



Recreation Facility & Programming Master Plan

City of St. Catharines | July 2015



CITY OF  
ST. CATHARINES





**City of St. Catharines**

## **Recreation Facility & Programming Master Plan**

July 24, 2015

**Prepared for:**

City of St. Catharines  
Parks, Recreation and Culture Services Department

**Prepared by:**



in  
association  
with









## Acknowledgements

Thank you to everybody who has contributed to the development of this Recreation Facility and Programming Master Plan. Feedback from the community, City Council and Staff, local stakeholders, and our partners has been a cornerstone of this document. The local knowledge resulting from considerable and quality input from the community has been invaluable. Without your efforts, this Master Plan would not have been possible.

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## Executive Summary

Recreation provides individuals with numerous physical health, psychological, economic and environmental benefits which are associated with a high quality of life. Not only does participation in recreation provide opportunities for a healthy lifestyle, it also facilitates greater cognitive development, self-esteem, social interaction, economic spending, conservation of natural lands, and community vibrancy. The field of recreation planning has emerged in response to the importance of the recreation sector, effectively positioning decision-makers and service providers to meet the recreational needs of a community in a sustainable manner. Municipalities frequently undertake assessments of their recreation systems to develop policy frameworks, and quantify benefits and needs. The City last undertook a Recreation Facility Master Plan that was approved in 2008 (a Parks Policy Plan was also approved in 2005).

This new Recreation Facilities and Programming Master Plan (RFPMP) plays an important role in setting a new course in delivering high quality services and facilities to residents of St. Catharines. In establishing the strategic framework for this Plan, efforts were made to ensure integration and consistency with other municipal projects and priorities, while respecting key themes that were provided through this Master Plan's community consultation program. The Master Plan is clear in that it distinguishes between community needs and perceived "wants"; recommendations are based upon a comprehensive methodology, consideration of regional trends and best practices, demographic composition and projections, and alignment to municipal roles and priorities for the delivery of core services. City Staff and Council will play a key role in implementing recommendations of the RFPMP through annual capital and operating budgeting processes, along with any supporting work plans developed by Staff, for City Council to consider on a recommendation-by-recommendation basis.

A cornerstone of the RFPMP is the comprehensive community engagement program, involving over 1,000 residents and stakeholder groups through use of telephone and online surveys, workshops and focus groups, interviews, and open houses. One of the most prevalent themes emerging from the consultations was the need for more equitable and inclusive investments in the City's recreation system, resulting in a vision designed specifically for the RFPMP to make St. Catharines:

**The City Where Everybody Can Play**



The following pages summarize the facility service level targets from this Master Plan. It is emphasized that the tables should not be construed as a tool for determining facility needs based simply by applying a service level to a population or registration figure. The Master Plan has arrived at its recommendations using an integrated methodology that considers evolving trends, public opinion and user preferences, utilization and operational performance, demographic characteristics, and service levels.

