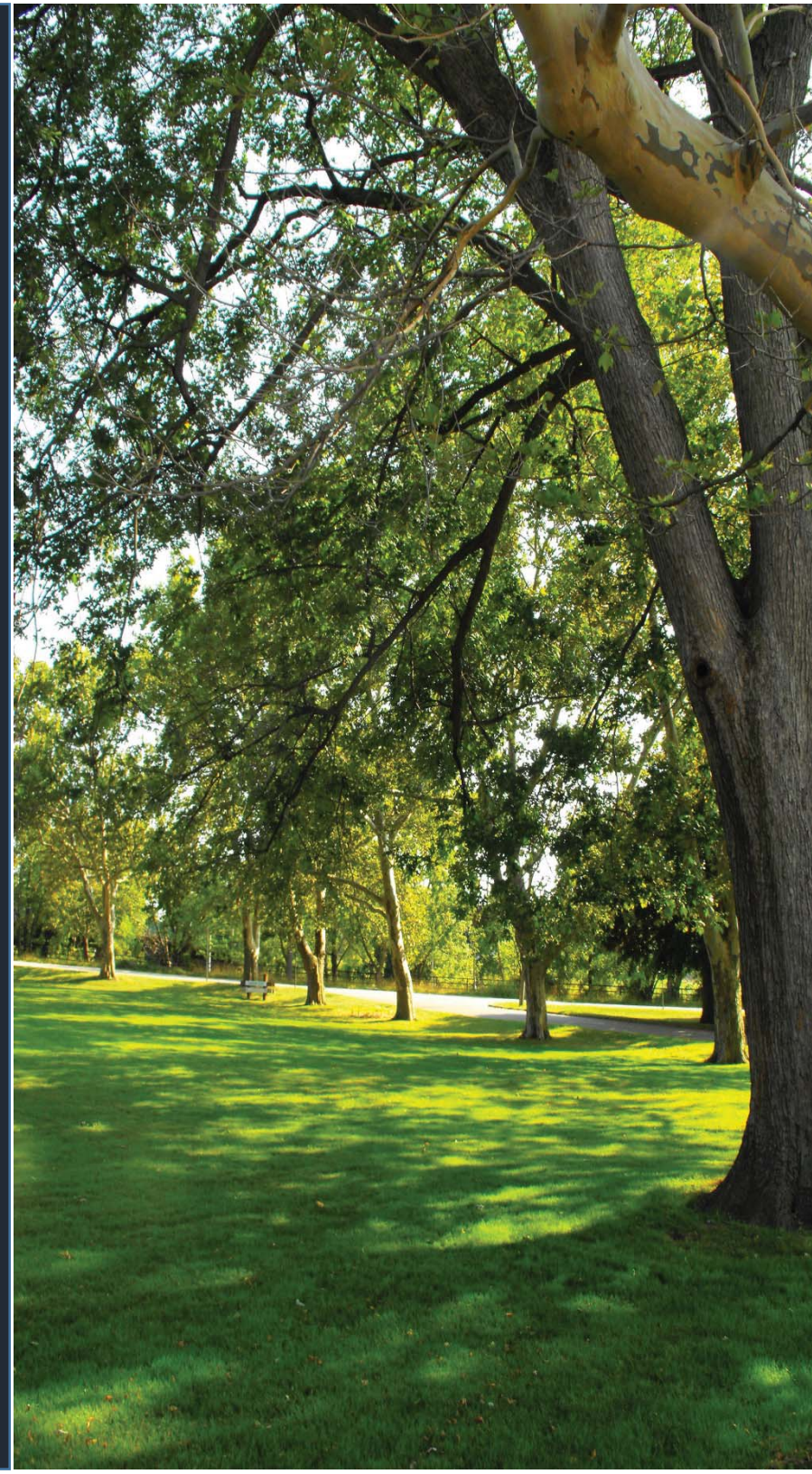


## Section 2

# Key Inputs

There are a number of inputs that provide the foundation upon which the Recreation Facility and Programming Master Plan is built. Such inputs include the demographic composition of the City, the supply of recreation facilities and services provided through the Parks, Recreation and Culture Services Department, trends and best practices in the recreation sector, and the valuable input that has been provided through the Master Plan's community consultations.

Inputs are carefully evaluated in the context of St. Catharines parks and recreation system. They are used as points of departure and justification to consider in the Master Plan's assessments.



