradoc whose feedback has made the Plan a document that embodies the core values, beliefs, and priorities of the community.

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*Note: This Master Plan is being prepared in the midst of the **COVID-19 pandemic** and the beginning of the recovery phase. Given the rapid pace of change – as people find new ways of living, working, playing, and connecting – planning for an uncertain future is a challenge.*

The pandemic will affect the long-term demand for and delivery of parks and recreation services and we anticipate that the change will be lasting; however, we do not yet know the ultimate scope and scale of change. We are confident that the Municipality and everyone involved in community services will work hard to address the challenges resulting from COVID-19. We firmly believe that long-term planning and strategic investment are vital to support the significant role that the parks and recreation sector plays in our personal, social, and economic recovery and revitalization.



1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

Inclusive and affordable parks and recreation opportunities are essential to the health and wellbeing of Strathroy-Caradoc's residents and our broader community and help support the Municipality's vision. Everyone benefits from participation in leisure activities and a well managed parks and recreation system provides tremendous social, environmental, and economic value. As part of the Municipality's Strategic Plan, the quality of municipal parks and recreation facilities were identified as examples of sources of pride in Strathroy-Caradoc.

Regular planning is required to ensure that parks and recreation services respond to current and emerging needs, ensuring that residents continue to have opportunities to be healthy, active, and engaged. The Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc last undertook a comprehensive examination of needs in 2015. Among its chief recommendations, the 2015 Parks and Recreation Master Plan identified the need to establish a comprehensive park renewal and rehabilitation program addressing lifecycle requirements, increase the number of accessible parks and recreation facilities, as well as ensure that gaps in parkland provision are addressed in the northern part of Strathroy.

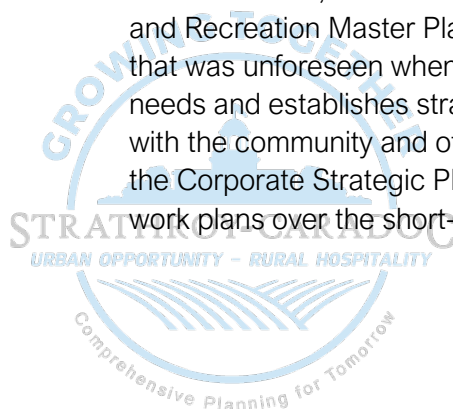
This updated Parks and Recreation Master Plan is part of a larger planning process to comprehensively plan for Strathroy-Caradoc's future. Titled "Growing Together Strathroy-Caradoc", this initiative will update all of the community's master plans and key planning documents, including the Municipality's Official Plan. This new Master Plan provides the Municipality with a forward-thinking public policy framework to successfully manage its parks, open spaces, programs, events, facilities and amenities in a cost-effective manner for the next 25 years.

To achieve this, this Master Plan reviews and updates the recommendations from the 2015 Parks and Recreation Master Plan within the context of a rapid increase in population and development that was unforeseen when the previous plan was prepared. The Plan considers existing and future needs and establishes strategies and options to meet these needs over time, often in partnership with the community and others. In particular, this Plan aligns with other Municipal plans including the Corporate Strategic Plan and Recreational Trails Master Plan; the former contains practical work plans over the short- and medium-terms to achieve the community vision.



Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc's Vision:

Strathroy-Caradoc's communities will provide economic opportunities, wellbeing and places to call home for residents and businesses.



To ensure that the Plan is responsive to community needs, it is grounded in extensive public and stakeholder input and research into best practices, trends, demographic shifts, growth forecasts, service gaps, and park and facility requirements. Recognizing that many things can change over the course of the next 25 years, the Plan contains decision frameworks and recommendations that will help the Municipality to explore and evaluate new opportunities as they arise. It is intended to be a living document that will be reviewed and updated regularly to respond to changing needs in our community.

1.2 Benefits of Parks and Recreation

Recreation services and facilities are integral to our community's success and wellbeing. They contribute in a significant way to our social, economic and environmental priorities by providing spaces for services and programs that benefit residents and provide opportunities to build a sense of community. Universal access to parks and recreation opportunities that address diverse needs and offer affordable, high-quality opportunities is vital to individual and community health and prosperity.

Parks and recreation opportunities:

- Enhance mental and physical wellbeing;
- Enhance social wellbeing and promote engagement and inclusion;
- Help build strong families and communities;
- Help people connect with nature;
- Help people develop critical and creative thinking skills; and
- Provide wide-ranging economic benefits.

Strathroy-Caradoc is blessed with many excellent examples of parks, facilities, and programs that demonstrate these benefits within the community. Local parks and open spaces provide places for picnicking, unstructured play, and opportunities to connect with nature. The playgrounds, splash pads, and Fair Grounds Aquatic Park are among the many spaces the local community and children socialize with their neighbours, play and be active, and develop valuable skills. The numerous sport fields and arenas provide opportunities for children and adults, to play as a team, develop confidence and stay active. These facilities also serve as destinations which attract people surrounding communities to Strathroy-Caradoc and contribute to the local economy.

1.3 Master Planning Process

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a part of Strathroy-Caradoc's Growing Together initiative, which brings together all of the municipality's master plans and key planning documents, enabling Council, municipal staff and the community to see how these elements fit into a united vision of our future. The Growing Together Strathroy-Caradoc project began in late 2020 and was formally launched to the public in February 2021. Following the completion of this Master Plan, the Official Plan Review and Municipal Comprehensive Review will bring together the recommendations of the master plans to guide growth and development, and manage change within the municipality for the next 25+ years.



Development of this Master Plan is divided into three phases: (1) Research and Consultation; (2) Assessments; and (3) Master Plan Finalization. Each phase was designed to accomplish a variety of tasks and also included internal meetings and reporting. These phases occurred concurrently with other Master Plans and Studies including a Recreational Trails Master Plan, Attainable Housing Study, and Transportation Master Plan, among others.

Figure 1 - Master Plan Phases



Phase 1 of the project began with a review of relevant background reports, planning policies demographic characteristics and trends, and an inventory of the municipal parks, open space and recreation facilities. Public consultation is also an important component of the Master Plan process. A public workshop was held early in the process to establish the public's vision of parks and recreation and surveys and stakeholder consultation was undertaken to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges facing parks and recreation in the municipality.

Phase 2 included assessments of parks, open space and recreation facility and service needs that aligned with the vision and guiding principles. Through research and public input, the Master Plan examines service levels in all communities across the Municipality and establishes priorities for the next 25 years. Recommendations have been developed to respond to community needs, population changes, participation trends, gaps in service, and operational requirements.

Through **Phase 3**, the draft Master Plan was presented to the public prior to being presented to Municipal Council for final approval.

2 Community Context

2.1 About Strathroy-Caradoc

The settlements of Mount Brydges and Strathroy were first established by European settlers in 1929 and 1932 respectively, however, there are records of indigenous settlements in the region for many thousands of years before this. The municipality is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinabek, Attiwasand (Neutral) and Mississauga peoples, and the lands were included as part of the Longwoods Treaty (Treaty 21) signed by the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation and the King of England in 1819. In 2001, the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc was formed through the amalgamation of the Town of Strathroy and the Township of Caradoc.

The municipality is located west of the City of London along Highway 402 with a population that is estimated to be 24,100 by 2021. Strathroy-Caradoc has a long agricultural tradition and its early growth was fueled at first by a number of mills along the Sydenham River and later by its strategic location on the railway network between London, Sarnia and Windsor/Detroit.

Strathroy is the primary settlement area in the municipality and is located along the Sydenham River Valley. Mount Brydges (located approximately 12km southeast of Strathroy) is the municipality's second largest settlement area. Both Strathroy and Mount Brydges have experienced rapid growth in recent years due to their charming urban centres, the convenient access to the 400-series highways, access to full municipal services, and the relative affordability of housing compared to the Greater Toronto Area and larger urban centres in Southwestern Ontario.

2.2 Demographic Profile

Understanding who, how, and where population growth will occur during the planning period is important in order to position Strathroy-Caradoc's parks and recreation system to adapt to changing community demographics. This section highlights the municipality's historical and projected population, age profile, and related statistics that may have implications on recreation needs.

Recent years have seen a large increase in development in Middlesex County communities outside of London including Mount Brydges, Strathroy, Komoka-Kilworth, Ilderton, Lucan, Dorchester and Thorndale¹. Several factors are driving this including the exodus of people leaving the Greater Toronto Area due to soaring housing prices, combined with a lack of available housing and development lots in nearby London. It is understood that there is a significant "pent-up" demand for housing in many of the surrounding communities which is currently constrained in some cases by the lack of sanitary servicing capacity and designated lands for residential development.

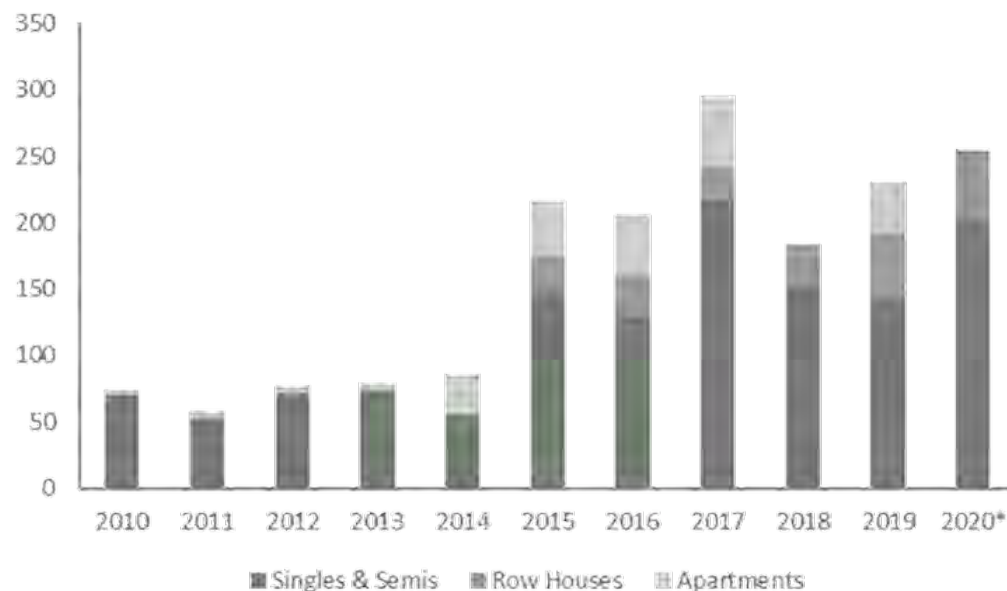
¹ <https://lfpres.com/news/local-news/london-area-growth-bustling-towns-feeding-off-the-boom>. Accessed December 21, 2020

2.2.1 Population Growth

Over the past twenty years, the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc's population has increased at nearly a 1% average annual growth rate, from approximately 18,000 people in 1996 to 20,900 in 2016 (accounting for census under-coverage, the 2016 population can be adjusted to 21,600). More than two-thirds (69%) of the population lived in the urban centre of Strathroy in 2016, 9% in Mount Brydges, and 22% in rural areas.

Although growth was slowed during the 2011 to 2016 period, there has recently been a significant increase in the growth rate for Strathroy-Caradoc. This shift is apparent in the Municipality's building permit activity. Between 2010 and 2014 there was an average of 75 residential building permits issued per year. Starting in 2015 there was a significant increase in development activity with an average of 226 building permits issued each year between 2015 and 2019. This trend accelerated in 2020, with 289 building permits issued and is expected to continue into the future. Since 2014 and 2015 there has also been a significant increase in the number dwelling units in row houses, townhouses and apartment buildings. **The recent increase growth will have a significant impact on the demand for parks and recreation services in the community beyond what had been projected in previous studies.** Furthermore, the shift to smaller and denser dwelling types with less private open space is also anticipated to increase demand for high quality public open space.

Figure 2 - Building Permits for New Residential Dwellings in Strathroy-Caradoc



* Represents year-to-date as of November 30, 2020

Source: Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc; Hemson Consulting Ltd.

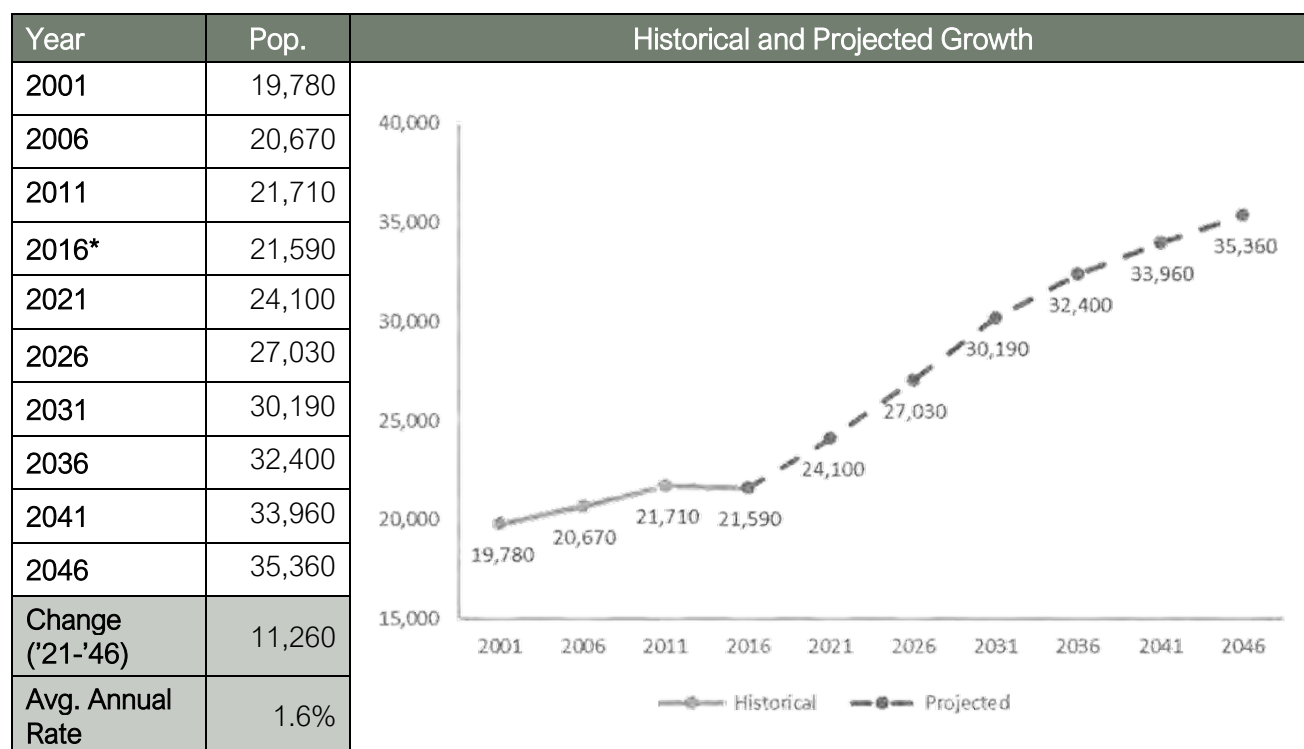
Historically, from amalgamation in 2001 until about 2014 or so, the community of Strathroy has been home to the vast majority of development activity within the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc. Over the past several years there has been significant development along Saxon Road in the southeast and southwest near Ridge Street and further south. In the north end of Strathroy,

development activity has continued to move east along areas south of Second Street as well as a pocket of residential development on the north side.

In recent years the level of development has been roughly evenly split between Mount Brydges and Strathroy following the extension of municipal services to portions of Mount Brydges. The Lions Gate Subdivision (located immediately west of the Caradoc Community Centre and Tri-Township Arena) and the South Creek community (at the south end of Mount Brydges) have been the focus of recent development activity in Mount Brydges.

Based on projections from the Municipality and County, the estimated population of Strathroy-Caradoc is 24,100 in 2021, an increase of approximately 2,500 or 11.6% growth since 2016. **In February 2021, the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc approved updated population projections (high growth scenario) that project that the municipality will be home to 35,360 people by 2046.** This represents total growth of 47% (11,260 persons) or an average annual growth rate of 1.6%. The big shift in the growth rate is illustrated in Table 1 and Figure 3 below.

Table 1 & Figure 3 – Historical and Projected Population Growth for the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc (High Growth Scenario)



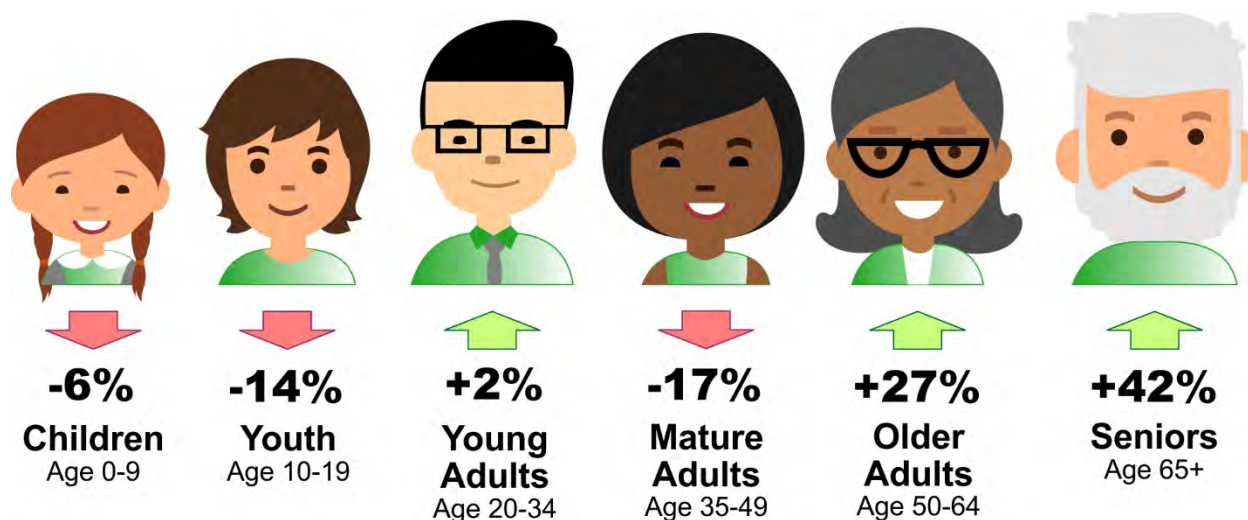
* 2016 Census population includes a 3.5% adjustment for an estimated census undercount

Source: Middlesex County Housing Growth Forecast and Allocations by Local Municipality by Watson & Associates, Census of Canada, Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc

2.2.2 Population by Age

Similar to other communities, Strathroy-Caradoc has an aging population profile where, between 2006 and 2016, the median age increased from 39.2 years to 43.7 years. During this same period, the population of older adults (aged 55-64 years) and seniors (aged 65+ years) increased by 27% and 42%, respectively (See Figure 4). The number of young adults (aged 20-34 years) remained relatively constant and increased just slightly by about 2% while the population of children (aged 0-9 years) decreased slightly by 6%. In contrast the population of youth (aged 10-19 years) and mature adults (aged 35-54 years) declined by 14% and 17%, respectively. As the older adults from the baby boom generation continue to age, the number of seniors is expected increase significantly more over the next couple decades. Furthermore, due to the recent housing affordability crisis in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, it is possible that many older adults and seniors may look to cash in on the housing market and move to more affordable housing in communities like Strathroy-Caradoc for retirement.

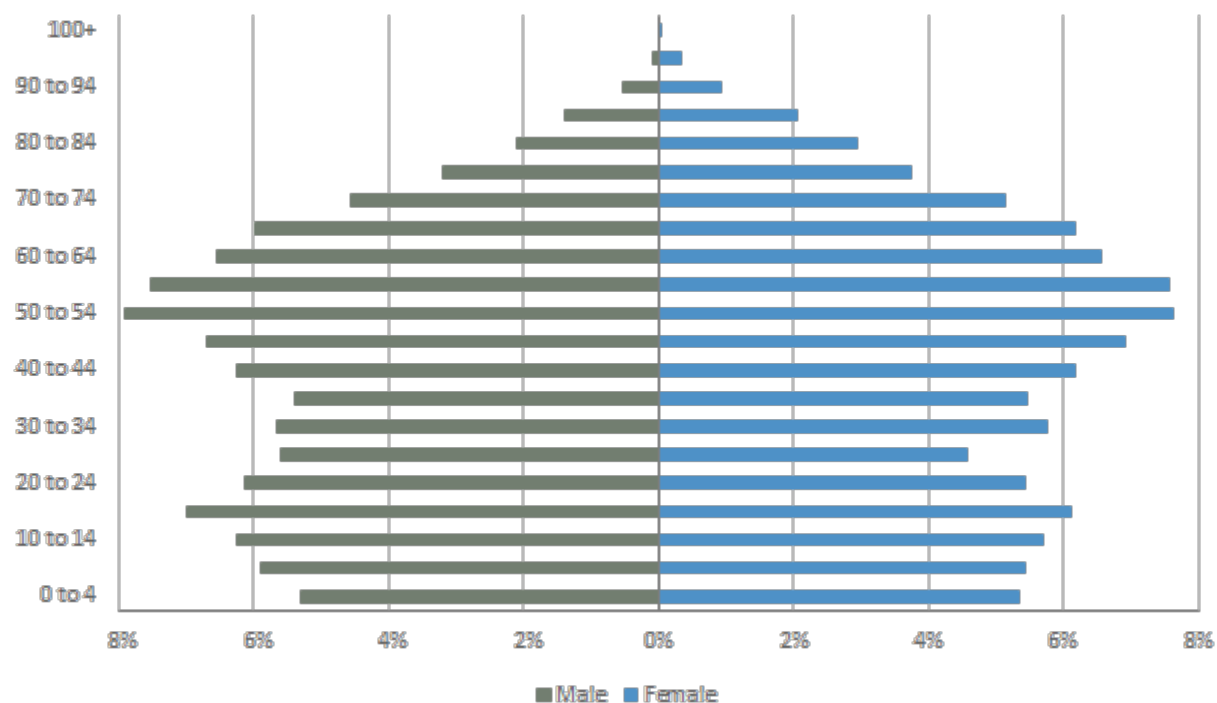
Figure 4 – Historic Population Changes by Age Groups (Strathroy-Caradoc, 2006-2016)



Source: Statistics Canada 2006 & 2016 Census, Monteith Brown Planning Consultants

As shown in Figure 5, Strathroy-Caradoc sees a lower prevalence of young adults between the ages of 20 to 44. This is likely due to the trend of young adults leaving the municipality for post-secondary education and then staying in larger municipalities as they begin their professional careers. Community infrastructure, like parks and recreation facilities, are important economic drivers for attracting these young adults and their families back to the Municipality. High quality, well maintained and funded facilities, programming, and public services are important for attracting these residents to move back, rather than going to other mid-sized cities.

Figure 5 – Population Pyramid for the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc (2016)



Source: 2016 Census of Canada, Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, 2021

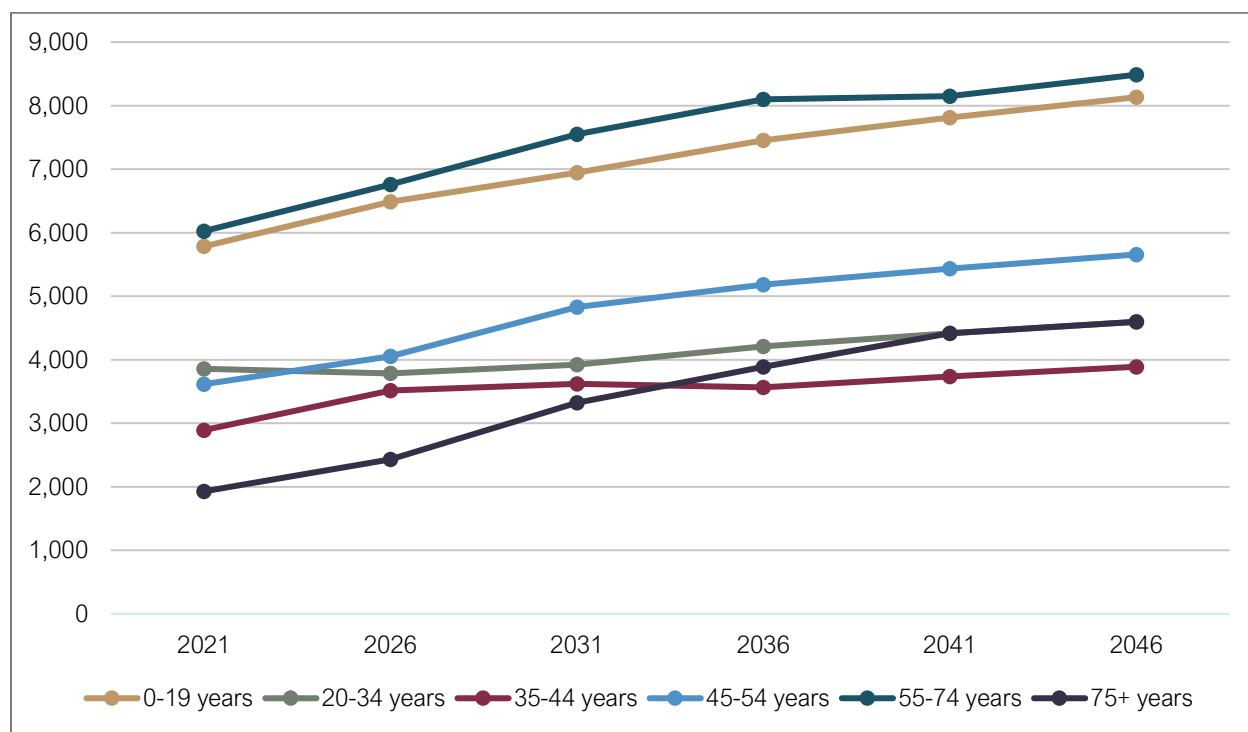
Middlesex County as a whole is projected to continue to see an aging of the population according to its latest projections. Although specific projections by each age cohort are not available for the Municipality, applying the County-wide percentages to the Municipality's population results in the following estimates that illustrate increases across all age groups, most notably seniors.

Table 2 – Population Forecast for the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc (High Growth Scenario), Adapted

Age Cohort	Population		Increase	
	2021	2046	#	%
0-19 years	5,784	8,133	2,349	41%
20-34 years	3,856	4,597	741	19%
35-44 years	2,892	3,890	998	34%
45-54 years	3,615	5,658	2,043	57%
55-74 years	6,025	8,486	2,461	41%
75+ years	1,928	4,597	2,669	138%
Total	24,100	35,360	11,260	47%

Source: Figure 1, Appendix A: Middlesex County Population and Household Forecast by Watson & Associates
Note: Age cohort forecasts for County applied to population forecasts for Strathroy-Caradoc (High Growth Scenario)

Figure 6 – Population Forecast for the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc (High Growth Scenario), Adapted



Source: Figure 1, Appendix A: Middlesex County Population and Household Forecast by Watson & Associates
Note: Age cohort forecasts for County applied to population forecasts for Strathroy-Caradoc (High Growth Scenario)

2.2.3 Income and Education

Research has found that income and education levels influence (or are at least an indicator of) participation levels in parks and recreation opportunities. Generally speaking, the greater a person's level of income and education, the more likely they are to participate in leisure activities.

The 2016 Census reported that Strathroy-Caradoc's median income for all private households was \$71,582 in 2015, which was higher than the median income for the Middlesex County (\$64,797), but slightly lower than the Province (\$74,287). Strathroy-Caradoc also has a lower proportion of low-income households. In 2015, 10% of Strathroy-Caradoc residents lived below the low-income measure (after-tax), compared to 17% of residents in the Middlesex County and 14% of residents in Ontario.

In terms of educational attainment, 47% of Strathroy-Caradoc residents have completed a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree, which is similar to the County (46%) but lower than the Province (55%).



2.2.4 Immigration, Diversity and Language

Strathroy-Caradoc has a smaller number of immigrants than most large urban centres, however, the Municipality has significant well-established immigrant communities. In the 2016, 13% of people reported to be an immigrant in Strathroy-Caradoc compared to the Ontario average of 29%. 34% and 22% of immigrants in Strathroy report their place of birth as Portugal and the Netherlands respectively, compared to 3% and 1% in Ontario. The vast majority of these immigrants came to Canada before 1985 (9.5% of the population, or 75% of immigrants in Strathroy-Caradoc), while less than 1% of the population is considered recent immigrants who moved to Canada between 2001 and 2016 (6% of immigrants). As the vast majority of the Municipality's population are non-immigrants, barriers to participation associated with ethnicity (or culturally-specific activity interests) are not likely to be significant in Strathroy-Caradoc; however, given that the Province as a whole is becoming more diverse, these factors may require more consideration over the longer-term.

In terms of language, English is the most common language spoken in Strathroy-Caradoc with approximately 95% of the population indicating they only know how to speak English. 4% indicate they can also speak French.

2.3 Supporting Documents

Guiding municipal documents (summarized below) and relevant materials (such as community demographics, budgets, participation data, policies, etc.) have been reviewed. To ensure alignment, the findings and directions from these reports – as they relate to parks and recreation – have been incorporated into this Master Plan where appropriate.

2.3.1 Strathroy-Caradoc Corporate Strategic Plan (2020-2029)

The Municipality recently prepared its 2020-2029 Strategic Plan to outline the Municipality's vision, mission and goals, including strategies and tactics for achieving those goals. Parks and recreation and the important role they play within the community are weaved throughout the Strategic Plan. Strathroy-Caradoc's vision statement is that "Strathroy-Caradoc's communities will provide economic opportunities, wellbeing and places to call home for residents and businesses". In developing the vision, a common theme was the creation of a complete community, part of which including ensuring a vibrant community with many options of "things to do" in the community. The provision of high quality leisure and recreation opportunities were seen as important to help ensure residents spend more of their time in the community, rather than travel to other communities like London.

The Strategic Plan lays out several goals for the Municipality including one related to Community Wellbeing: ***"Residents of all ages in Strathroy-Caradoc will have access to community amenities and activities that are accessible and support active lifestyles and wellbeing."*** The Municipality identified several strategies and tactics to achieve this goal, including providing recreational facilities that meet and adapt to changing needs and trends, and developing equitable standards for the provision of parks, playgrounds and passive green spaces.

Several short-, medium- and long-term tactics for achieving the Municipality's goal of community well being are summarized in the following table:

Table 3 – Relevant Tactics Proposed in the Municipality’s Corporate Strategic Plan

Short-Term	Medium-Term	Long-Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Recreation, Parks and Trails Master Plan – Incorporate active transportation in current and upcoming capital projects – Prepare a concept plan and cost estimate for a new multi-use community centre in Mount Brydges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Undertake an accessibility audit for existing parks and trails – Set annual targets for new active transportation – Prepare replacement plan for seniors’ centre – Upgrade or repurpose older playgrounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Build a park in north Strathroy when new development is complete – Evaluate Parkland Dedication Fund

As part of this concurrent Official Plan Update, the Municipality is already undertaking the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and Trails Master Plan. The Municipality has also already begun replacing and upgrading several older playgrounds with barrier-free equipment, and the North Meadows Secondary Plan has included plans to retain land for a new large community park in North Strathroy as well as an additional local park.

2.3.2 Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2015)

The last Parks and Recreation Master Plan was completed by the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc in 2015. The previous Master Plan and a Situational Analysis Report included a demographic analysis, profiles of users of various parks and recreation facilities and programs, and a summary of consultation with the public and stakeholders. The Master Plan provided recommendations for additional studies to be undertaken including a Parks Inventory and Renewal/Rehabilitation Program (completed in 2021), Trails Master Plan (currently in development), Service Delivery Review, and Engineering Assessments of Indoor Recreation Facilities (completed in 2019). In addition, recommendations for the development of up to eight new parks are included in the Master Plan as a result of new residential development.

The Municipality’s 2015 Parks and Recreation Master Plan contained 110 strategic actions to be accomplished within a 10-12 year timeframe. Many of the best practices identified in the Plan remain pertinent today. However, much has changed since the 2015 Master Plan was completed including the population growth discussed above and emergence of new parks and recreation trends.

Since the previous Plan was prepared, the Municipality has made progress by taking action and in some cases completing many of the recommendations. The majority (66%) of the recommendations from the 2015 Master Plan have been completed or are in progress. This illustrates the Municipality’s commitment to its parks and recreation system, as well as the need to update strategies for the future.



Table 4 - 2015 Parks and Recreation Master Plan Implementation to Date

Status	2015 Recommendations	
Completed	6	66%
Ongoing	67	
No Action	3	34%
Further Review Required	34	
Total	110	100%

In addition to new recommendations to address the Municipality's changing growth patterns and emerging needs, further consideration is given to the 27% of recommendations that have not yet been initiated or require further review. Non-implementation may be due to several factors, such as shifting directions caused by emerging priorities or a shortage of funding/partners. Key recommendations from the 2015 Master Plan that have yet to be fully achieved include:

- That Strathroy-Caradoc adopt the Parkland Classification System as a basis for planning for and acquiring, designing, developing and programming parkland;
- That Strathroy-Caradoc undertake a comprehensive assessment and development strategy associated with program, services and facility user fees;
- That Strathroy-Caradoc undertake a comprehensive assessment and development strategy associated with program, services and facility user fees; and
- That Strathroy-Caradoc should support and encourage both seasonal and year-round use of parks by ensuring that, where possible and appropriate, park facilities are maintained and equipped to support both warm and cold weather activities.

The status of recommendations from the 2015 Parks and Recreation Master Plan is documented in **Appendix A**.

2.3.3 Recreation Facility Infrastructure Renewal Plan (2021)

The 2021 Recreation Facility Infrastructure Renewal Plan (RFIRP) provides a phased five-year capital reinvestment strategy for the Municipality's indoor recreation facilities (arenas and community centres).

On May 12, 2021, Council received the RFIRP and appointed a committee to provide direction on the implementation of the plan, with the goal of preparing shovel-ready plans that might qualify for senior government funding programs. The outcome of this process has been reflected in this Parks and Recreation Master Plan.



2.3.4 Additional Background Studies and Reports

The following list of reports, studies, and plans were also consulted and findings were used throughout the preparation of this Master Plan:

- Asset Management Plan (2013)
- Building Condition Assessments:
 - o Caradoc Community Centre (2019)
 - o Gemini Sportsplex (2019)
 - o Strathroy and Area Senior Centre (2019)
 - o Tri-Township Arena (2019)
- Development Charge Background Study, Mount Brydges (2018)
- Development Charge Background Study, Strathroy-Caradoc (2019)
- Growth Management and Housing Report (2020)
- Multi Year Accessibility Plan (2016) – County
- North Meadows Secondary Plan (Draft, 2020), including the Recreation, Trails and Open Space Report (2020)
- Official Plan, County of Middlesex (2006)
- Official Plan, Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc (2019)
- Residential Land Needs Assessment (2020)
- Strathroy Downtown Master Plan (Draft, 2020)

2.4 Key Trends to Consider

This section provides a review of continuing and emerging trends from communities across Ontario that are impacting parks and recreation facilities and services. These trends have been considered throughout the development of the Master Plan with local implications discussed below and in subsequent sections.

2.4.1 Socio-Demographic Trends

Population Growth: The Municipality's population has been growing steadily in recent years and is projected to increase by 11% over the next ten years. This level of growth may result in a continued increase in demand for new or expanded leisure opportunities. This growth represents an opportunity and challenge as it means that the Municipality will need to balance service enhancements in newly developing as well as built up areas, but will also have opportunities to acquire future parkland (and/or cash-in-lieu) and Development Charge funding to address growth-related needs.

Aging Population: The aging of Canada's population is significantly influencing the demand for and design of parks and recreation services and amenities. This trend is driven by two distinct groups: older adults wishing to remain active as they age, including those seeking lifelong-learning opportunities; and persons managing chronic illness, disease and/or those that are seeking low-impact, therapeutic and rehabilitative programs. Strathroy-Caradoc's 2020-2029 Corporate Strategic Plan outlines a number of related initiatives including: expanding seniors' services,

programming, and recreation opportunities; improving accessibility; increasing the number of benches in public spaces; and more.

Economic Trends: Income disparity is a growing concern in Ontario, causing a shift in leisure offerings to include more low-to-no cost alternatives. Participation rates are declining or stagnant among many registered sports in response to increasing costs of participation, such as registration, equipment and travel. Over the last decade or so there have been growing financial pressures on families in Strathroy-Caradoc, as well as concerns related to fairness and equity between different organizations and sports. As a result, the Municipality is committed to reviewing user fees to ensure that there is fairness and equity amongst all user groups be established within the user fee development model over time related to the design and application of the fee development formula.

Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities: To comply with the 2005 Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), municipalities have renovated public spaces to meet barrier-free standards, provided AODA-specific customer service training, and are continuously seeking opportunities to offer inclusive programs and services, regardless of ability. The Municipality has been actively renewing and upgrading a number of facilities to meet barrier-free standards including several playgrounds, splash pads, the Fair Grounds Aquatic Park, and the West Middlesex Memorial Centre.

Diversity: Ethnic diversity of Canada's population is expanding, particularly in larger urban centres. This influx of new cultures, traditions, and experiences has introduced new and emerging activities (e.g., cricket, rugby) and as a result, demand for support facilities and community development interventions are growing. Some municipalities have accommodated this demand by repurposing existing facilities to accommodate multiple uses. While the large majority of the Municipality's residents are non-immigrants, the number of immigrants is expected to increase in the coming years as a result of Canada's immigration targets.

2.4.2 General Participation Trends

Health and Wellness: A holistic and multi-faceted approach to health and wellbeing (including health promotion, socialization, mindfulness, management of stress and anxiety, etc.) is significantly influencing active living. Another key trend is adoption of Sport for Life's Long-Term Development Models and introduction of physical literacy in programs and training. Strathroy-Caradoc provides a variety of active and passive recreation and cultural programs that aim to encourage physical activity, health and wellness. These programs are complemented by those provided by community groups and sports organizations to provide a well-rounded portfolio of opportunities.

Physical Inactivity: Many of the health and wellness trends listed above were developed in response to historically low physical activity levels, high reports of social isolation, and the rise of sedentary behaviours. To combat this decline in physical activity, many service providers are working together to increase communications, modify programs and service levels, encourage participation, and support healthy, active lifestyles.

Active Transportation: More and more, active transportation is becoming a core requirement of complete communities. Human-powered modes of travel that are undertaken for utilitarian (day-to-day) purposes such as cycling, walking or skateboarding are common forms of active

transportation. Examples of active transportation facilities may include dedicated cycling infrastructure, signed pathways and trails, or wayfinding and navigation assistance. Middlesex County has recently prepared a Cycling Strategy that plans to significantly increase and improve the cycling routes and lanes within Strathroy-Caradoc as well as regional connections to adjacent communities. The Municipality is also preparing a Recreational Trails Master Plan concurrent to this study.

Outdoor Play: Recent childhood and adolescent health research has cited multiple benefits associated with “challenging play” and encourages opportunities for children to explore creative play. In response to this, many municipalities are providing natural play features and adventure playgrounds, encouraging children to stay and play outdoors longer. Strathroy-Caradoc has responded to a similar trend – that of installing a sensory playground for children at Sensory Park – and has also been active in upgrading its playgrounds throughout the municipality.

2.4.3 Programming and Policy Trends

Demand for Unstructured and Self-Scheduled Activities: In most communities, participation is gradually shifting away from structured programs and set participation schedules as people are demonstrating a desire for more drop-in, unstructured and self-scheduled times to participate. This is compounded by changes in demand for prime-time access – more adults and seniors are seeking activities in the evening, a shift from traditional daytime or late-evening provision. Participation in adult recreational sports (e.g., pickleball) is also growing and youth engagement is a being embraced in many municipalities.

Serving All Ages, Abilities and Backgrounds: Inclusion and access is a key goal for municipal recreation departments. To ensure access for all, the following barriers to participation should be considered: economic (e.g., costs associated with participation), information (e.g., knowledge and information sharing about available opportunities), geographic (e.g., equitable distribution of facilities and services), and inclusivity (e.g., ensuring all participants feel welcome and supported). The Municipality’s Corporate Strategic Plan outlines several ways in which Strathroy-Caradoc is working to ensure that its parks and recreation programs are inclusive of all residents.

Use of Technology: Recent technological advances have enabled both service providers and users to be more aware of leisure opportunities in their communities. This may include: websites that provide information on facilities, services and program offerings; online portals for program registration; synchronization with smartphone applications; and more. The Municipality has embraced the use of technology in a number of ways to improve communication with the public. For example, residents can register for programs online and the Municipality is connected with over 5,000 social media followers (as of early 2021). Technology has also enabled many parks and recreation departments to reduce their energy costs, improve monitoring and safety, expand programming (e.g., eSports), enhance the customer-experience (e.g., touch-free services, etc.), and more.

Partnership Opportunities: Collaborations with private or non-profit organizations are becoming increasingly common in Ontario municipalities. These help to distribute financial costs and benefit from economies of scale and shared expertise. Many municipalities also encourage community use

of schools (especially for access to gymnasiums); however, unreliable access is frequently cited as barrier to use. The Municipality has agreements with local schools to utilize gymnasiums for recreational programming; however, community access has been eliminated during the pandemic.

2.4.4 Facility Provision and Design Trends

Aging Infrastructure: Many municipalities in Ontario are faced with aging recreation infrastructure (e.g., arenas, outdoor pools, courts, etc.) and are pursuing renewal and reinvestment projects. These projects also provide opportunities to rethink provision and consider facility conversion or adaptive re-use options that accommodate emerging activities. The Municipality's Recreation Facility Infrastructure Renewal Plan identifies a number of strategies for aging recreation facilities, including the West Middlesex Memorial Centre's arena and Tri-Township Arena; a strategy to address the long-term provision of major indoor recreation facilities is currently being examined by a Council-appointed Committee.

Maximizing Existing Assets: Strategic programming and design are key factors in maximizing functionality and utilization of existing parks and facilities. Municipal providers are improving use of non-prime time by encouraging non-traditional uses. This may include partnerships with school boards, service clubs, or other emerging activities (including drop-in opportunities). As noted below, designing facilities to accommodate multiple uses – a philosophy embraced by the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc – also helps to maximize usage.

Multi-Use and Multi-Generational: Modern recreation facilities provide a convenient “one-stop-shop” experience. The community hub model has been applied to indoor recreation facilities as well as parks designed to engage users of all ages and abilities. The West Middlesex Memorial Centre and Fair Grounds Aquatic Park, which provides an ice pad, outdoor water park, gymnasium, dance studio, and community rooms in one location is one example of a multi-use facility that serves as a recreation destination for all members of the community.

Elite Training and Competition Facilities: Competitive athletes and sport organizations are seeking major recreation infrastructure that are built to be “competition ready”, such as multi-field/court/pad designs that accommodate tournament play and efficiencies in scheduling. Although most municipalities focus on community recreation, sport tourism and regional needs are other factors to consider when planning facility design and determining appropriate locations. The Municipality is proud to offer a twin pad facility at the Gemini Sportsplex, which frequently hosts tournaments. Royals Field in Alexandra Park, Cuddy Sports Complex, and Yorkview Community Park are also capable of hosting outdoor tournaments on their fields and diamonds.

Multi-Dimensional and Comfortable Spaces: Best practices in facility design consider safety, comfort, and opportunities for community socialization. This may include strategic placement of seating areas, proximity to washroom facilities and open concept design features, as examples. Many municipalities further support convenience in public spaces through provision of wireless internet access.



2.4.5 Parks Planning and Design Trends

Connecting with Nature: There is a growing amount of research that highlights the benefits of interacting with nature, especially through participation in physical activity (e.g., walking, hiking, etc.). Some ways that municipalities have encouraged residents to spend time outdoors are through provision of multi-use trails, community food gardens, and environmental stewardship initiatives. As discussed earlier, emphasis is also being placed on outdoor play opportunities for children and youth, including natural playgrounds.