Indoor Facility (number of facilities)	Standard Recommended in the Plan	Service Level Achieved in 2015	Additional Facilities Required by 2026	Comments and Qualifications
<b>Arenas / Ice Pads (10 total, 8.9 equivalents)</b>	1 : 500 Registered Youth Participants	1 : 390 Registered Youth Participants	<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equivalent supply assumes Meridian Centre as 0.25 ice pads, Merritton Arena as 0.65 ice pads, and includes Haig Bowl</li> <li>• Service Level Achieved is based on the 2013/14 arena registrations</li> <li>• Standard is within a generally accepted level of service across Ontario of ice pads per youth registrants, depending upon age composition, allocation priorities, rural vs. urban settings, etc.</li> <li>• Service level standard must be considered in tandem with prime time utilization rates (optimally 90%-95%) and other market factors</li> <li>• Future facilities required contingent upon two phased implementation approach (see Recommendations #1 and #2)</li> </ul>
<b>Indoor Aquatic Centres (1 municipal, 3 non-municipal)</b>	1 : 140,000 Population (excluding quasi-public pools)	1 : 140,660 (1 : 35,165 if including quasi-public pools)	<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally accepted service levels across Ontario are 1 indoor aquatics centre per 35,000 to 60,000 population, factoring access to quasi-public facilities such as the Y.M.C.A., Brock University and Ridley College pools</li> <li>• Refer to Recommendation #4</li> </ul>
<b>Indoor Sports Fields (0)</b>	Contingent on business planning	n/a	<b>n/a</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In line with municipal best practices, indoor turf is preferably pursued where an appropriate partnership is negotiated with a third party (see Recommendation #5)</li> </ul>
<b>Gymnasiums (2)</b>	Not Applicable	1 : 70,330 Population	<b>1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service levels typically range from 1 gym per 35,000 to 60,000 population in Ontario, there are no generally accepted service standards as provision depends on a variety of factors including agreements with school boards and ability to complement other indoor facility components to act as community hubs or multi-use/multi-generational facilities</li> <li>• Refer to Recommendations #6 to #8</li> </ul>
<b>Equipment-Based Fitness Centres (0)</b>	Not Applicable	n/a	<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are no generally accepted service standards as provision depends on service philosophies (e.g. whether to compete with the private sector)</li> <li>• Refer to Recommendation #9</li> </ul>

Indoor Facility (number of facilities)	Standard Recommended in the Plan	Service Level Achieved in 2015	Additional Facilities Required by 2026	Comments and Qualifications
<b>Dedicated Older Adult Centres (3) and Youth Centres (2 private)</b>	Not Applicable	1 : 46,889 for older adult space and n/a for youth space	<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are no generally accepted service standards as provision depends on municipal service philosophies and availability of community-based facilities</li> <li>• Instead of new dedicated facilities, age priority-based space integrated within an existing or future facility is preferred</li> <li>• Refer to Recommendations #10 to #13</li> </ul>

Outdoor Facility (number of facilities)	Standard Recommended in the Plan	Service Level Achieved in 2015	Additional Facilities Required by 2026	Comments and Qualifications
<b>Rectangular Fields (32 total, 37.0 equivalents)</b>	1 : 90 Registered Participants	1 : 144 Registered Participants	<b>24.8</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equivalent supply assumes Kiwanis Field is equal to 2.0 unlit natural fields, and lit fields equal 1.5 unlit natural fields</li> <li>• Service Level Achieved is based on 2014 registration data</li> <li>• Service level standard must be considered in tandem with prime time utilization rates (optimally 65%-85% for Class A and B fields) as well as age range of players to understand field sizes required</li> <li>• Provision should also consider access to non-municipal fields at schools, universities or other privately owned lands</li> <li>• Refer to Recommendations #14 to #16</li> </ul>
<b>Ball Diamonds (22 total, 27.5 equivalents)</b>	1 : 100 Registered Participants	1 : 72 Registered Participants	<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equivalent supply assumes lit diamonds are equal to 1.5 unlit diamonds</li> <li>• Service Level Achieved is based on 2014 registration data</li> <li>• Service level standard must be considered in tandem with prime time utilization rates (optimally 65%-85% for Class A and B diamonds)</li> <li>• Also consider access to diamonds at schools, universities or other privately owned lands (e.g. Grantham Optimist Club)</li> <li>• Refer to Recommendations #15, #17 and #18</li> </ul>
<b>Splash Pads (2)</b>	1 splash pad per City ward	1 splash in two City wards (or 1 : 70,330 pop.)	<b>4</b> (exception may be where already serviced by an outdoor pool)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally accepted service levels across Ontario are 1 splash pad per 3,000 to 5,000 children (ages 0 to 9) or based upon geographic distribution</li> <li>• Application of service level standard must be considered in tandem with the ultimate strategy for outdoor pools and other aquatic opportunities</li> <li>• Refer to Recommendation #19 and #20</li> </ul>