## 2.1 The City's Parks and Recreation Facilities and Programs

The following major indoor and outdoor recreation facilities are owned by the City of St. Catharines:

- Six **arenas** containing ten ice pads (assumed to be the equivalent of 8.9 ice pads for the purpose of the RFMP) - Bill Burgoyne Arena, Garden City Complex, Haig Bowl (decommissioned in for ice use in 2014 but included in the supply as historical utilization and registration data used in the Master Plan reflect usage of this arena), Meridian Centre (counted as 0.25 ice pads due to an orientation towards OHL and special event use), Merritton Centennial Arena (leased to Merritton Lions Club and counted as 0.65 ice pads), and the Seymour Hannah Sports and Entertainment Centre (note: Haig Bowl is not included in the below supply, as it was decommissioned for ice use in Spring 2014).
- One **indoor aquatics centre** – St. Catharines Kiwanis Aquatics Centre/Dr. Huq Family Library Branch.
- Four **community centres** – Port Weller Community Centre, Russell Avenue Community Centre, Queen Elizabeth Community Centre (leased to Boys and Girls Club of Niagara), and the Merritton Community Centre (leased to Merritton Lions Club).
- Three **older adult centres** – Port Dalhousie Older Adult Centre, Dunlop Drive Older Adult Centre, and the West St. Catharines Older Adult Centre.
- Thirty-one **natural turf soccer fields** at twenty-three parks and one outdoor **artificial turf field**, the latter of which is located at Seymour Hannah Sports and Entertainment Centre.
- Twenty-two **ball diamonds**, consisting of ten baseball diamonds and twelve softball diamonds located across fourteen parks.
- Thirty **tennis courts** at fourteen parks, including three membership-based courts at Realty Park.
- Twenty-one **basketball courts** in municipal parks.
- Ninety **playground structures** at fifty-two parks.
- Two **splash pads**, ten **outdoor pools** at six parks, three municipal **beaches** and a **kayak/canoe launch**.
- One **skateboard park**.
- Two municipal **golf courses**.
- Various cultural facilities under Departmental purview including the Lakeside Park Carousel, the St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre, and Morningstar Mill (forming part of the scope of related studies and plans such as the Culture Plan, Museum Strategic Plan, etc.).



Table 1 summarizes major recreation programs delivered at the City's recreation facilities and parks, noting that this is not intended to be a complete listing.

**Table 1: Summary of Recreation Program Inventory**

Program Area	Program Type	Target Age Groups
Arenas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public skating</li> <li>- Shinny</li> <li>- Preschool Stick and Puck</li> <li>- Ticket Ice (Figure Skating)</li> </ul>	All Ages
Aquatics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Aquatic fitness</li> <li>- Aquatic leadership</li> <li>- Leisure / drop-in swims</li> <li>- Lessons</li> </ul>	All ages
Pre-School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gymnastics</li> <li>- Music</li> <li>- Arts and crafts</li> <li>- Active play programs</li> </ul>	0-5
Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gymnastics</li> <li>- Martial Arts</li> <li>- Various sports (e.g. badminton, basketball, volleyball)</li> <li>- Various cultural (e.g. cooking, dance, music)</li> </ul>	6-10
Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Life skills and personal development</li> <li>- Martial Arts</li> <li>- Various sports (e.g. badminton, basketball, volleyball)</li> <li>- Various cultural (e.g. cooking, dance, music)</li> </ul>	11-13
Teens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Life skills and personal development</li> <li>- Music</li> <li>- Cooking</li> </ul>	14-17

Program Area	Program Type	Target Age Groups
Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Life skills and personal development</li> <li>- Martial Arts</li> <li>- Various aerobic and cardio (e.g. crossfit, boot camps, pilates)</li> <li>- Various wellness (e.g. yoga, chi gong)</li> <li>- Various sports (e.g. handball, table tennis)</li> <li>- Various cultural (e.g. cooking, photography, crafts)</li> </ul>	18+
Older Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Life skills and personal development</li> <li>- Various social activities</li> <li>- Various gentle exercise and wellness activities (e.g. Nordic pole walking, chair yoga)</li> <li>- Various sports (e.g. shuffleboard, darts)</li> <li>- Various cultural (e.g. dancing, crafts, etc.)</li> </ul>	55+

Source: City of St. Catharines Leisure Guide (Fall 2014)

## 2.2 Relevant Trends

There are many broad trends that are relevant to the recreation sector. The following pages articulate some broad socio-demographic and participatory trends, while other trends are integrated into the facility and programming assessments found throughout the RFPMP.