System of Parks: It is important for municipalities to provide a variety of parks with varying functions, including active and passive spaces. These parks should be animated through thoughtful design (including access to shade, seating, and washrooms, where appropriate) and promotion of community activities and events. A system of parks and natural areas along the Sydenham River Valley includes a trail system, known as the Rotary Memorial Trail, which provides important pedestrian connections between north, west and downtown Strathroy. Greater variety in park types and amenities will be a focus of future park development/redevelopment projects.

Environmental Design and Climate Change: Principles of environmental sustainability and environmentally-conscious facility designs are being ingrained in the sector. Parks are being increasingly recognized for their role in improving air quality, enhancing biodiversity, mitigating flooding from extreme weather, and reducing the urban heat island effect. Common standards for environmental sustainability help to guide investment, ensuring that new infrastructure includes design features such as low impact development practices, solar panels, geothermal heating, recirculation systems, etc. Park stewardship is also on the rise as people become more knowledgeable of these environmental benefits, leading to greater interest in community gardens, pollinator parks, native species, habitat corridors, and community-led naturalization projects.

2.4.6 Arts and Cultural Trends

Investing in our Residents and Community: Nurturing local cultural activity can be considered an “investment” that can reap long-term rewards. For example, arts education helps in child-development and has many positive social impacts. While delivery is typically community-based, municipalities are seeking strategic approaches to support local organizations.

Attendance and Participation: Research on attendance is broad but highlights growing participation and high levels of appreciation for arts and culture across the country. Residents value authentic experiences and the unique attributes of our communities. People are also experiencing and appreciating arts and culture in less traditional ways and have increasing expectations for programs and events.

Celebrating Local: Support for cultural activities can be a means of achieving many social goals, beyond simply supporting arts and culture for its own sake. For example, large-scale community events and public engagement opportunities highlight the value of celebrating local experiences. Strathroy-Caradoc celebrates local and regional artists, heritage and culture in various ways such as through the Museum Strathroy-Caradoc’s insider program to provide access to special events and programs.



Economic Value of Cultural Industries: Many communities are working to enhance their local economy through the incubation, attraction, and retention of creative talents and innovative industries. Increased collaboration among groups and local businesses helps to build grassroots and sustainable support for creative industries.

2.5 Potential Impact of COVID-19 on Parks and Recreation

Recreation services were among those most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic will affect the long-term demand for and delivery of parks and recreation services and we anticipate that the change will be lasting; however, we do not yet know the ultimate scope and scale of change. This Master Plan – which is being prepared in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and the beginning of the recovery phase – leverages the latest information and research, but acknowledges that much remains unknown.

We are confident that the Municipality and everyone involved in community services will continue to work hard to address the challenges resulting from COVID-19. We firmly believe that long-term planning and strategic investment are vital to support the significant role that the parks and recreation sector plays in our personal, social, and economic recovery and revitalization.

Based on emerging research and resident input through the Master Plan consultation program, the following are some preliminary thoughts of how the pandemic may affect the sector in the short- to longer-term.

Note: A portion of this research was compiled as part of our role in the ReImagined RREC initiative, a national project (led by the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association with funding from Sport Canada) to support the sector as it recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.5.1 The Importance of Parks and Recreation

The evidence is clear – communities view recreation and parks as essential services and believe that these spaces and services will be a critical contributor to our recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. There is overwhelming public support for this sector and this should be reflected in the municipality's policy and funding decisions.

The pandemic impacted personal levels of stress and anxiety and caused challenges associated with work/life balance for many. Parks and recreation play a critical role in the mental and physical health recovery of citizens – particularly those living in urban environments – and play an equally important role in community economic revival. 82% of Canadians said that **parks have become more important** to their mental health during COVID-19². The pandemic is helping to create a new and greater appreciation for the benefits of parks and leisure services, many of which provide respite from our growing social isolation.

² Park People. COVID-19 and Parks Survey. July 2020. <https://parkpeople.ca/2020/07/16/covid-19-and-parks-highlights-from-our-national-surveys>

Access to public spaces and programs is a fundamental service for Canadians, especially children, seniors, and marginalized populations and research suggests that **park use has increased** during the pandemic. With the knowledge that many activities may be safer outdoors than indoors, investment in parks and public spaces must continue. The large majority (87%) of Canadians support **increased spending** on parks in particular³.

2.5.2 Finance and Economics

The impact of the pandemic on municipalities, service providers, and community organizations has been dramatic, particularly from a financial and human resource perspective. For many organizations, ongoing financial support from senior levels of government will be required to help ease the burden until sustainability measures are able to fully take effect.

*The financial impact of the pandemic has been more acute within the parks and recreation departments than any other municipal services, with municipalities **losing considerable revenue** due to the temporary closure of parks and facilities and the suspension of programs. According to the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA), every month that community recreation facilities remain shuttered costs Canadian municipalities a combined \$221 million.⁴*

Aspects associated with physical distancing has led to reduced maximum capacities for classes, camps, teams, and events, requiring higher **levels of subsidy** to offset increased labour costs and decreased revenues. This could cause us to shift how we perceive success from quantifiable measures (e.g., number of people served) to qualitative metrics (e.g., meaningful outcomes and benefits).

The cancelling of events, fundraisers, and programs will have major **economic impacts**, both short- and long-term, as many organizations may fold and events or services will not return. A reduction in volunteering can be anticipated for a variety of reasons. *While government funding programs have helped many sport organizations, 28% remain temporarily closed as of January 2021 and 36% have declared or are facing bankruptcy.⁵ The large majority (84%) of sports organizations are concerned about their ability to provide the same level of service to the communities they serve⁶, due in part to a lack of financial, staff/volunteer and technological resources.*

In some municipalities, there is short-term volatility surrounding planned capital projects and service initiatives as funding is reallocated to other priority areas. Economic stimulus to the sector – such as continued senior government grants – may allow communities to address needed **infrastructure improvements**, particularly those projects that improve the adaptability of existing facilities. Added costs for design and capital construction can be anticipated for certain facility types.

³ Ibid

⁴ <https://www.cpra.ca/covid19>. Accessed May 15, 2020.

⁵ Simpson, Sean. Majority (52%) of Canadian Providers of Sports Programming Concerned About Possibility of Permanent Closure Amid COVID. Ipsos, 11 Feb. 2021, <https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/majority-52-canadian-providers-sports-programming-concerned-about-possibility-permanent-closure>. Accessed 17 Feb. 2021.

⁶ Ibid

2.5.3 Municipal Operations

The pandemic has led to new workforce demands and responsibilities, and more needs to be done to support volunteers and professionals. There is a need for new policies and protocols, service levels, enhanced and expanded training, and initiatives that support the mental and physical health of employees, who are being asked to adjust to new responsibilities and working conditions. Continued engagement within the sector (and outside the sector) will help to create a robust and responsive plan that is broadly supported.

Many parks and recreation agencies have been faced with new **maintenance challenges** directly or indirectly stemming from the pandemic. From surveys in the United States, departments are increasing dealing with issues such as removal of barriers promoting physical distancing (56%), increased trash left behind (56%) as well as discarded PPE on the ground (32%), deferred day-to-day maintenance of facilities due to budgetary constraints (32%), and increased vandalism (32%).⁷

Visitor management has become more critical as Canadians are likely to have new expectations and concerns around the public health and safety of parks and recreation facilities and programs. This will lead to the introduction of new and improved **protocols and policies** that ensure the safety of both customers and staff, such as cleaning and sanitization (spaces, surfaces, shared equipment, etc.), use of personal protective equipment, physical barriers, load capacities, crowd control (including pre-registration for drop-in activities) and enforcement, form of payment, services for vulnerable populations, communications, etc. Contact-free services and experiences will also be in demand.

Extra effort will be required to **train staff** and **communicate** these new protocols to the public and gain their confidence, including real-time reporting of capacities and occupant densities – municipal social media strategies are becoming more robust in response. However, four in ten (39%) municipal parks departments in Canada indicate that they require more resources and support to adapt community engagement strategies in light of physical distancing.⁸ In some cases, additional staff may be required to implement new operational requirements, in turn escalating labour expenses and subsidy levels. CPRA estimates that new disease deterrence procedures (e.g., hygiene, cleaning, physical distancing) could raise Canadian facility operating costs by as much as \$226 million annually.⁹

⁷ Roth, Kevin. "NRPA Parks Snapshot: May 6-8 Survey Results." *NRPA*, 8 May 2020, <https://www.nrpa.org/blog/nrpa-parks-snapshot-may-6-may-8-survey-results/>. Accessed 12 Feb. 2021.

⁸ Park People. "COVID-19 and Parks: Highlights from Our National Surveys." *Park People*, 12 May 2020, <https://parkpeople.ca/2020/07/16/covid-19-and-parks-highlights-from-our-national-surveys/>. Accessed 18 Jan. 2021.

⁹ <https://www.cpra.ca/covid19>. Accessed May 15, 2020.

2.5.4 Perceptions of Public Health Measures

Efforts to enforce health restrictions and increase cleaning and sanitization have largely been met with positive support. The pandemic has also underscored the importance of timely and reliable information for both residents and service providers. Many municipal recreation departments will require additional resources to support these expanded roles moving forward.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on people's leisure participation and levels of comfort within the public realm. Almost two-thirds (64%) of Canadians have experienced **fear or anxiety** about leaving their home to go outdoors during COVID-19, largely due to concerns over overcrowding and an inability to maintain physical distance from others.¹⁰

With that said, Canadians understand the benefits of parks and their positive impacts on their physical and mental wellbeing. There is strong support for the **health measures** that organizations are taking. Recent surveys found growing support for the use of face coverings, while support for enhanced cleaning and sanitization remains high.¹¹

2.5.5 Infrastructure and Community Design

There may be new infrastructure needs in a post-COVID-19 setting, with a priority being placed on accessible, resilient, and human-scaled spaces that provide for adequate separation. Demand has increased for initiatives that prioritize pedestrians, washrooms, natural spaces, Wi-Fi access, and animation of outdoor spaces (physically-distanced).

Every opportunity must be taken to enhance safety and minimize risk of illness, including preventative measures for future outbreaks. **Supporting amenities** such as hand washing stations, improved HVAC systems and outdoor ventilation within indoor environments (windows, "mid-door" spaces, etc.), easy-to-read directional signage, non-porous cleanable furniture and equipment, touchless amenities, one-way corridors and use of multiple entrances and exits may be required. Over time, government regulations and guidelines pertaining to community and building design are likely to be modified to include new approaches to public space planning, financing, and design.

With demand for **public open space** being accelerated by COVID-19, many communities are reimagining these spaces in creative ways¹², such as car-free streets (or temporary street closures) and open space enhancements that allow for creative programming and community interaction. To respond to the changing face of work/learning resulting from the pandemic, several parks and recreation agencies in the United States have increased public access to WiFi at indoor and outdoor facilities (28%), and transformed outdoor spaces to accommodate outdoor learning and

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Roth, Kevin. "NRPA Parks Snapshot: Special Edition October Survey Results." NRPA, 16 Oct. 2020, <https://www.nrpa.org/blog/nrpa-parks-snapshot-special-edition-october-survey-results/>. Accessed 12 Feb. 2021.

¹² PwC and the Urban Land Institute. *Emerging Trends in Real Estate 2021*. 2020.

working from home (22%).¹³ Many community centres have been transformed into social and health service hubs, serving as venues for health care treatment and vaccination, food distribution, and shelter. Some of these interventions may become permanent.

Further, a Canadian survey identified several changes to **parks and trails** that are widely supported, both during and after the pandemic: road closures to open up public spaces for pedestrians (65%); more opportunities to experience wild/natural spaces in parks (57%); more washrooms in parks (57%); more and clearer signage explaining what can and cannot be done in parks and trails (50%); and moving indoor events and activities outdoors into parks to better allow for physical distancing (50%).¹⁴

2.5.6 Access to Non-Municipal Facilities, Schools and Physical Education

Community access to schools was eliminated and many student physical education programs were curtailed during the pandemic, placing additional stress on municipal programs, parks and facilities. Further, financial losses have led to the closure of other critical spaces, such as YMCAs in some communities. The impacts of these actions will need to be monitored closely as they could be significant for municipalities and their partners.

Many municipalities (and their residents) rely on access to space provided by **third-party facilities** in order to offer their programming, such as schools, non-profit groups, and private sector operations. In certain cases, some service providers have decided to permanently close facilities due to pandemic-related financial losses (e.g., YMCAs in Windsor, Barrie, Orillia, Niagara, etc.), which may result in program gaps and an expectation for municipalities to step in and fill the void. For those that remain open, new operational and financial realities may necessitate the renegotiation of existing contracts.

With community access to schools being mostly eliminated during the active pandemic phase, some municipalities and user groups are further reducing their programming and seeking alternative solutions. There is also a heightened need for recreation departments to offer appropriate opportunities for physical activity as many schools are modifying or eliminating **physical education** due to the pandemic. Appropriate messaging is required to encourage participation, and reducing stigmas that may prevent participation.

¹³ Roth, Kevin. "NRPA Parks Snapshot: Special Edition October Survey Results." *NRPA*, 16 Oct. 2020, <https://www.nrpa.org/blog/nrpa-parks-snapshot-special-edition-october-survey-results/>. Accessed 12 Feb. 2021.

¹⁴ Ayer, Steven. *The Toronto Fallout Report*. Toronto Foundation, Nov. 2020, <https://torontofoundation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Toronto-Fallout-Report-2020.pdf>. Accessed 28 Jan. 2021.

2.5.7 Physical Activity Levels

The pandemic has caused increased physical inactivity and social isolation, especially among children/youth, seniors, and vulnerable populations. It is imperative that the recreation, parks and sport opportunities that are so critical to our physical health, mental health and community wellbeing be re-established as soon as safely possible.

Although many Canadians are discovering or rediscovering recreational pursuits during the pandemic, **overall physical activity levels have declined** – this finding was reflected in the community survey completed for this Master Plan. One study found that less than 3% of children and youth were meeting the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity per day at the outset of the pandemic¹⁵. Furthermore, *nearly seven out of ten (69%) parents report that their children are showing signs of being less physically fit due to pandemic restrictions.*¹⁶

The lack of physical activity has been influenced by the closure of schools, cancellation of sports and activities, increase of sedentary time, and personal living arrangements – those living in houses were more likely to play outdoors than those living in apartments. There is a need to increase physical activity promotion to ensure that these lifestyles do not become permanent. One study¹⁷ found that parental encouragement and support can lead to greater activity, as does dog ownership.

During the pandemic, many people became comfortable using online platforms and virtual programs to augment or replace in-person exercise activities. There is a growing sense that these technologies will continue to be employed post-pandemic, although they are less accessible for many vulnerable populations.

2.5.8 Health Equity and Vulnerable Populations

The pandemic has intensified social inequities and negatively impacted vulnerable populations such as lower-income households, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities. Intentional decisions and meaningful action will be required to improve equity in resource provision and access to recreation and parks services for all populations.

The pandemic is bringing to light a number of shortcomings that exist in our society, including the inequities for marginalized populations and disproportionate access to health care. The research is clear that certain **ethno-cultural and income groups** are being impacted disproportionately by the pandemic. Several pieces of research indicate that **lower income populations** and **ethnic minorities**

¹⁵ Moore et al. International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity (2020) 17:85
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-020-00987-8>. Accessed October 26, 2020.

¹⁶ Simpson, Sean. Majority (52%) of Canadian Providers of Sports Programming Concerned About Possibility of Permanent Closure Amid COVID. Ipsos, 11 Feb. 2021, <https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/majority-52-canadian-providers-sports-programming-concerned-about-possibility-permanent-closure>. Accessed 17 Feb. 2021.

¹⁷ Moore et al. International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity (2020) 17:85
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-020-00987-8>. Accessed October 26, 2020.

are finding it harder to find new ways to stay active. Due to the pandemic, **Canadians with disabilities** are also having greater difficulty sustaining physical activity levels than persons without disabilities – 80% of Canadians who identify as a person with a disability indicated that their need for recreation and leisure programs was not being met during the pandemic, more than double the pre-pandemic amount (34%).¹⁸

Open spaces and active transportation amenities not only give people room to enjoy the outdoors safely, but they also help reduce chronic diseases associated with physical inactivity such as obesity, heart disease and diabetes. This experience may lead to a closer working relationship with the public health sector, including the use of a health equity lens in all we do, ensuring that our most vulnerable have access to essential services and opportunities to safely spend time outdoors. When devising reopening plans, one-third (32%) of parks and recreation agencies in the United States believe it is important to consider ways of connecting vulnerable community members to social services, healthcare and other needed services.¹⁹

2.5.9 Unstructured Activities and Access to Outdoor Space

Participation in individual outdoor activities (e.g., walking, cycling, etc.) has increased during the pandemic. Research indicates that the increase in unstructured outdoor activity could persist beyond the pandemic, suggesting that our outdoor spaces, local parks, trail systems and natural open spaces may require additional resources. Demand is greatest for outdoor activities that can be enjoyed with smaller groups.

Many people are adjusting and finding new ways to stay active. Most notable are **unstructured outdoor activities** (e.g., walking, hiking, cycling, visiting natural areas, swimming in backyard pools, outdoor ice skating, etc.) during all four seasons where possible, often undertaken as a family. *In Canada and across the globe, the pandemic caused significant shifts in leisure participation. This has meant fewer organized sport and group activities and more unstructured (often outdoor) activities such as walking and cycling. Two-thirds (66%) of survey respondents from across the world reported walking more and one-quarter (25%) are biking more during the pandemic.*²⁰ A survey of American Mayors also revealed that more than three-quarters (76%) felt that residents would be visiting parks and greenspaces more after COVID-19 than before²¹

Access to outdoor space matters. A survey from England found that those with access to outdoor space for sport and exercise are 54% more likely to have done an hour a day of sport and physical

¹⁸ 45 Abilities Centre and Canadian Disability Participation Project. COVID-19 Disability Survey. The University of British Columbia, 25 Nov. 2020, <https://abilitiescentre.org/Abilities/media/Documents/COVID-19-Disability-Survey-Prelim-Report-1-25-November-2020.pdf>. Accessed 25 Jan. 2021.

¹⁹ Roth, Kevin. "NRPA Parks Snapshot: June 10-12 Survey Results." NRPA, 12 June 2020, <https://www.nrpa.org/blog/nrpa-parks-snapshot-june-10-12-survey-results/>. Accessed 12 Feb. 2021.

²⁰ O'Connor, Eamon. "Public Space Plays Vital Role in Pandemic." *Gehl*, 7 May 2020, <https://gehlpeople.com/blog/public-space-plays-vital-role-in-pandemic/>. Accessed 27 Jan. 2021.

²¹ Glick, David, et al. 2020 *Menino Survey of Mayors COVID-19 Recovery and the Future of Cities*. Boston University, Nov. 2020, <https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/2020-Menino-Survey-COVID-19-Recovery-and-the-Future-of-Cities.pdf>. Accessed 27 Jan. 2021.

activity than those who do not have access to outdoor space.²² Conservation areas and provincial/national parks have been in particularly high demand, often reaching capacity on weekends. However, those living in lower-income, high density or rural areas may have less favourable access to space and resources, underscoring the need for social equity to be at the centre of decision-making. Opportunities to maximize outdoor play and learning, especially amongst children, have been a focus in recent years and should continue. Case in point, four in five (80%) parks and recreation agencies in the United States are leading formal and/or informal **park activation activities**, such as drive-in movies in the park and nature programs.²³

In addition to greater demand for outdoor walking and cycling, the pandemic may also lead to **increased demand** for items such as community gardens, trails and bike lanes, outdoor skating rinks, outdoor small group activities, outdoor classrooms, and interaction in nature. The increase in outdoor activity, along with restrictions placed on other sectors, has also underlined the importance of washrooms in parks and public spaces, which can be expected to be in even greater demand going forward, including during the **winter season**.

2.5.10 Sport Participation

People will not return to community recreation and sport activities until it is safe to do so. Those involved in competitive sport are more likely to be missing their activity of choice; however, interest in community recreation appears to be lower and more dependent on individual comfort levels.

*People are missing their sports activities, with most expecting to return. Nearly nine out of ten (87%) parents indicate they are very much **looking forward to the return of sports** and recreational play, rising to 93% among those most impacted by the loss of sport.²⁴ However, comfort levels vary (due largely to health-related concerns) and many people are concerned about organizational capacity.*

*Personal **financial impacts** are also an ongoing concern for many families – a local survey in Alberta found that 25% of families anticipate accessing subsidy programs to return to sport.²⁵ The high personal and financial costs of participation could lead many families to rethink participation even when assembly restrictions are relaxed. A continued focus on expanding **free and low-cost activities** for all residents could also help to boost participation.*

²² Sport England. *Children's Experience of Physical Activity in Lockdown*. Sport England, July 2020, <https://www.thinkactive.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Sport-England-Childrens-experience-of-physical-activity.pdf>. Accessed 2 Feb. 2021.

²³ Roth, Kevin. "NRPA Parks Snapshot: August 19-21 Survey Results." *NRPA*, 21 Aug. 2020, <https://www.nrpa.org/blog/nrpa-parks-snapshot-august-19-21-survey-results/>. Accessed 12 Feb. 2021.

²⁴ Simpson, Sean. *Majority (52%) of Canadian Providers of Sports Programming Concerned About Possibility of Permanent Closure Amid COVID*. Ipsos, 11 Feb. 2021, <https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/majority-52-canadian-providers-sports-programming-concerned-about-possibility-permanent-closure>. Accessed 17 Feb. 2021.

²⁵ Lethbridge Sport Council. *Sport, Physical Activity, & Recreation (SPAR) Survey Results*. Lethbridge Sport Council, 2020, <https://lethbridgesportcouncil.ca/assets/pdf/SPAR-Survey-Report.pdf>. Accessed 28 Jan. 2021.

2.5.11 Lifestyles and Behaviours

The pandemic will have lasting effects on lifestyles and behaviours, both positive and negative. Given the rapid pace of change – as people find new ways of living, working, playing, and connecting – continued monitoring and information sharing is necessary to address emerging issues and take advantage of new opportunities.

The pandemic could have an extended impact on our individual behaviours, including travel as people may be more hesitant to leave their local surroundings. Even before the pandemic, there was a strong trend toward **close-to-home recreation**. This could continue to enhanced interest in neighbourhood parks, trails and other local/low-cost activities, while those communities that typically rely on seasonal or tourist markets could be negatively affected. This may impact tournaments and sport tourism destinations, at least in the short-term.

Travel restrictions may also lead to fewer seniors leaving the community for warmer weather, creating greater demand for activities during the **winter** (along with winter park maintenance and snow clearing on trails). It will be important to quickly and effectively address barriers to winter activity, such as equipment and access to amenities.

The newfound ability for many to **work from home** has translated to greater flexibility, which may allow for increased participation in activities during daytime hours, times that have traditionally been difficult to fill. Some municipalities are revisiting their definitions of prime time and corresponding fee structures. Understanding the long-term impact of the pandemic on people's values and priorities will require regular monitoring and discussion.

2.5.12 Looking Ahead

The recreation and parks sector has taken on new responsibilities and formed partnerships with other sectors as a result of the pandemic. Many of these new roles – including community-based supports (e.g., food security, health service coordination, homelessness, etc.) – may remain in some form beyond the pandemic and will require additional policy direction, training, and support.

The longer-term projection is less certain and much will depend on the duration and severity of the COVID-19 pandemic. As pandemic restrictions loosen, it is anticipated that there will be a strong desire to return to in-person activities and events; however, concerns around gatherings may keep some people away from **large group events and crowded spaces**.²⁶

As evidenced in Strathroy-Caradoc, some are taking it a step further and relocating to **less populated, suburban or rural areas**; many communities with sizable seasonal populations are

²⁶ Stone - Olafson. The NEW Experience Economy: The Intersection of Arts, Culture, Sports & Recreation in a Pandemic and Post-Pandemic Environment Phase 3 Results. Stone - Olafson, Nov. 2020, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5702f6d34c2f85f4f9c50330/t/5fb8379d9529e726a9ee0aee/1605908417919/The+New+Experience+Economy+Phase+3+Results+FINAL.pdf>. Accessed 28 Jan. 2021.

reporting a shift toward permanent residency as the notion of working from home becomes more entrenched. Complete communities with a mix of residential, education, employment, recreational, open space and active transportation opportunities that function as self-sustaining and connected neighbourhoods will be most desirable.

Furthermore, the sector is likely to see more **partnerships** than fewer – Sport for Life reported that 72% of organizations have reached out to another sport organization to work together and/or support one another in starting initiatives.²⁷ The pandemic has also strengthened existing and created new forms of collaboration with other sectors, something that may carry forward into the future. Examples identified through sector surveys include:

- parks organizations purchasing and distributing groceries to vulnerable people
- improving coordination with local public health agencies
- providing programming focused on mental health and well-being (both public and staff)
- using recreation facilities as COVID-19 testing and vaccination sites
- opening recreation facilities to serve as emergency shelters

Moving forward, it is evident that **technology** is increasingly being used to help deliver our services, from social media, online registration, and apps that help to spread information and enhance service, to thermal/motion sensors, drones, and Internet of Things smart technologies that help to monitor activity and collect real-time data to be used in decision-making. We can also expect new innovations and cleaning technologies to emerge that may help to generate efficiencies over time. Looking ahead, more than three-quarters (78%) of sports industry leaders throughout the world believe that sports organizations will increase funding and efforts to accelerate digital transformation as they come out of the COVID-19 crisis.²⁸

²⁷ Sport for Life. *Impacts of COVID-19 on Local Sports Organizations Nationwide Survey Results*. Sport for Life, June 2020, <https://sportforlife.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/National-Report-Impacts-of-COVID-19-on-Local-Sports-Organizations-1.pdf>. Accessed 18 Jan. 2021.

²⁸ PWC. *Sports Industry: System Rebooting*. PWC, 2020, <https://www.pwc.ch/en/insights/sport/sports-survey-2020.html>. Accessed 27 Jan. 2021.

3 Public and Stakeholder Input

Engagement with residents and stakeholders (e.g., service clubs, sports organizations, Municipal staff, etc.) was critical to understanding current issues and future opportunities for supporting the parks and recreation system in Strathroy-Caradoc.

Primary engagement tactics included:

- community visioning workshop and survey
- community survey
- stakeholder questionnaire
- public open house
- input from Recreation Facility Infrastructure Renewal Plan
- sharing of ideas on the Growing Together webpage

Engagement opportunities were promoted through the project website, media releases, newspaper articles, and social media updates. As the project was launched during the COVID-19 pandemic, engagement focused on digital and remote opportunities to provide feedback. The pandemic created new opportunities for the public and stakeholders to become involved in the planning process, leading to broader participation.

Note: It is important to note that the information and suggestions presented in this section should not be interpreted as recommendations. Community input has not been altered even in instances where comments may incorrectly reflect the Municipality's actual policies, practices or level of provision.

3.1 Community Visioning Workshop and Survey

A Community Visioning Workshop was held on March 18, 2021 to gather input from the public on a vision for parks and recreation and explore what types of parkland, community facilities, and recreational programs and activities people would like to see in Strathroy-Caradoc. The workshop – which was held jointly with the Recreational Trails Master Plan – was held virtually on March 18, 2021 and was attended by over 30 residents.

The workshop began with an overview of the Growing Together initiative and how the Parks and Recreation Master Plan fits in with the other Master Plans and planning studies being undertaken. Throughout the presentation the community in attendance was invited to respond to questions either via the webinar's chat or through an online engagement and discussion tool.



Figure 7 – Visioning Session Word Cloud: Vision for Parks & Recreation in Strathroy-Caradoc

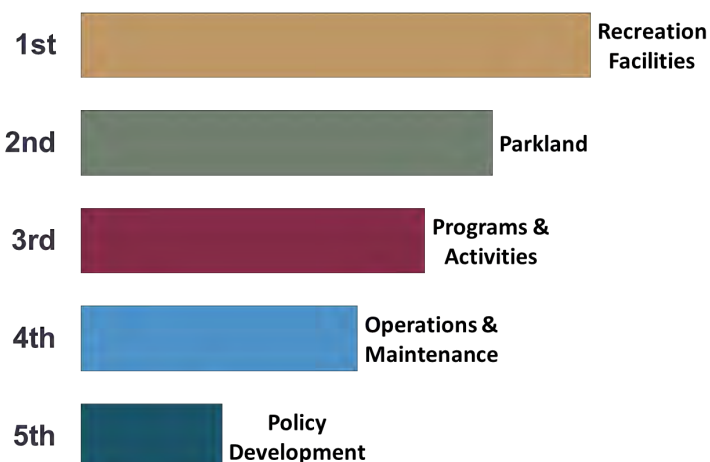


Source: WSP, Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, Mentimeter, 2021

In questions related to the general vision for Strathroy-Caradoc, high quality green spaces, and parks and recreation service which are welcoming, accessible, inclusive, family friendly and safe are a key part of that vision. It was identified that the challenges and opportunities that the community faced included ensuring services and facilities keep up with growth, including the development of new facilities and services, as well as ensuring existing facilities and green spaces are maintained and improved. The attendees also identified that they envision parks and recreation that is accessible, fun, green, clean, inclusive, and provides variety and diversity in what is available (See Figure 7).

The Master Plan is being undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic which has significantly changed how we use parks and recreation and participate in programming. While vaccines give the potential for a return to 'normal', attendees were asked to identify what changes they thought were 'here to stay'. Attendees identified the need for opportunities to be outside, and placed a higher value on parks, especially for people of all ages and abilities given the positive impact on physical and mental wellbeing. It was identified that improvements should be made to extend the season of outdoor facilities, and ensure that existing facilities are improved so that they are safe and more accessible to women, children, seniors, and people with mobility impairments. TO this end, suggestions included providing more lighting and seating, and ensuring responsive maintenance and snow clearing. In terms of priorities, attendees listed recreation facilities as their top priority for the next ten years (See Figure 8).

Figure 8 – Workshop Question: Main Priorities for our Parks and Recreation System

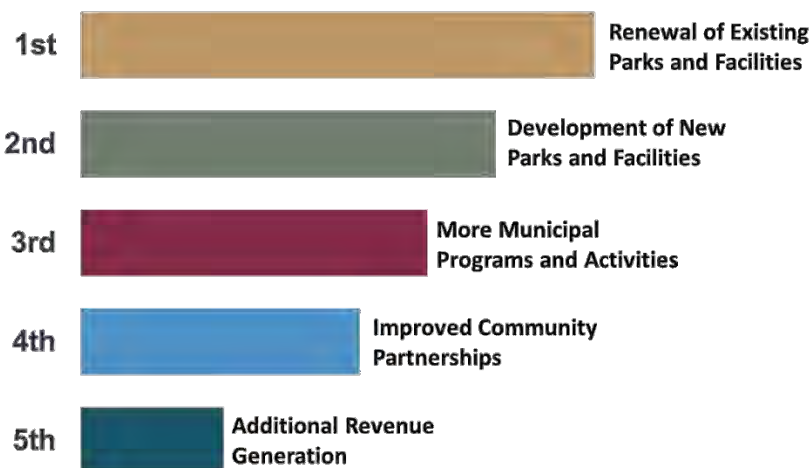


Source: WSP, Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, Mentimeter, 2021

Following the community workshop, a vision and initial set of guiding principles for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan were drafted (see Section 4). To confirm if we heard the community correctly, these statements were posted on the project website and tested through a survey that ran from April 12 to May 7, 2021. Nearly 150 responses were received. Key results include:

- 83.5% were supportive of the proposed vision statement, with 4.8% opposed.
- An open-ended question was posed soliciting adjustments to the vision and guiding principles. Responses were varied. Common themes included more/improved recreation facilities in Mount Brydges, the provision of an indoor pool, opposition to selling parkland, and a desire for more parks or better distribution of parks.
- Of the five guiding principles that were presented, “Supportive Environments”, “Connecting People & Nature”, and “Active Living” were felt to be the most important to respondents. “Inclusion & Access” and “Recreation Capacity” were least important to respondents. Note: The initial set of guiding principles mirrored the goals of the Framework for Recreation in Canada – following input from the public and the project advisory committees, modifications were made to the guiding principles.
- To achieve the proposed vision, five opportunities were presented. Respondents felt that the renewal of existing parks and facilities was the most important to them, followed by the development of new parks and facilities, with revenue generation being the least important.

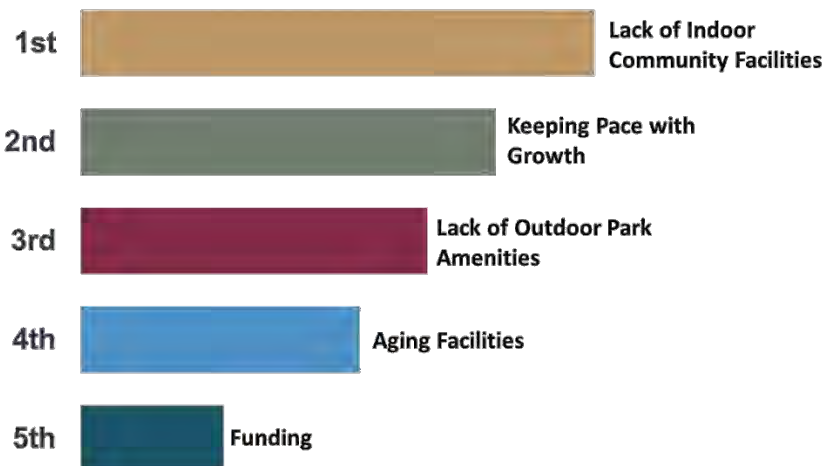
Figure 9 – Visioning Survey: Opportunities to Achieve Proposed Vision (Importance)



Source: WSP, Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, 2021

- To achieve the proposed vision, five challenges were presented. Respondents felt that the lack of indoor community facilities was the most important to them, with funding being the least important.

Figure 10 – Visioning Survey: Challenges to Achieve Proposed Vision (Importance)



Source: WSP, Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, 2021

3.2 Community Survey

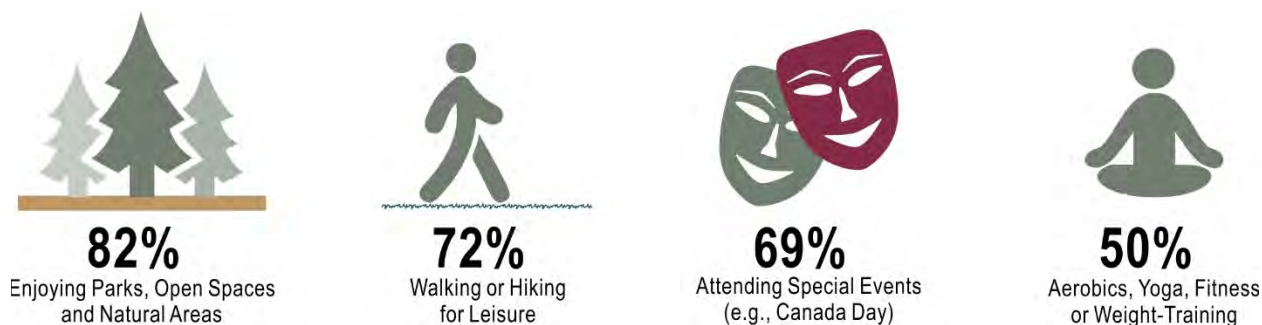
To support the development of this Master Plan, the Municipality hosted an online community survey that ran for eight weeks from February to April 2021. The survey was posted on the project website and was promoted through the local media, social media, newsletters, community events, and stakeholder networks. A total of **224 unique responses** were received; being a voluntary, self-directed survey, response rates vary by question. The survey was designed to take about 10 minutes of time to complete, depending on the number of questions answered and level of detail provided.

The purpose of the community survey was to elicit information on the recreation and parks needs of residents in Strathroy-Caradoc. The questions were designed to gather information regarding: participation rates in both organized and unorganized activities; barriers to activity; facility and park use; recommended improvements; support for investment; and opinion/agreement with various statements. Questions were also included in the survey to investigate the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on parks and recreation as well as what lasting effects it will leave. Tabulated survey response data has been provided in **Appendix B**.

3.2.1 Participation in Parks and Recreation Activities

The following figure summarizes the **most popular parks and recreation activities** respondents participated in over the 12 months prior to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. A common element among the most popular activities – such as use of parks, open space and natural areas, walking/hiking, special events, fitness or weight-training, use of playgrounds and splash pads, and dog walking etc. – is that they are unstructured and can generally be self-scheduled, which is consistent with participation trends observed across Ontario.

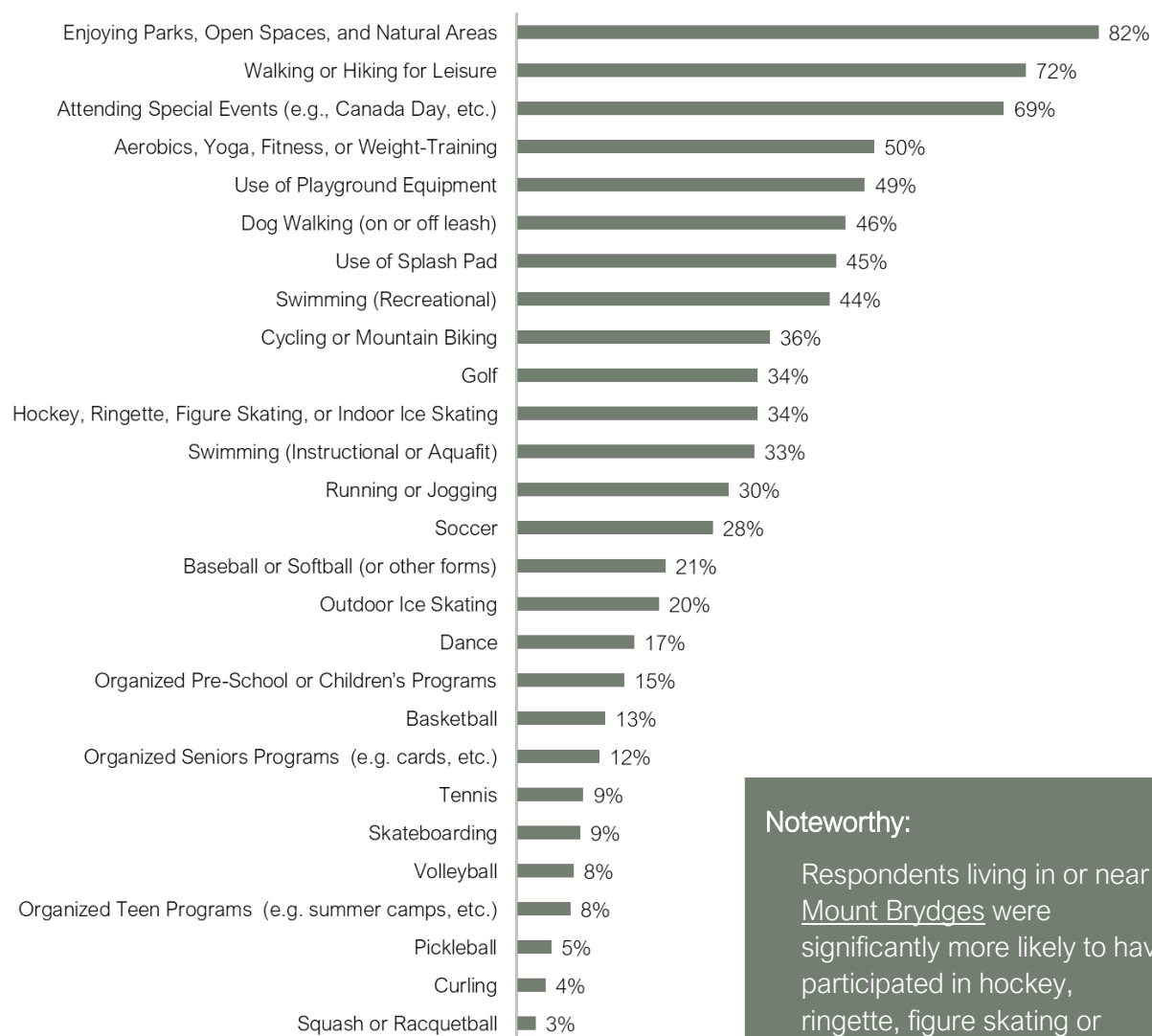
Figure 11 – Most Popular Parks and Recreation Activities, 12 months prior to COVID-19



Source: Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, 2021

The full list of activities that respondents have participated in is shown in the following figure. The most popular organized sports and recreation activities were hockey, instructional swimming and soccer.

Figure 12 – Participation in Parks and Recreation Activities, 12 months prior to COVID-19



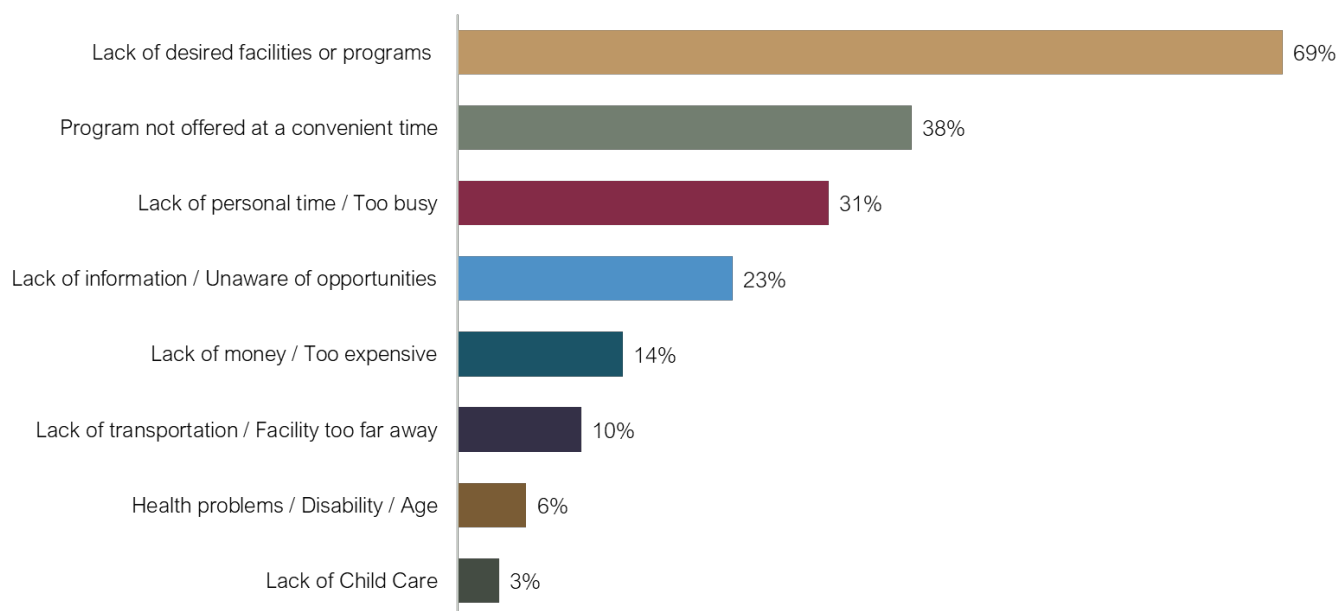
Noteworthy:

Respondents living in or near Mount Brydges were significantly more likely to have participated in hockey, ringette, figure skating or indoor ice skating in 2019.

Source: Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, 2021

One-third (34%) of respondents indicated that they were not able to participate in parks and recreation activities as often as they would like; the majority of respondents (64%) did not indicate any barriers. The following figure illustrates the most common **barriers to participating** in parks and recreation activities that were identified by respondents. The most common barrier was a “lack of desired programs or facilities” (69%), suggesting that the provision of opportunities could be improved as it is the most significant factor keeping residents from participating as frequently as they would like. Similarly, another common barrier was “programs not offered at a convenient time” suggesting that the scheduling of activities are times that are convenient could be improved.

Figure 13 – Participation Barriers to Parks and Recreation Activities

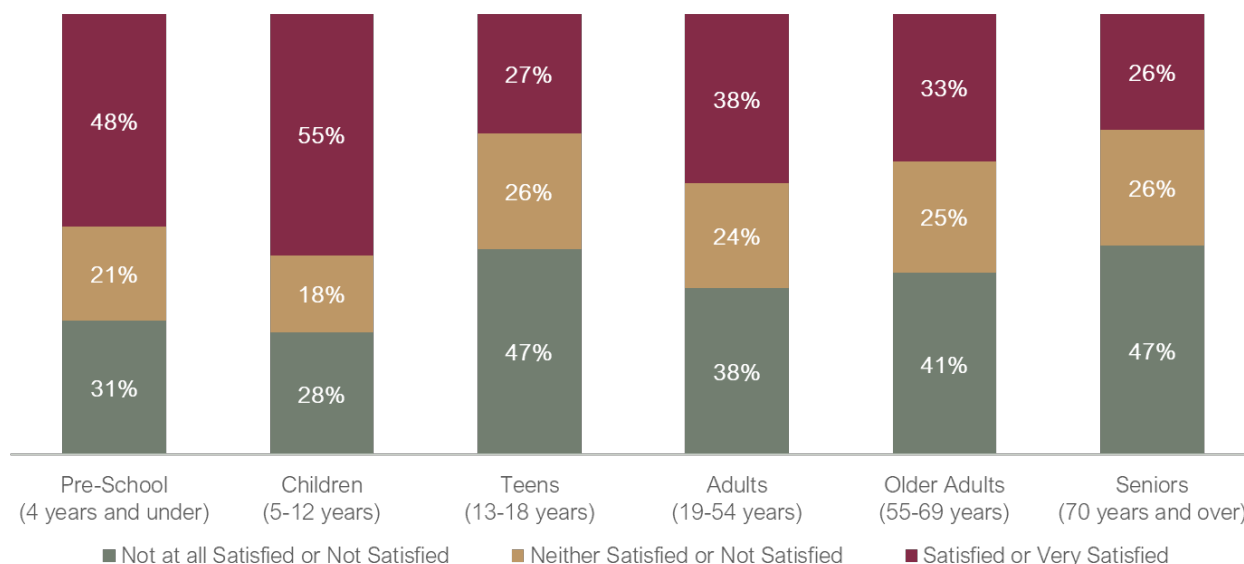


Source: Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, 2021

3.2.2 Importance and Satisfaction

The following figure illustrates respondents' level of satisfaction with the parks and recreation opportunities by age group. Respondents were most satisfied with parks and recreation opportunities for children (age 5-12 years) and pre-school (4 years and under). Satisfaction levels were generally lower for all other age groups, particularly teens (which are a challenging age group for most recreation departments to serve; though often the gaps are more perceived than real), and seniors. It is important to recognize that the median age of the respondent was 43 years and not all respondents may be familiar with the opportunities that exist for each age group.

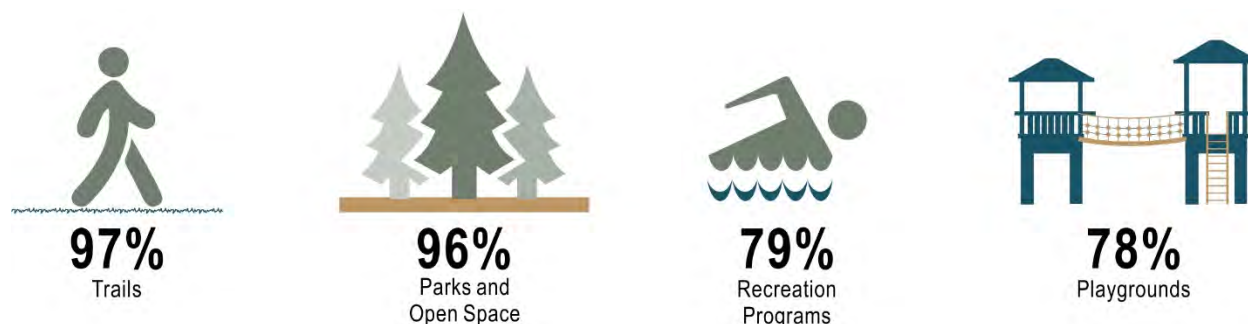
Figure 14 – Satisfaction with Parks and Recreation Opportunities by Age Group



Note: % of responses excludes those who indicated they were unsure or don't use the type of facility
Source: Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, 2021

The following figure shows that respondents felt the **most important** amenities and services included trails (97%), parks and open space (96%), recreation programs (registered and drop-in) (79%), and playgrounds (78%).

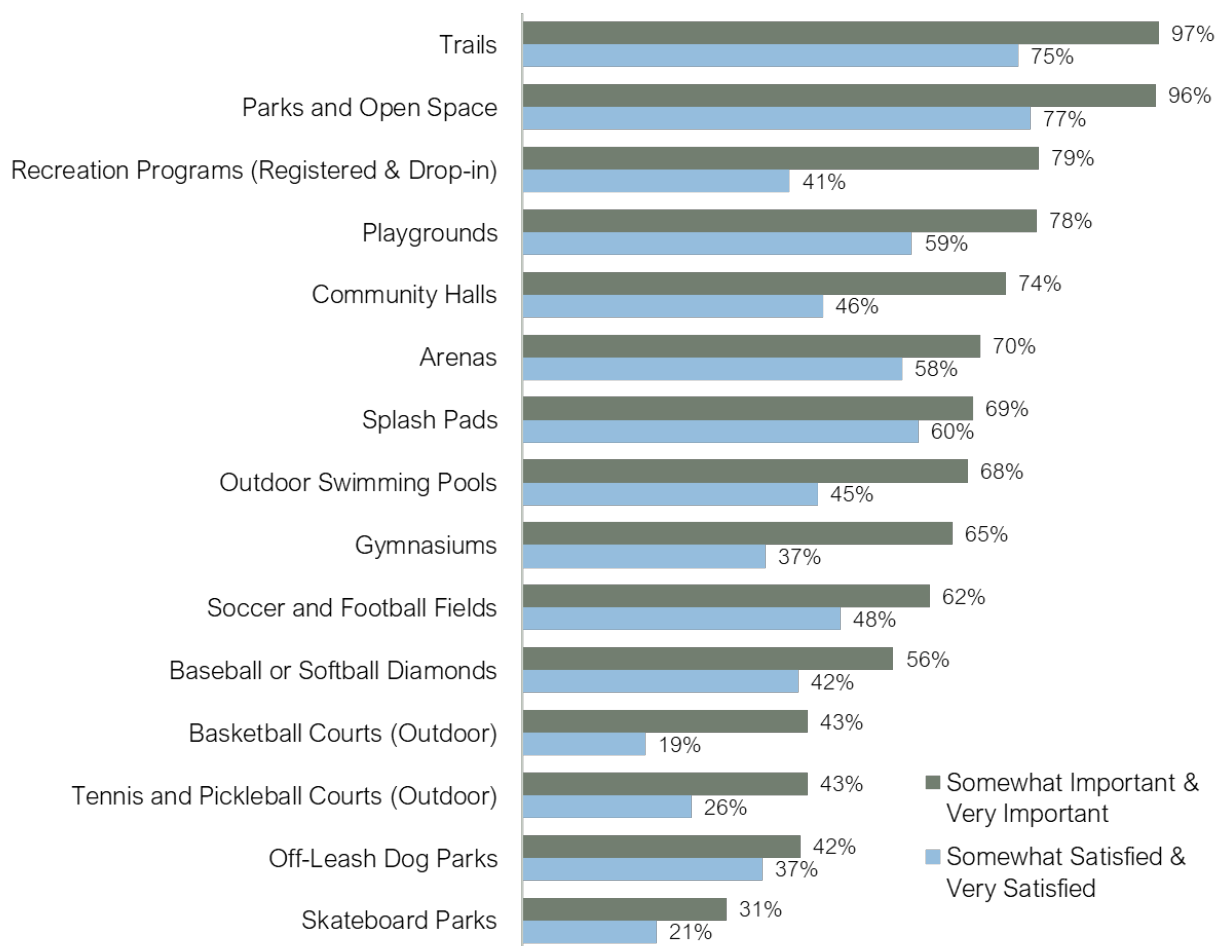
Figure 15 - Importance of Parks and Recreation Amenities and Services



Source: Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, 2021

The following figure shows the percentage of respondents who rated each amenity and service as somewhat and very important, compared with the percentage who indicated they were somewhat or very satisfied with that facility. Respondents were **most satisfied** with parks and open space (77%), trails (75%), splash pads (60%), playgrounds (59%), and arenas (58%). There were significant gaps between the level of importance and the level of satisfaction of several important amenities and services, including recreation programs (-38% difference between importance and satisfaction), community halls (-28% difference), and gymnasiums (-28% difference). The most significant difference is in the recreation programs offered (followed by gymnasiums and community halls) which suggests that the public is placing a priority on these as areas for further investment.

Figure 16 - Level of Importance and Satisfaction of Parks and Recreation Facilities



Source: Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, 2021

3.2.3 Suggestions for Additional Activities and Programs

A broad range of suggestions were offered when respondents were asked what additional parks and recreation activities/programs they would like to see offered in Strathroy-Caradoc that are not currently available. The most common request were for an **indoor pool** and **more facilities in general within Mount Brydges**. Specifically, respondents from Mount Brydges were interested in items such as an improved skate park, tennis and pickleball courts, basketball courts, walking trails, and a pool.

"Mount Brydges is growing like crazy with young families and is sorely lacking parks and recreation programs and facilities."

Survey respondent comment

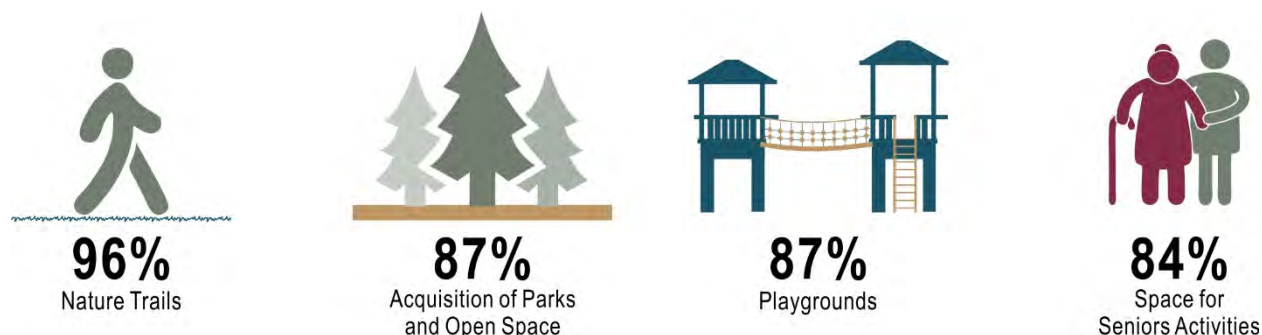
Other top suggestions (Municipality-wide) included:

- more seniors' activities (e.g., dedicated seniors centre, pickleball, indoor walking track, etc.);
- expanded and improved walking trails;
- an outdoor rink in the winter;
- youth activities and facilities, such as basketball courts, skateparks, and gymnastics programs;
- more tennis courts; and
- more playgrounds.

3.2.4 Priorities

The following figure summarizes the highest priorities for additional public spending for parks and recreation facilities (either for upgrades or new construction). These priorities – including the trails, parks and open space, and playgrounds – support the finding that there is an increasing public desire for unstructured and self-scheduled opportunities. In addition, the priority for seniors' space highlights the changing demographics experienced by all municipalities across Ontario and which will continue to increase over the next decade as the baby boomer generation continues to age.

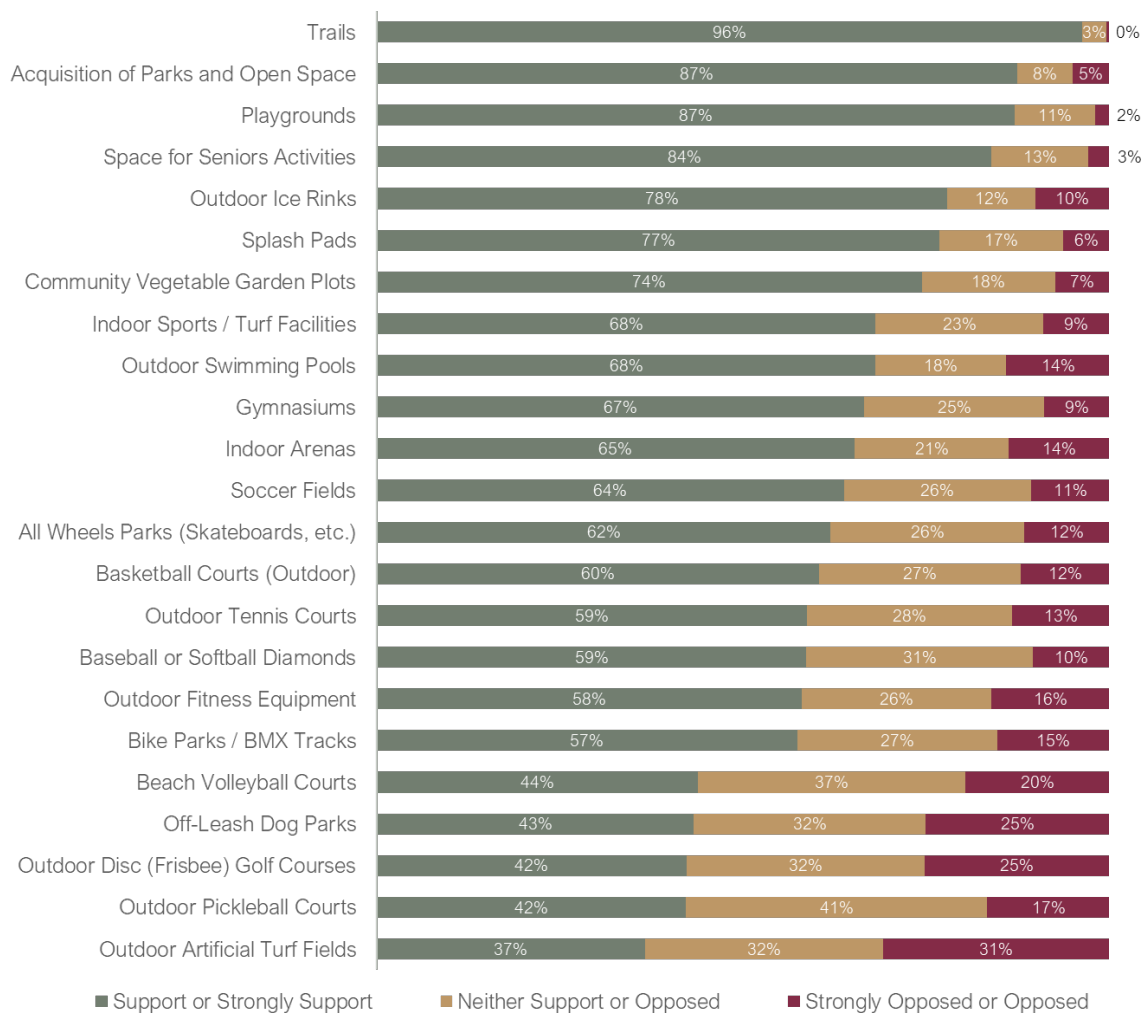
Figure 17 - Top priorities for Additional Public Spending for Parks and Recreation Facilities



Source: Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, 2021

Note: An “indoor swimming pool” was not a listed option for this question, however, a large number of respondents indicated a desire for this type of facility through their open-ended comments.

Figure 18 – Support for Public Spending on Constructing or Improving Parks and Recreation Facilities



* Note: % of responses excludes those who indicated they were unsure or don't use the facility
Source: Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, 2021

Respondents living in or near Mount Brydges were somewhat more likely to support additional public spending on playgrounds, outdoor swimming pools, ball diamonds, and outdoor tennis and pickleball courts. Respondents living in or near Strathroy were somewhat more likely to support additional public spending on bike parks/BMX tracks.

Noteworthy:

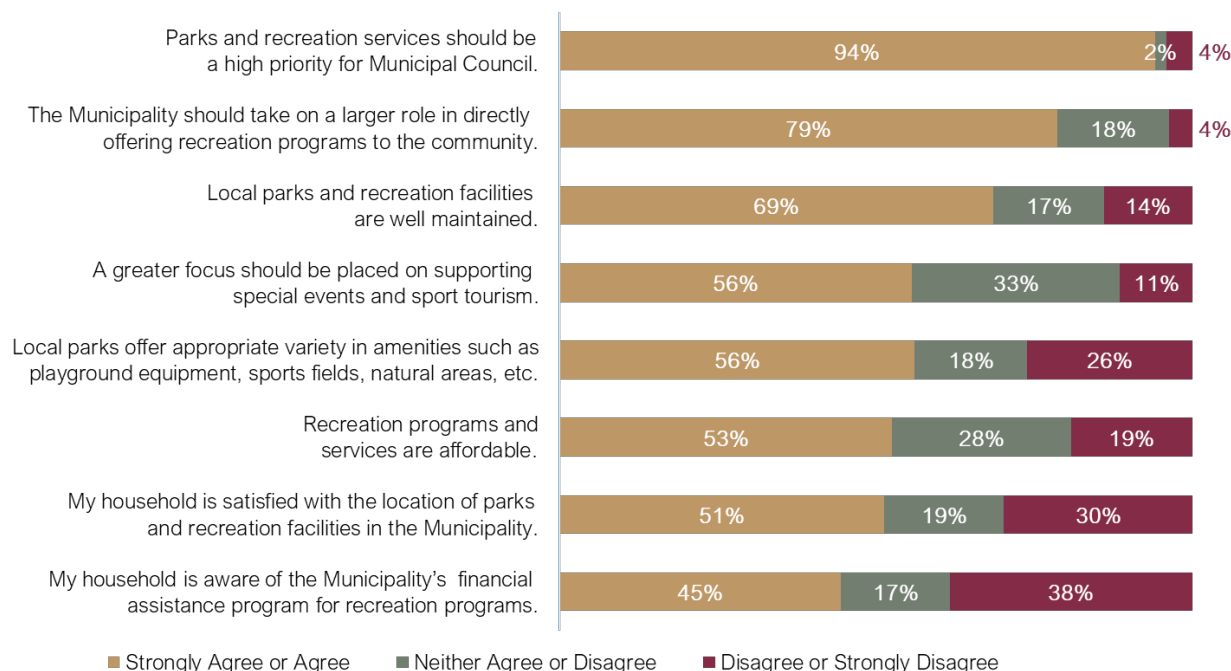
Respondents living in or near Mount Brydges were significantly more likely to support additional public spending on arenas and soccer fields.

Respondents were asked to identify their level of support for various statements with respect to parks and recreation in the Strathroy-Caradoc. The survey found that more than nine-out-of-10 (94%) respondents felt that parks and recreation services should be a high priority for Council. Nearly four-out-of-five (79%) of respondents supported the statement that the Municipality should take on a larger role in directly offering recreation programs to the community. More than two-thirds (69%) of respondents felt that parks and recreation facilities are well maintained. About half (53%) of respondents indicated that parks and recreation programs are affordable and a similar proportion (51%) indicated that they were satisfied with the location of parks and recreation facilities, suggesting that there is demand for both affordable and accessible leisure opportunities. Less than half (45%) respondents indicated that they were aware of the Municipality's financial assistance program, suggesting that more can be done to generate awareness of this program.

Noteworthy:

Respondents living in or near Strathroy were significantly more likely to say their household was aware of the Municipality's financial assistance program for recreational programs.

Figure 19 - Agreement with Statements about Parks and Recreation Services

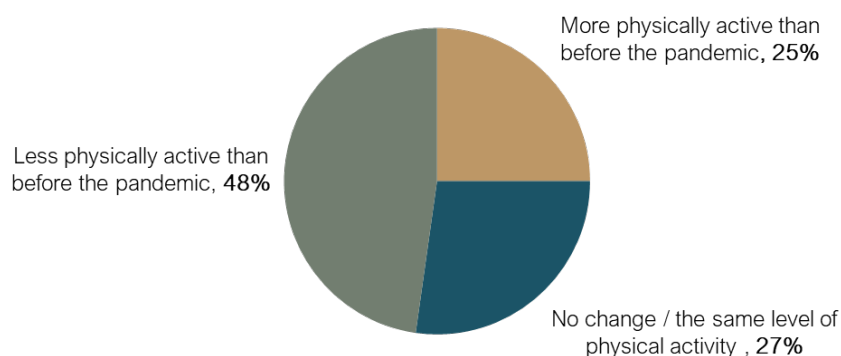


* Note: % of responses excludes those who indicated they were unsure or do not use the program/facility.
Source: Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, 2021

3.2.5 Comments Relating to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The survey was conducted approximately a year into the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Ontario, which has had significant impacts on people's behavior and preferences. About half (48%) of respondents indicated that they had been **less physically active** over the past year than before the pandemic. Only a quarter (25%) of respondents indicated that they were more active during the pandemic and before it.

Figure 20 - Changes to Physical Activity During the Pandemic



Source: Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, 2021

The pandemic may also potentially impact how the community uses parks and recreation facilities even after it has finished. Approximately one-third of respondents did not expect their behaviors to change or just wanted to return to 'normal'. Many respondents indicated that they expected to continue spending more time outside, being active, and engaging in more passive activities (e.g., walking, skateboarding, biking, etc.). The pandemic is also expected to have a lingering impact on people's concerns about cleanliness, and a preference for individual or small group activities. Several respondents were also concerned about how challenging it will be to reverse the decline in activity among children. Some hoped that the ability to register and reserve activities online would be continued after the pandemic.

3.2.6 Additional Comments

In addition to the survey findings, respondents had an opportunity to provide additional input. A variety of comments were received regarding all aspects of Strathroy-Caradoc's parks and recreation system. The following is a summary of some of the key themes from the comments, which echoed many of the results found throughout the survey:

"As the town continues to grow there is increasing demand for recreational activities that are needed by new and growing families. An indoor pool for year-round swimming lessons is necessary at this is a valuable life skill. Ensuring that activities are available throughout the year will aid in development a healthy community physically, mentally, and emotionally."

Survey respondent comment

- A large number of people indicated that they feel the municipality should have an **indoor pool**. Suggestions included partnering with the YMCA to create a multi-use facility with a pool which could also serve as a **seniors' centre**.
- Many respondents indicated a concern that existing **parks and open space** would be lost to development. Respondents wanted to ensure that these lands were not developed for housing or other uses and are retained for use by the community.

- People also wanted to see more **playgrounds** in areas that are currently under-served (with several mentions to north Strathroy), as well as a couple of the parks in the southern portion of Strathroy that recently had their playgrounds removed.

“Great parks, programs and splash pads! Just wish to see them more integrated into all neighbourhoods.”

Survey respondent comment

3.2.7 Profile of Survey Respondents

The Community Survey collected the following information about the responding households:

- Compared to Census data, households with children (9 years and under), youth (age 10-19), and mature adults (age 35-54) were slightly over-represented in the survey, while households with adults (age 20-34), older adults (age 55-69) and seniors (age 70+) were slightly under-represented. The average household size was 3.4 persons, which is higher compared to the 2016 Census (average household size: 2.2 persons). These results are common as households with multiple children and youth are more likely to complete a self-administered survey regarding parks and recreation opportunities.
- About three-fifths of survey respondents (57%) reside in the urban area of the community of Strathroy, and an additional 7% resided in the rural areas nearest to Strathroy. Approximately one-third (29%) of respondents reside in the urban area of the community of Mount Brydges, and an additional 6% resided in the rural areas nearest to Mount Brydges. The geographic location of survey respondents was generally representative of all households across Strathroy-Caradoc.
- About 4% of survey respondents were non-residents, the majority of whom resided in the Municipality of Adelaide Metcalfe.



3.3 Stakeholder Input

The Municipality has dozens of community groups that offer services to the community in the fields of sports, arts, culture, music, dance and theatre. Some have competing demands and needs for space, staff resources and funding while desiring to increase their programs and services. A total of 41 organizations were invited to participate in the Master Plan process through the completion of a stakeholder questionnaire in Spring 2021. Several attempts were made to solicit their input. This summary represents the input of 19 organizations.

Table 5: Stakeholder Questionnaire Distribution and Completion List

Provided Written Input	Invited but did NOT Provide Input
1st Strathroy Scouting Group	Magic Blades
3 Striker Air Cadet Squadron	Mount Brydges Skating Club
Bluewater Hawks Girls Hockey Association	Oneida
Caradoc Optimist Club	Rockets
DKMB Minor Baseball	Strathroy Caradoc Youth Hockey
Holy Cross Secondary School	Strathroy Skating Club
Mount Brydges Business Association	Strathroy Christian School
Mt Brydges Minor Hockey	Del-Ko-Brydge Soccer
Mt. Brydges Lion's Club	Royals
Ontario Minor Hockey Association	Strathroy Fastball
Samson Christian Slo-Pitch League	Strathroy Minor Baseball
Strathroy District Minor Hockey Association	SWM Ladies League
Strathroy Adult Coed Baseball League	Strathroy District Collegiate Institute
Strathroy and District Chamber of Commerce	Dojo-Strathroy Optimist Club
Strathroy BIA	Melbourne & District Lions Club
Strathroy Lacrosse	Mount Brydges Legion
Strathroy United Football Club	Rotary Club of Strathroy
Strathroy-Caradoc Family YMCA	Strathroy Lions Club
Strathroy-Caradoc Horticultural Society	Mount Brydges Optimist Club
	Strathroy-Caradoc Lions Club
	Mount Brydges Scouting
	Strathroy Dance Club
Total: 19	Total: 22

The following high-level summary synthesizes common themes that emerged from stakeholder feedback, organized by subject area. It should be noted that the input represents the opinions of stakeholders and the summary may not represent the recommended Master Plan directions.

3.3.1 Participation and Trends

- The majority of user groups felt that their membership and interest in their activity would rise over the next five years due to population growth in the area. Some groups expressed a degree of uncertainty about future participation due to the impact of COVID-19.
- Membership trends over the past three years (2017-19) indicate a stable level of participation for most organizations before the pandemic. The number of girls hockey participants has been increasing in recent years, while the number of minor league baseball and boy hockey players have remained steady, and the number of soccer players have been declining.
- Several groups indicated that their memberships are regional and that they draw participants from surrounding communities.

3.3.2 Park and Facility Requests

- Due to the recent and expected growth in Mount Brydges, suggestions were received for additional ice pad in the community. There is a concern that the lack of additional ice space in Mount Brydges will force the Minor Hockey Association to disband or relocate and force its members to join other associations with increased travel requirements. To a lesser extent there was also a desire for more ice time in Strathroy for some of the smaller groups and associations.
- The local YMCA had been experiencing consistent growth leading up to the pandemic, although their current space limits the number and range of programs they are able to offer. They would be open to discussing partnership opportunities with the Municipality to expand their offerings to better serve the community.
- Suggestions were made for baseball diamond improvements (e.g., for fencing and lighting), as well as additional (accessible) washrooms, bleachers, and bbq pits in parks.
- Some groups identified a need for access to meeting space to accommodate community meetings and business education/support. Groups that previously used the Strathroy Seniors Centre are now looking for new, affordable space.
- Demand was expressed for more youth facilities in parks (e.g., bike park, outdoor rink, etc.) and an indoor recreation facility for dryland training as well as for youth to learn new skills like rock climbing, archery, trampoline, etc.

3.3.3 Service Delivery Requests

- The community groups appreciate the partnerships that they have with the Municipality that have helped them run programming or maintain facilities that they use.
- Improvements to facilities mentioned above will assist the community groups with expanding the services that they can deliver.

3.4 Public Open House

A virtual open house was held on July 20, 2021 to present an overview of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the Growing Together Official Plan Review. The session was attended by approximately ten residents. A presentation was made consisting of a summary of input received to date, draft vision and guiding principles, and preliminary directions. Comments were received regarding the need to maintain an arena and community centre in Mount Brydges and parkland provision in Mount Brydges,

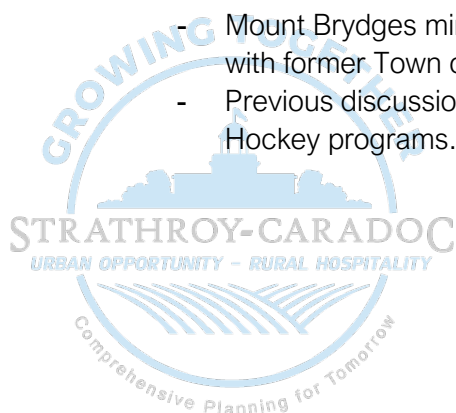
3.5 Community Consultation from Recreation Facility Infrastructure Renewal Plan (2021)

The Municipality's 2021 Recreation Facility Infrastructure Renewal Plan included a public survey that was completed in full by 555 respondents (67% lived in Strathroy, 21% Mount Brydges, and 12% other). Much of the input from this survey is relevant to this Master Plan, including commentary on usage levels and suggested improvements for local community recreation facilities.

- **Usage:** More than half of respondents consider themselves to be regular or occasional users of the West Middlesex Memorial Centre (65%), Gemini Sportsplex (65%), and Fair Grounds Aquatic Park (54%). Slightly lower usage levels were reported for the Tri-Township Arena (43%) and Caradoc Community Centre (33%).
- **Condition:** Respondents were most satisfied with the condition of Fair Grounds Aquatic Park (82% good or excellent), Gemini Sportsplex (73%), Caradoc Community Centre (72%), and West Middlesex Memorial Centre (70%). Only 38% reported that the condition of the Tri-Township Arena was good or excellent, with 31% suggesting that it was poor or fair.
- **Willingness to Pay:** Two-thirds (67%) of respondents indicated that they would accept an increase in property taxes for better or improved community indoor recreation facilities. Nearly two-thirds (64%) also feel that funding should be balanced between municipal tax dollars and user fees.
- **Other Facilities:** The survey included an open-ended question regarding other recreation facility needs. Unpromoted, one-third of respondents (33%) suggested the need for an indoor pool, while 9% suggested an indoor walking track, and 4% suggested a multi-use facility in Mount Brydges.

Several interviews with community stakeholders, municipal staff and members of Council were also completed for the Recreation Facility Infrastructure Renewal Plan. Input from sports and community user groups was summarized in the report as follows:

- Mount Brydges minor sports have closer ties with Komoka and Delaware communities than with former Town of Strathroy.
- Previous discussions have been had on amalgamating Mount Brydges and Strathroy Minor Hockey programs.

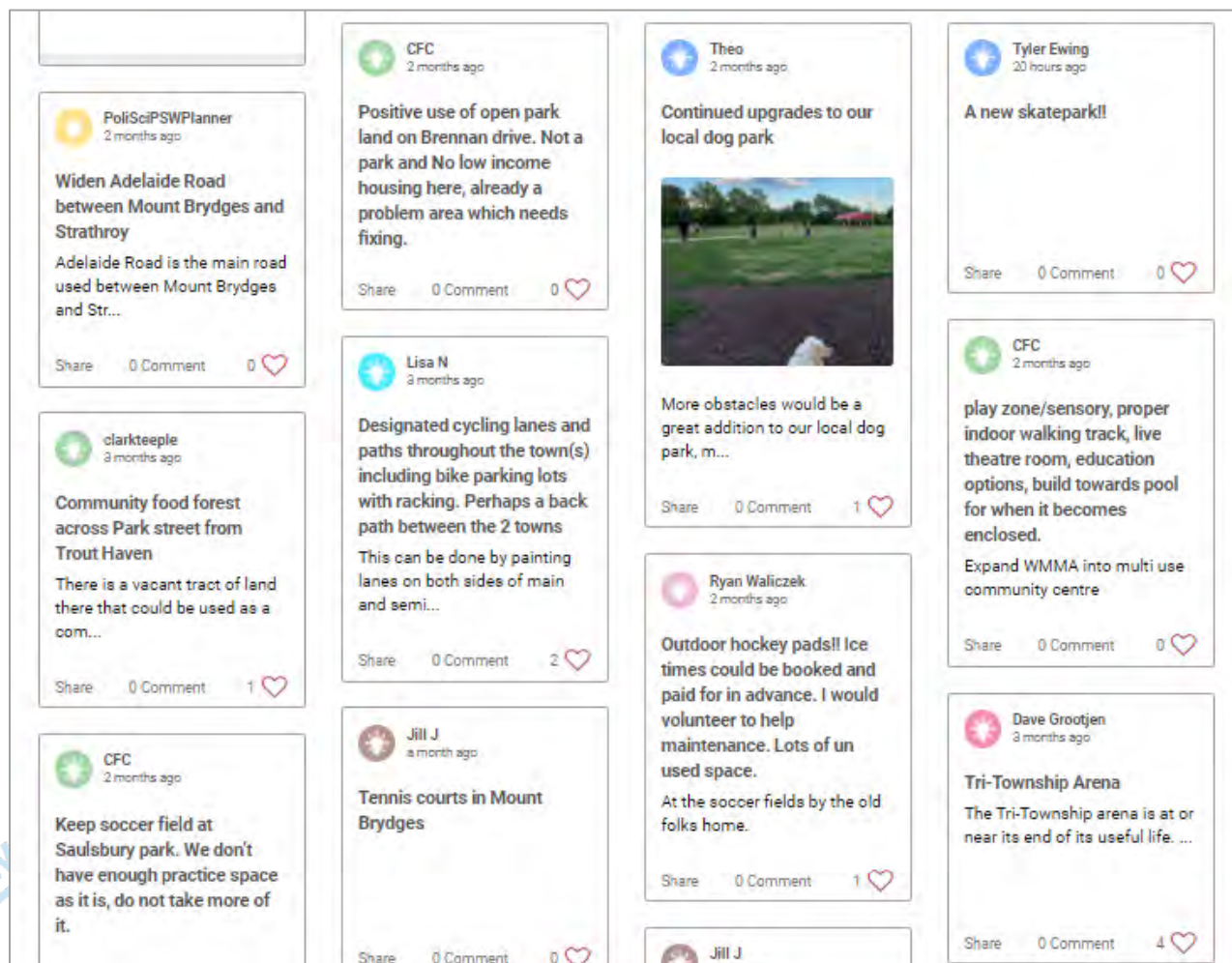


- Mount Brydges and Strathroy minor sports organization include significant number of participants from outside communities, such as the municipality of Middlesex Centre and Adelaide Metcalfe.
- Soccer and baseball organizations would be very interested in an indoor playing field.
- Most organizational reps would like to see a multi-use facility similar to facility in Komoka.
- Need for additional gym space for indoor court sports.
- No organized youth volleyball program.
- Minor basketball court surface at West Middlesex Memorial Centre is not ideal for basketball.

3.6 Webpage Comments and Written Submissions

Throughout the public input process, the public had opportunities to submit written comments for consideration, including through an idea wall on the project website.

Figure 21: Sample of Parks and Recreation Ideas Posted on the Project Website



A summary of written input received is highlighted below:

- New multi-use facility (indoor turf field, gymnasium, etc.) in Mount Brydges (5)
- Outdoor basketball courts (3)
- Renewal of Tri-Township Arena (3)
- New skatepark in Strathroy (3)
- Tennis and pickleball courts (3)
- Community garden/orchard (2)
- Outdoor ice rinks (2)
- Improvements to existing off-leash dog park (2)
- Oppose disposition of parkland (2)
- Tennis dome (1)
- Convert WMMC into a multi-use community centre with indoor track, theatre, pool, etc. (1)

3.7 Other Consultation

The Draft Master Plan was posted on the project website for public review in November 2021. Comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

In addition, consultation was undertaken with the Stakeholder Advisory Committee (with community representation), Technical Advisory Committee (municipal staff), and Municipal Council. Input from these sources was wide-ranging and has been used to inform the Master Plan.

3.8 Emerging Directions from Public Input Phase

Key findings of the initial public engagement and research phase are summarized below. These themes have been assessed along with community profiles, usage data, and promising practices from other communities to inform the Master Plan's recommendations.

1. Parks and recreation is very important to Strathroy-Caradoc residents – 94% of survey respondents felt that parks and recreation services should be a **high priority for Council**.
2. Many respondents expressed the need to be proactive given the Municipality's ongoing **population growth** and **aging infrastructure**. Spaces that are welcoming, accessible, inclusive, family-friendly and safe should be made a priority.
3. There is a desire to establish and implement a strategy to address **indoor recreation facility provision in Mount Brydges**. Ice users generally support the replacement of the Tri-Township Arena with a twin pad arena, while others support the development of a multi-use facility (e.g., gymnasium, turf, activity space, etc.).
4. Many respondents indicated a desire for an **indoor pool**.
5. Some expressed concern over a potential **loss of parkland**.
6. Interest was expressed in resolving gaps in **playground provision** (Strathroy) and providing additional **park amenities for unstructured play** such as sport courts (badminton, tennis, pickleball, etc.), outdoor rinks, and skateboard parks.

7. Suggestions were received for **improvements to existing facilities and park amenities**, such as adding washrooms to parks and lights to ball diamonds.
8. Many respondents expressed concerns about the **lack of parks and recreation facilities available in Mount Brydges** compared to the number that are provided in Strathroy.
9. Some raised concern over the loss of the Strathroy **seniors centre**, which will eliminate programming and room rental options in Strathroy.
10. There is support for more Municipally-directed **recreation programs**, especially for older adults and seniors.
11. While physical activity levels have generally declined during the **pandemic**, there has been a **greater appreciation for and use of parks and trails**. Going forward, residents expressed interest in outdoor amenities, local opportunities, and activities that can be done individually or in small groups. While most respondents are eager to return to the pre-pandemic activities, some will take a more cautious approach.



4 Strategic Framework

This section identifies the strategic framework that will guide the Master Plan's development and implementation. In creating this framework, the overarching strategies established in the 2015 Parks and Recreation Master Plan have been revisited through the lens of updated consultation and research, including alignment with foundational documents such as the Corporate Strategic Plan and Framework for Recreation in Canada.

4.1 Corporate Objectives

The following mission, vision and strategic priorities have been set by the current term of Municipal Council for the period of 2020-29.

Mission: We serve the communities of Strathroy-Caradoc by delivering modern municipal services, proactively planning for the future, and facilitating partnerships that advance our goals.

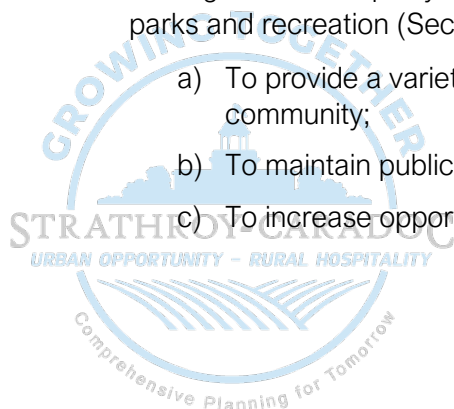
Vision: Strathroy-Caradoc's communities will provide economic opportunities, wellbeing and places to call home for residents and businesses.

Priorities:

- a) Local Infrastructure: Households and businesses in Strathroy-Caradoc are supported by reliable, financially responsible and well-maintained infrastructure networks.
- b) Economic Development: Strathroy-Caradoc will have a diverse tax base and be a place that offers a variety of economic opportunities to current and prospective residents and businesses.
- c) Community Wellbeing: Residents of all ages in Strathroy-Caradoc will have access to community amenities and activities that are accessible and support active lifestyles and wellbeing.
- d) Customer Service: The municipality offers seamless, responsive service and an exceptional experience for every customer.
- e) Growth Management: Strathroy-Caradoc will be an inclusive community where growth is managed to accommodate a range of needs and optimize municipal resources.
- f) Destination Building: Strathroy-Caradoc will provide distinct experiences that celebrate its past and future by prioritizing innovative new ideas that set the community apart.

Through the Municipality's Official Plan, several goals and objectives have been established for parks and recreation (Section 2.5.1), including:

- a) To provide a variety of recreational facilities to meet the diverse and changing needs of the community;
- b) To maintain public parks and recreation facilities to a safe and high standard;
- c) To increase opportunities for physical fitness;



- d) To achieve long term sustainability and active community participation in the provision and maintenance of public parks and recreation facilities.

4.2 A Vision for Parks and Recreation in Strathroy-Caradoc

Based on supporting documents and public input, the following vision and guiding principles have been established to guide the development and implementation of this Master Plan. This strategy reflects the values and aspirations articulated by the Municipality and the community as a whole. Together, the framework describes the core directions that the Municipality and its partners should strive to achieve over time.

4.2.1 Proposed Vision

Setting a “vision” for the Municipality in the delivery of parks and recreation programs, facilities and services is the initial step in setting a strategic path forward. A strategic vision depicts how the Municipality wants to be viewed in the future and compels Council, staff and the community to work together to achieve their collective goals over time.

The following **vision statement** – updated from the vision contained in the Municipality’s 2015 Parks and Recreation Master Plan – is proposed for parks and recreation in Strathroy-Caradoc:

**Strathroy-Caradoc will support a diverse range of accessible parks
and recreation opportunities that contribute to personal health and
community wellbeing, enrich quality of life for all ages,
promote partnerships and volunteerism, and
sustain the integrity of the natural environment.**

4.2.2 Proposed Guiding Principles

In 2015, the Framework for Recreation in Canada (FRC) was developed by the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association together with provincial/territorial Parks and Recreation Associations, and Provincial/Territorial Governments. The FRC supports coordinated policies and practices in recreation and related sectors in Canada with the aim of improving the wellbeing of individuals, communities, and the built and natural environments. The guiding principles of this Master Plan are informed by the five goals advanced in the FRC: Active Living; Access & Inclusion; Connecting People and Nature; Supportive Environments; and Recreation Capacity.

The following four guiding principles reflect input received from the Strathroy-Caradoc community and municipal officials. They are intended to inform and direct the Municipality’s approach to decision-making and investment over the next ten years and beyond. Everything the Municipality does in relation to parks and recreation should further the vision and one or more of the guiding principles.



Figure 22: Parks and Recreation Master Plan Guiding Principles



Detailed recommendations that will assist the Municipality and the community to achieve the vision and goals can be found in the following sections of this Master Plan, which are organized according to the four guiding principles.

5 Supporting Participation & Social Interaction

This section identifies current strengths in the Municipality's service delivery model, in addition to areas that could be improved through the adjustment of program offerings, management practices, policies and operating procedures.



Guiding Principle:

We will support affordable opportunities for physical activity, wellbeing and social interaction for residents of all ages and abilities.

Key directions:

1. Continue to expand Municipally-directed **recreation programs**, especially for children, teens, and seniors (e.g., indoor/outdoor, healthy/active living, all genders/abilities).
2. Continue to work with others to reduce **barriers to participation** (physical, geographic, financial, etc.).
3. Establish cost recovery targets and opportunities for **revenue generation** while ensuring **affordability** for core programs and services.
4. Over the longer-term, enhance support for **events and sport tourism**.