### Implications of Population Growth

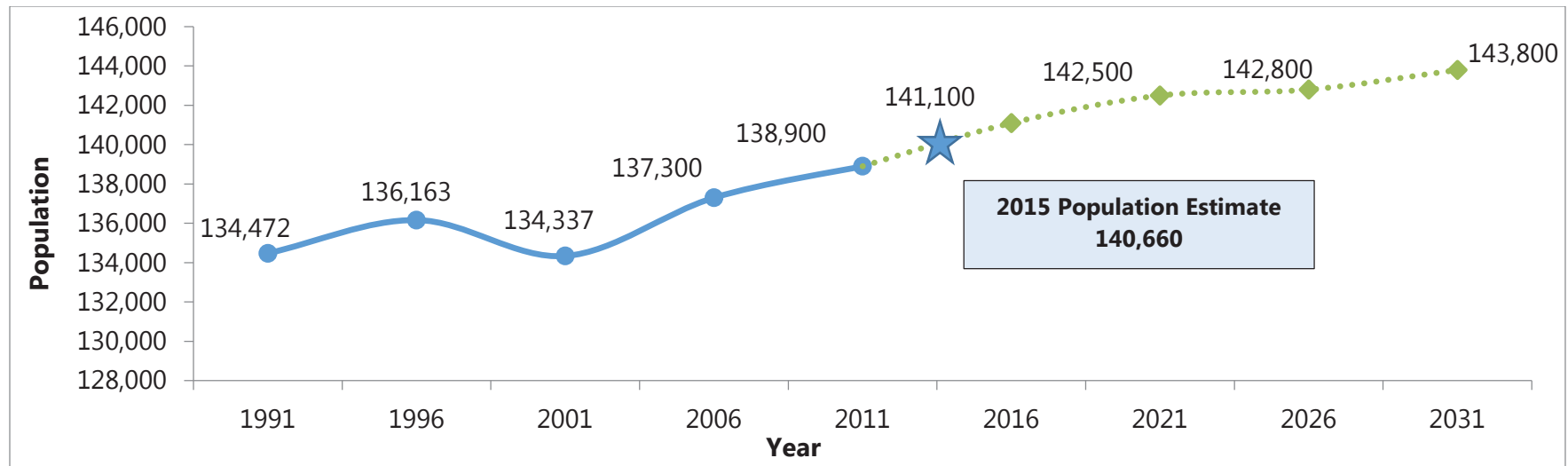
The number of people residing in St. Catharines has a direct impact on how many recreation facilities and programs are provided. Population growth, along with evolution in specific market segments, influences the degree to which specific recreation services are delivered to the community. In St. Catharines, population growth has historically resulted in additional pressures being placed upon the City's existing recreational infrastructure, while new population growth (although modest) may generate new demands for certain types of facilities and services. This is exacerbated by aging infrastructure, evidenced locally by certain arenas and various community centres.

As shown in Figure 2, St. Catharines' population has remained fairly stable over the past 25 years with some modest fluctuations recorded through the Statistics Canada Census. According to Region of Niagara Official Plan Amendment 2-2009, which is the primary population projection guiding the Master Plan, St. Catharines' 2011 population of 138,900 represented a slight increase of 1,600 persons since 2006



(both figures adjusted to include net Census under coverage). It is estimated that the City's current 2015 population is 140,660 by taking a straight-line average between the 2011 and 2016 forecasts contained in the Region of Niagara Official Plan Amendment 2-2009.<sup>i</sup>

**Figure 2: Historical and Projected Population, City of St. Catharines, 1991- 2031**



Source: Statistics Canada Census for years 1991 to 2001, adjusted by 4% to reflect Census net undercount; Region of Niagara Official Plan Amendment 2-2009 for years 2006 to 2031.

With a fairly modest increase in population (i.e. fewer than 2,000 new residents) projected over the next ten years, growth-related demand for most recreation facilities is expected to remain generally comparable to present levels of need. As will be discussed throughout this Section, however, the City will likely face pressures for differentiated services and/or facilities based on the characteristics of 'who' its population consists of. For example recreational needs will likely be established based upon potential segmentation along lines of age, income, ability and/or cultural background more so than simply growth in the number of residents.

<sup>i</sup> Region of Niagara. May 2009. Sustainable Community Policies: Places to Grow/2005 Provincial Policy Statement Conformity and Niagara 2031 Amendment. Amendment 2-2009 to the Official Plan for the Niagara Planning Area as approved on May 28, 2009 by Regional Council and amended through the addition of Policy 4.6.6. Note: the Region's forecasts were prepared prior to release of the 2011 Census, the latter of which recorded a marginal decline in population compared to 2006 – accordingly, the City of St. Catharines will need to monitor its population on an ongoing basis and determine what, if any, impacts of deviations in total population have upon the Recreation Facility and Programming Master Plan.