5.1 Service Delivery

There are numerous providers involved in the delivery of parks and recreation services in Strathroy-Caradoc, led by the Municipality's Community Services Department. This Department is responsible for the maintenance and operation of public recreation facilities and parks and the overall development and delivery of related services. In 2020, the Department's budget amounted to \$3.86 million and accounted for 8% of all Municipal expenditures. Key service areas are listed below, including those that are addressed within the Master Plan:

Departmental Services *within* the scope of this Master Plan

- Aquatics
- Arenas
- Caradoc Community Centre
- Parks Operations
- Recreation
- Scout House
- Tri-Township Arena (85%)

Departmental Services *beyond* the scope of this Master Plan

- Cemetery
- Library Operations
- Museum Operations

Other key providers and stakeholders with the parks and recreation sector include:

- volunteers and community organizations, such as sports leagues and service clubs that help to fund and program municipal parks and facilities;
- school boards, which provide spaces that are available for community use outside of school hours;
- Boards of Management, such as the board that operates the Tri-Township Arena and maintains parks in Mount Brydges;
- non-profit organizations and agencies, such as the YMCA which provide valuable community supports directly and indirectly related to recreation and leisure;
- Conservation Authority, which maintains notable natural areas within the area;
- private sector, which address needs such as fitness, dance, martial arts, etc.; and
- adjacent municipalities, some of which provide higher-order services such as indoor swimming.

The Municipality acknowledges these other providers and works to address gaps as they emerge, with the goal of maximizing existing parks and facilities. Two key approaches are taken: (1) the direct provision of programs and services by the Municipality; and (2) the provision of a range of supports to community organizations (i.e., community development). This illustrates a coordinated approach that focuses on providing a wide range of opportunities efficiently and effectively. Consideration is given to ensuring all residents are included, regardless of age, gender, income, background, etc.



Within this context, the following core service delivery responsibilities have been identified for the Municipality's Community Services Department (excluding cemetery, museum and library operations):

- a) assessing and responding to changing demographics, community issues, and trends;
- b) creating awareness of municipal services and engagement/participation opportunities;
- c) engaging the community in meaningful participation through planning, decision-making and service delivery;
- d) working to include all residents and advocating for marginalized individuals and groups;
- e) educating about and promoting the benefits of parks and recreation services;
- f) determining service gaps and needed improvements (with an emphasis on enhancing community wellness);
- g) providing core facilities where gaps exist or the capacity is not present in the community;
- h) building and fostering partnerships with key stakeholders in the delivery of services;
- i) playing an ongoing support role to community groups, volunteers and partners;
- j) delivering core programs focused on low-cost activities that promote community and individual health and wellness;
- k) supporting or facilitating social activities and events that promote community interaction, vibrancy and cohesion;
- l) developing effective and meaningful policies and procedures that enhance accountability and transparency; and
- m) providing exceptional customer service.

Due to the current hybrid service delivery model – where the Department is directly responsible for all facility/park operations and programs in Strathroy, but shares these responsibilities with the Tri-Township Arena Board and private contractors in Mount Brydges – the Municipality cannot fully fulfil these aforementioned roles across the entirety of Strathroy-Caradoc. The proposed redevelopment of the Mount Brydges arena (potentially as part of a multi-use facility) provides an opportunity to re-examine this service model to determine if it remains the most effective and efficient approach for the community.

Lastly, it is recommended that decision-making be aligned with the guiding principles of this Master Plan, which have been informed by the Framework for Recreation in Canada (2015). The Municipality can create alignment with these principles in several ways, such as: referencing them within staff reports; using them to help evaluate submissions to community grant programs; informing the annual budget process; embedding them within staff training and policy development; and more.



Recommendations

1. Align service delivery initiatives and decision-making with the **vision and guiding principles of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan**, which include: (1) Supporting Participation & Social Interaction; (2) Building Capacity & Relationships; (3) Activating our Parks; and (4) Renewing & Diversifying our Facilities.
2. As part of the planning for a new arena and multi-use facility in **Mount Brydges**, examine the **service delivery model** (e.g., municipal, third-party operator, etc.) to determine the most effective and efficient approach for parks, facilities and programs in this community.

5.2 Programming and Events

Access to affordable and high quality parks and recreation programs is an essential component of a healthy community. The goal of most municipal recreation departments is to introduce various programs that promote physical activity and sports, creative pursuits, and topics of general interest. This exposes residents to opportunities generally at an introductory level and encourages people to try new activities and reap the benefits of participation. A review of the offerings in Strathroy-Caradoc suggests that – while there is a broad range of opportunities for most age groups and abilities – there is room to add more offerings based on under-served markets and evolving community demand.

The Municipality's Community Services Department endeavours to provide a variety of programs that meet the recreational and leisure needs of the community, with a focus on affordable recreation opportunities that improve quality of life and health. Examples of programs offered by the Municipality include:

- Aquatics:
 - o registered courses, such as swimming lessons, water safety, Life Saving Society programs, swim team, able swimmers, Grade 3 Swim to Survive initiative – these attract over 660 registrations and nearly 11,000 visits per year to the Fair Grounds Aquatic Park
 - o drop-in programs, such as recreational swimming, lane swimming, aquafit, water polo, aquatic campers – these generate nearly 15,000 visits per year to the Fair Grounds Aquatic Park
- Public skating at arenas in Strathroy
- Camps:
 - o extensive summer sports, aquatics, and specialty camps (e.g., arts, science, cooking, adventure, etc.) – all have been growing in popularity, with over 750 registrations over nine weeks in 2019
 - o March Break camps, PA Day camps, Winter Break camps, accounting for 215 registrations in 2019

Special events such as Feast on Front

- Recreation programs during the fall, winter and summer – demand for programs (and resultant revenue) has grown considerably in recent years as shown in the table below

Table 6: Registration in Selected Municipal Recreation Programs (2015-2019)

Program - Participation	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Archery Tag	0	0	0	15	14
Archery Tag (Kids)	0	0	0	24	30
Badminton (Children)	0	0	0	0	0
Badminton (Adults)	29	69	66	69	64
Basketball (Children)	0	0	0	0	20
Basketball (Men's)	14	23	15	15	17
Junior Trades - Carpenters	0	0	0	0	40
Junior Trades - Chefs	0	0	0	6	48
Pickleball	48	91	108	113	144
Robotics	0	0	0	0	16
Talk N' Stroll	0	0	0	0	16
Volleyball (Co-ed League)	153	327	376	375	404
Volleyball (Kids)	0	0	0	0	20
Volleyball (Recreational)	24	50	47	44	49
Total	268	560	612	661	838

Staff regularly review registration statistics, reassess programs with low registration, and add new programs and opportunities to respond to trends and community needs (such as the junior trades and cooking programs). The Department needs to continue to be nimble and progressive in responding to emerging needs. Measuring participation rates year-to-year provides useful indicators locally and may identify gaps. The Municipality is also encouraged to work with other providers to understand participation figures and the degree to which the participation rate extends beyond directly-delivered programs. Every effort should be taken to increase participation rates and enhance social and health outcomes.

The Municipality strives to ensure that a variety of options are available throughout the year and seeks to leverage community resources by working in partnership with others. Some offerings require advance registration while others are drop-in (note: drop-in programs required pre-registration during the pandemic due to COVID-19 protocols), offering flexibility to participants. The new online booking system is well used for program registration, but could be expanded to facilitate facility/space bookings.

Input received through this plan indicates that the community is receptive to the Municipality providing more direct programming. Four-fifths (79%) of survey respondents identified recreation programs as being important to their household; however, only 41% were satisfied with the current offerings, suggesting that an expanded suite of program opportunities should be a priority. In addition, 56% of survey respondents agreed that a greater focus should be placed on supporting special events and sport tourism.

Consultation for this Master Plan yielded some requests for specific programs. Listed below, these suggestions will need to be tested further to better understand specific needs, space availability, and potential delivery and partnership options:

- more older adults and seniors’ activities;
- more casual and drop-in activities;
- more indoor (year-round) activity-specific training and play opportunities;
- self-directed outdoor play opportunities;
- engaging activities for teens;
- family-friendly events, concerts, cultural events, and winter festivals;
- more environmental stewardship opportunities/education; and
- additional social and learning activities (e.g., seniors’ mentorship, multi-generational programming, etc.).

As the Municipality grows, it is anticipated that programming will become more diverse. Facility upgrades and development also need to keep pace with these demands. The proposed arena/multi-use facility in Mount Brydges and the potential addition of new program space to the Gemini Sportsplex and/or repurposing of the West Middlesex Memorial Centre offer significant opportunity to do just that. By adding gymnasiums, walking tracks, multi-use space, and more diverse park amenities, the Municipality will be better positioned to meet the growing expectations of the community.

The decision to offer direct recreation programming is also informed by available staffing resources and the benefits to core markets and the community at large. The Municipality may also be the preferred provider due to reasons of accessibility, affordability, safety, and/or mandate alignment. It is vital for the Municipality to continue to evaluate the delivery of services on a regular basis and to consider new approaches that may improve the efficiency and cost effectiveness of existing services. In making decisions to support and promote specific activities, the Municipality may prioritize opportunities that:

- a) maintain or enhance the existing level of service;
- b) focus on children/youth, older adults/seniors and persons with disabilities;
- c) are affordable and accessible;
- d) incorporate physical literacy into child and youth activities;
- e) support healthy living and healthy aging;
- f) strengthen community partnerships;
- g) support unstructured and self-scheduled activities;
- h) promote the use of appropriate parks and facilities for special events;
- i) optimize the use of municipal parks and facilities; and
- j) allow people to connect with nature and be good environmental stewards.

Some specific opportunities to activate this mandate through programming are discussed further below.

- A lack of time is the number one barrier to participation for every age group, including older adults. Activities that are convenient, accessible, affordable, and relevant – such as many drop-in activities – have proven to be well attended. Across Ontario, exercise and fitness

classes, sports such as pickleball (mainly for older adults, but not exclusively), and drop-in activity times for pre-school children and caregivers are on the rise. Existing drop-in activities must continue to be promoted and adapted to respond to current trends.

- In addition, communities are increasingly animating their park spaces through year-round programming and new forms of community engagement. Some examples include (but are not limited to) fitness in the park, food trucks, and cultural events such as music, concerts, and theatre in the park. Viewing parks as “outdoor living rooms” helps to expand the scope of use and engages a broader range of residents and visitors, leading to experiential learning, participation, and community mobilization. This also helps to support the desire to move “indoor activities” outdoors in response to public health concerns relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Much of the Department’s program focus is currently on children and youth and this is expected to continue. However, demand for young and older adult programming is also growing and represents an emerging market for the Municipality. With the growing number of older adults and seniors in the community – coupled with the recent closure of the Strathroy Seniors’ Centre – this is a group that may be under-served as we recover from the pandemic. Today’s older adults are more active than previous generations and are making better use of municipal parks and recreation facilities as a result. Although additional multi-use program space is required to fully serve this demographic, efforts should be made to accommodate the needs of older adults and seniors within existing facilities in the interim.

Recommendations

3. Continue to expand affordable **drop-in and registered programming** with an emphasis on under-served groups such as children/youth, older adults, and lower-income households. Program planning should be done in coordination with community partners and in response to local needs, with an emphasis on services that promote physical activity and social inclusion.
4. Seek to **expand multi-use programming space** through major infrastructure renewal and development projects.
5. Support **expanded year-round park use, outdoor education and programming** through community development activities, special event coordination, and challenging play opportunities.
6. Collect **participation data from primary rental groups** (such as arena and sports field users, including residency) as part of the annual contract booking process. This data will help to inform the analysis of trends/community needs and to ensure the fair and transparent application of access policies.

5.3 Access and Affordability

Inclusive and affordable access to parks and recreation services improves individual, social, and economic wellbeing. Reducing barriers to participation is an ongoing goal of service providers everywhere. Coordination and communication within and between municipal departments and community agencies is paramount in creating a supportive environment for inclusive and universal access.

The Municipality strives to offer programs, parks, and facilities that can be used by all, but challenges still exist. One-fifth (19%) of survey respondents indicated that local parks and recreation programs are not affordable. To this end, the Municipality has partnered with the County of Middlesex and the Dairy Farmers of Ontario to offer two subsidy programs known as "Can I Play, Too?" and "Play It Forward" and many local organizations also make use of the Canadian Tire Jumpstart fund. These programs provide financial assistance to families whose financial situation creates barriers that limit their children from participating in community sports and recreation programs. The community survey found that the majority of households are not aware of these financial assistance programs, suggesting that additional promotion may be required. Demand for financial assistance programs should be monitored and reported on annually, with pooled funding adjusted accordingly to ensure that participation barriers are mitigated.

It is also important to recognize that the Municipality's recreation program and facility rental fees are intentionally set at levels below full cost recovery in order to promote participation and to derive the many benefits of individual and community wellness. Fees are typically subsidized by general taxation and other funding sources, while still ensuring that a portion of direct costs are borne by users. The Municipality has been working to establish fair and transparent fees and charges that achieve reasonable cost recoveries for its recreational offerings. For example, the Department includes a 25% reduction from standard rates for registered not-for-profit organizations, as well as a 12.43% rate reduction for registered minor sports groups.

A high-level scan of facility rental rates was undertaken to understand how Strathroy-Caradoc's fees compare with municipalities within the area, with the objective of maintaining competitive fees for use of facilities. A detailed comparison can be found in **Appendix C**. It is noted that the Department may select other municipalities of comparable size and level of service when conducting its own reviews.

The scan found that Strathroy-Caradoc's rental rates are below the benchmark average for summer ice and dry pad rentals, as well as public skate and shinny fees. Rates for halls and meeting rooms were also lower. Strathroy-Caradoc's rates are higher for prime-time ice and most pool admission rates. Additionally, the Municipality's rates are generally on par with the adult non-prime ice rentals, public swim admissions for children and youth, and swim programs. It was noted that Thames Centre is the only municipality to impose field lighting fees, as well as non-resident fees for the use of their arenas and sports fields.

These findings should be considered when Strathroy-Caradoc reviews its recreation rates to ensure that they are affordable for residents. Any adjustments to the Municipality's recreation rates should consider recovering a sustainable portion of the cost to operate the municipal facilities.

Recommendations

7. Formalize **cost recovery rates** and establish **rental and program fees** that are transparent, reflect the level of service, and are competitive within the region. Facility and sports field rental rates should be comprehensively reviewed every three years, with appropriate phase-in provisions.
8. Establish a **uniform rental and program rate schedule** for locations in Strathroy and Mount Brydges when the new arena/multi-use facility is built in Mount Brydges.
9. Review the rate for **summer ice rentals** to better reflect the cost of delivering this service.
10. Increase promotion of **financial assistance programs** in order to bolster awareness of opportunities for universal access to parks and recreation activities.
11. Expand the **online booking system** to facilitate facility/space bookings.

5.4 Funding and Service Levels

Understanding how Strathroy-Caradoc compares to other communities regarding the funding of parks and recreation is helpful to establishing a broader context. The Province of Ontario, through Financial Information Returns submitted annually by municipalities, tracks and publishes data on municipal spending, revenue, and resources. This data can be used to illustrate the level of financial support provided to parks and recreation services/facilities amongst comparable municipalities.

Prior to examining costs, revenue, and staffing levels, it is important to consider general levels of service. At a high-level, these can be illustrated by the existence of major facilities and capital assets, as venues such as arenas and pools are substantial cost centres with more significant staffing obligations. Compared to benchmark municipalities, the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc generally provides a similar range of parks, recreation, and cultural amenities per capita. Amongst the comparator group, the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc has a very similar value of tangible capital assets per capita (\$1,052 versus an average of \$1,019).



Table 7: Tangible Parks, Recreation, and Culture Capital Assets - Comparator Municipalities

Municipality	Major Facilities	Net Book Value of Tangible Capital Assets (2019)	Capital Asset Value Per Capita
Amherstburg	Multi-use recreation complex (twin pad arena, indoor soccer field), outdoor pool	\$24,188,836	\$1,103
Centre Wellington	Multi-use Sportsplex (twin pad arena, indoor pool), single pad arena, community hall	\$16,526,236	\$586
King	Multi-use facility (single pad arena, curling club, indoor track, fitness centre), 2 single pad arenas, 4 community halls, King Heritage and Cultural Centre, outdoor pool	\$40,196,258	\$1,640
Kingsville	Single pad arena, arts centre	\$9,377,459	\$435
Lincoln	Single pad arena, multi-use recreation facility (single pad arena, indoor track), event space, 2 outdoor pools	\$18,387,972	\$773
Middlesex Centre	Multi-use recreation centre (twin pad arena, fitness centre, gymnasium), single pad arena, 4 small community centres	\$23,854,610	\$1,382
Wilmot	Multi-use recreation complex (twin pad arena, indoor pools, active living centre, youth centre, indoor track)	\$25,061,142	\$1,147
Woolwich	Multi-use recreation centre (twin pad arena, indoor pool, fitness centre, track, youth centre, seniors centre), single pad arena	\$29,956,285	\$1,198
Group Average		\$23,443,600	\$1,019
Strathroy-Caradoc	Twin pad arena, 2 community centres (one with single pad arena and gymnasium), single pad arena (board-run), outdoor pool	\$21,958,651	\$1,052

Source: Schedule 51, Financial Information Returns (2019)

Major facilities sourced from municipal websites

Per Capita Values calculated using the 2019 municipal population estimates and/or 2016 Census Profile, Statistics Canada contained in Table 2

As shown in the following table, the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc's average municipal tax amount (for all services) per residential household in 2019 was 4% lower than the average of the comparator group (\$1,504 versus \$1,562). This suggests that the Municipality values the efficient and effective delivery of services and that residents expect value for their tax dollars.

Table 8: Municipal Population and Tax Comparison – Comparator Municipalities

Municipality	Population (2019)	Households (2019)	Average Municipal Taxes per Household (2019)*
Amherstburg	21,936**	9,434	\$2,084
Centre Wellington	28,191	12,918	\$889
King	24,512	8,736	\$3,175
Kingsville	21,552	8,990	\$1,554
Lincoln	23,787	9,363	\$1,399
Middlesex Centre	17,262	6,578	\$2,132
Wilmot	21,850	7,991	\$849
Woolwich	25,006	9,117	\$820
Group Average	23,012	9,141	\$1,562
Strathroy-Caradoc	20,867**	9,127	\$1,504

Source: Schedules 22A, Financial Information Returns (2019)

* lower-tier/residential only

** 2016 Census population

The Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc's annual per capita spending on parks, recreation, and culture is 31% lower than the average of the comparator group (\$204 versus \$293), indicating that the Municipality funds these services at a lower rate than the other municipalities and/or has achieved notable efficiencies in the delivery of service.

Table 9: Annual Spending on Parks, Recreation, and Culture

Comparison	Annual Expenses (2019)	Per Household	Per Capita
Group Average	\$6,752,308	\$739	\$293
Strathroy-Caradoc	\$4,246,725	\$465	\$204

Source: Schedule 40, Financial Information Returns (2019)

The Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc's annual per capita revenue associated with parks, recreation, and culture is 33% higher than the comparator group average (\$86 versus \$65). This demonstrates a commitment to revenue generation and optimization of existing spaces and services.

Table 10: Annual Revenue (User Fees & Service Charges) Associated with Parks, Recreation, Culture

Comparison	Annual Revenue (2019)	Per Household	Per Capita
Group Average	\$1,493,079	\$163	\$65
Strathroy-Caradoc	\$1,796,860	\$197	\$86

Source: Schedule 12, Financial Information Returns (2019)

Across all comparator communities, expenses outpaced revenues, underscoring the subsidy that is afforded parks, recreation, and culture services. In 2019, the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc recovered 42% of its expenses through revenues, higher than the comparator group average (22%).

In terms of staffing levels, the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc's annual per capita spending on personnel for parks, recreation, and culture is 44% lower than the comparator group average (\$74 versus \$132). The number of employees (full time equivalents, estimated) in Strathroy-Caradoc is slightly lower than the comparator municipalities average (34 FTE versus 38 FTE).

Table 11: Salaries, Wages, and Employee Benefits for Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Facilities/Programs (subset of total expenses)

Comparison	Annual Staffing Expenses (2019)	Per Household	Per Capita
Group Average	\$3,035,447	\$332	\$132
Strathroy-Caradoc	\$1,548,472	\$170	\$74

Source: Schedule 40, Financial Information Returns (2019)

Table 12: Employees Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Facilities/Programs

Comparison	Full-Time	Part-Time	Seasonal	FTE (estimate)	Population per Employee
Group Average	20	60	25	38	606
Strathroy-Caradoc	16	0	55	34	608

Source: Schedule 80A, Financial Information Returns (2019)

These findings consistently demonstrate that the Municipality's parks, recreation, and culture staffing, resourcing and spending levels are lower than the benchmark municipalities. This suggests efficient operations and levels of service that have room for future growth. Given these efficiencies, additional funding would be required for the Municipality to substantially improve operational and capital aspects of its parks and recreation system.

Recommendations

- Continue to encourage **long-term financial sustainability** through the cost-effective and efficient management of resources, appropriate application of user fees and the securement of external funding.

6 Building Capacity & Relationships

The Municipality values the many contributions of volunteers and community organizations to the local parks and recreation system. By working together – formally or informally – we are better able to respond to the wide range of needs. This section examines opportunities to build capacity and foster relationships within both the Corporation and the community.



Guiding Principle:

We will collaborate with the community and build capacity to respond to the diverse needs of our growing municipality.

Key Directions:

1. Adopt a **strengths-based service delivery approach** that maximizes the skills and resources of volunteers, non-profit groups, the Municipality, and the private sector.
2. Ensure that **Municipal staffing levels** keep pace with growth and demand (e.g., customer service, program staff).
3. Enhance **communication and information sharing** with service clubs and local organizations through annual forums and topic-based discussions.
4. Engage the **community and potential partners** in the implementation of the Master Plan.

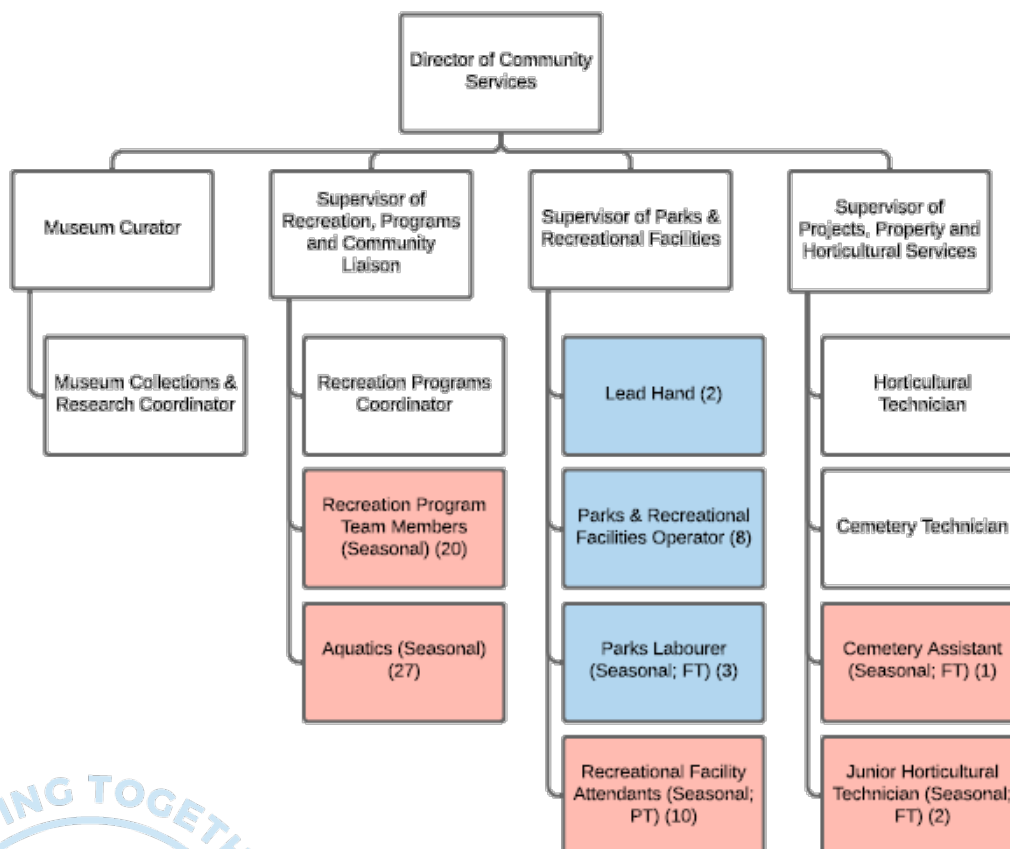


6.1 Staffing and Governance

The Municipality's Community Services Department is committed to providing and enabling programs and services that are responsive to community needs and are delivered effectively. Led by a Director that is part of the Municipality's Senior Management Team, the Department is divided into four divisions, each with a supervisor: (1) recreation and programs; (2) parks and facilities; and (3) properties, horticulture, and cemeteries; and (4) culture/museum. Front-line staff are a mix of full-time, part-time, and seasonal staff, reporting to their respective supervisors. The Department structure facilitates the effective and efficient deployment of resources within a transparent and accountable reporting structure.

Arena and parks operations in Mount Brydges make use of municipal capital equipment and are the responsibility of a third-party board, while concession operations with Strathroy arenas are contracted out to a private operator. Reconsideration of the service delivery model in Mount Brydges was recommended in Section 5.

Figure 23: Current Organizational Structure – Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc Community Services Department



Looking forward, a greater focus on customer service (e.g., bookings, registration, communications, data/software management, etc.) may be required due to rising resident expectations and the provision of a broader range of services and facilities. Currently, many of

these duties are the responsibility of the Supervisor or Recreation, Programs and Community Liaison; however, as the number and range of programs grows within the Municipality, there may be a need for additional staff resources to support the customer service and permitting needs across all divisions of the Community Services Department.

As the Municipality grows, additional operations staff will be needed to keep pace with the expanded system of programs, parks and trails – many of these are likely to be part-time or seasonal staff. Opportunities to consolidate part-time staff into full-time positions may be considered should there be challenges with recruiting and retaining qualified staff. To support the increasing use of the growing parks system, a new parks and open space coordinator should also be considered; this position would be responsible for landscape planning, park design, park renewal projects, environmental management, park activation initiatives, and more.

In terms of governance, the Municipality has several advisory committees that report directly to Council. Those with mandates impacting the Community Services Department include the Community Development Advisory Committee (CDAC), Museum Strathroy-Caradoc Advisory Committee, Tri-Township Arena Board, as well as two Conservation Authority Boards. CDAC has the primary role of advising and assisting the Municipality in promoting parks, recreation, cultural and community development-based activities, identifying capital requirement, and providing direction on programs and community services. Other notable roles of CDAC include administration of the Municipality's community grant program (Progress Through Partnership) and assisting in implementation of relevant master plans.

Recommendations

13. Continually review Departmental **staffing levels** to ensure alignment with levels of service. Additional staff will be required as the Municipality grows, including parks operations, programming, and customer service. Through future budgets, specific consideration should be given to the creation of two new positions: (1) events and booking coordinator (posted in late 2021); and (2) parks and open space coordinator.

6.2 Policies, Procedures and Guidelines

A range of policies, procedures, by-laws and guidelines are necessary to ensure effective, orderly and transparent delivery of services. As the scope of municipal services grows and new issues arise, the review and enhancement of existing policy tools (both internal and external) is required. The list is broad – from customer service to facility allocation, from fees and charges to parkland dedication, from health and safety to in-kind services, and many more. While the Municipality has many policies and standard operating procedures in place relative to parks and recreation, resources are required to monitor and respond to the changing operating and legislative environment.

As the Municipality expands its programming over time, continued support of customer service policies and quality standards policies will be required. There are several quality assurance programs available to recreation providers, such as HIGH FIVE, which ensures that children's programs are age-appropriate, meet safety and supervisory needs, are enjoyable, and offer some

skill mastery; this program has recently been extended to older adult programming. Continued participation in this program is recommended, with consideration of extending support to the new HIGH FIVE quality framework for older adults.

The Municipality has few formal processes and performance metrics in place for parks and recreation beyond the required provincial reporting. Considering the adage “what gets measured gets done”, it is important that the Municipality seek ways to capture the benefit of its services and programs and illustrate the value to residents and the local economy. Useful metrics may include level of investment, participation rates, event attendance, grants leveraged and user satisfaction. This approach will enable staff to easily compare performance year-over-year in relation to established targets.

Recommendations

14. Undertake regular reviews of municipal parks and recreation **policies and guidelines** to ensure that they are up-to-date, accurate and appropriate. Steps should be taken to address gaps in policies and procedures, where applicable.
15. Identify key **performance indicators and targets** that illustrate the value of parks and recreation services. This includes (but is not limited to) participation data and satisfaction levels for activities offered by the Municipality and community.

6.3 Partnerships and Working Together

6.3.1 Community Partnerships

The strength and success of the local parks and recreation system lies in the Municipality’s ability to work in partnership with the community to provide quality facilities, programs and events. In recognizing and utilizing the assets available within the community, the Municipality is able to leverage its resources while benefitting from the capacity of residents and community organizations. This requires collaboration between the Municipality, schools, volunteers, non-profit providers, stakeholder agencies and the private sector, with each entity delivering skills in key areas.

Partnerships play an important role in the provision and upgrading of parks and recreation facilities and services within Strathroy-Caradoc. Fostering community partnerships is imperative in a climate of increasing costs and declining resources. The ability to work together around shared goals can produce outstanding results and deliver value to taxpayers. The community use of schools arrangement involving the Gemini Sportsplex and two high schools is one example of this.

Through its policies and programs, the Municipality has shown a clear commitment to working with community partners. For example, the Municipality’s community partnership program – “Progress Through Partnership” – is one way that the Department works with community partners to effectively deliver services. This financial assistance program provides groups with waived fees or discounted use of facilities in a fair and transparent manner based on an annual granting mechanism. For qualified capital projects, the Municipality matches up to 50% of funds contributed

by community groups (up to \$40,000), organizations and/or businesses providing funds. Recent projects that have benefit from this program include the track replacement at the Sleepy Hollow Railway, a bike repair station, Cenotaph repairs, cross-ice hockey nets, batting cage, and dog waste containers.

Other examples of facilitating community development locally that the Municipality may consider include:

- supporting organizing committees in the provision of special events;
- helping groups to generate awareness of their services through marketing and promotion efforts;
- assisting groups with volunteer recruitment, training, recognition and succession planning;
- facilitating partnership arrangements to provide programs and access to facilities; and
- providing technical supports and trends research where appropriate

The most successful partnerships are derived from common objectives (e.g., environmental conservation, community improvement, physical activity, etc.), maximizing the strengths of each party, and mitigating risks (e.g., costs, liability, etc.). There are a number of criteria that must be considered prior to establishing a relationship with a third party wishing to introduce a new level of service with municipal assistance. To adequately prepare to effectively manage partnership opportunities, it is recommended that the Municipality follow a standardized partnership framework and decision-making process, including for the evaluation of unsolicited proposals involving non-core services (which should be informed by a proponent-led business plan).

The following guidelines for Municipal participation in community-led initiatives were established in the 2015 Master Plan and remain appropriate. Specifically, Strathroy-Caradoc may consider leading or supporting initiatives that embody the following characteristics:

- identification of demonstrated need at reasonable participation levels;
- evidence of long-term sustainability for the program or service;
- assured public accessibility, participation and affordability;
- involvement by the Municipality at a scale reflective of the benefits to be achieved to both the participants and the community at large;
- the use of business case analysis as a basis to support Municipal investments in parks and recreation services initiatives;
- consistent with Municipal revenue generation strategies; and
- a transferability assessment of directly-delivered Strathroy-Caradoc programs as to how they might be delivered in the future by an alternate service provider.



The 2015 Master Plan also recommended that the Municipality establish a partnership evaluation process – supported by data collection and outcome-driven metrics – to effectively assess:

- the value of the Municipality's role in the various service delivery strategies;
- the degree of participation that is being realized; and
- the benefits being achieved through the Municipality's investments.

Recommendations

16. Continue to **work with partners** to reduce reliance on tax dollars in providing quality parks and recreation services in Strathroy-Caradoc. Use a standard set of criteria to evaluate municipal participation in proposals from outside interests, informed by the guiding principles and recommendations of this Master Plan.
17. Continue to **engage adjacent municipalities and public sector agencies** (e.g., health unit, public library, school boards, YMCA, etc.) on initiatives that improve access to recreation services for Strathroy-Caradoc residents.

6.3.2 Volunteer Support

Volunteers are the backbone of the recreation system as they deliver many sports programs and special events and help to fund community improvements. However, increasing regulation and administrative requirements are taxing many groups; nationwide research suggests that volunteer involvement has stagnated as younger generation are less inclined to volunteer their time. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this and put many volunteer-run organizations at risk of folding. In cases where volunteer involvement wanes, residents will look to the Municipality to assume many of these responsibilities, leading to increased costs and difficult decisions.

There is a growing need for community volunteer support and management resources (e.g., recruitment, screening, training, recognition, etc.). The Community Services Department recognizes the outstanding contributions of local volunteers through the annual "Medal of Distinction" awards program, which was recommended in the 2015 Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Some additional options to be considered include the expansion of inter-generational volunteering opportunities (e.g., youth and seniors), as well as creating connections between mandatory high school community service requirements and municipal/community volunteer needs.

Recommendations

18. Continue to actively support **volunteer-led community organizations** and facilitate municipal volunteers in the development and delivery of parks and recreation programs and services.

6.4 Communications

A lack of awareness was cited by some residents as barriers to participation in parks and recreation activities in Strathroy-Caradoc. This is a challenge in many communities as people are increasingly looking for their information through a growing array of mediums. The key is to effective marketing

is to ensure that messaging is consistent, accurate and in formats that are accessible to as many residents as possible; this includes sustained messaging around the benefits of participation and healthy lifestyles.

The Community Services Department has a significant online presence, offering a great deal of program and facility information through its website, which also supports online registration. Event information and other relevant notifications are also available through Corporate social media channels (Facebook and Twitter). Print material is more limited, such as a program guide for the Fair Grounds Aquatic Park, which targets both residents and non-residents. The digital roadside sign at the Fair Grounds Recreation Complex is also effective at spreading word, as are articles and advertisements within the local newspaper.

The Municipality should regularly test the effectiveness of its marketing efforts through surveys of program participants and other means. Recognizing that many new residents are moving to the area and that several still value printed materials, the potential to develop a printed Community Guide (seasonal) – potentially in partnership with other departments or service providers – should be explored. In addition, the Municipality’s new recreation management software may help to leverage customer intelligence that can be used for targeted marketing.

Input from stakeholders found a desire for local groups to be consulted on issues affecting them. An open line of communication with community groups is necessary to ensure that issues, ideas, concerns, suggestions, needs, etc. are voiced and addressed. To this end, it was recommended in the previous Master Plan that the Municipality host annual forums with community organizations and the public to collectively discuss issues and opportunities related to service delivery, community needs, policy, and overall communication. Public and stakeholder engagement should also be a mandatory requirement for all major capital projects and policy decisions impacting the community and user groups, as has been the case through the Recreation Facilities Infrastructure Renewal Plan.

Recommendations

19. Continue to utilize and enhance a variety of **communication tools** to promote and gather feedback on parks and recreation services and initiatives. Options for expanding printed materials, such as seasonal Community Guides, should be considered.
20. Host **annual forums and information sessions** with community organizations and service providers to enhance community awareness and discuss topics of interest.

7 Activating our Parks

Public parks are important places for building a sense of community and social belonging. To ensure that the Municipality keeps pace with land-based demands, this section examines the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc's parks and open space system, along with future requirements and policy considerations.



Guiding Principle:

We will build a high quality parks system by offering distinct experiences that encourage residents to get outside and enjoy our parks.

Key Directions:

1. Update **parkland policies** (e.g., classification system, dedication), as appropriate.
2. Enhance **wayfinding and signage** (coordinated with trails).
3. Provide guidance to **future park development and redevelopment program**. Consider environmental management practices and climate change mitigation initiatives.
4. Improve the supply and distribution of **playgrounds** in Strathroy.
5. Implement the planned development of the **All-Wheels Park** in Strathroy.
6. Expand provision of **park amenities for unstructured play and all-season activity** (sport courts, outdoor rinks, washrooms, community gardens, etc.).



7.1 Parkland Inventory and Classification

The following table and maps provide a summary of existing parks that are owned and/or maintained by the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc. Privately-owned lands, natural areas and open spaces (including lands maintained by the Conservation Authority) are excluded.

Table 13 Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc Parkland Inventory

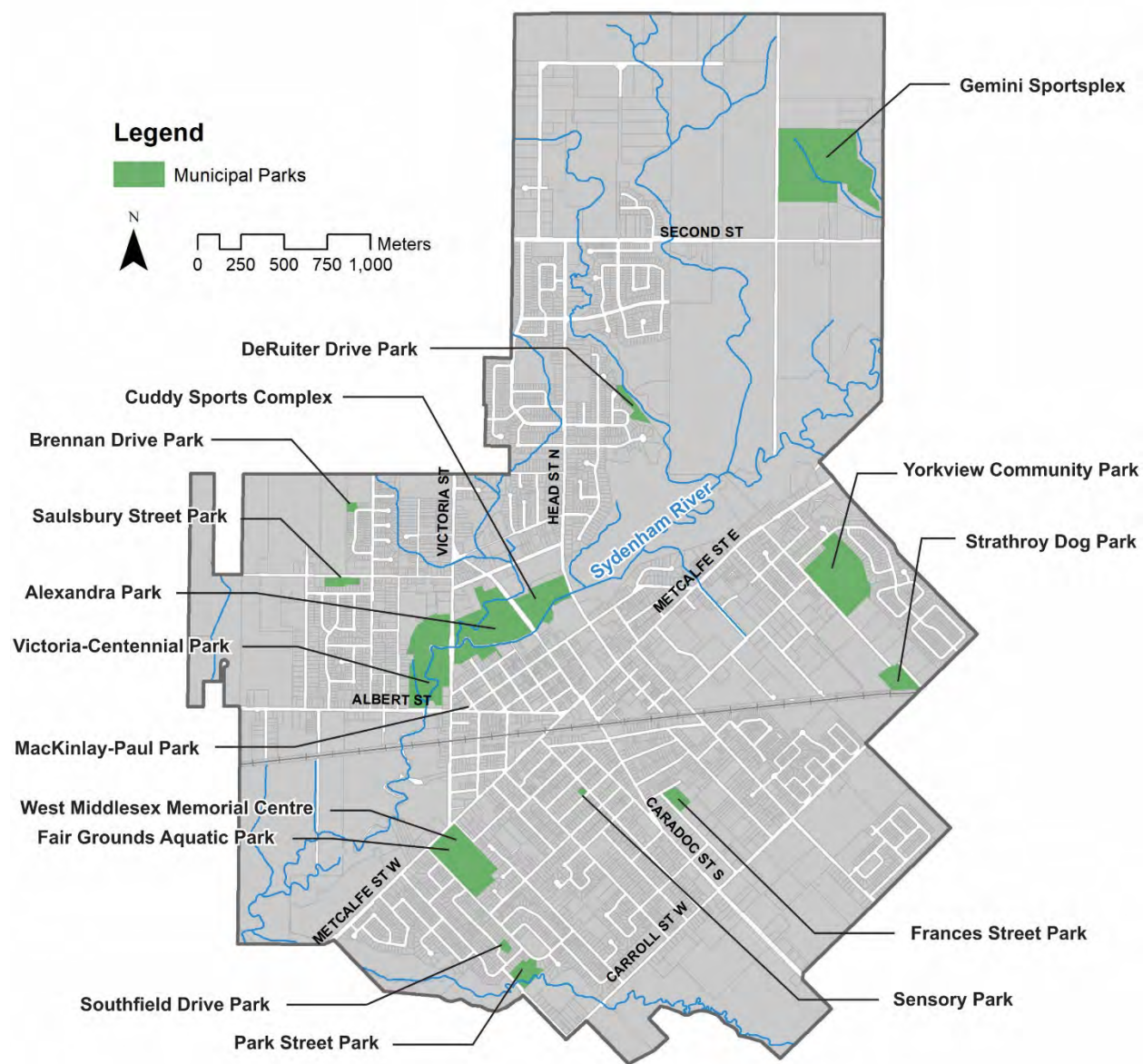
Park Name	Classification	Community	Size (ha) ¹
Alexandra Park	Community Park	Strathroy	10.8
Brennan Drive Park ²	Neighbourhood Park	Strathroy	0.3
Cuddy Sports Complex	Major Park	Strathroy	5.0
Fair Grounds Aquatic Park	Major Park	Strathroy	8.0
Frances Street Park	Neighbourhood Park	Strathroy	1.2
Gemini Sportsplex ³	Major Park	Strathroy	8.0
MacKinlay-Paul Park	Neighbourhood Park	Strathroy	<0.1
Park Street Park	Neighbourhood Park	Strathroy	1.8
Saulsbury Street Park	Neighbourhood Park	Strathroy	1.0
Sensory Park	Neighbourhood Park	Strathroy	0.2
Southfield Drive Park	Neighbourhood Park	Strathroy	0.9
Strathroy Dog Park	Community Park	Strathroy	2.1
Victoria-Centennial Park	Community Park	Strathroy	11.0
Yorkview Community Park	Major Park	Strathroy	10.3
Strathroy Total			60.7
Applewood Park	Neighbourhood Park	Mount Brydges	0.2
Bennett Crescent Park	Neighbourhood Park	Mount Brydges	0.2
Caradoc Community Park	Community Park	Mount Brydges	4.3
Churchill Street Park ⁴	Neighbourhood Park	Mount Brydges	0.4
Glover Crescent Park	Neighbourhood Park	Mount Brydges	0.3
Lioness Park	Neighbourhood Park	Mount Brydges	0.5
Lions Park ⁵	Community Park	Mount Brydges	3.6
Mount Brydges Cenotaph Park	Neighbourhood Park	Mount Brydges	0.6
Mount Brydges Legion Park	Community Park	Mount Brydges	1.5
Optimist Park	Neighbourhood Park	Mount Brydges	0.2
Mount Brydges Total			11.8
Total Parkland			72.5

Source: Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc 2021

Notes:

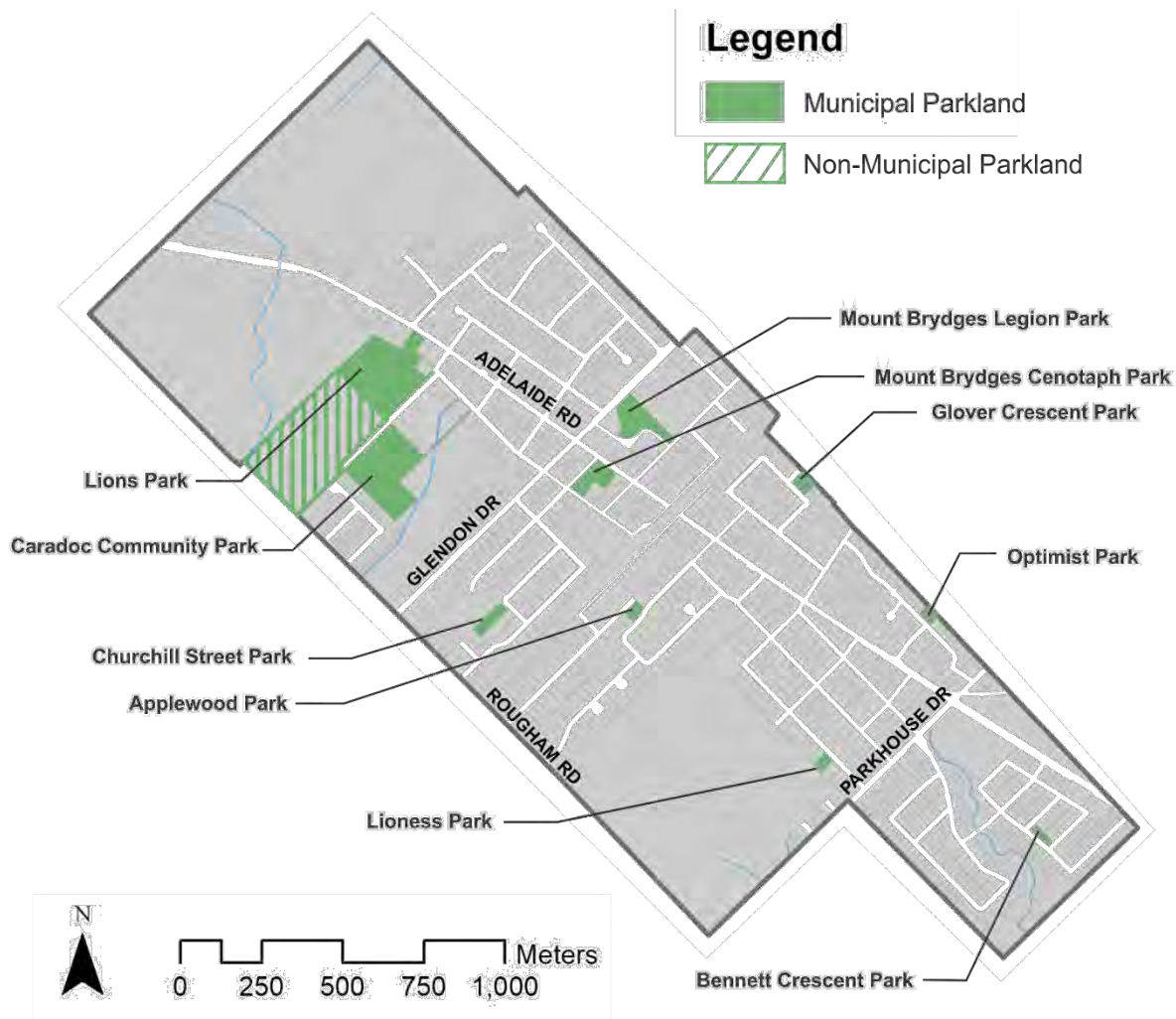
1. Totals may not add due to rounding. Includes lands containing major indoor recreation facilities. Natural Areas are not included including the DeRuiter Drive Park (1.2 ha) and other natural areas including lands associated with the Rotary Memorial Trail, and the woodlot and trails adjacent to Churchill Street Park.
2. The Municipality is in the process of deeming this site surplus and converting to residential.
3. The lands which are controlled by the high schools, including the football/multi-use field, the two easterly full size soccer fields, and the small field are not included in the parkland area.
4. The adjacent woodlands and trails are not included as part of the Churchill Street neighbourhood park.
5. Excludes the adjacent parklands owned by the Mount Brydges Lions Club (approximately 8 hectares).

Figure 24 – Municipal Parkland in Strathroy



Note: The Municipality is in the process of deeming Brennan Drive Park surplus and converting to residential.

Figure 25 – Municipal Parkland in Mount Brydges



1: Skatepark at Mount Brydges Legion Park



2: Playground at Mount Brydges Lions Park



3: Sleepy Hollow Railroad in Strathroy



4: Strathroy Dog Park



5: Splash Pad at Alexandra Park



6: Sensory Park in Strathroy



7: Soccer Field at Cuddy Sports Complex



8: Cenotaph Park in Mount Brydges

The core element of park planning is the parkland classification system. A classification system defines the range of characteristics found in municipal parks, such as their size, form, function and/or level of amenity. Such definition encourages a broad range of park types and facility combinations that enables a consistent management approach that can be tailored to respond to community needs. The identification of common elements also helps to ensure compatibility with neighbouring land uses, while providing the community, developers and planners with an understanding of what new or redeveloped parks may include.

Originally defined in Appendix A of the Municipality's 2015 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, these elements are summarized below. Although these definitions are not captured in the current Official Plan, they should be incorporated as part of the Official Plan Review and Update.

Neighbourhood Parks ("Active Parkland")

Neighbourhood Parks are intended to serve the local community within a 5-10 minute walk (400-800m) of the park. They should typically be 0.5 to 1 hectare in size and provide facilities to serve the local community such as play structures, benches and seating areas, informal sport fields, paved courts, community gardens, walkways and passive open space. They typically have non-programmed spaces that are free for public use.

Community Parks ("Active Parkland")

Community Parks are intended to serve multiple neighbourhoods and may also provide specialized facilities or amenities which may serve the neighbourhood park needs of the local community, while also serving the community or municipality as a whole. These parks are typically 1 to 3 hectares in size and provide a range of facilities including multiple outdoor sports fields or sport courts, as well as play structures, splash pads, passive open spaces, pathways and walkways. They may include both fee-based facilities that require booking as well as non-programmed spaces that are free for public use.

Major Parks ("Active Parkland")

Major Parks are significant recreational destinations which serve the municipality as a whole, or even residents from surrounding municipalities. They are typically a minimum of 3 hectare in size and may include large sport complexes with multiple outdoor sports fields or courts, swimming pools, hard surfaced arenas, as well as play structure, passive open space, and trails/pathways. In the 2015 Master Plan the following parks are listed as 'Major Parks': Gemini Sports Complex, Cuddy Sports Complex, Fair Grounds Recreation Complex, and Yorkview Community Park.

Natural Areas ("Open Space")

Natural areas are typically lands used for conservation of natural heritage features, which may have some form of passive public recreation. Their size is dependent upon the natural feature they are conserving plus the ecological buffer to protect it from negative impacts

from development. The main natural area and open space system within the Municipality is along the Sydenham River Valley in Strathroy. Some of these lands are owned by the Municipality and are part of the Cuddy Sports Complex, Alexandra Park and Victoria-Centennial Park, while others are owned and maintained by the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority.

With a total of 72.5 hectares, the Municipality is currently providing active parkland at a rate of 3.0 hectares per 1,000 residents. This figure increases to 80.6 hectares and 3.3 hectares per 1,000 residents when the lands maintained as public parkland by the Mount Brydges Lions Club are included. On a per capita basis, Mount Brydges has a greater supply of active parkland than Strathroy (6.3ha/1000, compared to 4.2ha/1000; excluding the Lions Club lands).

Section 3 of the Municipality's Official Plan (2014-2034) defines the following provision targets by park type for the settlement area of Strathroy; provision standards are not provided for Mount Brydges. Overall, the Official Plan states that *"a standard of 8 hectares of open space per 1,000 population shall be used as a guide governing land acquisitions"*.

The current target for "active parkland" (community, neighbourhood and major parks) is 1.5 ha/1000, although the Municipality is achieving a level of 3.0 to 3.3 ha/1000 across Strathroy-Caradoc. This target should be reassessed through the Official Plan update to reflect current supplies and future needs.

In addition, a provision standard of 6.5ha/1000 has been set for "open space" lands; we do not have a full inventory of these lands and they are excluded from the analysis in this Master Plan. As open space lands are not accepted as part of the parkland dedication requirement, it is not generally appropriate to set a target for these lands.

Table 14 – Official Plan Parkland Provision Standards v. Actual

Park Classification	Current Inventory (hectares)	Provision Target (per 1,000 population)	Current Provision (per 1,000 population)
Neighbourhood Parks	7.8	0.5 ha/1000 (1.5 acres)	0.32 ha/1000
Community Parks	33.3	1.0 ha/1000 (2.5 acres)	1.38 ha/1000
Major Parks	31.3	n/a	1.30 ha/1000
Total	72.5 ha	1.5 ha/1000 (plus 6.5ha/1000 of open space)	3.0 ha/1000

Note: Current provision based on population estimate of 24,100 persons

Future parkland needs are discussed later in this chapter.

Recommendations

21. Through the Official Plan Review, update the **parkland classification system** to align with the hierarchy proposed in this Master Plan (neighbourhood, community, and major parks). This hierarchy should be used to guide the development or redevelopment of parks according to park type, size, service level and the amenities that they provide.

7.2 Parkland Policy

There are several regulations, policies and guidelines governing the acquisition and location of parkland. This begins with the Ontario Planning Act, which establishes a framework for the dedication of parkland and possible alternatives for the dedication of land for park and recreation purposes.

The Municipality's Official Plan sets out objectives for parks and open spaces, along with policies for parkland dedication and development. Currently, there are separate sets of policies for parks and open spaces in Strathroy and Mount Brydges within the current Official Plan; a single policy regime that applies across entire Municipality should be considered within the Official Plan Review. In addition, the Official Plan should direct the Municipality to implement the recommendations of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, as appropriate.

The Municipality also has a Parkland Dedication By-law (No. 58-19) that works in tandem with the Official Plan in order to guide the parkland acquisition process, including conditions for the requirement, valuation, and collection of parkland dedication and cash-in-lieu.

Development approvals provide mechanisms for municipal parkland acquisition. Options available to municipalities include:

- 1) 5% of land: Taking 5% of gross residential land for parkland dedication (or 2% for commercial/industrial developments);
- 2) Cash-in-lieu: Accepting cash-in-lieu of the parkland dedication at the rates identified above (5%/2%); funds are kept in a reserve and can be spent on the purchase of lands elsewhere or on the improvement of parkland;
- 3) A blend of 5% and cash-in-lieu: Determining a partial dedication where less than the 2% or 5% of land is taken and the remainder is accepted as cash-in-lieu; or
- 4) Alternative parkland rate: Under certain conditions, a municipality may require the conveyance of one hectare of parkland per 300 dwellings units (or 1 hectare per 500 units when accepting cash-in-lieu) if greater than the 5% requirement.

The Municipality's current policies establish the 5%, 2% and cash-in-lieu allowances, but do not allow for the alternative parkland rate. The alternative rate (1ha:300 units if land or 1ha:500 units if cash) is advantageous for residential proposals exceeding 15 units per hectare. This policy change should be considered more fully under the Official Plan Review and Update as it will help ensure that growth pays for growth.

Note: In 2020, the Province of Ontario passed Bill 197 (COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act), which made a number of adjustments to the parkland dedication sections of the Ontario Planning Act, among other changes. Current legislation now states that new Parkland Dedication By-laws with the alternative rate are appealable to the Ontario Land Tribunal.

Furthermore, it is a requirement that new Parkland Dedication By-laws using the alternative rate must be supported by a Parks Plan, which includes a duty to consult with local school boards. If this step is completed, this master plan may serve as the basis for a Municipal Parks Plan.

An additional benefit of having a Parkland Dedication By-law is that it enables municipalities to require cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication at the Planning Act's Section 42 rate (day before building permit), as opposed to the Section 51.1 rate (day before draft plan approval). In order to enable this tool, reference to the Section 42 rate must be in both the Official Plan and Parkland Dedication By-law. Reference should be made to this through the Official Plan Review and Update.

Recommendations

22. Through the **Official Plan Review**:

- a) seek to create alignment between the Master Plan's guiding principles and the overall **goals and objectives** for the parks and recreation system;
- b) update the **provision targets** for each park type, with the goal of maintaining a municipal-wide supply of 2.0 hectares of active parkland per 1,000 residents to be applied to future growth;
- c) establish a **single policy regime** for Parks and Open Space that applies across the entire Municipality;
- d) ensure that **natural areas/open space** are not accepted as part of the required parkland dedication;
- e) ensure alignment with current Planning Act and recent changes via **Bill 197** relating to parkland dedication;
- f) include language to allow for parkland cash-in-lieu valuation to be via **Section 42** (day before building permit); and
- g) consider introduction of the **alternate parkland dedication rate** (this also requires an updated parkland dedication by-law and consultation with school boards).

7.3 Future Parkland Needs and Acquisition

Parks and open spaces are key components of a community's health as they provide places where people can recreate, connect and congregate for social interaction. In turn, an appropriate level of parkland provision is critical to ensuring a high quality of life and supporting an equitable distribution of amenities that achieve community objectives.

The focus of this Master Plan is on the provision and management of "parks", which are differentiated from "open spaces" in several ways. This emphasis is not intended to discount the impact of open space properties (such as DeRuiter Drive Park and other lands associated with the

Rotary Memorial Trail), which include well-used trails and help the Municipality meet its environmental conservation objectives. It is expected that the Municipality will continue to secure and/or protect select open space properties where there is a municipal mandate and community will to do so, although open space parcels will typically be acquired (where required) outside of the parkland dedication requirement.

Park demand is influenced by several factors, such as distribution and proximity to residential areas, non-municipal providers, urban density, population composition, amenity needs, existing park types, community objectives, and public input. Community input indicates that the parks system is highly valued by residents and efforts should be made to ensure that provision levels remain appropriate – 87% of survey respondents agreed that the Municipality should place a priority on the acquisition of parks and open space.

Most municipalities use population-based targets to calculate and plan parkland supply. A parkland target is particularly important because it is becoming more complex and costly to secure quality parcels for parkland within new higher density forms of development. Intensification generates less parkland per capita than traditional greenfield development, making it difficult to accommodate the desired sports fields and other recreational activities residents have come to expect.

The Municipality's current parkland provision rate is **3.0 hectares per 1,000 residents**, excluding open space and non-municipal parcels. Comparable urban/rural municipalities typically strive to achieve provision rates in the range of 2.0 to 3.0 hectares per 1,000 residents (mature state) to meet their active recreational needs associated with sports fields, playgrounds, courts and more. Strathroy-Caradoc is at the upper end of this range at this time.

Smaller municipalities with dispersed populations generally require more parkland per capita as there is an inherent need to ensure adequate access to a range of amenities for all residents. Land values also tend to be lower and community partnerships more prominent in smaller communities, thus there are more opportunities to support a robust and well-serviced parkland system. Conversely, it can be more challenging to assemble large blocks of land for community parks and development often occurs on a smaller scale.

Strathroy-Caradoc's current parkland inventory is generally meeting community needs. There are no immediate requirements for additional sports fields and the current sites can accommodate the desired amenities. The distribution of parkland is presently more of a challenge than the overall supply, as some areas are lacking reasonable access to neighbourhood parks (e.g., North Strathroy), while others have several options available to them. Unfortunately, maintaining the current provision level may not be realistic as the parkland dedication requirements through the Planning Act will be insufficient on their own.

Recognizing these realities, it is recommended that a minimum Municipality-wide target of 2.0 hectares of active parkland per 1,000 residents (excluding open space lands) be applied to future growth. Based on this target, there will be a need for 22.5 additional hectares of parkland by 2046 (to serve a population of 35,360).

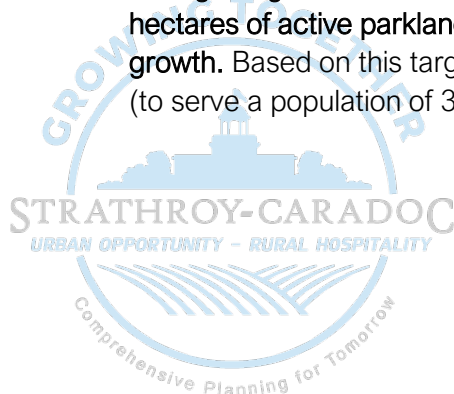


Table 15: Current and Projected (2031) Parkland Needs

Current Parkland Supply, excluding open spaces	72.5 ha
Estimated Population (2021)	24,100 persons
Parkland Per 1,000 (2021)	3.0 ha/1000
Projected Growth (2021 to 2046)	11,260 persons
Growth-related Parkland Needs to 2046, based on 2.0 ha/1000	22.5 ha
Estimated Future (2046) Parkland Supply	95.0 ha (2.7 ha//1000)

Some of these needs will be addressed through the development process, such as new subdivisions. At this time, parkland blocks are identified in the following subdivisions, but have not yet been conveyed to the Municipality:

- South Creek Park (Mount Brydges)
- South Grove (Strathroy)
- Wood's Edge (Mount Brydges)
- Adelaide Road (Mount Brydges) – not yet registered
- Edgewood East (Mount Brydges) – not yet registered
- Cuddy (Strathroy) – not yet registered
- Fieldcrest (Strathroy) – not yet registered

As for future opportunities, the Municipality's Residential Land Needs Assessment (2020) contains a high-level analysis of potential parkland that may be generated from longer-term development (e.g., up to a 25-year horizon). High-level estimates include approximately 11.6 hectares of parkland in Strathroy and 2.4 hectares of parkland in Mount Brydges, in addition to those subdivisions noted above. The most notable is the North Meadows Secondary Plan area in Strathroy, which will provide up to 7.0 hectares of parkland consisting of:

- a large Community Park is planned on the lands to the west of the DeGroot Watercourse, which will provide space for sports fields, playgrounds, and other recreation amenities; and
- a Neighbourhood Park to be centrally located within the planned residential areas east of the DeGroot Watercourse, which will provide space for playgrounds, and other active and passive recreational amenities.

Potential parkland dedication from the planned and potential developments noted above totals approximately 15.1 hectares of land – two-thirds (67%) of the total requirement of 22.5 hectares.

The Municipality's parkland reserve fund may also be used to capitalize on additional acquisition opportunities. It is noted that smaller scale developments will generate cash-in-lieu that will be available for parkland acquisition and/or park improvements. The Municipality will need to be aggressive in identifying and securing future land for park purposes to address the remaining estimated 7.4 hectares required to address growth-related needs. As a long-term goal, it is recommended that **one additional Community Park site (3+ hectares) be secured in both Strathroy**

and Mount Brydges to address these unmet growth-related needs; this is in addition to the parks planned for North Meadows. Locations with good accessibility from growth areas and trails systems are recommended. Cash-in-lieu, direct purchase, donations, gratuitous dedication, and/or non-acquisition-based strategies (e.g., partnerships, leases, land exchanges, etc.) will be required to supplement the basic parkland dedication tools.

Part of this strategy involves addressing parkland gaps to improve equity and accessibility. The previous Master Plan identified a **parkland gap in North Strathroy** (east of Head Street and south of Second Street in the area of Thorn Drive) as several large subdivisions were developed without parks. The planned development of the North Meadows Secondary Plan area will eventually help to address this gap in distribution.

Due to the high overall parkland supply in Mount Brydges, some new subdivisions have also been developed without park blocks. The Municipality should seek to address these geographic gaps to the degree possible through future residential development in proximity to these locations and/or the acquisition of a future Community Park site.

Although the Municipality will require additional parkland to serve future growth, it is noted that some existing parks are too small or too large for their intended use, are disconnected, or have overlapping service areas, resulting in duplication of service. Sub-optimal locations and park configurations limit public benefits and use. A recent municipal initiative considered the potential to convert less prominent park sites into attainable housing. Through the Master Plan's community consultation process, several residents expressed concern over the potential disposal of parkland.

In the future, should the Municipality consider declaring any **park parcels as surplus** (in whole or in part) and disposing of them, this should follow a prescribed process and be evaluated using a set list of criteria, which may include:

- an assessment of the recreational value/need for the site and its requirement to meet parkland accessibility targets;
- the potential to relocate amenities/activities to other Municipally-owned lands, as well as the operational benefits to be achieved through consolidation;
- past investment in the site and the condition of existing amenities, vegetation and landforms;
- development potential, adjacent uses and applicable land use policies; and
- community input.

Any revenue generated from a sale of surplus parkland should be allocated to investments in the parks and recreational system.

Recommendations

23. Through the Official Plan Review, update the **provision targets** for each park type, with the goal of maintaining a municipal-wide supply of 2.0 hectares of active parkland per 1,000 residents applied to future growth. Approximately **22.5 additional hectares of active parkland** will be required to achieve this target by 2046.

Recommendations

24. Identify and secure **one additional Community Park site (3+ hectares) in both Strathroy and Mount Brydges** to address long-term growth; this is in addition to the parks planned for North Meadows. Acquisition will likely require a mix of cash-in-lieu reserves, tax levy, donations, and/or non-acquisition-based strategies (e.g., partnerships, leases, land exchanges, etc.).
25. In the future, should the Municipality consider declaring any **small park parcels as surplus** (in whole or in part) and disposing of them, this should follow a prescribed process and be evaluated using the criteria identified in this Master Plan, including a transparent public consultation process. Any revenue generated from a sale of surplus parkland should be allocated to investments in the parks and recreational system.

7.4 Conditions for Parkland Development and Conveyance

Many decisions regarding parkland requirements and conditions for acceptance, design and development rest with the Municipality, as governed by applicable legislation and policies. For example, the current policy regime provides guidance on the acceptability of parkland (Section 3.3.6.3 of the current Official Plan) and when to accept cash-in-lieu of parkland (Section 3.1 of the Parkland Dedication By-law).

The Municipality does not have a manual to establish a common set of expectations around the requirements from the development community associated with the design and development of parkland. The following information should be used as a foundation to create such a manual or set of principles that will guide the development of new parks and renewal of existing ones.

When parkland dedication is required pursuant to the Planning Act or development agreements, the designated blocks should be identified on the development plans with enough detail to identify lot grading, drainage, landscaping, access and other information as may be required. Through subdivision agreement, developers will complete the necessary works as identified by the Municipality.

The design and site preparation of the parkland and open space will take into account the intended and future passive and/or active recreational uses in accordance with this and other Master Plans as required. General requirements for parkland preparation and conveyance are identified below. The Municipality may amend these requirements from time to time; additional requirements may apply to developer-built parks.

- a) The developer will develop grading and drainage plans acceptable to the Municipality. The developer will complete pre-grading, drainage, fine grading, and grass seeding (with 4-inches of topsoil) to the satisfaction of the Municipality. No topsoil will be removed from the site. All costs associated with these requirements will be the sole responsibility of the developer and will not be taken out of Development Charges.
- b) As part of the general subdivision development in areas with public services, the developer will be responsible for installing storm sewers serving the park, as well as electrical and water services 2.0 metres into the park property if future municipal plans indicate a need. In privately

served areas, the developer must include an open ditch, culvert and driveway in the road allowance; a well, constructed as per applicable regulations; and hydro service 2.0 metres into the park property. Sanitary servicing may be required for higher-order community parks. Access for park maintenance will also be incorporated into the design.

- c) The developer will be responsible for all pathway, trail, and/or sidewalk connections to park blocks. These connections do not comprise part of parkland dedication.
- d) The developer will be required to post and maintain signage at all park locations indicating that the site will be a future park and that it may have playground equipment installed.
- e) Any site work and designs will pay special attention to the care and preservation of natural wetland and natural features, where applicable.
- f) Stormwater management (SWM) facilities will be integrated into parkland and open spaces, where applicable (not part of legislated parkland dedication). Low maintenance vegetated buffers will be required around the pond perimeter.
- g) All projects will comply with the Design of Public Space Standards under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, such as where walkways or trails are required through parklands. Additional direction may be provided through the Recreational Trails Master Plan.
- h) The developer will install permanent fencing around the park perimeter where property lines are shared with residential/commercial land uses or protected/hazard lands, to the specifications approved by the Municipality, where required.
- i) Plantings will comply with municipal tree planting standards, with an emphasis on native and non-invasive species along all public road allowances. Opportunities for tree preservation should be discussed with the Municipality prior to undertaking any site works; a detailed Park Tree Preservation Plan may be required.
- j) The developer will be responsible for demolition, removal and disposal of all existing materials, buildings and foundations. Municipal property preserved as open space or intended for parkland development will not be used for the purposes of temporary stockpiling or storage of earth, construction supplies, debris or any other materials without express permission of the Municipality.
- k) The timing of conveyance of parkland in accordance with the Planning Act will be stipulated in the Subdivision Agreement. The Municipality will typically require conveyance be completed during registration of the first phase of a subdivision. Parks will generally be constructed by the Municipality upon 25% to 50% occupancy of a residential subdivision.
- l) At the Municipality's discretion, the developer will engage the professional services of a registered Landscape Architect to prepare Detail Design/Technical Drawings to fully describe the construction of all park features. The price proposal from the Landscape Architect should be mutually agreed upon in advance and include a minimum of three concepts, cost estimation, detailed design, contract documents/specifications, contract administration, inspection, and acceptance/warranty. The costs of such professional services are attributable to the park development costs assigned to the park project through Development Charges.
- m) Park construction will include the installation of permanent signage, including park identification signs, regulatory signs and interpretive signs, as specified and located by the Municipality.

Recommendations

26. Include the conditions and processes proposed in this Master Plan for parkland development and conveyance within **subdivision agreements** to ensure that new parks comply with municipal standards.

7.5 Park Maintenance, Design and Renewal

Designing parks requires a strong understanding of community needs, contemporary design practices, operational requirements, and programmatic considerations. From our observations, the Municipality's parks system is well maintained, but some older parks contain aging equipment, lack variety in activities, are unable to support environmental management practices and climate change mitigation initiatives, and/or do not have updated comfort amenities (e.g., seating, washrooms, signage, etc.). These findings are supported by the Master Plan survey, which found that 69% of respondents agreed that local parks and recreation facilities are well maintained, while 56% agreed that local parks offer appropriate variety in amenities such as playground equipment, sports fields, and natural areas. Park renewal and new park development provide opportunities to address these shortcomings.

The following are best practices that the Municipality may adopt in designing new or redeveloped parks.

- a) Promote **universal accessibility** in all parks, such as wheelchair access, ramps to play structure areas, etc.
- b) Provide both junior and senior play opportunities in parks with **playgrounds**. Use engineered wood fibre surfacing for play structures, to an appropriate depth for the fall-height of the equipment. Ensure appropriate sight lines to play areas.
- c) Consider activities and programming for the growing **older adult population**, including increased daytime use and emerging activities such as pickleball.
- d) **Unstructured space** within a park that allows for a wide variety of **active and passive uses throughout all seasons** is considered an asset.
- e) Locate **shade structures and trees** central to amenities to protect users from the harmful effects of the sun. Consideration may be given to shade pavilions, shade structures over playground equipment and tree planting.
- f) Provide informal **seating** opportunities. Locate seating in shaded areas, along accessible routes, and in proximity to active amenities.
- g) Maintained **pathways** should be a minimum of 3.0m wide, unless otherwise required. Provide clearance along pathways (waste receptacles, benches, trees, bike racks, etc.) for maintenance vehicles.
- h) Locate **waste and recycle receptacles** close to park entrances to facilitate maintenance.
- i) Select **materials and equipment** (e.g., park furniture) that are not easily vandalized and can be easily sourced for repair and/or replacement.

- j) Provide **consistent branded signage** at all public parks identifying the park name, address and Municipal emblem. Additional signage should include emergency contact information and regulatory requirements (e.g., non-permitted uses, park hours, etc.).
- k) Encourage **public art** within appropriate park locations and in keeping with relevant municipal guidelines.
- l) Use non-invasive native species in all **plantings**.
- m) Follow **CPTED** (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design) principles to enhance community security and safety features.
- n) Include **buffer space** between pathways and adjacent lot lines (minimum of 5.0 metres when abutting a residential property and 2.0 metres when abutting other land uses), as well as high-activity zones and residential lot lines.
- o) Provide **naturalized buffers** adjacent to natural features. Where appropriate, consider the piloting of naturalization initiatives in under-utilized portions of parks to support habitat creation and other environmental objectives.

Recommendations

27. Maintain a commitment to **universal accessibility, safety and comfort** within the Municipality's parks system. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - a) Regularly consulting with the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee and ensure compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), recognizing that some parks may include areas of natural terrain that are more difficult to access.
 - b) Undertake and incorporate accessibility audits into the Municipality's asset management planning to identify a multi-year strategy for addressing barrier-free compliance.
 - c) Engaging local police services to undertake a review of all parks using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to identify safety concerns relative to access and sightlines (surveillance).
28. Emphasize the provision of amenities such as **benches/seating areas, bike racks, shade (structures, tree canopy, etc.), and washrooms** in appropriate park types to address the needs of all age groups.
29. Provide a variety of active and passive spaces within the parks system to support **all-season usage**, including recreation and sports, casual use and unstructured play, special events and cultural activities.
30. Undertake **park amenity condition assessments** on a regular basis to inform the Municipality's asset management plan and long-term capital plan.
31. Establish consistent and high-quality **signage at all municipal parks** to enhance branding and wayfinding.

Recommendations

32. Ensure the adequate provision of **space for parks staff and equipment** by exploring the feasibility of:
- a) converting the existing garage in **Yorkview Community Park** to a year-round works building; and
 - b) establishing a municipal park maintenance/equipment building in **Mount Brydges**, as recommended in the RFIRP.

7.6 Outdoor Park Amenities

The following table provides a summary of existing outdoor park amenities that are owned and/or maintained by the Municipality. Aquatic facilities and permitted facilities such as sports fields are addressed in Section 8.

Table 16 Summary of Outdoor Park Amenities in the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc (2021)

Outdoor Facilities	Supply	Location(s)	Current Provision
Playgrounds (locations)	13	Strathroy: Alexandra Park (2), Fair Grounds Recreation Complex (2), Saulsbury Street Park, Sensory Park, Yorkview Community Park Mount Brydges: Applewood Park, Churchill Street Park, Glover Crescent Park, Lions Park, Lioness Park, Mount Brydges Cenotaph Park, Optimist Park, Bennett Crescent Park	1:1,850 (1:315 ages 0 to 14 years)
Splash Pads	2	Alexandra Park, Mount Brydges Cenotaph Park	1:12,050 (1:2,045 ages 0 to 14 years)
Tennis and Pickleball Courts	4	West Middlesex Memorial Centre (4 – lit; shared with pickleball)	1:6,025
Basketball Courts	2	Yorkview Community Park (2)	1:12,050 (1:1,510 ages 10 to 19 years)
Skateboard and Bike Parks	2	Victoria-Centennial Park (Strathroy), Legion Park (Mount Brydges)	1:12,050 (1:1,510 ages 10 to 19 years)
Off-Leash Dog Parks	1	Strathroy Dog Park	1:24,100

Current provision based on population estimate of 24,100 persons

In addition to these municipal park facilities, residents also benefit from a number of amenities owned and/or managed by others (note: some may have limited access), such as:

- **Schools:** many elementary and secondary schools offer playgrounds, basketball hoops and/or open space;
- **Conservation Areas:** several properties maintained by the St. Clair Region Conservation Area, including the Strathroy Conservation Area along the Sydenham River and the Clark Wright Conservation Area south of Strathroy, as well as the Longwoods Road Conservation Area and the Mill Stream Conservation Area southeast of Mount Brydges which are maintained by the Lower Thames River Conservation Authority;
- **For-profit providers:** two semi-private golf courses are within the Municipality: the Caradoc Sands Golf Course and the Bear Creek Golf & Country Club which both offer 18 holes of golf;
- **Adjacent Municipalities:** parks and trails are provided in nearby municipalities, including notable destinations such as the Komoka Provincial Park in Middlesex Centre, and the Pinery Provincial Park on Lake Huron.

A note about methodology:

The facility needs assessments use a mixed methods approach to ensure site-specific analysis and unique needs are considered. The assessment methodology included:

- environmental scan of local facilities (both municipal and non-municipal);
- review of current provision rates and spatial analysis;
- site visits and review of condition audits (where applicable);
- usage and participation analysis (where applicable);
- review of existing studies and previous directions; and
- consideration of public, stakeholder and staff feedback provided through the consultation program.

The needs assessment considers both overall provision (i.e., the total number of each facility type as determined by applying population-based “targets”) and geographic distribution (i.e., where facilities/parks are physically located in relation to the population). “Provision targets” represent a recommended measure toward which a community should strive in order to meet the demand for parks and facilities. The targets are created based on a combination of accepted industry standards, market-driven factors (such as demand/participation, trends and demographics), and past and present circumstances of the community, as well as public and staff input. For more localized facilities that residents expect to be able to walk or bike to (e.g., playgrounds, splash pads, etc.), geographic distribution also becomes an important consideration. The Master Plan’s research and consultation phase was designed to ensure that the targets and catchment areas are appropriate for Strathroy-Caradoc and responsive to demonstrated community needs.



7.6.1 Playgrounds

There are 13 playground locations within the Municipality's parks, including 5 playgrounds in Strathroy and 8 in Mount Brydges (including the playground provided by the Mount Brydges Lions Club). The new playground at Sensory Park is unique in that it contains inclusive features that inspire sensory play for guests of all ages and abilities. Playgrounds are also available at elementary schools, although community access is after-hours and during the summer.

Playgrounds provide opportunities for early childhood leisure, unstructured play, and interaction and are a common component in most local parks. The design of municipal playgrounds has evolved over time. The design of modern playgrounds has led to the emergence of unique play structures to allow children to use their imagination to create more enjoyable playing experiences. This may include a broad range of design-elements such as the use of vibrant colours, interactive play components, natural elements, thematic designs, and sensory stations.

For example, adventure and nature playgrounds use landscape features, provide creative options and daring opportunities, and employ natural materials such as wood, logs, rope, stones and large boulders. These playgrounds are designed to appear more precarious and facilitate the concept of "risky play", which encourages children and youth to problem-solve through climbing, exploring, moving vigorously, and creating their own activities. As the Municipality replaces its playground equipment, accessible features should be integrated, and natural components may also be considered.

This is the plan for the upcoming playground replacement in Saulsbury Park, which is planned to include a nature-themed fully accessible playground and fitness trail. The Municipality has also been replacing playgrounds as they age and upgrading the surface of all updated playgrounds to an engineered wood fibre base which is easier to maintain. Greater attention should be placed on ensuring that accessible playgrounds have pathways that extend from the sidewalk and parking lot to the playground. An annual playground replacement fund should be established to address the ongoing asset management needs (an average of one site every one to two years), including accessibility upgrades.

Playground at the Fair Grounds Complex



Playground at Mount Brydges Cenotaph Park



Playgrounds are a base element in most neighbourhood and community parks and it is anticipated that they will be included in most new park development, particularly in areas that do not have adequate access to nearby municipal playgrounds. 87% of survey respondents identified playgrounds as a priority for public spending and many expressed concern over the lack of parks

and playgrounds in the developed portion of north Strathroy. This has been a longstanding gap that will be partially resolved through the construction of parks within the North Meadows Secondary Plan area. To expedite service to this area, the Municipality should encourage the playgrounds in North Meadows to be installed within the initial phases of subdivision construction.

The common provision standard for playgrounds is based on walking distance from all or a majority of residences to the nearest playground. Typically, the aim is for a playground to be, at most, a 5-10 minute walk away, or approximately 500-metres. The following maps illustrate the distribution of municipal playgrounds within Strathroy-Caradoc's urban areas using a 500-metre radius. The gaps in Strathroy are quite prominent, suggesting that playground development should generally be a priority for new park sites in most new subdivisions within Strathroy. Residential infill opportunities within gap areas should also be evaluated for potential playground installation. Conversely, there is excellent coverage in Mount Brydges, suggesting that not all new parks will require playgrounds or – at a minimum – should consider more diverse features and experiences.

Figure 26: Current Playground Distribution in Strathroy

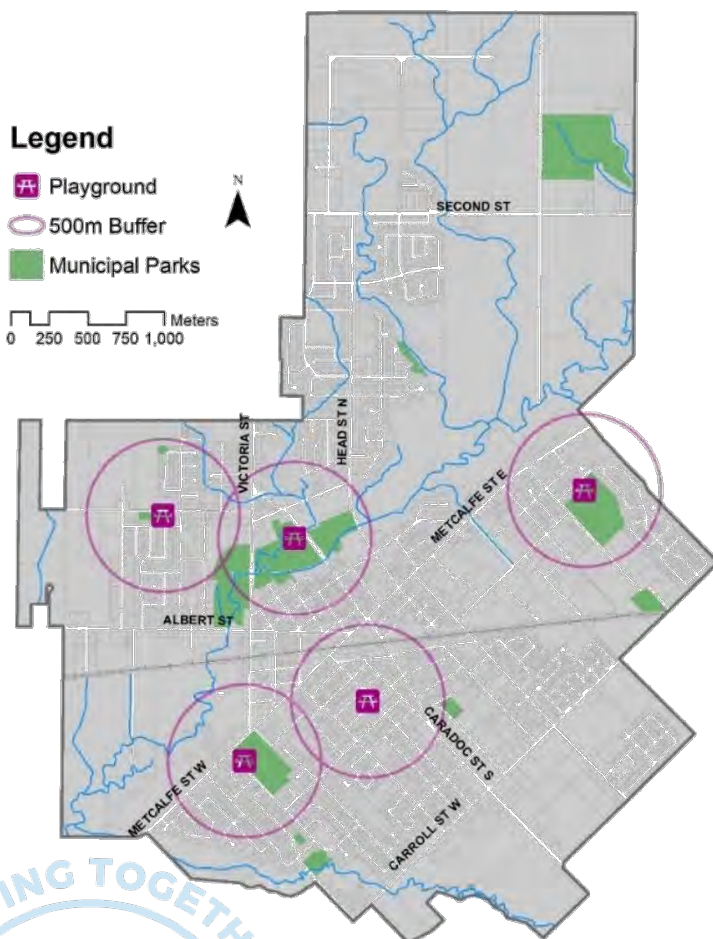
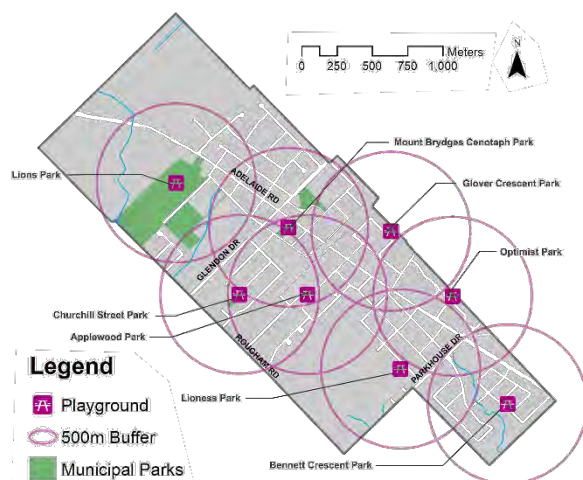


Figure 27: Current Playground Distribution in Mount Brydges



As the population ages, more adults are seeking opportunities to get outside and be physically active. Specially-designed outdoor fitness equipment facilitates low-impact, bodyweight activities that focus on mobility, flexibility and strength training – great exercise options for older adults and seniors. The Municipality has supported this concept in the past through fitness stations along the Rotary Memorial Trail in Cuddy Park. These stations have deteriorated and should be replaced with more modern equipment that supports the use of this site as a “fitness park”, including outdoor fitness program opportunities.

Recommendations

33. Establish a **playground replacement fund** as an annual capital budget line item to address ongoing asset management needs, including accessibility upgrades (equipment, pathways, seating, etc.).
34. Ensure that playgrounds are provided in new development areas based on a **500-metre service area**. Playground development should be a priority for most new park sites in Strathroy. Residential infill opportunities within gap areas should also be evaluated for potential playground installation.
35. Require that the playgrounds planned for the **North Meadows Secondary Plan area** be installed within the initial phases of subdivision construction to address gaps in north Strathroy.
36. Upgrade the **outdoor fitness equipment in Cuddy Park** to support the use of this site as a “fitness park”, including outdoor fitness program opportunities.

7.6.2 Splash Pads

Splash pads are interactive water play features that are activated using motion sensors and buttons. They are highly sought-after amenities for young families and are best located in destination parks (i.e., community parks). They have no standing water and are unsupervised sites, but can attract large numbers of children and youth looking to cool off on a warm day.

Strathroy Rotary Splash Pad



Lions Community Splash Pad (Mount Brydges)



The Municipality has partnered with local service organizations to offer seasonal splash pads in two locations:

- Strathroy Rotary Splash Pad at Alexandra Park (opened in 2013)
- Mount Brydges Lions Splash Pad at Cenotaph Park (opened in 2014)

Existing splash pads provide for equitable distribution that supports local accessibility and usage. High levels of satisfaction were expressed for these amenities through the community survey. Based on the current and projected population, the existing facilities are anticipated to meet the long term needs of the municipality; no additional splash pads are expected to be required by 2046.

7.6.3 Tennis and Pickleball Courts

There are currently four (4) outdoor courts available in the Municipality, located at the West Middlesex Memorial Centre park; these are shared by both tennis and pickleball players. The courts are approximately 30 years old but have recently been resurfaced.

Tennis and Pickleball Courts in Strathroy



The lack of hard court surfaces in Mount Brydges (and the demand for pickleball courts in general) has been a common issue raised by residents. To address these

immediate needs, the Municipality has recently tendered the construction of a court complex within Legion Park adjacent to Caradoc Public School and consisting of one tennis court and two pickleball courts. These should be available for play in 2022, increasing the overall supply to five (5) tennis courts and six (6) pickleball courts, noting that some are shared use courts.

Across Ontario, tennis has been experiencing a resurgence over the past several years due to the success of Canadian professionals, a greater emphasis on grassroots programs to attract younger players, and a growing segment of baby boomers that are returning to the sport. With a supply of 5 courts (including the new court in Mount Brydges), the Municipality is providing courts at a rate of one per 4,800 residents. Many municipalities provide outdoor tennis courts at a rate of one court per 5,000 residents, a target that should be used to project needs in Strathroy-Caradoc. Based on this target, a total of seven (7) municipal tennis courts will be required by 2046. Locating two (2) new tennis courts in the community park proposed for the North Meadows area will address this need and provide service to the growing North Strathroy area.

Pickleball is a quickly growing sport and is especially popular among older adults. The sport can be played both indoors and outdoors; the Municipality runs indoor programs at the West Middlesex Memorial Centre. In an outdoor setting, pickleball can be played on dedicated courts or modified tennis courts (it requires a badminton-sized court with a net that is slightly lower than tennis height). Pickleball is easy for beginners to learn, but can develop into a quick, fast-paced, competitive game for experienced players. Although the Master Plan survey found low support for the activity (42% identified pickleball courts as a priority for public spending, the second lowest percentage among the listed facility types), several suggestions for dedicated pickleball courts were received. The community survey found that 5% of respondents have recently played the sport, compared to 9% for tennis.

With a supply of 6 shared/dedicated pickleball courts (including the two new courts in Mount Brydges), the Municipality is providing courts at a rate of one per 4,000 residents. Being such a new sport, there are no industry standards for the provision of pickleball courts, although many municipalities are having difficulty meeting expressed demands. As the sport continues to evolve – and possibly grow to include younger players – the Municipality may provide additional courts to address demonstrated needs, ideally as part of a multi-court complex capable of accommodating league play and tournaments. Within new parks, the preferred model is to provide dedicated courts to avoid conflicts with other sports, though they may be part of a larger court complex. Pickleball courts should be provided in community parks that have access to off-street parking, washrooms, and shade, and suitably distanced from residential properties.

Recommendations

37. Include two (2) **tennis courts** in the community park proposed for the North Meadows area.
38. Consider the development of a **pickleball court complex** (e.g., 6 courts) through the design and development of a future community park.

7.6.4 Basketball and Multi-use Courts (including outdoor rinks)

There are two municipally-owned basketball courts, both of which are located at the Yorkview Community Park (one is full-sized court and the other is smaller). The courts are showing some cracking and pooling of water and will likely require resurfacing in the coming years. Outdoor hoops at schools and private residences also meet a portion of local needs.

Basketball Court at Yorkview Community Park



Aligning provision with the youth age cohort allows for greater accuracy as they are the primary users of outdoor basketball courts. A target of one full basketball court (two hoops) per 1,000 youth (ages 10-19) is recommended (or one half court per 500 youth). With an estimated current provision rate of one court for every 1,500 youth, Strathroy-Caradoc is underserved in this regard. This finding is supported by the high level of public interest expressed through the consultation process, which found a large gap between importance (high) and satisfaction (low), indicating that those that are interested in basketball courts strongly support additional facilities.