## Recreational Preferences Among Different Age Groups

The age structure of a community assists in defining the types of recreation facilities and programs to provide. For example, a strong market of children and youth bolsters participation in minor sports such as soccer, hockey and figure skating. On the other end of the spectrum, communities with greater proportions of older adults and seniors may need to place considerable focus upon programs requiring a lesser degree of physical intensity and recreation activities geared towards social interaction.

St. Catharines' median age was recorded at 43.5 years, slightly below that of Niagara Region (44) but older than that of the province (40). Since the 2006 Census, St. Catharines' median age increased by two years which indicates that the City's population is growing older as a whole. Further evidence of aging trends in St. Catharines, shown in Figure 3, is illustrated by the following changes occurring in the age structure between the 2001 and 2011 Census periods:

- declining populations of children and teens, with 2,000 fewer persons in the 0 to 19 age cohort, meaning that need for facilities and programs traditionally pursued by these populations may decline (e.g. facilities used by minor sports, outdoor basketball courts, children's programming, etc.); and
- a rapidly growing population of older adults with growth of over 5,000 persons over the ages of 55 and 69, suggesting that activities favoured by such age groups would be in greater demand.

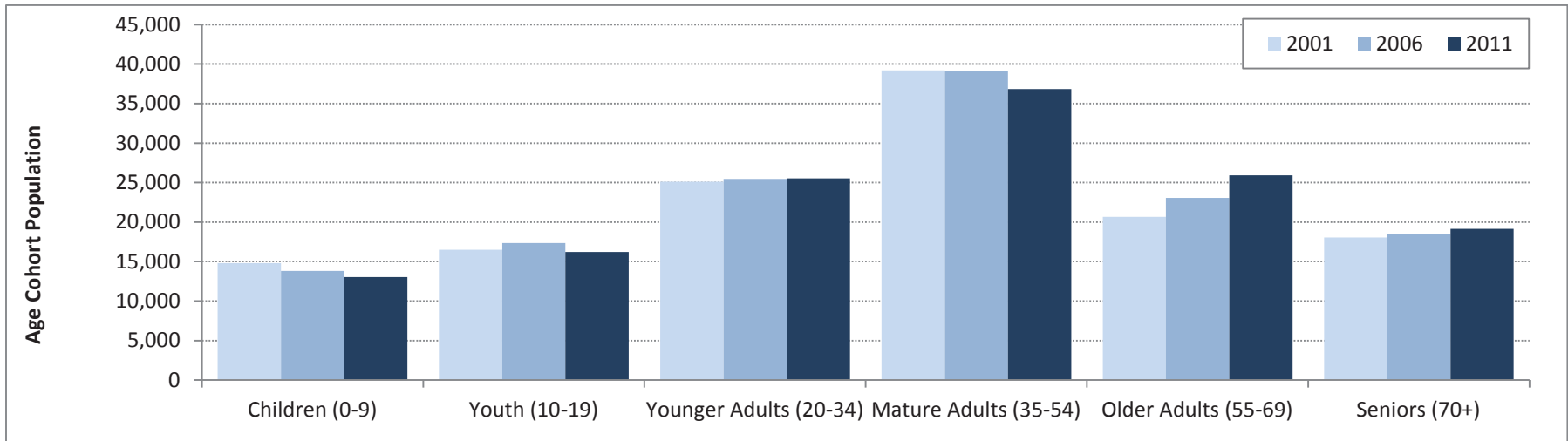
Aging population trends are common across Canada driven in part by the Baby Boomer generation, and it is expected that St. Catharines will continue to age accordingly throughout the foreseeable future. Between 2011 and 2026, the Region of Niagara's age specific population forecasts<sup>ii</sup> predict that the number of St. Catharines residents below the age of 55 will decrease by 1% (i.e. no growth) while the population of those 55 and over is projected to rise by 9%. Consideration of this market is significant since the current generation of "older adults" tends to be more active and have recreation preferences that are different than previous generations of older adults and seniors. As such, facilities and programs will have to be designed or adapted to meet greater needs from the "older adult" of today.

This expected aging of the population is not to say that the City should reduce its focus on serving children, youth and younger adult segments with recreational opportunities. What it suggests is that the City must be prepared to respond to the recreational needs of a growing market of older adults, and that it will continue to serve a broad range of age groups and their interests with a diverse and innovative range of facilities and programs. It also speaks to challenges that may be faced in filling cost-intensive facilities whose use is primarily driven by children, youth and minor sports organizations such as arenas, pools and sports fields, etc.

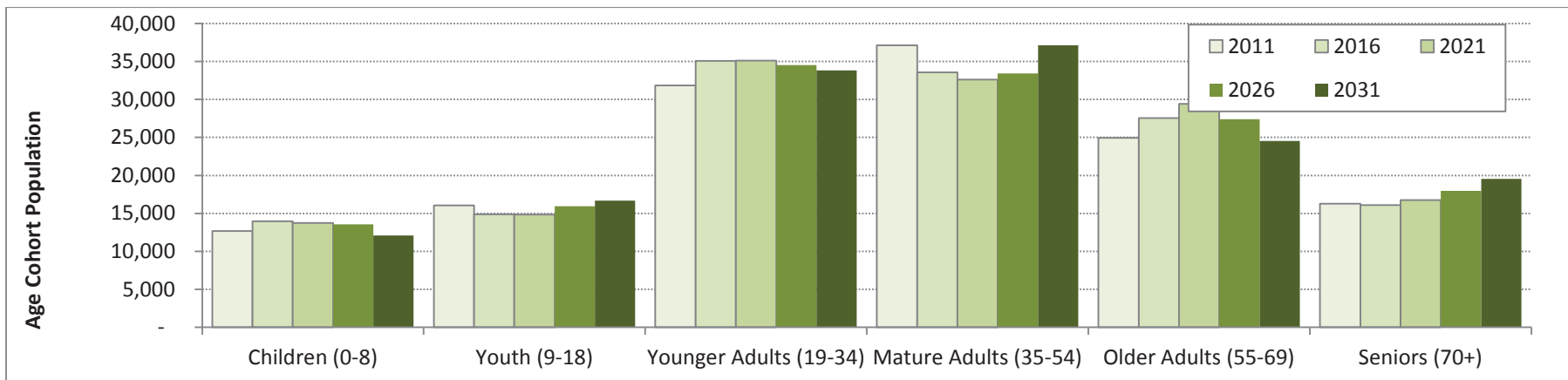
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<sup>ii</sup> Region of Niagara. Age Specific Population Forecasts by Area Municipality. December 7, 2012. Prepared by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd.

Figure 3: Historical and Forecasted Growth in Age Cohorts, 2001-2031



Source: Statistics Canada Census, 2001-2011, adjusted by 4% to reflect net Census undercount



Sources: Applies proportional age cohort structure contained in the Niagara Region Age-Specific Population Forecasts by Municipality (2012) to the City-wide population estimates contained in Region of Niagara Region of Niagara Official Plan Amendment 2-2009.

### Lack of Free Time is Resulting in Higher Rates of Physical Inactivity

A lack of free time, largely due to busy lifestyles and a number of socio-economic circumstances, has traditionally been the number one barrier to participation for youth and adults. Busy lifestyles, commuting, the changing family structure and a number of socio-economic circumstances put significant time pressures and constraints on recreation participation. Surveys conducted across the country suggest that a 'lack of free time' is the primary barrier to participation in recreation and cultural pursuits, including in St. Catharines where the Master Plan's statistically valid survey recorded time constraints as the primary barrier to participation in recreation activities for over half of households who are unable to participate in such activities as much as they would like. Broadly, a lack of time has contributed to other notable trends such as increases in rates of obesity and chronic disease (resulting from less physical activity), desire for more flexible and convenient program options, and decreasing levels of volunteerism.

As a result of the "time-crunch", there is greater demand for self-scheduled and spontaneous activities which are more readily able to fit into personal schedules. Flexible, drop-in type programming is the preferred method of participation for many residents in the community. This will have implications on the provision of recreation programs and services, including the demand for services during non-traditional hours, drop-in activities, and the continued popularity of multi-purpose facilities providing cross-programming opportunities serving more than one family member. Further, municipalities are trying to address the health-related concerns of inactivity and obesity by working with other like agencies and institutions. Partners typically include Public Health Departments, Social Service agencies, the medical profession, Boards of Education and Fitness/Sport groups at a minimum. Strategies are developed to inform residents of the benefits of active lifestyles, develop events and better understand motivation. Each agency plays their part in an integrated approach to increase levels of activity within the community. Casual and drop-in activities assist in introducing residents to more active lifestyles where time is a barrier to participation.

### Greater Demands for Unstructured Recreational Activities

The community is exhibiting greater demand on spontaneous, non-programmed forms of activity due to evolving household schedules and lifestyles, prompting a transition of activities from organized to unorganized recreation. In fact, the Master Plan's statistically valid survey recorded eight of the top ten activities pursued by local residents as being unstructured or self-scheduled in some way. Parks and recreation facilities are increasingly being designed to host a greater balance of programmable and non-programmable space to facilitate both structured and drop-in activities. For example, there is renewed demand for picnic areas or open spaces for family/group gatherings particularly with diversifying cultural communities making good use of such areas for their social functions. Also gaining favour are hard surface courts, off-leash areas, walking trails, places to simply relax, etc. since they permit spontaneous, drop-in uses.