To achieve this provision target, an additional outdoor basketball court (or two half courts) is required to meet current needs, with an additional court (or two half courts) to address longer-term demands. While the number of youth is forecasted to grow at a slower pace than the overall population, ensuring an equitable distribution is also a key consideration – courts should generally be provided to serve residents within a 1 to 1.5-kilometre radius. A priority should also be placed on providing courts in gap areas, with a focus on Mount Brydges (half court at a future park) and growth areas in Strathroy (a full court in North Meadows and a half court in another future park in west Strathroy). To improve distribution, these should be built within the next ten years, pending suitable sites.

Outdoor courts are more commonly being designed to be multi-use, capable of accommodating basketball or ball hockey, as well as ice skating in the winter. This requires certain design and operational considerations, including supporting infrastructure such as water service, seating, lighting and (ideally) washrooms and off-street parking. As such, multi-use courts are best situated in community parks.

Substantial public interest was expressed for outdoor rinks in Strathroy-Caradoc (78% of survey respondents identified outdoor ice rinks as a priority for public spending), noting that there are no authorized sites at present. The pandemic likely contributed to this demand as interest in outdoor winter activities rose and access to indoor facilities was restricted. Several communities across Ontario are responding to this trend through new construction and policies that support outdoor skating. In the short-term, it is recommended that the Municipality develop an outdoor rink program that supports volunteer-led ice rinks in appropriate park sites. There are many good examples for the Municipality to emulate, including the City of London's Neighbourhood-Managed Ice Rinks program which establishes safety procedures, provides basic maintenance equipment, and approves rinks for use.

Given the Municipality's growth, it is recommended that a purpose-built multi-use pad (non-refrigerated) be developed in the longer-term to support ball hockey and winter skating in Strathroy. The Municipality should seek to engage a service club or community organization in fundraising and/or winter maintenance of the pad, including options to add boards and/or a roof structure (open-air) to mitigate inclement weather. A community park with off-street parking and existing (or future) washrooms and/or changerooms is required for a facility of this type.

Recommendations

39. Construct **basketball courts** within new parks in Mount Brydges (half court – site to be determined), North Meadows Community Park (full court), and west Strathroy (half court – site to be determined) within the next ten years.
40. Establish an **outdoor rink program** to support volunteer-led ice rinks in appropriate park sites.
41. As a longer-term recommendation, pursue the development of a **multi-use pad (non-refrigerated) to support ball hockey and winter skating** within a future community park site in Strathroy. Options for community fundraising, operation, boards, roof system (open-air), and support infrastructure (washrooms, etc.) may be considered.

7.6.5 Skateboard and Bike Parks

Skateboard parks are provided by the Municipality in two locations: Victoria-Centennial Park in Strathroy and Legion Park in Mount Brydges. Both of these installations are concrete parks with relatively limited features for skateboarders and do not meet the needs of today's users. The Strathroy facility is somewhat disconnected from other park amenities, is in poor condition and has a number of design-related shortcomings that inhibit its use. Both locations also lack convenient access to washrooms, water fountains or shade.

Skate Parks in Victoria-Centennial Park (Strathroy) and Legion Park (Mount Brydges)



Skateboarding and other action sports have become mainstream pursuits (primarily for youth, but increasingly for adults). Most municipalities are seeking safe and suitable locations to accommodate these sports and new facilities are being designed differently than in the past based on the evolution of the sports. Investing in unstructured activities responds to national trends of declining participation in organized sports. For many youth, action sports are an outlet for self-

expression and an opportunity to find a sense of belonging that they cannot get elsewhere. By their very nature, action sports build independence and resilience.

For several years, the community has been fundraising to develop a more modern “all-wheels park” at the Fair Grounds Recreation Complex in Strathroy that accommodates the needs of a variety of riders and users including skateboards, scooters, in-line skating, and BMX bicycles. A new all-wheels park would also provide an opportunity for a design that is accessible for riders of all ages and abilities, with the potential to increase the number of youth that could use the facility. In 2013 Council established a skate park committee to pursue this initiative and in 2018 the design and location were approved, with construction drawings completed in 2019.

Concept Plan for Strathroy All-wheels Park



The development of an all-wheels park in Strathroy remains a high priority for the community. Three-fifths (62%) of survey respondents identified skate parks as a priority for public spending – this is significantly higher than the levels of support we have found in comparable communities, indicating a strong local interest. Consequently, this initiative is supported by the Master Plan.

The existing skate park in Mount Brydges does not serve nearly as many people as the one in Strathroy and is a lower priority for redevelopment at this time. Community interest in a new smaller-scale skateboard or all-wheels park in Mount Brydges should be tested following the opening of the new facility in Strathroy. A design that focuses on younger youth and introductory to intermediate skills may be considered if supported by community fundraising.

As Strathroy-Caradoc grows, consideration may be given to the installation of smaller-scale skateboard/scooter amenities (“skate spots”) such as ramps, rails, and bicycle/walking loops within selected new parks.

Recommendations

42. Develop the proposed **all-wheels park at the Fair Grounds Recreation Complex** in the short-term.

Recommendations

43. Consider the **replacement of the skate park in Mount Brydges** in the longer-term. A modestly-sized facility that focuses on younger youth and introductory to intermediate skills may be considered if supported by community fundraising.
44. Consider the installation of **smaller-scale skateboard/scooter amenities** such as ramps, rails and bicycle/walking loops within selected new parks.

7.6.6 Off-Leash Dog Parks

The Municipality has one off leash dog park located in Strathroy – the Strathroy Dog Park. The dog park is approximately 2 hectares in size and features a small dog area, as well as a larger off leash area. Both fenced off areas include benches, shade and trees. A hand pump is available to provide water for dogs to drink. The park is operated and maintained in partnership with the Strathroy-Caradoc Dog Owners Association.

Only 43% of survey respondents identified off-leash dog parks as a priority for public spending, one of the lower priorities among listed facility types. This suggests that needs are largely being met by the current location. In the longer-term, an off-leash dog park may be considered for the Mount Brydges area if accompanied by a community association that would take responsibility for day-to-day operations, as well as the identification of a suitable location.

Recommendations

45. Subject to sufficient demand, consider the creation of an **off-leash dog park in Mount Brydges** in the longer-term. This initiative should be supported by a community association that would take responsibility for day-to-day operations, as well as the securement of a suitable location.

7.6.7 Community Allotment Gardens

Community allotment gardens are small plots of land that are collectively maintained by a group of people or stewardship organization to produce fruit, vegetables, and/or flowers. These gardens may be established on dedicated parcels of land or may be incorporated into existing parks and open spaces. Community gardens not only provide aesthetically-pleasing park spaces, they also support community improvement, improve physical and mental wellbeing, enhance food security, and encourage social interaction among gardeners and visitors. Three-quarters (74%) of survey respondents identified community garden plots as a priority for public spending, in the top third of all facility types.

As the Municipality's population continues to grow in size and more multi-unit buildings are developed, consideration should be given to establishing community gardens at appropriate sites, such as existing parks or lands owned by non-profit agencies, preferably in close proximity to higher density residential areas and senior-lifestyle communities. Many municipalities seek proposals of

support from local community groups (e.g., schools, churches, food banks, service clubs, etc.) to assist with oversight and management of community gardens.

Recommendations

46. Encourage the establishment of community gardens in new developments and work with local community groups to explore opportunities to integrate **community vegetable garden plots** in parks, where appropriate.

7.6.8 Other Park Amenities

The Municipality and community associations provide a number of specialty recreation and leisure facilities that appeal to unique market segments and for which there are no specific provision targets. Examples of existing amenities include the Sleepy Hollow Children's Railroad, horse paddocks, community gardens, and toboggan hills.

It is recognized that other activities and needs may also emerge during the course of this Master Plan. One example is disc (frisbee) golf, which is a growing family-friendly sport that could be accommodated within an existing park such as Alexandra Park or Cuddy Sports Park. In the interest of providing recreation options that support healthy, active lifestyles for residents, the Municipality should be open to exploring and discussing opportunities for new and emerging activities with the community. Initiatives with significant capital and/or operating costs should be supported by a business case.

A number of parks also include washrooms, concessions, pavilions/shelters and support buildings (e.g., Scout Hut, Ricco Food Soccer Centre, etc.). These remain significant supporting amenities to higher order park sites and should be maintained and/or renovated on an as-needed basis if usage levels support their continued operation. In many cases, community partnerships will continue to play an important role in the funding and programming of these amenities.

8 Renewing & Diversifying our Facilities

Recreation facilities and outdoor amenities play an important role in the daily life of Strathroy-Caradoc residents. The Municipality invests in parks and recreation infrastructure to promote physical activity, healthy lifestyles, skill development, athletic competition, community building, and economic growth. This section reviews the Municipality's provision of recreation facilities through a qualitative and quantitative needs assessment focussed on the next twenty-five years.



Guiding Principle:

We will respond to demonstrated community needs by planning ahead and investing strategically in our recreation facilities.

Key Directions:

1. Integrate the recommendations of the committee appointed to establish the implementation strategy for the **Recreation Facility Infrastructure Renewal Plan (RFIRP)** – this initiative examines plans for the Tri-Township Arena, Caradoc Community Centre, West Middlesex Memorial Centre, and/or Gemini Sportsplex.
2. Address the gap in **seniors' space** by integrating programming into existing facilities, and adding space where necessary (RFIRP).
3. Undertake **ball diamond** improvements (e.g., Yorkview Community Park, Lions Park, etc.).
4. Over the longer-term, initiate a feasibility study to determine the viability of providing an **indoor pool** in coordination with key community partners.



8.1 Current Inventory

The following table and map provide a summary of existing recreation facilities that are owned and/or maintained by the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc. Park amenities such as playgrounds and sport courts are addressed in Section 7.

Table 17 Summary of Recreation Facilities in the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc (2021)

Recreation Facilities	Supply	Location(s)		Current Provision
Arenas (Ice Pads)	4	Gemini Sportsplex (2), West Middlesex Memorial Centre, Tri-Township Arena		1:6,025
Community Halls	1	Caradoc Community Centre		1:24,100
Meeting and Specialty Rooms	4	West Middlesex Memorial Centre (2 – Meeting Room & Dance Studio), Gemini Sportsplex, Caradoc Community Centre		1:6,025
Municipal Gymnasiums	1	West Middlesex Memorial Centre Note: Joint use agreement are in place for occasional community access to high schools		1:24,100
Indoor Swimming Pools	0	n/a		n/a
Outdoor Pools	1	Fair Grounds Aquatic Park		1:24,100
Ball Diamonds	7 total (11 unlit equivalents)	Hardball	Alexandra Park (lit), Yorkview Community Park (lit)	1:2,190 (unlit equivalents)
		Softball (lit)	West Middlesex Memorial Centre, Mount Brydges Lions Park	
		Softball (unlit)	Yorkview Community Park (2), Mount Brydges Legion Park	
Soccer, Football and Multi-Use Fields	20 total (21.5 unlit equivalents)	Full (lit)	Yorkview Community Park (2), Cuddy Sports Complex	1:1,120 (unlit equivalents)
		Football/ Multi-Use	Gemini Sportsplex/High School (unlit)	
		Full (unlit)	Gemini Sportsplex (4), Cuddy Sports Complex, Lions Park (Mount Brydges)	
		Intermediate (unlit)	Caradoc Community Park (2), Cuddy Sports Complex (2), Saulsbury Street Park	
		Mini (unlit)	Yorkview Community Park (4), Caradoc Community Park	

Notes: To account for extended periods of play for lit facilities, "Unlit Equivalents (ULE)" measure provision levels where every lit soccer/football field counts as 1.5 unlit fields and every lit ball diamond counts as 2.0 unlit diamonds.

Current provision based on population estimate of 24,100 persons.

Figure 28 –Recreation Facilities in Strathroy



Source: Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Queens Printer; County of Middlesex; Teranet Enterprises Inc. and its suppliers; 2021

Figure 29 – Indoor Recreation Facilities in Mount Brydges



Source: Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Queens Printer; County of Middlesex; Teranet Enterprises Inc. and its suppliers; 2021



9: Ice Pad at Gemini Sports Complex



10: Ice Pad at Gemini Sports Complex



11: Ice Pad at West Middlesex Community Centre



12: Gymnasium at West Middlesex Community Centre



13: Caradoc Community Centre



14: Tri-Township Arena



15: Soccer Clubhouse at Yorkview Community Park



16: Aquatic Park at Fair Grounds Recreation Complex

In addition to these municipal facilities, residents also benefit from a number of facilities owned and/or managed by others (note: some may not be broadly accessible to be public), such as:

- **Schools:** many elementary and secondary schools include recreational facilities (e.g., gymnasiums and sports fields);
- **Non-profit providers:** facilities are provided by the Strathroy-Caradoc Family YMCA (fitness centre), Middlesex County Library (Strathroy and Mount Brydges), Museum Strathroy-Caradoc (municipally-operated), Youth Opportunities Limited (Next Wave Youth Centre), Bethel Creekside (soccer fields), Portuguese Canadian Club (soccer fields), and Mount Brydges and Strathroy Legion (meeting/event space); other providers may include churches and places of worship, etc.;
- **Private Providers:** examples include fitness, music studios, dance studios, martial arts centres, indoor water fitness studio (Over The Deep End), etc.; and
- **Adjacent municipalities/communities:** arenas, halls and sports fields are provided in adjacent municipalities, such as Middlesex Centre and Adelaide Metcalfe.

8.2 Recreation Facility Infrastructure Renewal Plan

The Municipality's 2021 Recreation Facility Infrastructure Renewal Plan (RFIRP) provides a phased five-year capital reinvestment strategy for indoor recreation facilities in Strathroy-Caradoc (arenas and community centres). Key recommendations are shown in the following table.

A committee of Council was created to provide direction on the implementation of the plan, with the goal of preparing shovel-ready plans that might qualify for senior government funding programs.

Table 18: Recommendations from 2021 Recreation Facility Infrastructure Renewal Plan

Recommendation	RFIRP Rationale	Council Direction
1. Decommission Tri-Township Arena by Spring 2022.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tri-Township Arena was built in 1973 and renovated in 1996 (poor to critical condition) – is at the end of its life expectancy and is not barrier free • condensation and mould issues that require major remediation – liability risks • operating model is not consistent with other municipal arenas • decommissioning allows for avoidance of deferred and lifecycle maintenance costs • single pad arenas do not offer same user convenience, operating efficiencies, and sport tourism opportunities as multi-pad facilities 	In October 2021, Municipal Council resolved to begin planning for a new indoor ice pad in Mt. Brydges (to replace the Tri-Township Arena) and that this plan incorporate a multi-purpose facility, if financially feasible.

Recommendation	RFIRP Rationale	Council Direction
2. Within the next five years, decommission West Middlesex Memorial Centre .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Middlesex Memorial Centre was built in 1954 and renovated in 2010 (poor to critical condition) – has well exceeded its life expectancy and is not barrier free decommissioning allows for avoidance of deferred and lifecycle maintenance costs single pad arenas do not offer same user convenience, operating efficiencies, and sport tourism opportunities as multi-pad facilities 	Municipal Council did not specifically endorse this recommendation, but did recommend that the four ice pads remain. Future options will be brought forward for Council approval on a project-specific basis.
3. Develop a multi-use recreation facility for Mount Brydges consisting of: an air-supported indoor playing field (with an option for a permanent structure); multi-generational programming space and ancillary space for the indoor playing field (possibly through a retrofit of the existing Caradoc Community Centre – further study required); a covered pavilion with outdoor active multi-use court and an optional ice skating pad; and a park maintenance building.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caradoc Community Centre was built in 1991 (fair to poor condition) and is a stand-alone facility with minimal usage and programming versatility more diverse facilities are needed to enhance programming opportunities that will serve both Mount Brydges and the entire Municipality site is in municipal ownership, with minimal impact on adjacent land uses 	In October 2021, Municipal Council resolved to begin planning for a new indoor ice pad in Mt. Brydges (to replace the Tri-Township Arena) and that this plan incorporate a multi-purpose facility, if financially feasible.

Recommendation	RFIRP Rationale	Council Direction
4. Within the next five years, an expansion program for the Gemini Sportsplex Multi-use Recreation Facility consisting of: a third ice pad; a twin gymnasium with elevated indoor walking track; additional multi-generational programming space; capital upgrades to existing twin pad facility; an outdoor artificial turf playing field with lights (conversion of existing grass field).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gemini Sportsplex was built in 2000 and nearing 50% life expectancy (good to fair condition) third ice sheet can be added with minimal operating cost impacts investment will extend life of viable asset more diverse facilities are needed to enhance programming opportunities that will serve both Strathroy and the entire Municipality site is in municipal ownership, with minimal impact on adjacent land uses will provide optimal use of capital and operating funds, and maximize sport tourism opportunities 	Municipal Council did not specifically endorse this recommendation. Future options will be brought forward for Council approval on a project-specific basis.

8.3 Arenas (Ice Pads)

The Municipality currently offers four indoor ice pads at three different arenas:

- The Gemini Sportsplex near Highway 402 in Strathroy provides 2 ice pads (85'x200'). This facility is the only arena in the Municipality that provides an ice rink all year round; from April until July one ice pad is removed to allow for trade shows, events, lacrosse, etc. Although the Gemini Sportsplex is the Municipality's newest facility at approximately 20 years old, it has mounting lifecycle needs estimated at \$1.5 million over the next few years (roofing, flooring, etc.); the RFIRP noted that the capital requirements could be considerably higher than those stated in the most recent building condition audit.
- The West Middlesex Memorial Centre (WMMC) in Strathroy was built in 1953 and has one ice pad which is non-regulation size (75'x180'). Portions of the arena are not accessible. The building was renovated in 2010 to create a modern atrium with a new entrance as well as new dressing rooms; the debenture to facilitate this will be fully paid down by 2026. The recent building condition assessment recommends that the roof be replaced within the next seven years, the ice slab and bleachers be replaced, seating be modernized, and several dressing rooms be updated. In total it is estimated that approximately \$4.2 million in repairs are required over the next fifteen years.
- The Tri-Township Arena in Mount Brydges was originally built around 1973 (with an addition in 1996 to add more change rooms) and provides one non-regulation size ice rink (81'x184'). Portions of the arena are not accessible and most of its features are outdated. The building condition audit noted the facility to be in poor condition, requiring \$3.8 million in capital investment over the next four years. This facility is run by a board of management

comprised of municipal councillors, Chippewa of the Thames representatives, and members of the public. The Municipality has an 85% stake in the facility. Minor sports organizations also serve a regional population as the boundaries extend into the Municipality of Middlesex Centre (Komoka and Delaware). This facility operates independently from the other two municipal arenas, with different rates and scheduling practices.

Gemini Sportsplex



Tri-Township Arena in Mount Brydges



The matter of arena demand and provision was a major point of community discussion through the 2021 Recreation Facility Infrastructure Renewal Plan. As noted above, the RFIRP recommended sweeping changes to the Municipality's indoor recreation infrastructure, with the overall goal of diversifying recreation options to meet changing needs and markets. The options advanced through the RFIRP also sought to generate operational savings through consolidation of facilities and to avoid costly capital repairs through the closure of outdated arenas.

Ultimately, Council supported keeping an indoor ice pad in Mount Brydges through a new facility (potentially a multi-purpose facility) to replace the Tri-Township Arena. A building committee has been formed to direct this initiative, which is expected to be implemented in the short-term.

The RFIRP did not contain a long-term assessment of arena needs. The recommendation to reduce the supply from four to three ice pads was based largely on the desire to achieve operational savings through multi-pad arena facilities and the discounting of non-residents from the Komoka/Delaware area, which account for up to 75% of the minor ice sport participants at the Tri-Township Arena. Although the majority of users are from Komoka/Delaware, the local minor sport associations receive more ice time at the Tri-Township Arena than the Komoka Wellness & Recreation Centre, creating an imbalance that is partially borne by the tax base of the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc. By way of the 2021 Council resolution, it can be anticipated that the future Mount Brydges Arena will continue to serve minor sport associations with memberships that cross municipal boundaries.

Information collected through this Master Plan and the consultations that followed the RFIRP process found that minor hockey registration in both Mount Brydges and Strathroy has been growing slowly to 2019/20 (prior to the pandemic), driven by new population growth in the area.

Table 19: Registration Levels of Youth-based Ice User Groups (not a complete list)

Group	2017	2018	2019	Future Trend	% Residents
Mt. Brydges Minor Hockey	489	498	501	Increase	25%
Strathroy District Minor Hockey	417	422	429	Increase	90%
Bluewater Hawks Girls Hockey	295	298	332	Increase	42%

Figures exclude Strathroy Skating Club, Mount Brydges Skating Club, Strathroy Rockets Junior B Club, Mount Brydges Bulldogs Jr C Club, Strathroy-Caradoc Youth Hockey, Oneida Hockey, Strathroy Christian School. These groups did not respond to several requests to provide registration data.

The Municipality does not collect registration figures from its rental groups, but should begin doing so to support future trend analysis. Despite multiple attempts to solicit information, several youth-based ice organizations did not participate in the Master Plan's consultation program, thus we do not have a complete picture of current registration levels. A market-driven participant target is the preferred approach to defining current and future arena needs as the typical capacity of one ice pad is approximately 400-450 youth participants in communities where youth are the primary user of prime time hours; this figure accounts for common standards of play and may be adjusted to account for local factors (including access to arenas outside of the community).

Input received through the RFIRP process suggests that four existing ice pads are meeting needs and a review of schedules indicates that they are largely fully subscribed during prime time. Therefore, it is assumed that current needs are equivalent to four ice pads.

By 2046, Strathroy-Caradoc's population is forecasted to grow by 47%, although most of this will be in older age cohorts. County-wide age cohort projections indicate that the younger population (ages 0-24 years) – which is the primary user of arenas – is projected to grow by 10% during this period. Assuming that ice sport participation levels remain steady, then long-term demand for ice rinks should increase by 10% by 2046. While this is insufficient to project the need for a fifth ice pad, it supports the maintenance of four ice pads over the long-term in Strathroy-Caradoc²⁹. If arena demand exceeds the supply, adjustments may be required to the Municipality's ice allocation policy.

Looking ahead, the Municipality will seek to replace the Tri-Township Arena with a new single pad area, potentially as part of a multi-use facility. Three ice pads should continue to be supplied in Strathroy to meet long-term needs. The RFIRP recommended the addition of a third ice pad to the Gemini Sportsplex and decommissioning of the ice pad at the WMCC. Although the timeline of this recommendation (next five years) is likely unachievable, the strategy of consolidating ice pads at the Gemini Sportsplex as part of a larger expansion project and the conversion of the WMCC arena into space for non-ice recreation uses has merit and should be pursued further.

²⁹ It bears noting that the possibility of arena construction or closures in the region may also impact these needs as many groups rely on access to ice time and/or members from outside the Municipality.

Recommendations

47. Continue with plans to **replace the Tri-Township Arena** with a multi-use facility containing one indoor ice surface in Mount Brydges.
48. Continue to maintain the West Middlesex Community Complex arena until such time that a funding strategy is established to **replace the WMMC ice pad at the Gemini Sportsplex**, creating a three-pad complex that will offer operational efficiencies and tournament benefits.

8.4 Community Centres and Recreational Space

Community centre space can encompass a variety of components, such as halls, meeting rooms, activity rooms (multi-use or dedicated), gymnasiums, walking tracks, seniors' centres and more.

The current inventory of community centre space in Strathroy-Caradoc consists of the following:

- The Caradoc Community Centre in Mount Brydges is a stand-alone community hall (with large hall, kitchen, and meeting rooms) used for receptions, special events and other community activities. The facility was built in 1991 and was most recently used as a COVID-19 vaccination site. The community centre is an outdated space that lacks versatility, negatively impacting its usage (on average, there are 1-2 functions per month in the large hall and up to a dozen per month in the meeting rooms, including municipal programming). The facility is not ideally suited for active sports due to the war memorial on one wall and its lower ceiling height. The RFIRP recommended that the facility be retrofitted or rolled into a new multi-use facility proposed for Mount Brydges.
- The West Middlesex Memorial Centre in Strathroy has a gymnasium (approximately 60 by 120 feet) as well as a dance studio and meeting room. Issues have been experienced with the gymnasiums flooring and overall dimensions that limit its use.
- The Gemini Sportsplex has a multi-purpose meeting room with an attached kitchenette that is used largely for municipal programs, community meetings, and tournament support. The Municipality also has a joint use agreement with the Thames Valley District School Board and the London District Catholic School Board for the mutual use, maintenance and improvement of the multi-use facility at the combined site for the Gemini Sportsplex and associated secondary schools. School facilities available for municipal and community use include gymnasiums, change rooms, classrooms and related facilities.
- The Scout House – located in Alexandra Park in Strathroy – was constructed in 1958 and is used primarily by Scouts Canada, although it is available for community rental.
- Until 2020, the Strathroy & Area Seniors' Centre was operated by a volunteer Board, offering various leisure and educational services to its members. In late 2020, the Municipality declared the building that housed the Centre to be surplus due to its high capital repair costs. The RFIRP recommended that additional space be added to the Gemini Sportsplex to accommodate the needs of this and other age groups.

There are currently no indoor walking tracks within the municipality.

WMMC Gymnasium



Caradoc Community Centre



Strategies to diversify indoor recreational spaces were considered through the RFIRP in 2021 (see Section 8.2). There are several notable strategies that will be used as a guide for Council relative to major facility investment, including the following, some of which may require community partnerships (e.g., YMCA, etc.) and fundraising:

- Caradoc Community Centre: Council has supported the redevelopment of an indoor ice pad in Mount Brydges, with consideration to a multi-use facility. The future of the Caradoc Community Centre will be examined by the Building Committee that has been established to guide this process. Changing needs suggest that opportunities to convert the community centre into more active space for gymnasium-type activities should be considered, along with more space for programming.
- Gemini Sportsplex: The RFIRP recommended that a double gymnasium, walking track, and multi-use programming space be added to the Gemini Sportsplex (in addition to a third ice pad). The Master Plan survey found strong support for public investment in senior's space (84% identified this as a priority) and gymnasiums (67% identified this as a priority). Given the recent closure of the Strathroy Seniors' Centre and growing demand for gymnasiums (coupled with the limitations of the under-sized gymnasium at the WMMC and unreliable access to secondary school gyms), there is considerable merit in undertaking this project in the mid-term (by 2031). Timing will also be dependent upon decisions related to the potential replacement of the WMMC arena at this site and funding capacity.
- West Middlesex Memorial Centre: Due to its age, limitations, and costs of replacing its ice-related infrastructure, the RFIRP recommended that the WMMC be decommissioned within the next five years. With Council committed to retaining four ice pads in the municipality, this timeline will surely be extended. However, the mounting capital lifecycle costs associated with this 68-year-old facility, along with the operational inefficiencies associated with single pad arenas, strongly support its eventual replacement. Nevertheless, its central location and connection to other indoor and outdoor recreational spaces are valued in the community. If cost feasible, opportunities to convert the space into a turf field (68% of survey respondents identified indoor sports/ turf facilities as a priority) or gymnasium should be considered as a part of a future repositioning of the facility.

Recommendations

49. **Repurpose the Caradoc Community Complex** into more versatile, active, multi-use space as part of the proposed arena and multi-use facility in Mount Brydges.
50. Initiate an **expansion project at the Gemini Sportsplex** to add a double gymnasium, walking track, and multi-use programming space that will serve as a central destination for seniors' activities (among others). Timing and needs may be dependent upon decisions related to the potential replacement of the WMMC arena at this site, as well as funding and potential partnerships.
51. When a decision is made to **decommission the arena at the West Middlesex Memorial Centre**, consider opportunities to reimagine the space as an indoor turf field or gymnasium.

8.5 Swimming Pools

The Municipality owns and operates one outdoor swimming pool at the Fair Grounds Recreation Complex in Strathroy. The facility features a heated 6 lane, 25m competition pool as well as a leisure pool with a beach style entry, toddler pool, water slide, and a pavilion with change rooms and concession. The pool is operated from June to Labour Day and is a popular destination for families within the municipality and beyond. In 2019, it attracted over 25,000 visits, a considerable figure that rivals or exceeds that of pools in many larger communities.

Fair Grounds Aquatic Park



The Municipality does not operate any indoor swimming pools. Residents seeking indoor swimming opportunities are likely to use facilities in the City of London (about a 20- to 30-minute drive in normal road conditions). During the summer months the outdoor pool and splash park at the Fair Grounds Aquatic Park is well used by local residents.

Indoor pools can support instructional swimming, recreational swimming and training/ competition, providing important lifesaving and physical health services. Unlike outdoor pools, they provide a controlled environment that is available year-round. Across Ontario, the demand for aquatic services is expanding, requiring higher levels of design (e.g., multi-tanks, different configurations, etc.) and functionality (e.g., different water temperatures).

Resident interest in an indoor pool is high, with frequent requests received through the Master Plan and Corporate Strategic Plan consultation programs. These requests are common in smaller communities that do not provide indoor pools as swimming is an activity that appeals to people of all ages and abilities, and an indoor aquatic centre provides access during the colder months when the outdoor pool is closed. The option of building an indoor pool in Strathroy was studied in 2008

and Council ultimately decided to replace the outdoor pool with a new outdoor aquatic centre at the Fair Grounds Recreation Complex.

The 2015 Master Plan also indicated that Strathroy-Caradoc has an insufficient population to support an indoor pool as they are more commonly provided in communities with larger populations (or those without ready-access to other pools beyond their community). While it is uncommon for municipalities with fewer than 30,000 residents to build indoor pools, there are several examples of smaller communities in the region that provide these facilities (e.g., Petrolia – YMCA, St. Marys, Ingersoll, etc.).

The decision to provide an indoor aquatic centre is heavily influenced by cost, as municipal indoor pools are highly subsidized facilities that require approximately \$600,000 to \$800,000 of tax support annually (this would be equivalent to a 3.5% to 4.5% tax increase in Strathroy-Caradoc). Further, construction costs tend to range from \$12 to \$20 million, which can be difficult for smaller communities to afford. While partnerships, grant opportunities, and more minimalistic designs may help to mitigate some costs, sustainable funding strategies are needed to ensure a viable operation.

Within that context, it is also important to recognize that the Municipality is growing, with 47% more residents anticipated by 2046 for a total population of 35,360 persons. Further, with no indoor pools in surrounding municipalities, these communities may serve as a secondary market that would help to support a future indoor pool initiative in Strathroy-Caradoc. There is also the potential to collaborate with other providers, including the YMCA which has a presence in Strathroy and which operates pools in other jurisdictions.

Given the Municipality's growth, the demand and feasibility of an indoor aquatic centre should be revisited when Strathroy-Caradoc reaches a population of 30,000 people (currently forecasted for 2031). A feasibility study that examines costs, locations, potential partners, and funding strategies is recommended at this time, with consideration of other municipal capital obligations and potential impacts on the Fair Grounds Aquatic Park.

Recommendations

52. Prepare a **feasibility study for an indoor swimming pool** when the municipality reaches a population of 30,000 (currently forecasted for 2031). The study should examine costs, locations, potential partners, funding strategies, etc.

8.6 Ball Diamonds

There are seven (7) ball diamonds available in local parks, including two lit hardball diamonds, two lit softball diamonds, and three unlit softball diamonds. The Municipality has an effective supply of ten (10) unlit equivalents as lit diamonds have twice the capacity given that they can be used later in the evening. Yorkview Community Park in Strathroy houses the largest complex of fields, with three diamonds. The lit hardball diamond in Alexandra Park is prone to periodic flooding which restricts its use. In addition, lower quality fields exist at local schools, though these are seldom used for organized play.

Royals Field in Alexandra Park



Diamond at Mount Brydges Lions Park



Baseball participation has been trending upward in many communities recently after several years of decline, mirroring the recent surge in popularity of the Toronto Blue Jays. It is a prominent sport for children and youth in Strathroy-Caradoc, with many adults also playing baseball and softball. One in five (21%) Strathroy-Caradoc households contain at least one member that has participated in baseball or softball since 2019, ranking 15th out of 27 activities. Three-fifths (59%) of households identified ball diamonds as a priority for public spending, amongst the lower half of facility priorities. Respondents from Mount Brydges were more likely to identify ball diamonds as a priority.

Locally, it is believed that interest in youth hardball had been growing pre-pandemic. The 2015 Master Plan estimated that there were as many as 450 to 600 children, youth and adult participants in local baseball programs in the Municipality. It is likely that this figure is now greater, although we do not have a complete picture of current registration levels as several organizations did not participate in the Master Plan's consultation program.

Table 20: Registration Levels of Primary Ball Diamond User Groups (not a complete list)

Group	2017	2018	2019	Future Trend	% Residents
DKMB Minor Baseball (including non-residents)	374	426	380	Increase	25%
Strathroy Adult Co-ed Baseball League	250	250	250	Stable	95%
Samson Christian Slo-Pitch League	300	300	300	Stable	15%

Figures exclude Strathroy Minor Baseball, Strathroy Fastball, Strathroy Royals, Co-ed League, SWM Ladies League, etc. These groups did not respond to several requests to provide registration data.

A market-driven participant target is the preferred approach to defining current and future diamond needs as the theoretical capacity of one ball diamond is approximately 75 to 100 participants; this figure accounts for common standards of play and may be adjusted to account for local factors (including access to diamonds outside of the community and the mix of youth and adult players).

With 11 diamonds at present (unlit equivalents), the Municipality has the capacity (in theory) to accommodate 825 to 1,100 ball players. It is assumed that current participation is in this range as a review of schedules indicates that most diamonds are used daily during the peak of the summer, although there is modest capacity for greater use on some evenings and weekends.

Looking ahead, the cyclical nature of the sport suggests that registration levels and rental requests should be monitored to inform future provision. Should participation levels be strong as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Municipality may add lights to one of the diamonds at Yorkview Community Park. To serve longer-term, the North Meadows Community Park should be able to accommodate one to two ball diamonds if needed. A future community park in Mount Brydges (if secured) should also be considered for ball diamond development. Groups expressed a desire for larger, lit diamonds, which should be the form of all new diamonds as this provides for the greatest level of flexibility.

In addition, the lighting standards at many of the diamonds are outdated and in need of replacement, as are some of the benches and dugouts. A capital replacement strategy is needed to support diamond renewal.

Recommendations

53. Add lights to one existing ball diamond at **Yorkview Community Park** to address any unmet demand in the short-term.
54. Establish a capital replacement strategy for **ball diamond lighting** and supporting infrastructure, with the goal of upgrading one field every two to three years until all lit fields are complete.
55. Consider the development of **lit ball diamonds** through future community park development in Strathroy and Mount Brydges if supported by demonstrated needs.

8.7 Soccer and Multi-use Fields

There are 20 rectangular sports fields (three with lights) available in local parks, including soccer, football, and multi-use fields. The Municipality has an effective supply of 21.5 unlit equivalent fields as lit fields have 50% more capacity given that they can be used later in the evening.

The Gemini Sportsplex in Strathroy is the largest complex with 4 unlit full size soccer fields, plus a multi-purpose field on the adjacent high school lands; two of the soccer fields and multi-purpose field are programmed by the high schools that share the facilities. Other soccer complexes include Yorkview Community Park (2 lit fields and 4 mini fields), Caradoc Community Park (3 total fields), and Cuddy Sports Complex (1 lit field and 4 unlit

Soccer Fields at Yorkview Community Park



fields). Additional soccer fields are available at local schools (e.g., 2 full fields at the Strathroy Community Christian School) and the Bethel Creekside property (1 full and 2 minis), which are both used by Strathroy United FC.

Soccer continues to be the most popular organized sport among Canadian youth. Interest in the sport is driven by its worldwide appeal, high fitness quotient, and relatively low cost to participate. As a result, soccer fields are in high demand in most municipalities. However, trends in Ontario Soccer Association affiliated programs indicate that provincial soccer participation peaked in 2007 and has slowly been declining since. This may be due to factors such as demographic trends, introduction of the OSA's Long Term Player Development model, emergence of unaffiliated clubs and academies, concussion awareness, and growing interest in competing activities.

These trends are also believed to be affecting soccer participation in Strathroy-Caradoc, as Strathroy United FC noted a decline in registration between 2018 and 2019, although participation had been on the rise in years prior. More than one-quarter (28%) of Strathroy-Caradoc households contain at least one member that has participated in soccer since 2019, ranking 14th out of 27 activities. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of households identified soccer fields as a priority for public spending, while only 37% identified outdoor artificial turf fields as a priority.

A market-driven participant target is the preferred approach to defining current and future field needs as the theoretical capacity of one rectangular field is approximately 60 to 80 participants; this figure accounts for common standards of play and may be adjusted to account for local factors (including access to other fields, the mix of youth and adult players, turf maintenance and rest requirements, etc.). With 21.5 fields at present (unlit equivalents, excluding non-municipal fields), the Municipality has the capacity (in theory) to accommodate 1,290 to 1,720 soccer and football players. Current participation is estimated to be below this range, although actual field usage is not tracked as most fields are block booked by the local youth organizations. Anecdotally, demand would appear to be greatest for the larger, higher quality fields. Further, some fields – such as those at the Cuddy Sports Complex – may be unavailable for use during certain times of the year as they are situated in the floodplain.

Table 21: Registration Levels of Primary Soccer Field User Groups (not a complete list)

Group	2017	2018	2019	Future Trend	% Residents
Strathroy United Football Club	n/a	892	733	Stable	85%

Figures exclude Del-Ko-Brydge Soccer, which did not respond to several requests to provide registration data.

Given that the current provision of soccer fields is high for the number of registered soccer players in the Municipality, it is anticipated that the current field supply will be sufficient for the foreseeable future. The need for an artificial turf field with lights at the Gemini Sportsplex – as initially noted in the RFIRP – is not evident at this time based on our consultations; however, the Municipality may consider this should there be the potential to partner with a school or sport organization as it would assist in extending the outdoor season. Overall field demand should be monitored through facility bookings and consultation with user groups.

At the same time, it is recognized that the Municipality is growing and interest in other field activities such as football, rugby, ultimate frisbee, field lacrosse, etc. may emerge. Should long-term demand for additional fields arise, opportunities to add lights to existing fields (e.g., Mount Brydges) may be considered, as well as establishing complexes with multiple fields within future community parks.

Recommendations

56. Monitor usage and demand for **soccer fields** in order to guide long-term provision strategies. The existing supply should be sufficient to address needs for some time, although consideration may be given to adding lights to existing fields (e.g., Mount Brydges), installing an outdoor artificial turf field (in partnership with others), and/or establishing multi-field complexes within future community parks.

8.8 Other Recreation Facilities

Addressed above (and in Section 7) are the facility types provided – at present and in the foreseeable future – in the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc. However, there may be other recreational facilities that are desired by the community which are not considered to be core services at this time. Some may be addressed by other sectors, such as fitness clubs, while others might be emerging facility types (e.g., indoor turf).

It is common for municipalities to receive requests for new and/or non-traditional parks and recreation facilities. Often these requests deal with emerging activities or facilities that are not part of the municipality's core service mandate. Strathroy-Caradoc should be prepared to consider these requests on a case-by-case basis and may consider low-risk participation in unsolicited proposals if supported by additional research, appropriate sources of funding and the goals of this Master Plan. The Master Plan may be used as a resource in determining if a proposal serves a clearly identified community need that is not currently adequately addressed.

The Municipality's response to unsolicited proposals will depend on its capacity to participate in such projects, the focus on community-wide benefits (versus individual benefits) and the specific aspects of the proposal. If the Municipality were approached by a community partner for the development of a facility, the organization should provide the following (at a minimum) to assist in the evaluation of the proposal: justification of needs and business plan (for projects with a capital cost of over \$250,000); statement of the organization's capacity; revenue sources and a demonstration of project sustainability; broad-based public consultation; evidence of community benefits; and risk analysis.

Recommendations

57. Require an evaluation of **unsolicited requests for facilities** that are not part of the Municipality's core mandate. Proponent-led business plans should be developed to determine demand, alignment with Master Plan goals, the net benefit to the Municipality, and the degree of municipal involvement (if any).

9 Master Plan Implementation

Activation of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is critical to its success. This requires coordinated efforts and a commitment from Council, staff, stakeholders, and the public, as well as a variety of funding options to implement the Plan. This section provides guidance on the Master Plan's implementation and high-level financial considerations.

9.1 Financial Considerations for Major Initiatives

This Master Plan calls for continued financial investment and outlines a series of planning priorities for the provision of new and existing parks and infrastructure for the next twenty-five years. The timing of the projects listed in the Master Plan recognize a need for phased implementation. Proposed timing is based on the anticipated need for infrastructure, which relies on projected population growth and alignment with associated initiatives, if applicable. Should growth be slowed or accelerated, the timing of implementation may require adjustment.

To assist the Municipality in establishing a financial strategy for the Master Plan, several assumptions have been identified. These assumptions provide direction about the types of opportunities and constraints that must be considered when budgeting for Master Plan implementation.

In the future, it is expected that:

1. Increases in costs to develop, revitalize and maintain parks and recreation facilities will be greater than the rate of inflation because of rising land costs, increasingly complex projects, the general public's heightened quality expectations, legislated building and accessibility standards, etc.
2. The Municipality will be expected to adhere to fiscally-responsible revenue generation policies and practices, along with the allocation of sufficient capital and operating resources to fund core priorities.
3. The magnitude of investments required to achieve and maintain facilities in acceptable condition will grow in proportion to an expanding volume of assets and the increasingly aged stock of facilities.
4. The range of new types of parks and recreation infrastructure will continue to expand, which will increase the funding requirements to address a growing inventory.
5. The need for sufficient, stable and predictable infrastructure funding streams will be increasingly important to support sound and proactive facility planning.
6. The need for creative infrastructure funding solutions will be greatest in periods of low-growth and where aging facilities need to be revitalized or replaced.

7. Working collaboratively with the community, developers and other partners will be important to successfully keeping pace with escalating needs for more and better parks and recreation amenities.

9.2 Overview of Potential Funding Sources

To assist with implementation, several potential funding opportunities for capital investment – in addition to direct taxation – have been identified below.

9.2.1 Development Charges

Development charges (DC) are fees that are collected through the building process in order to address the growth-related infrastructure needs of a community, such as new or enhanced parks and recreation facilities (but not parkland acquisition). Through recent changes to the Development Charges Act, eligible capital projects may be fully funded through development charges (this amount was previously 90%). Funding limitations include replacement portions of facilities, historical service level deficiencies, or excess capacity as a result of the pre-emplacement of facilities. Some of the items identified in this Master Plan are partially or fully growth-related, thus will be eligible for Development Charge funding.

9.2.2 Parkland Cash-in-Lieu

The Planning Act establishes a framework for the dedication of parkland and possible alternatives, with implementation policies identified through official plans. One such alternative to land dedication is the conveyance of cash-in-lieu of parkland generated by development or redevelopment. At the Municipality's discretion, cash-in-lieu may be used to purchase parkland, to acquire associated machinery or equipment and/or for parkland development. Recent changes to the Planning Act allow municipalities alternative options to collect funds for parkland through a community benefits charge, applicable to certain type of development and supported by local studies and by-laws.

9.2.3 Municipal Reserves

On occasion, municipalities may decide to set aside monies accrued from tax dollars or other revenue sources for special projects, such as the development or expansion of a specific community facility or park. In addition, annual lifecycle reserves that are earmarked to fund the maintenance and state-of-good-repair of existing facilities are becoming more common. Industry standards suggest that 2% of the capital value of assets be put into a reserve annually. An asset management plan serves to identify all capital assets, their current condition, and when the asset or components should be refurbished or replaced. The Municipality has established a number of facility-specific reserves intended to partially fund future facility development or upgrades.