## Considering the Ability to Pay

Studies have shown that a household's participation in recreation activities is proportional to level of income, especially in organized team sports given the high cost to participate. In St. Catharines, Statistics Canada's 2011 National Household Survey records the average household income in the City at approximately \$68,500, which is lower than that of Niagara Region (\$72,450) and the Province of Ontario (\$85,800).<sup>iii</sup> Recreation service providers, including the City, must be cognisant that income may be a barrier to participation for some households. The Parks, Recreation and Culture Services Department is mindful of this fact as it facilitates a broad range of recreational activities, including a number of low-to-no cost programs.

St. Catharines' Fee Assistance In Recreation (FAIR) program provides financial assistance to local residents falling under the Low Income Cut-off to participate in City-run recreation and leisure activities. Types of assistance available include a 50% discount on an individual pass for each member of the household or a family pass for up to one year, and a 50% discount on City recreation programs for each family member to a maximum of four programs per person during the year. In addition to FAIR, the City partners with the Niagara Region for its ProKids program as well as with Canadian Tire for the Jumpstart program.

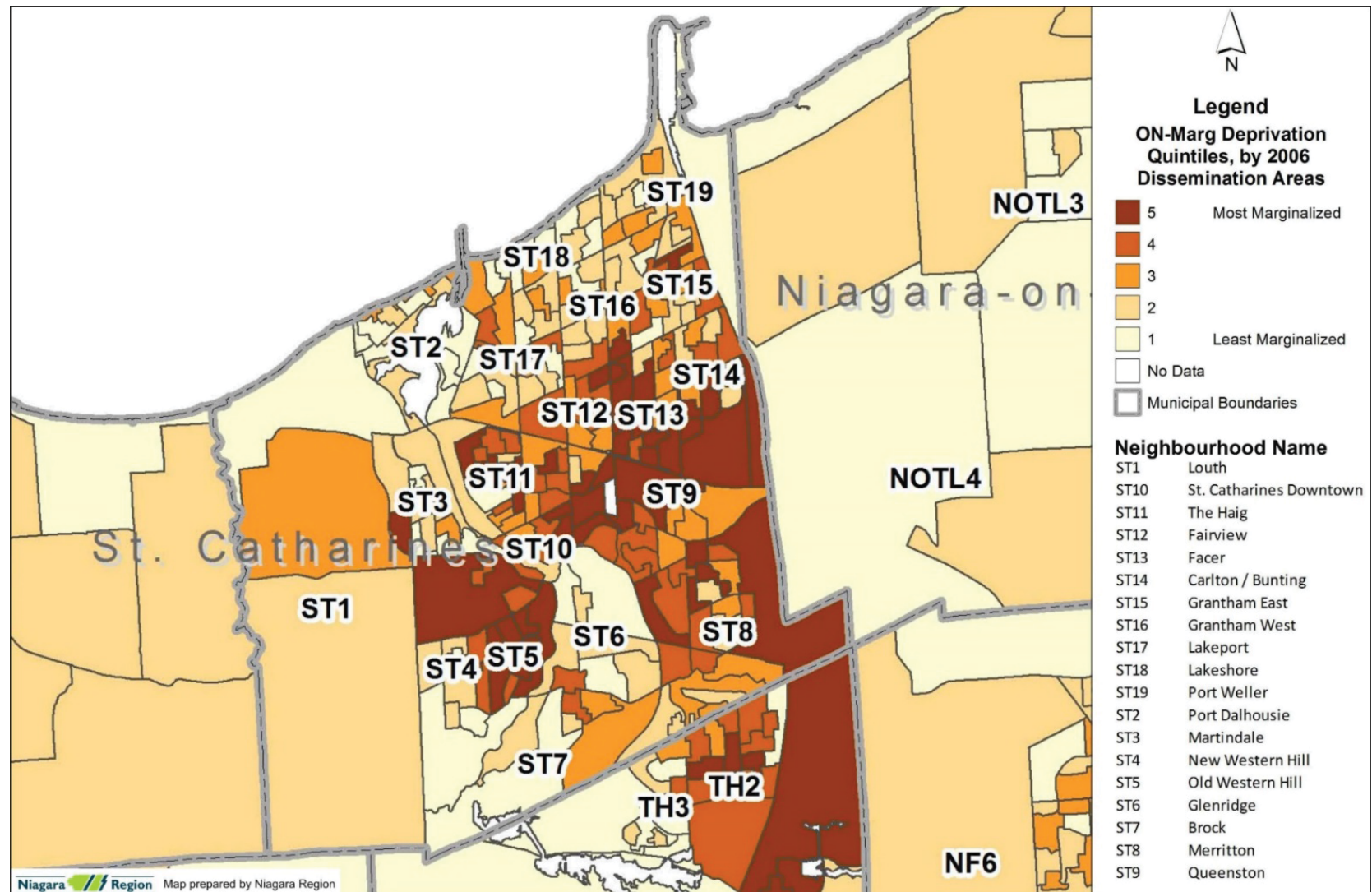
To provide an indication of 'marginalized' communities in St. Catharines, the Region of Niagara has prepared mapping based on the Ontario Marginalization Index and highlights the 'Material deprivation' dimension only. Using 2006 Census data, a score of 1 (least marginalized) to 5 (most marginalized) is assigned to each dissemination area in St. Catharines. The highest prevalence of marginalization, namely where the darkest colours are shown, occurs in what the Region identifies as:

- the Merritton and Queenston communities (located in the Merritton Ward);
- the Fairview, Facer and Carlton/Bunting communities (located in the St. George's Ward);
- the Downtown and The Haig communities (St. Patrick's Ward); and
- the Old Western Hill community (St. Andrew's Ward).

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<sup>iii</sup> Statistics Canada. 2011 National Household Survey.

Map 1: Ontario Marginalization Index applied to City of St. Catharines, 2006



Source: Region of Niagara, Department of Public Health; Statistics Canada 2006 Census and Ontario Marginalization Index (Material Deprivation dimension). Map has been modified by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants to isolate the City of St. Catharines.



## Influences of Cultural and Social Diversity

Increasing levels of socio-cultural diversity is changing the City's recreation needs. As the City becomes more diverse, there is a need to ensure that persons from diverse cultural and income groups, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Questioning (LGBTQ) community, persons with disabilities, etc. are engaged in the City's recreation activities to maximize use of facilities and attain objectives of greater physical health in St. Catharines. Newcomers to Canada are frequent users of parks and recreation facilities as they are ideal locations for social gatherings and interaction. The 2011 National Household Survey records the City's immigrant population at over 25,000 persons, amounting to about 20% of the population. The majority of the immigrant population (67%) is well established in Canadian culture having moved to the country prior to the year 1991. The National Household Survey also records a visible minority population of nearly 13,000 residents, the majority of whom are represented by Black, Latin American, Chinese and South Asian cultural backgrounds. There is a common perception that the influx of newcomers will generate considerable demands for new types of non-traditional programs. While this is true to a certain extent, it is important to realize that newcomers will also be looking for traditional activities as they integrate into Canadian culture.

Changing demographics present staff and volunteer organizations with the challenge of becoming more inclusive and ensuring that programs and services are accessible to all. Specific efforts need to be made to include diverse populations in traditional Canadian programs and sports as well as to offer services that support various cultures recreational interests. Recreation is beginning to see a fusion of activities reflecting the makeup of the community. Further, communities are broadening their definition of diversity to include all groups whereby special efforts are made to educate and ensure that all residents have barrier free access to participation.

The range of recreational activities, both competitive and non-competitive, for people with disabilities has increased significantly in recent years. The 2006 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey identified that approximately 4.4 million Canadians were living with a disability, nearly one-quarter of whom lived in Ontario. Applying this average rate to St. Catharines' population could suggest that over 32,000 residents have some form of disability. Promotion of inclusive parks and recreation facilities is critical to ensure participation from residents with different abilities, particularly since research suggests that youth with special needs who participate in recreational activities are more likely to do well in school, have higher self-esteem and good social skills, and are less likely to be involved in criminal activity.

A variety of measures need to be explored to remove barriers to participation for all residents, including those with disabilities and special needs. The City's Accessibility Advisory Committee is responsible for the information and advocacy of matters pertaining to persons with disabilities to City Council and has been actively involved in providing guidance to the City with respect to facilities and services. The Region of Niagara's Facility Accessibility Design Standards serves as an overarching accessibility guideline document for the City of St. Catharines along with annual Accessibility Plans. In addition there are a number of Provincial legislative requirements related to accessibility. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and its various Standards mandate criteria and objectives relating

to accessibility for both the public and private sectors. These various Standards, such as the Accessible Customer Service Standard and the Design of Public Spaces Standard, all contain objectives for training of staff and volunteers.

### Multi-Use, Multi-Generational Facilities

There is a continuing and growing demand for facilities that contain something for everybody, rather than those designed solely for singular uses. Through the Master Plan's consultations, it was often mentioned that St. Catharines has many great facilities but they are generally oriented to singular uses (e.g. arenas, halls, pools, etc.) rather than containing a wide variety of recreational components at one site.