9.2.4 Fundraising, Donations, Sponsorships and Naming Rights

The capital and ongoing operational costs of constructing parks and facilities are substantial and could place pressure on municipal budgets. Seeking assistance from the community to contribute resources towards the construction and/or operation of facilities and park amenities can be an

effective way to provide services and spaces that are truly desired by residents. In the past, many local user groups and service clubs have collected donations and/or participated in fundraising for new facilities and this practice is expected to continue. Increasingly, municipalities are exploring opportunities for sponsorship and naming rights of major facilities to offset a portion of costs.

9.2.5 User Fees and Surcharges

User and rental fees for parks and recreation services and facilities vary widely depending on their target market and direct costs. Fees are lowest for those items that promote physical activity, social interaction and community benefits (e.g., parks, playgrounds, etc.), and highest for those that allow dedicated access and provide benefits to distinct individual (e.g., ice rentals, memberships, etc.). In certain cases, increases in user fees – such as through a project-specific surcharge – can be used to offset the costs associated with capital upgrades.

9.2.6 Debenture Financing

In cases where alternate sources of funding are unavailable, some municipalities have shown a willingness to finance a portion of major capital expenditures. For example, the Municipality financed part of the West Middlesex Memorial Centre expansion project. Depending on the municipality's credit rating, this can be a more expensive funding alternative and can impact the future borrowing rate and fiscal capacity.

9.2.7 Ongoing Government Programs

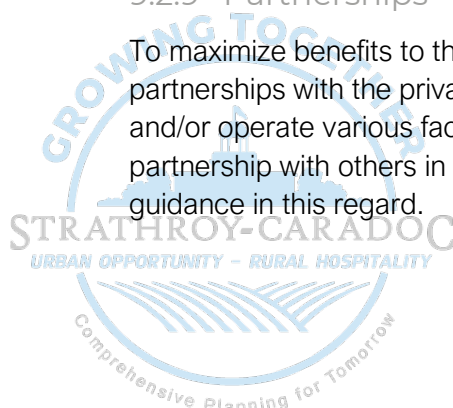
One example of an ongoing government program is the Federal Gas Tax Fund, which provides municipalities with a long-term funding stream that can be used for the construction and rehabilitation of core public infrastructure, including roads, bridges, drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, and leisure facilities (e.g., trails, bike lanes, etc.).

9.2.8 One-Time Grants

Municipalities often seek financial support from senior levels of government for major municipal capital projects. Recently, the Federal budget made commitments towards infrastructure investments through the “Investing in Canada” Plan and – in partnership with the Provincial Government – the Community, Culture and Recreation Infrastructure funding stream opened in 2019 (amounting to over \$700 million across Ontario over 10 years, with up to 73.33% support for eligible municipal projects). The presence of an approved Master Plan is often a requirement to securing grant funding.

9.2.9 Partnerships

To maximize benefits to the community, the Municipality may consider engaging in collaborations or partnerships with the private sector, non-profit sector, or other levels of government to develop and/or operate various facilities and services. The Municipality has had great success working in partnership with others in the past and has recently developed a partnership policy that provides guidance in this regard.



Recommendations

58. Use this **Master Plan as a resource** in developing the Municipality's annual budget documents, Development Charges, secondary plans and related studies.
59. Where appropriate and consistent with municipal policies and priorities, consider **alternative funding and cost-sharing approaches** such as (but not limited to) surcharges, capital reserve contributions, fundraising, grants, sponsorships, and various forms of collaboration to provide the best value to residents.
60. Establish a **capital reserve** to fund the repair and replacement of major capital infrastructure. This reserve should be an annual line item in the budget that could be linked to overall asset replacement value (up to 2%) or a percentage of Department revenues (5% to 10%).

9.3 Monitoring and Updating the Master Plan

The Municipality should regularly review and assess, and periodically revise the recommendations of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan to ensure that they remain reflective of local conditions and responsive to the changing needs of the community. This will require monitoring of activity patterns, tracking user satisfaction levels, regular dialogue with community organizations, annual reporting on implementation and short-term work plans, and updating the plan every five to ten years. Through these mechanisms – or as a result of other internal or external factors – adjustment of resource allocations and priorities identified in this Plan may be required.

Keeping the plan alive requires a commitment from all staff involved in the planning, financing, and delivery of parks and recreation services, Council and the public. The Municipality's budget process is an appropriate time for an annual review. The following steps may be used to conduct an annual review of the Master Plan:

- a) review of the past year (recommendations implemented, capital projects undertaken, success/failure of new and existing initiatives, changes in participation levels, issues arising from the public and community groups, etc.);
- b) identification of issues impacting the coming year (anticipated financial and operational constraints, emerging opportunities, etc.);
- c) cursory review of the Plan for direction regarding its recommendations;
- d) preparation of a staff report to indicate prioritization of short-term projects and determination of which projects should be implemented in the coming year based upon criteria established by staff (e.g., financial limitations, community input, partnership/funding potential, etc.);
- e) communication to staff and Council regarding the status of projects, criteria used to prioritize projects and projects to be implemented in the coming year; and
- f) budget requests/revisions as necessary.

Recommendations

61. Develop a system for the regular **monitoring, ongoing implementation and reporting on the progress** of the Master Plan, such as the collection of participation data and annual reports to Council and/or the community.
62. Engage the **Community Development Advisory Committee** in the implementation of this Master Plan, including the identification of priorities on a year-to-year basis.
63. Undertake a **comprehensive review and update** of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan between 2026 and 2031. Consideration may be given to accelerating the timeline to coincide with the other major studies, such as updates to the Official Plan or Development Charges By-law. Exact timing may also be adjusted based on the pace of implementation and changes in the community.

9.4 Timing and Priority of Recommendations

Throughout the body of this Master Plan, recommendations have been identified at the end of each subsection. By approving this Plan, the Municipality is not bound to implementing every recommendation or providing facilities/services in the order, amount or timing indicated; rather, this Plan provides guidance on community priorities and sets a general course for meeting the needs as they are presently defined.

The timing of the recommendations proposed in this Master Plan recognizes the need for phased implementation and/or outside funding sources as some recommendations are based upon what is needed and not necessarily what may be financially achievable by the Municipality at the present time. As part of the annual budget process, this Plan will be reviewed to identify areas where the availability of resources may affect the timing of implementation. Analysis of implementation options and budget implications should be undertaken prior to approving major projects.

The Municipality has limited resources and cannot afford to do everything that the community desires; this is one of the primary reasons for undertaking a Master Plan in the first place. Although Strathroy-Caradoc may be challenged in providing the appropriate financial resources to meet the Master Plan's recommendations, the Municipality should make every reasonable effort to implement these strategies through appropriate and acceptable means. The full implementation of this Plan will require the use of development charges, grants, fundraising and/or collaborations with community partners.

Determining priorities is an exercise that should be revisited each year prior to the Municipality's capital and operating budget development exercise. **It is expected that the Municipality will make decisions on individual projects and funding sources annually through the budget process.**



In addition to funding availability, factors that might change priorities year to year may include:

- capital lifecycle and considerations of safety;
- legislation and mandated requirements;
- changes to service standards;
- public input and community interests;
- emerging trends and changes in participation rates;
- availability of alternate providers; and
- socio-demographic changes and growth forecasts.

Priority is often, but not always, synonymous with timing – the higher the priority, the sooner the recommendation should be implemented. Priority has been determined based on an assessment of need, as identified throughout the planning process (including public engagement, trend and demographic analysis, assessments of amenities and services, etc.). Generally, municipalities seek to address the widest range of needs and achieve maximum community benefit through the efficient use of resources.

The priority and timing of the recommendations are defined as follows:

Priority

- **High Priority:** Immediate attention is strongly suggested during the timeframe recommended.
- **Medium Priority:** Attention is required when high priority recommendations have been initiated or completed, or when suitable partners have been identified for funding.
- **Lower Priority:** Attention is required when high and medium priority recommendations have been initiated/completed.

Timing

- **Short-term:** 2022 to 2025
- **Medium-term:** 2026 to 2029
- **Longer-term:** 2030 and beyond
- **Ongoing:** Guidelines and practices to be followed on a continual basis



Table 22: Summary of Master Plan Recommendations and Implementation Schedule

Recommendations	Priority	Timing	Comments
Supporting Participation & Social Interaction (Section 5)			
1. Align service delivery initiatives and decision-making with the vision and guiding principles of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan , which include: (1) Supporting Participation & Social Interaction; (2) Building Capacity & Relationships; (3) Activating our Parks; and (4) Renewing & Diversifying our Facilities.	High	Ongoing	--
2. As part of the planning for a new arena and multi-use facility in Mount Brydges , examine the service delivery model (e.g., municipal, third-party operator, etc.) to determine the most effective and efficient approach for parks, facilities and programs in this community.	High	Short-term	Determination of operating cost implications will require further study
3. Continue to expand affordable drop-in and registered programming with an emphasis on under-served groups such as children/youth, older adults, and lower-income households. Program planning should be done in coordination with community partners and in response to local needs, with an emphasis on services that promote physical activity and social inclusion.	High	Ongoing	--
4. Seek to expand multi-use programming space through major infrastructure renewal and development projects.	High	Ongoing	See also recommendations 49-51
5. Support expanded year-round park use, outdoor education and programming through community development activities, special event coordination, and challenging play opportunities.	Medium	Ongoing	--
6. Collect participation data from primary rental groups (such as arena and sports field users, including residency) as part of the annual contract booking process. This data will help to inform the analysis of trends/community needs and to ensure the fair and transparent application of access policies.	Medium	Ongoing	--
7. Formalize cost recovery rates and establish rental and program fees that are transparent, reflect the level of service, and are competitive within the region. Facility and sports field rental rates should be comprehensively reviewed every three years, with appropriate phase-in provisions.	High	Ongoing	--

Recommendations	Priority	Timing	Comments
8. Establish a uniform rental and program rate schedule for locations in Strathroy and Mount Brydges when the new arena/multi-use facility is built in Mount Brydges.	Medium	Short-term	--
9. Review the rate for summer ice rentals to better reflect the cost of delivering this service.	Lower	Short-term	--
10. Increase promotion of financial assistance programs in order to bolster awareness of opportunities for universal access to parks and recreation activities.	Medium	Ongoing	--
11. Expand the online booking system to facilitate facility/space bookings.	Lower	Short-term	--
12. Continue to encourage long-term financial sustainability through the cost-effective and efficient management of resources, appropriate application of user fees and the securement of external funding.	High	Ongoing	See also recommendation 59
Building Capacity & Relationships (Section 6)			
13. Continually review Departmental staffing levels to ensure alignment with levels of service. Additional staff will be required as the Municipality grows, including parks operations, programming, and customer service. Through future budgets, specific consideration should be given to the creation of two new positions: (1) events and booking coordinator (posted in late 2021); and (2) parks and open space coordinator.	High	Short- to Medium-term	Refer to annual budget process
14. Undertake regular reviews of municipal parks and recreation policies and guidelines to ensure that they are up-to-date, accurate and appropriate. Steps should be taken to address gaps in policies and procedures, where applicable.	High	Ongoing	--
15. Identify key performance indicators and targets that illustrate the value of parks and recreation services. This includes (but is not limited to) participation data and satisfaction levels for activities offered by the Municipality and community.	Lower	Ongoing	--
16. Continue to work with partners to reduce reliance on tax dollars in providing quality parks and recreation services in Strathroy-Caradoc. Use a standard set of criteria to evaluate municipal participation in proposals from outside interests, informed by the guiding principles and recommendations of this Master Plan.	High	Ongoing	--

Recommendations	Priority	Timing	Comments
17. Continue to engage adjacent municipalities and public sector agencies (e.g., health unit, public library, school boards, YMCA, etc.) on initiatives that improve access to recreation services for Strathroy-Caradoc residents.	Medium	Ongoing	--
18. Continue to actively support volunteer-led community organizations and facilitate municipal volunteers in the development and delivery of parks and recreation programs and services.	High	Ongoing	--
19. Continue to utilize and enhance a variety of communication tools to promote and gather feedback on parks and recreation services and initiatives. Options for expanding printed materials, such as seasonal Community Guides, should be considered.	High	Ongoing	--
20. Host annual forums and information sessions with community organizations and service providers to enhance community awareness and discuss topics of interest.	Medium	Ongoing	--
Activating our Parks (Section 7)			
21. Through the Official Plan Review, update the parkland classification system to align with the hierarchy proposed in this Master Plan (neighbourhood, community, and major parks). This hierarchy should be used to guide the development or redevelopment of parks according to park type, size, service level and the amenities that they provide.	High	Short-term	--

Recommendations	Priority	Timing	Comments
<p>22. Through the Official Plan Review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) seek to create alignment between the Master Plan's guiding principles and the overall goals and objectives for the parks and recreation system; b) update the provision targets for each park type, with the goal of maintaining a municipal-wide supply of 2.0 hectares of active parkland per 1,000 residents to be applied to future growth; c) establish a single policy regime for Parks and Open Space that applies across the entire Municipality; d) ensure that natural areas/open space are not accepted as part of the required parkland dedication; e) ensure alignment with current Planning Act and recent changes via Bill 197 relating to parkland dedication; f) include language to allow for parkland cash-in-lieu valuation to be via Section 42 (day before building permit); and g) consider introduction of the alternate parkland dedication rate (this also requires an updated parkland dedication by-law and consultation with school boards). 	High	Short-term	--
<p>23. Through the Official Plan Review, update the provision targets for each park type, with the goal of maintaining a municipal-wide supply of 2.0 hectares of active parkland per 1,000 residents applied to future growth. Approximately 22.5 additional hectares of active parkland will be required to achieve this target by 2046.</p>	High	Short-term	--
<p>24. Identify and secure one additional Community Park site (3+ hectares) in both Strathroy and Mount Brydges to address long-term growth; this is in addition to the parks planned for North Meadows. Acquisition will likely require a mix of cash-in-lieu reserves, tax levy, donations, and/or non-acquisition-based strategies (e.g., partnerships, leases, land exchanges, etc.).</p>	High	Longer-term	Specific sites and funding sources to be determined
<p>25. In the future, should the Municipality consider declaring any small park parcels as surplus (in whole or in part) and disposing of them, this should follow a prescribed process and be evaluated using the criteria identified in this Master Plan, including a transparent public consultation process. Any revenue generated from a sale of surplus parkland should be allocated to investments in the parks and recreational system.</p>	Lower	Ongoing	--

Recommendations	Priority	Timing	Comments
26. Include the conditions and processes proposed in this Master Plan for parkland development and conveyance within subdivision agreements to ensure that new parks comply with municipal standards.	High	Ongoing	--
27. Maintain a commitment to universal accessibility, safety and comfort within the Municipality's parks system. This includes, but is not limited to: a) Regularly consulting with the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee and ensure compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), recognizing that some parks may include areas of natural terrain that are more difficult to access. b) Undertake and incorporate accessibility audits into the Municipality's asset management planning to identify a multi-year strategy for addressing barrier-free compliance. c) Engaging local police services to undertake a review of all parks using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to identify safety concerns relative to access and sightlines (surveillance).	High	Ongoing	--
28. Emphasize the provision of amenities such as benches/seating areas, bike racks, shade (structures, tree canopy, etc.), and washrooms in appropriate park types to address the needs of all age groups.	High	Ongoing	--
29. Provide a variety of active and passive spaces within the parks system to support all-season usage , including recreation and sports, casual use and unstructured play, special events and cultural activities.	High	Ongoing	--
30. Undertake park amenity condition assessments on a regular basis to inform the Municipality's asset management plan and long-term capital plan.	Medium	Short-term	--
31. Establish consistent and high-quality signage at all municipal parks to enhance branding and wayfinding.	Medium	Medium-term	--

Recommendations	Priority	Timing	Comments
32. Ensure the adequate provision of space for parks staff and equipment by exploring the feasibility of: a) converting the existing garage in Yorkview Community Park to a year-round works building; and b) establishing a municipal park maintenance/equipment building in Mount Brydges , as recommended in the RFIRP.	Medium	Short-term	Determination of capital cost implications will require further study
33. Establish a playground replacement fund as an annual capital budget line item to address ongoing asset management needs, including accessibility upgrades (equipment, pathways, seating, etc.).	High	Short-term	\$50,000 annually would support replacement of two playgrounds every 3 years
34. Ensure that playgrounds are provided in new development areas based on a 500-metre service area . Playground development should be a priority for most new park sites in Strathroy. Residential infill opportunities within gap areas should also be evaluated for potential playground installation.	High	Ongoing	--
35. Require that the playgrounds planned for the North Meadows Secondary Plan area be installed within the initial phases of subdivision construction to address gaps in north Strathroy.	High	Medium-term	--
36. Upgrade the outdoor fitness equipment in Cuddy Park to support the use of this site as a “fitness park”, including outdoor fitness program opportunities.	Lower	Short-term	Estimate \$50,000
37. Include two (2) tennis courts in the community park proposed for the North Meadows area.	Medium	Medium-to Longer-term	Estimate \$250,000 (DC-eligible)
38. the development of a pickleball court complex (e.g., 6 courts) through the design and development of a future community park.	Medium	Medium-term	Estimate \$250,000 (DC-eligible)
39. Construct basketball courts within new parks in Mount Brydges (half court – site to be determined), North Meadows Community Park (full court), and west Strathroy (half court – site to be determined) within the next ten years.	High	Short- to Medium-term	Estimate \$250,000 (DC-eligible)
40. Establish an outdoor rink program to support volunteer-led ice rinks in appropriate park sites.	High	Short-term	Estimate \$10,000 for equipment

Recommendations	Priority	Timing	Comments
41. As a longer-term recommendation, pursue the development of a multi-use pad (non-refrigerated) to support ball hockey and winter skating within a future community park site in Strathroy. Options for community fundraising, operation, boards, roof system (open-air), and support infrastructure (washrooms, etc.) may be considered.	Medium	Longer-term	Estimate \$300,000 (DC-eligible)
42. Develop the proposed all-wheels park at the Fair Grounds Recreation Complex in the short-term.	High	Short-term	Estimate \$700,000 (funding partially secured)
43. Consider the replacement of the skate park in Mount Brydges in the longer-term. A modestly-sized facility that focuses on younger youth and introductory to intermediate skills may be considered if supported by community fundraising.	Medium	Longer-term	Estimate \$250,000
44. Consider the installation of smaller-scale skateboard/scooter amenities such as ramps, rails and bicycle/walking loops within selected new parks.	Medium	Ongoing	Costs dependent on scale and design
45. Subject to sufficient demand, consider the creation of an off-leash dog park in Mount Brydges in the longer-term. This initiative should be supported by a community association that would take responsibility for day-to-day operations, as well as the securement of a suitable location.	Lower	Longer-term	Estimate \$50,000 (DC-eligible)
46. Encourage the establishment of community gardens in new developments and work with local community groups to explore opportunities to integrate community vegetable garden plots in parks, where appropriate.	Medium	Ongoing	--
Renewing & Diversifying our Facilities (Section 8)			
47. Continue with plans to replace the Tri-Township Arena with a multi-use facility containing one indoor ice surface in Mount Brydges.	High	Short-term	Financial implications examined in RFIRS; see also recommendation 49
48. Continue to maintain the West Middlesex Community Complex arena until such time that a funding strategy is established to replace the WMMC ice pad at the Gemini Sportsplex , creating a three-pad complex that will offer operational efficiencies and tournament benefits.	High	Medium-term	Financial implications examined in RFIRS; see also recommendation 50

Recommendations	Priority	Timing	Comments
49. Repurpose the Caradoc Community Complex into more versatile, active, multi-use space as part of the proposed arena and multi-use facility in Mount Brydges.	High	Short-term	Financial implications examined in RFIRS; see also recommendation 47
50. Initiate an expansion project at the Gemini Sportsplex to add a double gymnasium, walking track, and multi-use programming space that will serve as a central destination for seniors' activities (among others). Timing and needs may be dependent upon decisions related to the potential replacement of the WMMC arena at this site, as well as funding and potential partnerships.	High	Short-term	Financial implications examined in RFIRS; see also recommendation 48
51. When a decision is made to decommission the arena at the West Middlesex Memorial Centre , consider opportunities to reimagine the space as an indoor turf field or gymnasium.	High	Medium-term	Costs dependent on future use; will require further study
52. Prepare a feasibility study for an indoor swimming pool when the municipality reaches a population of 30,000 (currently forecasted for 2031). The study should examine costs, locations, potential partners, funding strategies, etc.	High	Longer-term	Estimate \$75,000 for Study (DC-eligible)
53. Add lights to one existing ball diamond at Yorkview Community Park to address any unmet demand in the short-term.	Medium	Short-term	Estimate \$80,000 (DC-eligible)
54. Establish a capital replacement strategy for ball diamond lighting and supporting infrastructure, with the goal of upgrading one field every two to three years until all lit fields are complete.	High	Short-term	Costs to be determined through future study
55. Consider the development of lit ball diamonds through future community park development in Strathroy and Mount Brydges if supported by demonstrated needs.	Medium	Longer-term	Costs to be determined through future study (DC-eligible)
56. Monitor usage and demand for soccer fields in order to guide long-term provision strategies. The existing supply should be sufficient to address needs for some time, although consideration may be given to adding lights to existing fields (e.g., Mount Brydges), installing an outdoor artificial turf field (in partnership with others), and/or establishing multi-field complexes within future community parks.	Lower	Ongoing	Costs to be determined through future study (DC-eligible)

Recommendations	Priority	Timing	Comments
57. Require an evaluation of unsolicited requests for facilities that are not part of the Municipality's core mandate. Proponent-led business plans should be developed to determine demand, alignment with Master Plan goals, the net benefit to the Municipality, and the degree of municipal involvement (if any).	High	Ongoing	--
Master Plan Implementation (Section 9)			
58. Use this Master Plan as a resource in developing the Municipality's annual budget documents, Development Charges, secondary plans and related studies.	High	Ongoing	--
59. Where appropriate and consistent with municipal policies and priorities, consider alternative funding and cost-sharing approaches such as (but not limited to) surcharges, capital reserve contributions, fundraising, grants, sponsorships, and various forms of collaboration to provide the best value to residents.	High	Ongoing	See also recommendation 12
60. Establish a capital reserve to fund the repair and replacement of major capital infrastructure. This reserve should be an annual line item in the budget that could be linked to overall asset replacement value (up to 2%) or a percentage of Department revenues (5% to 10%).	Medium	Short-term	Determination of cost implications will require further study
61. Develop a system for the regular monitoring, ongoing implementation and reporting on the progress of the Master Plan, such as the collection of participation data and annual reports to Council and/or the community.	High	Short-term	--
62. Engage the Community Development Advisory Committee in the implementation of this Master Plan, including the identification of priorities on a year-to-year basis.	High	Ongoing	--
63. Undertake a comprehensive review and update of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan between 2026 and 2031. Consideration may be given to accelerating the timeline to coincide with the other major studies, such as updates to the Official Plan or Development Charges By-law. Exact timing may also be adjusted based on the pace of implementation and changes in the community.	High	Medium-term	Estimate \$75,000 (DC-eligible)

Appendix A – Summary of 2015 Parks and Recreation Master Plan Recommendations

Recommendations		Status
PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN FOUNDATION		
Vision Statement		
1	<i>Strathroy-Caradoc will have a diverse range of parks and recreation activities and venues that contribute to improved health and well-being, facilitate individual participation and volunteerism, enrich quality of life and community development, and sustain the integrity of the natural environment</i>	Review Required
Mission Statement		
2	Strathroy-Caradoc Parks and Recreation Master Plan directs the achievement of a balanced array of accessible and distributed parks and recreation opportunities that support the evolving leisure interests of residents.	Review Required
3	The Master Plan builds on the depth of the community's parks and recreation resources that collectively contribute to the enrichment of the quality of life for residents, through both collaborative and direct service delivery strategies, that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inspires a true value for the benefits of parks and recreation participation, and encourages broad-based, active lifestyles that contribute to improved resident health, well-being and personal development; - Generates a strengthened sense of community identity, spirit and volunteer service amongst all residents; - Supports improved community unity and capacity building. 	Review Required
Principles		
	Strathroy-Caradoc Parks and Recreation Master Plan will contribute to...	n/a
4	Corporate Strategic Alignment. Developing parks and recreation services that align with and support the Municipality's priorities and initiatives related to resident health, economic development, the environment, community development and quality of life .	Review Required

Recommendations		Status
5	<i>A Balanced Array of Park and Recreation Opportunities:</i> The provision of a balanced array of park and recreation opportunities , involving recreation, parks, sports, trails and other opportunities linked through partnerships and involving social, health, education and related public and community services.	Review Required
6	<i>Fairness and Inclusion:</i> Ensuring fair and inclusive park and recreation opportunities that encourage and facilitate participation by all residents in terms of ability, age, culture, economic, geographic and related interests and backgrounds.	Review Required
7	<i>Services Integrity and Evaluation:</i> Developing and delivering park and recreation services that operate with integrity , are continually evaluated relative to outcomes and respond to evolving resident needs and community growth.	Ongoing
8	<i>Balancing Public Accessibility and Revenue Generation:</i> Providing park and recreation services that achieve a fair and reasonable balance between facilitating broad-based public accessibility and benefit while generating revenues at levels that do not result in an undue burden on the Municipality.	Review Required
9	<i>Maximizing Existing Facility Resources:</i> Achieving maximum utilization of existing parks and recreation facilities as a priority before new facility development occurs, along with ensuring cost effective facilities operations , and undertaking the ongoing repositioning, integration or closing of facilities to meet evolving market needs and legislative requirements.	Ongoing
10	<i>Municipal Leadership Role:</i> Undertaking Municipal leadership roles in the planning, development, facilitation, evaluation and supports for parks and recreation services, using an array of innovative delivery strategies involving partnerships, joint ventures, direct delivery and community-based service provider approaches with volunteer supports.	Ongoing
11	<i>Conservation of Natural Resources:</i> Ensuring that the Municipality's parks, open spaces and trails continue being valued by the community, conserve key environmental resources , are accessible to the public for both programmed and non-programmed activities where feasible, and contribute significantly to a positive urban form and healthy physical environment in Strathroy-Caradoc.	Ongoing
12	<i>Flexible and Environmentally Responsible:</i> Developing parks and recreation services that are flexible and environmentally responsible over the longer term through innovative designs, are adaptable and flexible , facilitate an ease of maintenance and support the inclusion of all residents.	Ongoing

Recommendations		Status
PARKS AND RECREATION SERVICES DELIVERY POLICIES		
Parks and Recreation Services Delivery Policy Framework		
13	<i>Service Delivery Approach:</i> That community-based organizations and volunteers represent the principal recreation programs delivery approach in Strathroy-Caradoc, and represent the primary means for expanding the accessibility, availability, affordability and mix of parks and recreation programming available to residents.	Review Required
14	<i>Prioritization Process:</i> That the prioritization process for Strathroy-Caradoc's direct participation in parks and recreation services focus on municipal residents first as the primary users and beneficiaries within the following decision framework.	Review Required
Municipal Servicing Priority Framework		
15	<i>Supporting Corporate Priorities:</i> Services that are primarily intended to support key strategic priorities of the Municipality.	Review Required
16	<i>Broad-Based Resident Participation and Benefit:</i> Services that facilitate and encourage broad-based participation amongst residents at recreational participation levels, including local, regional and provincial competitively oriented activities for children and youth.	Ongoing
17	<i>Inclusion and Accessibility:</i> Services and accessibility supports that link to requirements to support identifiable groups' participation , including those with disabilities, seniors, young children, teens, new Canadians and others.	Review Required
Municipal Leadership Role		
18	<i>Municipal Role:</i> Strathroy-Caradoc will fulfill its role in the planning, development, delivery and evaluation of parks and recreation services based on the following hierarchy of Municipal responses and roles , and within the budgetary priorities and strategies as established by Council.	Ongoing

Recommendations		Status
Municipal Involvement and Priorities Hierarchy		
19	<p>Facilitation: Continue to actively work to facilitate and support community groups and individuals in the development and delivery of parks and recreation programs and services by providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technical supports; - Access to grants/financial resources, data and information; - Volunteer training and recognition; - Access to facilities; - Trends research; and - Related strategies and supports. 	Review Required
20	<p>Partnerships: Continue to enter into partnerships, joint ventures and related collaborative initiatives, at variable levels of involvement, that result in a shared responsibility for park and recreation programs and services delivery where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The interest of the residents are fully realized; - Need/demand for the service is demonstrated; and - Sustainability exists within acceptable risk parameters. 	Ongoing
21	<p>Direct Delivery by the Municipality: Continue to undertake the direct delivery of park and recreation programs and services where need is established and other service delivery strategies are not viable or available, utilizing direct capital investment and annual budget support, as well as Municipal staff operating alone or in partnership with volunteers.</p>	Ongoing

Recommendations		Status
Municipal Involvement Criteria and Evaluation		
22	<p><i>Municipal Involvement Criteria:</i> That any Municipal involvement in park and recreation services delivery should continue to be based on the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identification of demonstrated need at reasonable participation levels; - Evidence of long term sustainability for the program or service; - Assured public accessibility, participation and affordability; - Involvement by the Municipality at a scale reflective of the benefits to be achieved to both the participants and the community at large; - The use of business case analysis as a basis to support Municipal investments in parks and recreation services initiatives; - Consistent with Municipal revenue generation strategies; and - A transferability assessment of directly delivered Strathroy-Caradoc programs as to how they might be delivered in the future by an alternate service provider. 	Review Required
23	<p><i>Municipal Evaluation of Parks and Recreation Services:</i> Strathroy-Caradoc will establish an evaluation process with appropriate data collection and outcomes/performance monitoring capacity that will effectively assess:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The value of the Municipality's role in the various service delivery strategies; - The degree of participation that is being realized; and - The benefits being achieved through the Municipality's investments. 	Ongoing
Parks and Recreation Department Services Roles and Priorities		
24	<p>That the Parks and Recreation Department undertake a functional assessment initiative that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prioritizes its staffing and services in alignment with the directions and strategies of the Master Plan; - Continues to intensify its efforts at formulating, managing and evaluating partnerships, joint ventures and other collaborative approaches to services delivery within the Municipality, and on a broader geographic market basis as appropriate; and - Establishes an organizational model that should be developed based on consultation, best practices and other inputs that support the multi-dimensional service approach necessary to effectively develop and implement a community development and capacity building priority. 	Ongoing

Recommendations		Status
25	That the Municipality pursue periodic discussions and assessments with community service providers to assist them in their ongoing service delivery capacities and viability , to ensure the continuity of service to residents so that services are not diminished or lost.	Review Required
Voluntary Sector Services Delivery		
26	That Strathroy-Caradoc engage with the various voluntary organizations at a level consistent with the capacities, experiences and approaches of each voluntary service delivery organization, respecting the fact that each organization is unique and may be at different levels of development and capability;	Ongoing
27	That Strathroy-Caradoc supports to the voluntary service delivery sector also include the provision of common supports , such as marketing, research and related perspectives that will bring benefits to these groups that they likely could not achieve within their own resources;	Review Required
28	That Strathroy-Caradoc undertake a multi-tiered recognition program , potentially in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce and/or other partners, for volunteers and voluntary organizations with respect to longevity of service, special initiatives and benefits they achieve so that the community is aware of the important contributions volunteers make to the quality of life in Strathroy-Caradoc;	Completed
29	That Strathroy-Caradoc host community services provider forums and sustain an online resources library that focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharing and networking opportunities amongst forum participants; - Overviews trends and strategic directions emerging relative to parks and recreation services within municipal and other environments; - Identifying and disseminating broader sources of available information and resources online through provincial and national organizations and other sources; - Providing theme specific training and development opportunities relevant to participants; - Supporting and providing guidance on corporate sponsorships, Trillium grants and other sources of capital and operational financial support; - Providing workshops on strategic planning, governance, program evaluation, volunteer recognition and recruitment and other topics of interest; and - Undertaking consultation on and/or delivery of strategic directions, policy initiatives and related considerations that Strathroy-Caradoc is engaged in and which could influence this service area. 	Review Required

Recommendations		Status
30	That the Municipality should consider establishing a committee to review and determine appropriate communications/awareness methodologies and tools, timing/ frequency, format, including consideration of in-person and online consultation formats, participants, roles and responsibilities and other details of these forums and online resources library.	Review Required
31	That the Municipality, through these forums, discuss with the community service providers the potential benefit, role and strategy for a community-based events development and coordinating committee .	Ongoing
Customer Service and Services Planning		
32	That Strathroy-Caradoc incorporate parks and recreation services needs into its Corporate Technology Plans to support and continue to build upon the full development of online registration, payment, program evaluation and related services;	Ongoing
33	That Strathroy-Caradoc continually upgrade and develop new electronic information points of access and social media that support the marketing and promotion of both Strathroy-Caradoc and community service providers' programs, including opportunities for market research and program evaluation analysis, and support a comprehensive, one stop web information portal for all parks and recreation information in Strathroy-Caradoc.	Ongoing
Financial and Funding Strategies		
34	That Strathroy-Caradoc require community fundraising, corporate sponsorship and related community investments for the development of new recreation facilities, major facilities expansions or major facility renewals (not rehabilitation or systems replacement), particularly for projects above a threshold cost of \$1 million, with a guideline of 25% of total project costs.	Ongoing

Recommendations		Status
User Fees		
35	<p>That Strathroy-Caradoc undertake a comprehensive assessment and development strategy associated with program, services and facility user fees that results in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - User fees being increasingly based on the cost of service delivery, with costs potentially incorporating direct costs, Department overhead allocations and facility renewal/reinvestment charges; - Fairness and equity amongst all user groups be established within the user fee development model over time related to the design and application of the fee development formula; - The model establish clear coverage targets by service area, as well as for the overall Division as a basis to establish fees and budgetary directions; and - Staged implementation strategies of up to five years, where appropriate, to support major increases in fees so as not to dramatically impact user groups in the short term. 	Review Required
36	<p>That the User Fee Policy framework be based on the following key principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fair and equitable user fees; - Maximum utilization of facilities; - Maximum revenue generation from ancillary income sources; - Direct benefits realized and the cost of delivery; - Transparent and simple to understand; and - Cost effective facilities and program operations by the Municipality. 	Review Required
37	That the overall user fee policy development program ensure stakeholder consultation in regards to the development of its key principles and approaches;	Review Required
38	That user fee strategies also reflect market-based strategies , such as multiple price points to balance utilization levels and to maximize income in high demand categories;	Review Required
39	That the user fees be reviewed annually and comprehensively assessed at a minimum every five years as to the cost inputs to the approved formula that emerges from this recommendation.	Ongoing
40	That policies on organizational and individual participant financial support related to user fees be aligned with and considered as per the specific recommendations on these topics in Section 3.10 of the Master Plan.	Ongoing

Recommendations		Status
Policy Development Initiatives		
41	<p>1. Balancing Public Accessibility and Revenue Generation Goals</p> <p>That a policy be developed related to integrating and balancing the competing perspectives of public accessibility and maximizing revenue generation from major recreation facilities, focusing on the following components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring public accessibility at viable times in support of low or non-programmed activities, such as public skating, unstructured sports field utilization and related uses; - Giving preference to minor sports, youth and other special needs groups within selected timeframes for regularly scheduled and program-based activities; - Developing a tournament, shows, event and festivals component that supports program diversification/ variety and fundraising, but within limits that do not displace key points of accessibility, such as for public skating, and has clear displacement parameters on other regularly scheduled uses/users; - Developing the context of the financial coverage targets established annually and as approved by Council for its recreation facilities; - Ensuring evident linkages are made between the user fee, fairness and equity, special populations and other key Strathroy-Caradoc policies; - Developing policy using best practices analyses, community organization consultation and technical assessments on utilization, revenue generation and related profiles and inputs; and - Developing a corporate sponsorship and naming policy for the Municipality's physical facilities, programs (such as public skating and swims) and special events that balance potential revenue opportunities with important public principles. 	Review Required
42	<p>2. Facilities Allocation</p> <p>That current policies, particularly the facilities allocation policies, be reviewed or developed to ensure the following key value considerations are incorporated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fairness and equity amongst all user populations; - Inclusion and transparency; - Support of emerging parks and recreation services and for less developed or known programs and services that are evolving; and - Enhancing participation involvement for new Canadians, residents with physical and other challenges and other populations who require integrated supports to facilitate equitable participation. 	Completed

Recommendations		Status
43	<p>3. Policy Format</p> <p>That consideration be given to developing policies based on the following framework in order to establish a consistency of format, presentation and understanding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy rationale and need; - Policy principles and foundation; - Policy statement and content; - Operational procedures and standards; - Linkages to all regulatory and/or statutory acts or legislation, regulations and other Strathroy- Caradoc policies; - Implementation and monitoring procedures; - Mandatory policy review, potentially every five years; and - An amendments tracking capacity. 	No Action
Data Collection, Analysis, Evaluation and Performance Measurement		
44	<p>That a comprehensive review and further development of the Department's data collection, analytical, evaluation and performance measurement activities be undertaken, to ensure increasingly relevant, accurate and timely data to support current and future-oriented operational and strategic priorities identification, decision-making and performance management, with emphasis on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parks and recreation services operations to ensure that revenues are being optimized, expenses are being minimized and participation opportunities are maximized; - Identifying and responding to changes that are occurring in the parks and recreation services and regional markets that could influence future participation patterns and which might impact financial results, related to reduced revenues, increased expectations or other changing market conditions; - Supporting organizations that the Municipality is significantly connected with in terms of grants or related to the potential impacts if the organization were to cease operations or run into a major organization or financial challenges; <p>Assessing service trends, government policy initiatives, evolving societal priorities and other service influences as key impacts to ongoing strategic analysis and services development; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing and applying performance measurement criteria, targets and reporting on the results achieved. 	Ongoing

Recommendations		Status
Partnerships and Joint Ventures		
45	That Strathroy-Caradoc actively continue to lead and/or support partnership, joint venture and related initiatives where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need is identified and demonstrated; - Public access and affordability are assured; - The partnership arrangement is financially sound and sustainable; and - The scope of Municipal investment is reflective of the benefits to be realized by Strathroy- Caradoc residents. 	Ongoing
Individual Participant Financial Support		
46	That Strathroy-Caradoc continue to offer individual participants financial support via the Can I Play Too Program to access parks and recreation programs, based on the following principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evident benefit to qualifying participants; - A reasonable assessment of the financial or other limitations that are barriers to participation; and - Selective tracking of financially supported participation to ensure engagement and to assess the benefits realized. 	Ongoing
47	That the individual participant financial support program be positioned outside the User Fee Policy of Strathroy-Caradoc in order to separate participant financial subsidies from revenue generation targets.	Ongoing
48	That financial support offered to individual participants be aligned with their assessed capacity to fund portions of the fees applicable.	Ongoing
49	That the financial support program be positioned within formats and strategies that ensure awareness of this opportunity and be subject to budgetary approval.	Ongoing
50	That an annual report , consistent with Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act requirements, be provided to Council on the level of participant financial support provided by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Program and/or service; - Full or partial fee contributions; and - Individuals, families and age profiles. 	No Action

Recommendations		Status
51	That through the recommended community development role for the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Municipality actively promote , where appropriate and possible, by providing proposed advice and direction to community service providing organizations to develop their policy frameworks and the resources necessary, i.e. Jump Start, etc., to facilitate the participation of individuals or families who have limited financial capacity and who would otherwise benefit from program participation.	Ongoing
Land Acquisition Policies		
52	That Strathroy-Caradoc adopt the Parkland Classification System as a basis for planning for and acquiring, designing, developing and programming parkland (see Appendix A).	Completed
53	That Strathroy-Caradoc should strive to maximize the supply of available parkland in new development areas by acquisition through dedication from development, donations, accessing grants, land trusts, conservation easements, land exchange, partnerships, agreements and direct purchase. Where land acquired through dedication by development is insufficient in size or shape for their intended park function, the Municipality should consider acquisition of additional parkland by other means.	Ongoing
54	That, where parkland is identified and deemed surplus to the needs of the community based on overlapping service areas, duplication of available parkland and resources or other factors that result in evidence of limited usage, any proposals relating to the disposition of the surplus land should be evaluated based on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential for re-allocating the land for other municipal purposes; - The land use policies and objectives of the Official Plan as it pertains to the property and surrounding area, and the applicable zoning; and - That any revenue to be generated from a proposed sale of the surplus land should be allocated to investments in parks and recreational facilities and programs. 	Ongoing
55	That the acquisition of parkland by dedication through development in accordance with the Planning Act should continue to be governed by the Municipality's Official Plan, with consideration to amending the Official Plan to incorporate the related recommendations of this Master Plan, and as per a Parkland Dedication By-law (see below).	Ongoing

Recommendations	Status
<p>56 That Strathroy-Caradoc develop and enact a Parkland Dedication and Cash-in-Lieu of Parkland Dedication By-law considering the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2% of the area of the lot where development/redevelopment is for commercial or industrial purposes; - 5% of the area of the lot where development/redevelopment is for residential purposes; - 33.3 square metres per dwelling unit where development is for residential purposes at a density exceeding 15 dwelling units per hectare; and - For mixed use development, parkland dedication should be calculated based on the proportionate ratios above for each use and added together to determine the sum of total parkland required. 	Review Required
<p>57 That, in order to promote and facilitate residential intensification at higher densities in appropriate areas of Strathroy and Mount Brydges through redevelopment and new development within the maximum density provisions of the Municipality's Official Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A cap be considered whereby the required parkland dedication will not exceed 25% of the lot area and whereby the required cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication will not exceed 25% of the value of the lot; and - Policies should be considered that provide for potential reductions in the amount of cash-in- lieu of parkland required for redevelopment projects that meet sustainability criteria, in accordance with Subsection 42(6.2) of the Planning Act; as may be governed by the Municipality's Official Plan and Parkland Dedication and Cash-in-Lieu of Parkland Dedication By-law (as/if adopted). 	Review Required
<p>58 Cash in-lieu of parkland funds will be used in accordance with the Planning Act. The Municipality should consider prioritizing the use of these funds as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First – Acquiring new parkland and/or improving existing Neighbourhood Park(s) accessible to the local area being developed; - Second – Acquiring new parkland and/or improving existing Community or Major Park(s) accessible to the local area being developed; and - Third – Investing in recreation buildings/indoor recreational facilities. 	Ongoing

Recommendations	Status
<p>59 That Strathroy-Caradoc should require that land to be dedicated for parkland meets minimum standards for acceptance as parkland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The land should be generally flat, well-drained developable land of a suitable shape with no constraints to active park use; - Hazard lands and sensitive natural features should not be accepted as part of the minimum mandatory parkland dedication except where it can be demonstrated that the parkland needs of the area can be met by existing local parks and/or the acquisition of these marginal lands provides opportunities to enhance access to an existing and sufficient supply of available parks and open spaces in the area; and - The conveyance of natural areas and hazard lands should be considered over and above the minimum parkland dedication requirements. 	Ongoing
<p>60 That Strathroy-Caradoc continue to pursue the acquisition of natural areas through the development process and other means of securement to provide opportunities for enhanced conservation, compatible public access and linkages to the parks, trails and open spaces network. Available means of acquisition, management objectives, public use opportunities and related operating/resource requirements for natural areas should be identified in considering whether acquisition is required. The Municipality should continue to require that conservation land dedicated to the Municipality through the development process should be conveyed in a satisfactory condition and with sufficient area for proper maintenance, in accordance with the Official Plan.</p>	Ongoing
<p>61 That Strathroy Caradoc should support community fundraising, joint ventures and other initiatives to acquire additional parkland, and engage the community in any significant parkland acquisition decision-making process. Acquisition of property should be considered only when there is a demonstrated community need and benefits, a fit with one or more categories of parks in the Parkland Classification System, and a financial strategy that addresses the capital, operating and long-term maintenance costs. Preparation of a Business Plan should be considered as a basis to support investments in parkland acquisition where appropriate.</p>	Ongoing
<p>62 That Strathroy-Caradoc should continue to coordinate the acquisition of parks with the appropriate school board to maximize integration between facilities and joint use opportunities, where possible. The Municipality should also consider acquisition of school sites in the event that the closure of school facilities is contemplated by the school board(s) in the future, to ensure that local access to parks and open space can be maintained based on the service area and provision level targets of this Master Plan.</p>	Review Required

Recommendations		Status
63	That, as part of the Municipality's next Official Plan review, Strathroy-Caradoc should consider identifying future pedestrian pathways and bicycle pathways (known and/or conceptual routes) as part of a new transportation map schedule with related policies to require the dedication of land for pedestrian and bicycle pathways as a condition of the subdivision of land, as provided for under the Planning Act (s. 51(25)(b)).	Ongoing
64	That Strathroy-Caradoc should also require the identification and provision of walkways and other means of pedestrian access, accessibility supports as well as bicycle parking facilities and other sustainable design elements on municipal streets, as may be required for site plan approvals and developments in accordance with the Planning Act (s. 41(4) #2(e), s.41(7)(a)(4)).	Review Required
Accessibility Standards for Parks		
65	<p>The Government of Ontario has established the Design of Public Spaces (Built Environment) Standard under the AODA, and this standard applies when developing new public spaces and redeveloping existing public spaces involving (among others) recreational trails, outdoor public use eating areas, outdoor play spaces, exterior paths of travel (e.g. sidewalks, walkways), accessible parking and maintenance. For this standard, the compliance date for municipalities is January 1st, 2016.</p> <p>The Municipality's 2013-2015 Accessibility Plan list the overall general requirements, the timelines for implementation, completion and legislated date for compliance, and related goals. Parks and Recreation Ontario has released a Guidebook titled "Pathways to Recreation – Learning about Ontario's Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces" to provide owners, managers and operators of municipal and not-for-profit parks, outdoor recreation facilities and amenities with an understanding of the accessibility requirements, and should be reviewed as a reference guide.</p>	Ongoing

Recommendations	Status
Design & Development Policies and Strategies for Parks, Open Spaces and Trails	
<p>66 That Strathroy-Caradoc should consider adopting the following steps to guide the Design and Development Process for new parks and for any significant changes/ renewal/replacement or new facilities in existing parks:</p> <p>1. Design:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1.1 Project Initiation - define work plan, schedule, roles, consulting services required, coordinate with project partners, notify community; - 1.2 Site Investigation - review and document existing conditions, survey, topo, surface/subsurface, drainage, surroundings/interface, demographics, linkages, servicing, acceptance of new parkland; - 1.3 Concept Development - develop optional park layouts, facilities/ amenities (based on Parkland Classification System), preliminary costing of options, review operational requirements/ resources; - 1.4 Concept Evaluation - review and consultation with community and stakeholders/advisory committee(s), confirm needs/preferences; - 1.5 Finalize Concept - adjust preferred option(s) to develop final concept based on selected components, refine preliminary costing, obtain approvals to proceed with detailed design and construction; and - 1.6 Detailed Design - prepare landscape, grading/drainage/storm-water management, servicing, lighting and other plans and details as required, with detailed cost estimates, finalize as a basis for construction quotes. <p>2. Development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2.1 Construction Contract - prepare and issue construction tender/ RFP, evaluation of submissions, selection and award of contract; - 2.2 Pre-Construction - establish communication protocols and project management roles/structure, review detailed design and construction requirements, confirm schedule, scope, provisional items, notification; - 2.3 Site Preparation - ensure erosion/sediment controls, staging areas, security/safety measures, on-site notifications are in place; - 2.4 Construction - hold regular progress meetings with designers and contractor(s), record changes/instructions, monitor, etc.; - 2.5 Inspections - review certifications and as-built information, on-site inspection and testing of constructed works, deficiency list, etc.; and - 2.6 Acceptance - ensure rectification of any deficiencies, commence maintenance /warranty period, monitoring, final site inspections, as-built documents, safety/compliance certificates, municipal take-over. 	Ongoing

Recommendations	Status
67 That, for each of the steps identified in the Parks Design and Development Process, the Municipality should identify related staff/departmental roles, organizational protocols and detailed procedures to further map out this process.	No Action
68 The Municipality should continue to encourage and facilitate the community's participation in park design, development and renewal projects by obtaining public input during the planning and design process, fostering partnerships and joint ventures in park development/renewal, and promoting awareness of park projects and initiatives through effective public communications. Consideration should be given to formally establishing staff/departmental roles, responsibilities, procedures and protocols for community engagement in park projects in further mapping out the recommended Park Design and Development Process.	Ongoing
69 That Strathroy-Caradoc should continue to pursue high quality and innovative park design that balance functional use, urban form and aesthetic benefits, community safety, accessibility, integration with nature and operational requirements to ensure long term sustainability. Parks should be designed and developed to support the Municipality's urban design principles set out in the Official Plan.	Ongoing
70 That Strathroy-Caradoc should pursue and support park designs that will reduce energy, water use and environmental impacts , and that integrate recycled/ environmentally-friendly materials and landscape treatments that support reduced maintenance requirements and sustainable operations . To encourage the increased use of green technologies and sustainability features in the development of new communities and in redevelopment areas, the Municipality may want to consider incentives such as enhanced park designs and developments to assist projects in meeting emerging sustainability standards such as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Neighbourhood Development (LEED-ND) certification, subject to further policies and criteria as may be established in the Official Plan.	Ongoing

Recommendations	Status
<p>71 That, as a basis for park design and development, current and future needs for parks, open spaces and trails should be defined based on a range of influencing factors, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Historic and forecast population growth, demographic characteristics and planned development within the service area; - Current parkland and facility supply/provision levels and available land supply in the service area; - Evolving demographic, recreational and design trends; - Current demand and forecast growth in participation in sports and other programmed activities; - Partnership opportunities and the role of other service/facility providers (e.g. school boards); - Input from the public, stakeholders and Municipal departmental staff; and - Geographic deficiencies and gaps/overlaps in facility and service provision. 	Review Required
<p>73 Where possible, the Municipality should consider agreements providing for Development Charge credits in exchange for developer-build parks as a strategy to support the earlier development of parks and trails in new development areas. The recommended guidelines, standards and procedures for park design and development in the Parks Master Plan should be applied.</p>	Review Required
<p>74 That, in support of local food production, urban agriculture and related health benefits, Strathroy- Caradoc should continue to work with local community groups to explore opportunities to integrate community gardens in existing and new local parks. Potential partners for community gardens may include the local school board(s), local churches and the local Food Bank.</p>	Ongoing
<p>75 That Strathroy-Caradoc should continue to work with and support the local Horticultural Society for their contributions to community beautification and stewardship tending public gardens.</p>	Ongoing

Recommendations	Status
<p>76 That the following should be considered in the design of parks to support the arts and related culture and tourism benefits and the role of parks, open spaces and trails in contributing to place-making, urban design and community identity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Park designs should integrate a balance of active and passive facilities and flexible spaces that can support special events and a wide range of cultural activities; - Opportunities for including public art in parks based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Early site selection and integration with park design and development; and o Consideration of appropriate forms of public art for parks such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Functional art pieces that support the park use; ▪ Civic landmarks, memorials and monuments that recognize and celebrate local heritage and culture and honour local achievements; and ▪ Inspirational art reflecting the shared vision for the community and the parks system (e.g. nature, health, sustainability, active living, etc.); - with priority to locally- or regionally-sourced art works. 	Ongoing
<p>77 That Strathroy-Caradoc should continue to apply the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) in the design of park resources to maximize public safety and prevent undesired behaviour by the elimination or modification of design features that potentially contribute to crime and disorder, through natural surveillance. Park spaces should be visible from the street frontage/entrances and/or parking areas.</p>	Ongoing
<p>78 That Strathroy-Caradoc should continue to further develop and incorporate physical accessibility features and operational standards in parks, open spaces and trails and to ensure a balance of seasonal and year-round recreational opportunities are available to support the widest possible range of users, ages, abilities and interests. The Municipality should also monitor and assess existing and proposed accessibility standards of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and identify related impacts on park design, development and renewal/rehabilitation requirements (see information above related to Accessibility Standards for Parks).</p>	Ongoing

Recommendations		Status
Parks Programming and Use Policies and Strategies		
79	That the Parks Classification System provided in this Master Plan should be used to guide potential park uses and activities for each category of park as a basis for planning and development of parks and outdoor recreation facilities. The safe and permissible use of the Municipality's parks will continue to be governed by the Municipality's by-laws and policies (e.g. Permits for sports field bookings). The Municipality should develop and adopt a Park Use By-law under the Municipal Act to regulate permitted and prohibited activities, hours of operation, procedures for any exemptions/approval of special events and any fees penalties for violations.	Completed
80	That Strathroy-Caradoc should continue to provide a balance of park facilities to support both unstructured and structured activities supporting spontaneous, informal and self-directed recreational, social and educational activities, along with scheduled programming and formal uses that may be revenue generating to offset the costs of providing and maintaining facilities for specific or specialized uses.	Ongoing
81	That Strathroy-Caradoc should continue to pursue expanded park use and programming by promoting community awareness of available park resources, facilities and services through information delivery and availability, coordinating special events and festivals, assisting program providers with marketing, and other initiatives.	Ongoing
82	That Strathroy-Caradoc should support and encourage both seasonal and year-round use of parks by ensuring that, where possible and appropriate, park facilities are maintained and equipped to support both warm and cold weather activities.	Review Required
Management & Operations Policies & Strategies for Parks, Open Spaces & Trails		
83	That Strathroy-Caradoc should continuously assess and monitor operational resources needs to address the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The continued growth, expansion and diversification of parks and facilities and related quality and maintenance standards; and - Environmental services to address the horticultural, forestry and aligned specialty services related to restoring, enhancing and sustaining the health of municipally-owned natural areas. - For all parks-related capital projects, the Municipality should define related staffing, equipment and other resource requirements for parks management and operations based on a graduated increase of existing operating requirements on a per unit basis and an assessment of opportunities for efficiencies and reduced operational requirements to ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to sustain new parks and facilities. 	Ongoing

Recommendations		Status
84	That Strathroy-Caradoc should review and consider environmentally-friendly technologies that contribute to the sustainability and reduced environmental impact of parks operations and maintenance . As examples, this could include selective reduction of mowing and use of low-to-no maintenance landscape treatments, energy efficient lighting/heating, snow removal approaches, and fleet fuel efficiency strategies.	Ongoing
85	That Strathroy-Caradoc should review opportunities to better integrate park management and operational considerations in the processing of planning applications, parkland acquisition/dedication and park design stages. Where necessary, process improvements should be developed and documented to ensure effective operations and management decision support for park planning and design activities.	Review Required
Business Plan Development Applications		
86	<p>That Strathroy-Caradoc continue to require a Business Plan for all capital parks and recreation service proposals as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - That any new facility or servicing initiative or major addition to an existing parks and recreation resource with a potential capital cost of over \$250,000 be supported by a comprehensive Business Plan; - That Strathroy-Caradoc direct the undertaking of the Business Plans, seeking broad-based public consultation, and working within partnerships where appropriate with community proponents and participants; - That the Business Plan identify and assess the broadest range of capital revenue sources, such as corporate sponsorships and naming, foundations, senior government grants, and related opportunities; - That the results of the Business Plan, when finalized and accepted, become the basis for a new or expanded parks and recreation service being incorporated into the multi-year capital budget forecast for the Municipality related to timing, capital cost projections, Municipality's role/involvement, etc.; and - That the capital cost projections should be reviewed regularly and re-incorporated into the Municipality's multi-year capital cost forecast program in order to respond to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The potential impact of inflation that may not be predictable or certain over time; and o Any subsequent alterations in a proposed facility's design or use which should be approved by Council first as to rationale and need for the changes. 	Ongoing

Recommendations		Status
Multi-Use/Multi-Partner Approaches		
87	That Strathroy-Caradoc, for all major parks and recreation facility renewal and new facility development initiatives, investigate in depth, the potential for a wide range of multiple use opportunities within a single facility venue, as well as multi-partner participation.	Ongoing
Community Use of Schools		
88	That Strathroy-Caradoc continue to explore with local School Boards, strategies and protocols that would effectively increase community accessibility to publicly funded schools for recreation uses as a key support and service to both community service provider organizations and for Municipal services.	Ongoing
PARKS AND RECREATION SPECIFIC INITIATIVES		
Parks Inventory and Renewal/Rehabilitation Program		
89	<p>That Strathroy-Caradoc should create and maintain a Parks Inventory Database as a record and mapping of parks, open spaces and trails and related facilities, to be developed from the current inventory and mapping provided in the Situational Analysis Report and consisting of the following information in where and when available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Geographic Information System (GIS) based mapping of parks, open spaces and trails with inventory attribute data identifying park name, size, frontage, number, type and age of facilities – this could also be integrated with protocols and schedule for maintenance and inspections, usage and programming schedules and data, etc.; - A record of as-built documentation, boundary and topographic surveys, existing conditions and approved plans and budgets for park properties, inspection reports, asset management information such as replacement costs, life expectancy and anticipated timing of replacements; and - A public information map and inventory identifying available parks, locations, facilities and trails and related programs, building on the mapping, inventory and program information included in the Situational Analysis Report and the Municipality's website. <p>The Parks Inventory Database should be applied and maintained as a resource to review and plan for future parks and facilities management and operational resource needs, lifecycle replacement and renewal requirements, maintenance schedules and protocols, and related administrative functions, and to identify potential efficiencies in service delivery. Reporting on the status of the parks inventory and specific park assets, usage, and their maintenance costs should be documented and reviewed annually to assist in budgeting and decision-making.</p>	Ongoing

Recommendations		Status
90	That Strathroy-Caradoc should establish a comprehensive Park Renewal and Rehabilitation Program addressing lifecycle requirements, evolving standards and trends across the full range of parks, open spaces, trails and related facilities with the objective of sustaining the ability of these resources to effectively support and facilitate enhanced community use, programming and operational requirements. Related investments should be aligned and tracked with the Municipality's overall Asset Management Plan.	Ongoing
91	That Strathroy-Caradoc should complete a Parks Tree Inventory and establish and implement an ongoing Parks Tree Planting and Replacement Program within municipal parks, supportive of expanding urban forest cover and providing shade opportunities, and based on the direction of the Municipality's Tree Policy and Planting Guidelines.	Ongoing
New Park Development		
92	That Strathroy-Caradoc should acquire land for a new Neighbourhood Park (minimum size of 0.5 ha) to serve the north part of Strathroy east of Head Street and south of Second Street in the area of Thorn Drive, through parkland dedication requirements and/or the use of cash-in-lieu of parkland. If possible the park location should be connected with the Strathroy-Rotary Memorial Trail and located adjacent to natural areas and features of the area, with visibility and prominent street frontage.	Ongoing
93	That Strathroy-Caradoc should undertake the design and development of new parks on land dedicated to the Municipality as parkland in new development areas, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A new Neighbourhood Park site to be acquired in the northerly part of Strathroy as noted above. A second park site will be required east of the creek over the longer term to serve the build-out of this area; - A new Neighbourhood Park on parkland dedicated in the Southgrove Heights development in Strathroy; - Bennett Crescent and Gore Street park blocks with new parkette(s) or open space/green space commons in the South Creek development in Mount Brydges; and - Lucas Avenue parkland should be developed as a new parkette or open space/greenspace commons for the Wood's Edge development in Mount Brydges. 	Ongoing

Recommendations		Status
94	That, although there is overlap between the service areas of the existing Saulsbury Street and Brennan Drive park locations, there may be a need in the future for one or two new park sites, or one consolidated Neighbourhood Park location , with the build-out of land designated for residential purposes in the westerly part of Strathroy. The existing park locations should be retained in the near term, but changes to the number and location of parks may be warranted in the longer term with the development of the area, to create one or two consolidated Neighbourhood Park sites.	Review Required
95	That a new Neighbourhood Park should be considered in connection with the development of the designated residential land located south-west of Adelaide Road and Carroll Street West in Strathroy.	Review Required
96	That the parkland dedication locations, design and development of new parks required in connection with the future development of remaining vacant residential land in Mount Brydges should include consideration of the number and distribution of existing parks and opportunities to serve these areas through improvements to existing parks and/or to create consolidated Neighbourhood Park locations , including one location to serve the south west area (north of Parkhouse Drive and west of Church Street, east of Rougham Road and south of Pamela Drive) and one or two locations to serve the north area of the community (area along Falconbridge Drive).	Ongoing
Prioritization of Playground Repair/Replacement		
97	<p>That Strathroy-Caradoc should continue to develop and maintain an ongoing Playground Maintenance, Repair and Replacement Program to address current safety standards and accessibility requirements and consider trends in playground design (e.g. themed play equipment, natural playgrounds, integration of water and other creative features). This initiative should form part of the recommended comprehensive Park Renewal and Rehabilitation Program addressing lifecycle requirements, evolving standards and trends across the full range of park resources with the objective of sustaining the ability of the system to effectively support and facilitate enhanced community use, programming and operational requirements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - That Strathroy-Caradoc rank and organize the 2013 playground inspection results by Hazard Rating and Suggested Plan of Action to identify priority actions; - Budgetary costs should be assigned to each proposed repair/replacement; - The information on Maps 11 and 13 of the Situation Analysis Report may be used to assist the ranking of the remedial activities by identifying areas of overlap of playground catchment area; and - Should any playgrounds be identified for closure rather than repair/replacement, public consultation should be performed prior to removal. 	Ongoing

Recommendations		Status
Trails Master Plan		
98	<p>That Strathroy-Caradoc prepare a Trails Master Plan to guide the planning, design and development of additional trails and management of existing and new trails.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As part of the Trails Master Plan process it is recommended that an inventory and mapping of existing trails be prepared. This will help guide more detailed planning and investigation to facilitate the identification of future trail routes and potential dedication of land for pedestrian and cycling pathways for new development areas. - The Trails Master Plan would also address the desires evidenced in the public consultation process, including the desire for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Increased maintenance (including winter maintenance) as well as lighting, where appropriate, to encourage more use; o Benches and seating along the trail in order better serve the needs of seniors and families; o Installation of outdoor exercise or fitness equipment in order to encourage greater public use of the trail system; and o Improved linkages to other trail systems and the downtown core. 	Ongoing
Partnership with St. Clair Region Conservation Authority		
99	That Strathroy-Caradoc seek enhanced partnership opportunities with the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority to improve the existing trail network and develop linkages between natural areas and municipal trails.	Ongoing
Services Delivery Review and Engineering Assessments of Indoor Recreation Facilities		
100	That Strathroy-Caradoc prepare service delivery strategy reviews and engineering assessments of the indoor recreation facilities, initially focusing on the West Middlesex Memorial Centre and Tri-Township Arenas with specific emphasis on forthcoming lifecycle capital expenses (e.g. roof and floor) as well as physical plant efficiency in order to evaluate future investment and positioning decisions.	Completed
Monitoring of Sports Fields Capacities		
101	That Strathroy-Caradoc monitor the need for additional sports field capacity based on annual reviews of field bookings and participant registrations in related programs, input from program providers and sports field users, and service level standards as identified through the Situational Analysis Report.	Review Required

Recommendations		Status
102	That Strathroy-Caradoc establish an Allocation Policy and Sports Field Maintenance Protocol to guide and establish protocols for the Municipality's scheduling of the facility use, processing of sports field booking requests, categorization of fields by size and level of facility development, and the typical maintenance schedule and related operational activities.	Ongoing
103	That, should a potential need for additional sports field capacity be identified, that a review of scheduling, potential lighting of additional fields and the potential use of school or other sports fields be explored and optimized prior to new field development.	Ongoing
Community Services Facilitator		
104	That Strathroy-Caradoc hire a Community Services Facilitator to improve communications, marketing and programming at Municipal parks and recreation facilities. The position would involve marketing the Municipal facilities and programs, performing outreach to community groups, encouraging community support and development of programs and promoting special events to the community and beyond.	Completed
Potential Additional Youth Programming/Facilities		
105	That Strathroy-Caradoc consider the potential for additional youth programming and facilities in order to meet the evolving needs of youth including an expanded skateboard park or new location for older youth as a possible addition to one of the existing facilities.	Ongoing
Potential Additional Older Adult Programming/Facilities		
106	That Strathroy-Caradoc work with the Strathroy and Area Seniors Centre and other older adult groups to identify evolving programs, interests and opportunities, providing technical and organizational supports in enriching older adult programs.	Ongoing
107	That Strathroy-Caradoc, in working with older adult and other community service providers, actively explore opportunities for inter-generational programming, multi-use of available facilities and other similar initiatives.	Ongoing
Master Plan Review		
108	That the Master Plan be updated annually , specifically the implementation components , in order to maintain a current listing of capital and operating initiatives and as a progress tracking tool for staff and Council, and to support information updates to the community.	Ongoing

Recommendations		Status
109	That at the fifth anniversary of the plan, planning sessions/workshops be held to review more comprehensively the recommendations with respect to changes in the fiscal, demographic, environmental, and legislative operating environment. Modifications to the plan may be made to reflect changing municipal strategic priorities and the impact of recommendations previously adopted.	Ongoing
110	That at the tenth anniversary , a Master Plan Update be prepared to assess the direction of the plan relative to municipal key strategic objectives and determine if changes in the operating environment require changes in the plan's direction.	Ongoing

Appendix B – Community Survey Results

See following pages.



1 How physically active has your household been during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to before? This includes leisure-time activities, such as participation in organized or in unorganized sports, physical activities, and play.

	#	%
More physically active than before the pandemic	56	25%
No change / the same level of physical activity	61	27%
Less physically active than before the pandemic	107	48%
Unsure	0	0%
answered question	224	100%
skipped question	0	

2 In 2019 (generally the 12 months prior to the COVID-19 pandemic), which of the following activities did you or anyone in your household participate in, in Strathroy-Caradoc or elsewhere? By participation, we mean situations where you or a member of your household actively participate (which does not include attending an event or watching others), either at home or in public. (Select all that apply)

	#	%
Enjoying Parks, Open Spaces, and Natural Areas	184	82%
Walking or Hiking for Leisure	161	72%
Attending Special Events (e.g., Canada Day, etc.)	154	69%
Aerobics, Yoga, Fitness, or Weight-Training	113	50%
Use of Playground Equipment	110	49%
Dog Walking (on or off leash)	104	46%
Use of Splash Pad	101	45%
Swimming (Recreational)	99	44%
Cycling or Mountain Biking	80	36%
Golf	76	34%
Hockey, Ringette, Figure Skating, or Indoor Ice Skating	76	34%
Swimming (Instructional or Aquafit)	75	33%
Running or Jogging	67	30%
Soccer	62	28%
Baseball or Softball (or other forms)	47	21%
Outdoor Ice Skating	45	20%
Dance	37	17%
Organized Pre-School or Children's Programs	34	15%
Basketball	28	13%
Organized Seniors Programs (e.g. cards, etc.)	26	12%
Tennis	21	9%
Skateboarding	20	9%
Volleyball	18	8%
Organized Teen Programs (e.g. summer camps, etc.)	17	8%
Pickleball	11	5%
Curling	9	4%
Squash or Racquetball	6	3%
Other (please specify)	10	4%
answered question	224	
skipped question	0	

3 Prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, were you and members of your household able to participate in parks and recreation activities as often as you would like (e.g., sports, fitness, outdoor play, etc.)?

	#	%
Yes	137	61%
No	77	34%
Unsure	10	4%
answered question	224	100%
skipped question	0	

4 Prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, why were you and members of your household not able to participate in parks and recreation activities as often as you would like? (select up to 3 responses)

	#	% of subsample	% of sample
Lack of desired facilities or programs	60	69%	27%
Program not offered at a convenient time	33	38%	15%
Lack of personal time / Too busy	27	31%	12%
Lack of information / Unaware of opportunities	20	23%	9%
Lack of money / Too expensive	12	14%	5%
Lack of transportation / Facility too far away	9	10%	4%
Health problems / Disability / Age	5	6%	2%
Lack of Child Care	3	3%	1%
Language / Cultural Barrier	0	0%	0%
Unsure	1	1%	0%
Other (please specify)	4	5%	2%
answered question	87		
skipped question	137		

5 In general, how important are the following items to your household?

	1 Not at all Important		2 Somewhat Important		3 Neither Important nor Unimportant		4 Somewhat Important		5 Very Important		6 Unsure / Don't Use		Answered Question		Skipped Question	Average
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%		
Arenas	15	7%	21	10%	20	9%	59	27%	95	43%	11	5%	221	100%	3	3.94
Baseball or Softball Diamonds	22	10%	16	7%	37	17%	54	25%	68	31%	19	9%	216	100%	8	3.66
Basketball Courts (Outdoor)	35	16%	22	10%	38	18%	56	26%	37	17%	26	12%	214	100%	10	3.20
Community Halls	7	3%	18	8%	25	11%	82	37%	80	36%	8	4%	220	100%	4	3.99
Gymnasiums	10	5%	15	7%	32	15%	69	32%	71	33%	17	8%	214	100%	10	3.89
Off-Leash Dog Parks	45	21%	7	3%	38	18%	36	17%	55	26%	34	16%	215	100%	9	3.27
Outdoor Swimming Pools	12	6%	14	7%	26	12%	55	26%	90	42%	17	8%	214	100%	10	4.00
Parks and Open Space	0	0%	3	1%	3	1%	15	7%	199	90%	2	1%	222	100%	2	4.86
Playgrounds	12	6%	6	3%	17	8%	40	19%	129	60%	12	6%	216	100%	8	4.31
Recreation Programs (Registered & Drop-in)	7	3%	10	5%	20	9%	65	30%	107	49%	10	5%	219	100%	5	4.22
Skateboard Parks	48	22%	12	6%	50	23%	36	17%	31	14%	38	18%	215	100%	9	2.94
Soccer and Football Fields	20	9%	11	5%	29	13%	51	24%	83	38%	22	10%	216	100%	8	3.86
Splash Pads	15	7%	12	6%	19	9%	45	21%	103	48%	22	10%	216	100%	8	4.08
Tennis and Pickleball Courts (Outdoor)	27	13%	15	7%	36	17%	53	25%	39	18%	42	20%	212	100%	12	3.36
Trails	1	0%	3	1%	1	0%	23	10%	191	86%	2	1%	221	100%	3	4.83

6 What is your level of satisfaction with the following parks and recreation amenities and services in Strathroy-Caradoc?

	1 Not at all Satisfied		2 Not Satisfied		3 Neither Satisfied or Not Satisfied		4 Satisfied		5 Very Satisfied		6 Unsure / Don't Use		Answered Question		Skipped Question	Average
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%		
Arenas	15	7%	22	10%	25	11%	74	33%	55	25%	32	14%	223	100%	1	3.69
Baseball or Softball Diamonds	3	1%	17	8%	49	22%	49	22%	43	20%	58	26%	219	100%	5	3.70
Basketball Courts (Outdoor)	22	10%	21	10%	55	25%	29	13%	12	6%	79	36%	218	100%	6	2.91
Community Halls	22	10%	22	10%	54	24%	62	28%	40	18%	23	10%	223	100%	1	3.38
Gymnasiums	24	11%	22	10%	45	21%	56	26%	25	11%	47	21%	219	100%	5	3.21
Off-Leash Dog Parks	9	4%	5	2%	41	19%	42	19%	37	17%	82	38%	216	100%	8	3.69
Outdoor Swimming Pools	25	11%	22	10%	36	16%	51	23%	48	22%	38	17%	220	100%	4	3.41
Parks and Open Space	7	3%	26	12%	13	6%	88	40%	83	38%	4	2%	221	100%	3	3.99
Playgrounds	10	5%	20	9%	26	12%	80	36%	51	23%	34	15%	221	100%	3	3.76
Recreation Programs (Registered & Drop-in)	22	10%	20	9%	44	20%	57	26%	33	15%	45	20%	221	100%	3	3.34
Skateboard Parks	8	4%	7	3%	53	24%	29	13%	16	7%	106	48%	219	100%	5	3.34
Soccer and Football Fields	6	3%	12	5%	31	14%	66	30%	40	18%	64	29%	219	100%	5	3.79
Splash Pads	3	1%	12	5%	28	13%	66	30%	66	30%	44	20%	219	100%	5	4.03
Tennis and Pickleball Courts (Outdoor)	14	6%	17	8%	44	20%	42	19%	14	6%	86	40%	217	100%	7	3.19
Trails	11	5%	22	10%	16	7%	94	43%	72	33%	5	2%	220	100%	4	3.90

7 When it comes to meeting the overall needs of the people who live in your household, how would you rate the parks and recreation opportunities available in the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc for the following age groups?

	1		2		3		4		5		6		Answered Question		Skipped Question	Average
	Not at all Satisfied		Not Satisfied		Neither Satisfied or Not Satisfied		Satisfied		Very Satisfied		Unsure / Don't Use					
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%		
Pre-School (4 years and under)	11	5%	25	12%	25	12%	39	19%	18	9%	88	43%	206	100%	18	3.24
Children (5-12 years)	12	6%	26	12%	24	11%	59	28%	16	8%	72	34%	209	100%	15	3.30
Teens (13-18 years)	20	9%	37	18%	32	15%	25	12%	8	4%	89	42%	211	100%	13	2.70
Adults (19-54 years)	12	6%	57	27%	43	20%	51	24%	19	9%	33	15%	215	100%	9	3.04
Older Adults (55-69 years)	15	7%	32	15%	29	14%	26	12%	12	6%	100	47%	214	100%	10	2.89
Seniors (70 years and over)	19	9%	26	12%	25	12%	19	9%	6	3%	116	55%	211	100%	13	2.65

8 Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	1		2		3		4		5		6		Answered Question		Skipped Question	Average
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neither Agree or Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Unsure / Don't Use		# %			
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%		
Parks and recreation services should be a high priority for Municipal Council.	5	2%	4	2%	4	2%	50	23%	158	71%	0	0%	221	100%	3	4.59
The Municipality should take on a larger role in directly offering recreation programs to the community.	4	2%	4	2%	39	18%	99	45%	75	34%	2	1%	223	101%	1	4.07
Local parks and recreation facilities are well maintained.	3	1%	28	13%	39	17%	116	52%	37	17%	0	0%	223	100%	1	3.70
A greater focus should be placed on supporting special events and sport tourism.	3	1%	22	10%	72	33%	80	37%	42	19%	4	2%	223	102%	1	3.62
Local parks offer appropriate variety in amenities such as playground equipment, sports fields, natural areas, etc.	11	5%	46	21%	39	18%	94	43%	29	13%	1	0%	220	100%	4	3.38
Recreation programs and services are affordable.	8	4%	32	15%	59	28%	94	45%	16	8%	13	6%	222	106%	2	3.37
My household is satisfied with the location of parks and recreation facilities in the Municipality.	19	9%	47	21%	42	19%	78	35%	36	16%	0	0%	222	100%	2	3.29
My household is aware of the Municipality's financial assistance program for recreation programs.	21	12%	46	26%	30	17%	68	39%	10	6%	47	21%	222	121%	2	3.00

9 To what degree do you oppose or support the Municipality spending additional public funds to improve or provide the following facilities?

	1		2		3		4		5		6		Answered Question		Skipped Question	Average
	Strongly Opposed		Opposed		Neither Support or Opposed		Support		Strongly Support		Unsure / Don't Use		#	%		
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%		
Trails	0	0%	1	0%	7	3%	66	30%	143	66%	4	2%	221	99%	3	4.62
Acquisition of Parks and Open Space	6	3%	5	2%	17	8%	82	37%	112	50%	0	0%	222	99%	2	4.30
Playgrounds	0	0%	4	2%	23	11%	90	43%	92	44%	10	5%	219	98%	5	4.29
Space for Seniors Activities	2	1%	4	2%	27	13%	78	38%	94	46%	19	8%	224	100%	0	4.26
Outdoor Ice Rinks	5	2%	16	8%	25	12%	85	41%	77	37%	12	5%	220	98%	4	4.02
Splash Pads	4	2%	9	4%	35	17%	80	39%	79	38%	13	6%	220	98%	4	4.07
Community Vegetable Garden Plots	3	1%	12	6%	37	18%	76	37%	75	37%	19	9%	222	99%	2	4.02
Indoor Sports / Turf Facilities	3	1%	16	8%	48	23%	73	35%	70	33%	11	5%	221	99%	3	3.91
Outdoor Swimming Pools	15	7%	15	7%	38	18%	75	35%	70	33%	9	4%	222	99%	2	3.80
Gymnasiums	3	1%	15	7%	50	25%	83	41%	52	26%	15	7%	218	97%	6	3.82
Indoor Arenas	9	4%	19	9%	43	21%	72	35%	61	30%	15	7%	219	98%	5	3.77
Soccer Fields	8	4%	13	7%	50	26%	77	39%	48	24%	24	11%	220	98%	4	3.73
All Wheels Parks (Skateboards, etc.)	9	5%	14	7%	52	26%	81	41%	41	21%	25	11%	222	99%	2	3.66
Basketball Courts (Outdoor)	8	4%	14	8%	50	27%	77	42%	33	18%	40	18%	222	99%	2	3.62
Outdoor Tennis Courts	10	5%	15	8%	53	28%	82	43%	29	15%	31	14%	220	98%	4	3.56
Baseball or Softball Diamonds	8	4%	12	6%	59	31%	86	45%	26	14%	32	14%	223	100%	1	3.58
Outdoor Fitness Equipment	12	6%	21	10%	53	26%	81	40%	38	19%	14	6%	219	98%	5	3.55
Bike Parks / BMX Tracks	9	5%	18	10%	48	27%	72	41%	29	16%	43	20%	219	98%	5	3.53
Beach Volleyball Courts	17	10%	18	10%	65	37%	50	28%	28	16%	43	19%	221	99%	3	3.30
Off-Leash Dog Parks	13	7%	34	18%	59	32%	44	24%	37	20%	34	15%	221	99%	3	3.31
Outdoor Disc (Frisbee) Golf Courses	9	5%	40	21%	63	32%	56	29%	26	13%	26	12%	220	98%	4	3.26
Outdoor Pickleball Courts	11	6%	19	11%	74	41%	52	29%	24	13%	38	17%	218	97%	6	3.33
Outdoor Artificial Turf Fields	15	8%	44	23%	62	32%	42	22%	28	15%	28	13%	219	98%	5	3.13

10 If applicable, list up to three (3) parks and recreation activities/programs that you or members of your household would like to see provided in Strathroy-Caradoc that were not available prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic

	#	% of sample		#	% of sample		#	% of sample
Indoor Pool	62	28%	Playgrounds	11	5%	Mountain Bike	6	3%
Mt. Brydges Activities	29	13%	Natural Environment	10	4%	Festivals & Events	6	3%
Seniors activities	21	9%	Indoor Turf	9	4%	Frisbee Golf	6	3%
Walking Trails	20	9%	Swimming	9	4%	Outdoor Fitness Equipemen	6	3%
Outdoor Rink	19	8%	Pickleball	8	4%	Jungle Gym	6	3%
Youth Activities	16	7%	Splash Pad	8	4%	Volleyball	5	2%
Basketball	15	7%	Accessible Park Features	7	3%	Yoga	5	2%
Tennis	12	5%	Fitness Gym	7	3%	Outdoor Pool	5	2%
Indoor Track	12	5%	Gymnastics	6	3%	Paved Trails	4	2%
Skate Park	11	5%	Community Garden	6	3%	Community Centre	4	2%
Other	196							
Total Responses	413							

11 Looking ahead, what lasting impacts – if any – might the COVID-19 pandemic have on your participation in parks and recreation activities?

	#	% of sample
Want to Return to Normal / None	46	21%
More Time Outside	24	11%
Being More Active	20	9%
More Passive Recreation Activities	19	8%
Concern about Cleanliness	10	4%
Preference for Individual / Small Group	7	3%
More Outdoor Facilities	4	2%
Decline in Kids Activity	4	2%
Want Seniors Centre	4	2%
Pre-Booking Time Slots	2	1%
Other	15	
Total Responses	155	

12 Please provide any additional comments you may have regarding parks and recreation in Strathroy-Caradoc.

open-ended - see data file

13 How many people, including yourself, live in your household?

	# Households	# Persons	%
1	7	7	3%
2	64	128	29%
3	39	117	18%
4	69	276	31%
5	29	145	13%
6	9	54	4%
7	4	28	2%
8	0	0	0%
9	1	9	0%
answered question	222		100%
skipped question	2		
Total persons in sample		764	
Persons per household		3.44	

14 Please indicate the total number of persons within your household that fall into the following age categories.

	#	persons	%	2016 Census	
				persons	%
9 years and under	80	138	18%	2,290	11%
10 - 19 years	88	137	18%	2,615	13%
20 - 34 years	75	114	15%	3,450	17%
35 - 54 years	135	231	30%	5,470	26%
55 - 69 years	66	107	14%	4,210	20%
70 years and over	24	36	5%	2,835	14%
total persons		763	100%	20,870	100%
answered question	223				
skipped question	1				

15 In what year were you born? (Optional)

Age	#	%
25 years or younger	5	2%
26-35 years	41	18%
36-45 years	72	32%
46-55 years	37	17%
56-65 years	42	19%
66-75 years	21	9%
76 years or older	5	2%
answered question	223	100%
skipped question	1	
Median Year	1978	
Median Age	43	

16 Do you live in the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc?

	#	%
Yes	214	96%
No	9	4%
Unsure	1	0%
answered question	224	100%
skipped question	0	

17 If living outside Strathroy-Caradoc, in which Municipality or First Nations community do you live?

	#	%
Adelaide Metcalfe	5	50%
London	2	20%
North Middlesex	2	20%
Southwest Middlesex	1	10%
answered question	10	100%

18 Where do you live within Strathroy-Caradoc?

	#	%
Mount Brydges (urban area)	63	29%
Rural area nearest to Mount Brydges	13	6%
Strathroy (urban area)	121	57%
Rural area nearest to Strathroy	16	7%
Melbourne (urban or rural)	1	0%
Unsure	0	0%
answered question	214	100%
skipped question	10	

Appendix C – Recreation Rates and Fees Scan

A high-level scan of facility rental rates was undertaken to understand how Strathroy-Caradoc's fees compare with municipalities within the area, with the objective of maintaining competitive fees for use of facilities. It is noted that the Department may select other municipalities of comparable size and level of service when conducting its own reviews.

This scan had certain limitations as direct comparisons to multi-purpose spaces and sports fields was not possible due to the variation in quality and size of the facility/field and rate structures established in each community. For example, some municipalities offer per game/hour field rates, while others charge per team or per season. Some municipalities also established different rates for multi-purpose facilities. In these instances, an average was calculated to determine a single comparator figure. Furthermore, certain multi-purpose spaces have established minimum or maximum rental lengths.

Rate Category	Lambton Shores	Lucan-Biddulph	Middlesex Centre	Southwest Middlesex	Thames Centre	Zorra	Benchmark Average	Strathroy-Caradoc
Arenas								
Adult Prime (per hour)	\$152.45	\$171.68	\$192.00	\$146.16	\$183.64	\$159.29	\$167.54	\$175.00
Adult Non-Prime (per hour)	\$75.35	N/A	\$109.00	\$65.25	\$156.00	\$95.58	\$100.24	\$100.00
Minor Prime (per hour)	\$129.70	\$171.68	\$158.00	\$137.46	\$170.64	\$125.66	\$148.86	\$165.00
Minor Non-Prime (per hour)	\$75.35	N/A	\$109.00	\$65.25	\$84.48	\$95.58	\$85.93	\$100.00
Summer Ice (per hour)	N/A	\$171.68	\$192.00	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$181.84	\$141.59
Dry Pad - Adult (per hour)	\$50.60	\$61.95	\$80.00	\$184.44	\$70.99	\$57.52	\$84.25	\$62.83
Dry Pad - Minor (per hour)	\$42.80	\$61.95	\$80.00	\$184.44	\$70.99	\$57.52	\$82.95	\$62.83
Public Skate Admission - Public/Adult/Student (per person)	\$2.00	N/A	\$3.10	\$3.00	\$4.50	\$2.65	\$3.05	\$2.50
Public Skate Admission - Children	N/A		N/A	\$2.00	\$3.00	\$2.65	\$2.55	N/A
Public Skate Admission - Family (per family)	\$6.00			\$6.00	\$7.96	\$7.08	\$6.76	\$5.00
Shinny/Pick-up Hockey Adult (per person)	\$7.00			\$8.70	\$7.21	\$4.42	\$6.53	\$4.42

Rate Category	Lambton Shores	Lucan-Biddulph	Middlesex Centre	Southwest Middlesex	Thames Centre	Zorra	Benchmark Average	Strathroy-Caradoc
Multi-Use Spaces								
Hall (per hour)	\$24.63	\$70.80	\$39.00	\$187.05	N/A	\$187.39	\$101.77	\$33.16
Meeting Room (per hour)	\$13.95	N/A	\$29.00	\$19.05	\$49.63	N/A	\$27.91	\$21.57
Gymnasium - Adult (per hour)	\$25.13	\$53.10	N/A	N/A	\$32.01		\$36.75	\$37.17
Gymnasium - Minor (per hour)	\$25.13	\$38.93			\$32.01		\$32.02	\$37.17
Non-Sport Facility Rental Youth/Senior (per hour)	N/A	N/A	\$10.00	\$69.00	N/A		\$39.50	\$15.93
Soccer								
Unlit Adult	\$17.10 / hr	\$48.67 / game	\$20.00 / hr	\$330.60 / team	\$46.16 / game	\$672.57 / season	-	\$477.88 / team
Unlit Minor	\$17.10 / hr	\$48.67 / game	\$20.00 / hr	\$13.92 / child	\$37.96 / game	\$829.65 / team	-	\$25.00 / child
Lighting Fee	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$21.38 / game	N/A	-	N/A
Ball Diamonds								
Unlit Adult	\$19.70 / hr	\$3008.85 / season	\$17.50 / hr	\$326.25 / team	\$52.84 / game	\$37.17 / game	-	\$477.88 / team
Unlit Minor	\$19.70 / hr	\$3008.85 / season	\$17.50 / hr	\$13.92 / child	\$35.43 / game	\$20.35 / game	-	\$25.00 / child
Lit Adult	\$32.85 / hr	\$3008.85 / season	\$22.50 / hr	\$430.65 / team	N/A	\$47.79 / game	-	N/A
Lit Minor	\$32.85 / hr	\$3008.85 / season	\$22.50 / hr	\$13.92 / child		N/A	-	N/A

Rate Category	Lambton Shores	Lucan-Biddulph	Middlesex Centre	Southwest Middlesex	Thames Centre	Zorra	Benchmark Average	Strathroy-Caradoc
Pools								
Admission - Child	N/A	\$4.00	N/A	\$1.30	\$3.00	N/A	\$2.77	\$2.65
Admission - Youth		\$4.00		\$2.18	\$4.50		\$3.56	\$3.54
Admission - Adult		\$5.00		\$2.61	\$4.50		\$4.04	\$5.31
Admission - Senior		\$4.00		N/A	\$2.70		\$3.35	\$4.42
Admission - Family		N/A		\$7.40	\$7.96		\$7.68	\$12.39
AquaFit (per hr)				\$5.66	\$2.89		\$4.28	N/A
Swim Programs		\$65.49 – \$169.91		\$60.03 – \$142.68	\$59.10 – \$127.38		\$61.54 – \$146.66	\$67.00 – \$130.00
Pool Rental (per hour)		\$74.34		\$73.95	\$76.43		\$74.91	N/A

Note: HST excluded