Co-location of complementary facility components (e.g. youth spaces with indoor recreation facilities, cultural spaces with libraries, etc.) can create convenient centralized activity centres for residents, dry-land training opportunities for user groups, and generate operating efficiencies for the City. Provision of high quality, multi-use facilities encourages physical and social activity among all age groups, while also creating opportunities for sport and cultural tourism at a regional scale. Whether as indoor facilities (such as the Garden City Complex) or the combination of indoor and outdoor facilities (such as at the S.K.A.C. and the Seymour Hannah Sports and Entertainment Centre), concentration of activities at a particular site provides convenience for users and operating efficiencies for the City that the community embraces. It is worth noting that the City has incorporated design flexibility into its strategic planning to allow for future multi-use expansion possibilities, such as at the S.K.A.C. which was designed to allow the addition of indoor recreation space in the future should the need or a funding opportunity arise.



## 2.3 Themes from Conversations with the Community

Input received through consultations with the community is a cornerstone of the RFPMP. The Consulting Team and City Staff committed considerable efforts to raising awareness about the RFPMP, scheduling multiple events and initiatives to solicit community and stakeholder input, and have been diligent in contacting a broad cross-section of the community to participate. Discussions were held with residents, stakeholders, municipal representatives, key agencies operating within the City, and other existing and potential partners. Branded through a 'Let's Talk Parks & Rec' messaging program, hundreds of individuals and organizations were engaged through the following opportunities to participate.



- **Online Community Survey** available between August and October 2014, resulting in 741 completed submissions.
- **Random Sample Telephone Survey** of 388 local households during September 2014, resulting in a statistically valid response rate with 95% level of confidence, 19 times out of 20.
- **Community Input Session** attended by 29 individuals on October 2, 2014 (invitations sent to over 140 individuals and organizations, in addition to project awareness efforts).
- **Parks and Recreation User Focus Groups** held on October 22 and 29, 2014 segmented into four distinct sessions (Arena Partners Committee, Indoor Recreation Facility Users, Parks & Outdoor Recreation Facility Users, and General Community Interest Users).
- **User Group Questionnaire** available between September and October 2014, with responses submitted by 46 organizations (invitations sent to over 800 local and regional stakeholders that in some way utilize St. Catharines' parks and recreation facilities).
- **City Staff Roundtables** conducted on November 19, 2014 with front-line and supervisory/management-level staff.
- **Key Informant Interviews** held in January 2015 with individuals representing a variety of interests pertaining to the provision of recreation facilities and services. Included in the interviews were members of City Council, City and Library Staff, Region of Niagara, the education sector, development industry, and key operating partners.
- Two **Open Houses** on February 18, 2015 to present the Draft Master Plan to the community for questions, comments and to test support for recommendations prior to finalizing the document.

While each consultative element involved different processes, questions and participants, a number of common themes emerged. While not an exhaustive list, the following themes were commonly identified (listed in no particular order). Consultation findings are described in greater detail in the Situation Analysis Report that informed the master planning process.

- **Engaging and empowering** stakeholders, volunteers and residents through community development and providing responsive customer service from all departments involved in service requests.
- Balancing the need for new facilities with **opportunities to renew** the City's existing recreational assets.
- **Distributing financial resources more equitably** into community facilities geared to a broader range of recreational interests given that recent investments have been weighted towards the supply of arenas and indoor aquatic centres.
- Seeking **creative partnerships** with others to gain access to an improved range of recreation facilities and programs, including the local school boards, Brock University, Ridley College, the Y.M.C.A., etc.
- Striving to make facilities and services as **inclusive** as possible for all residents, including persons with disabilities, from low income households or diverse cultural backgrounds, residents who do not have access to a car, etc.
- Providing **multi-use, multi-generational and multi-seasonal** facilities to create year-round hubs of community activity.
- Greater recognition of the considerable demands that exists beyond traditional organized sports, namely a desire for greater emphasis on **unstructured, self-scheduled and spontaneous** forms of recreation.
- Strive to improve the way in which City and stakeholder-run recreation facilities and programs are marketed to the community, in order to **make residents aware** of the many quality opportunities that are available.
- Many participants want to **continue to be involved in planning processes**, more regularly than the five year Master Plan update period, and indicated that they are willing to provide input regularly if provided the ability to do so.

All input provided through consultations was considered and verified through the facility and service assessments, and supplemented with additional research and analysis to comprehensively measure community needs. Community input and feedback was used to shape the Master Plan's vision and Guiding Principles, and to provide points of departure for the facility and program assessments.