Outdoor Facility (number of facilities)	Standard Recommended in the Plan	Service Level Achieved in 2015	Additional Facilities Required by 2026	Comments and Qualifications
<b>Outdoor Pools (10 at six locations)</b>	1 : 71,400 to 1 : 140,000 Population (number of locations)	1 : 23,443 Population (locations) or 1 : 14,066 Population (pool tanks)	<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are no generally accepted service standards as provision depends on municipal service philosophies and presence of other aquatic facilities (e.g. indoor aquatic centres, splash pads, beaches)</li> <li>Future provision must be considered in tandem with remediation/modernization costs, with the ultimate strategy for splash pads, considering the location of other aquatic opportunities (e.g. St. Catharines Kiwanis Aquatic Centre) whether to service marginalized areas of the community and/or other strategic locations</li> <li>Refer to Recommendations #21 to #23</li> </ul>
<b>Tennis Courts (28)</b>	1 : 5,000 Population	1 : 5,025 Population	<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generally accepted service levels across Ontario are 1 tennis court per 4,000 to 5,000 population</li> <li>Provision may also be warranted where required to service a geographic gap</li> <li>Refer to Recommendations #24 and #25</li> </ul>
<b>Multi-Use Courts (22)</b>	1 : 700 Youth	1 : 685 Youth	<b>2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generally accepted service levels across Ontario are 1 multi-use court per 600 to 800 youth (ages 10 to 19), while considering the geographic distribution of courts to serve the population</li> <li>Refer to Recommendation #26</li> </ul>
<b>Skateboard Parks (1)</b>	1 : 7,500 Youth	1 : 15,112 Youth	<b>1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generally accepted service levels across Ontario are 1 skateboard park per 5,000 to 8,000 youth (ages 10 to 19)</li> <li>Provision of smaller-scale skateboarding amenities may also be warranted where required to service a geographic gap</li> <li>Refer to Recommendations #28 and #29</li> </ul>
<b>Playgrounds (90 at 70 locations)</b>	1 Playground within 800 metres of Residential Areas	1: 2,009 Population (number of locations)	As required by new growth or gap areas (existing distribution is strong)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generally accepted service levels across Ontario are 1 playground per 1,500 or within 500 to 800 metres of residential areas without requiring crossing of major pedestrian barriers (e.g. highways, waterways, rail lines, etc.)</li> <li>Refer to Recommendations #30 to #32</li> </ul>
<b>Golf Courses (2)</b>	Not Applicable	1 : 70,330 Population	<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are no generally accepted service standards as provision depends on municipal service philosophies (notably whether to compete directly with the private sector)</li> </ul>
<b>Leash Free Dog Parks (1)</b>	Not Applicable	1 : 140,660 Population	<b>1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are no generally accepted service standards as provision depends on municipal service philosophies and presence of third parties who are willing to partner with a municipality</li> </ul>

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## Section 1

# Introduction

Across Ontario, municipalities are involved in providing some form of recreational services to their residents ranging from simple parks to large multi-use community centres. Through its infrastructure of recreation facilities, recreation programs and supporting services, the City of St. Catharines recognizes the importance of encouraging physical activity and healthy lifestyles. The City's recreation system facilitates a number of community benefits that culminate into a sustainable community such as healthy living, economic development, community vibrancy and environmental stewardship. According to the National Framework for Recreation:

*"Recreation is the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing."*



**The City Where Everybody Can Play**



## 1.1 The Importance of Recreation Facilities and Programs

St. Catharines' recreation system is essential to the health and well-being of the City as a whole and each resident living in the community. The vision contained within the National Framework for Recreation emphasizes the interconnected nature of the recreation system in enhancing the well-being of individuals, communities, and places and spaces. Recreation facilities and programs provide St. Catharines' residents with numerous physical, health, psychological, economic and environmental benefits. Not only does participation in recreation offer opportunities for a healthy lifestyle, it also facilitates greater cognitive development and self-esteem among individuals, social interaction, economic spending, conservation of natural lands, and community vibrancy.

This Recreation Facility and Programming Master Plan (RFPMP) is guided by the following vision statement, which was developed based upon themes arising from the various community engagement activities that were undertaken through this process. The Master Plan's vision embodies the City's philosophy that recreation opportunities are inclusive and available to the community at large. St. Catharines affords a recreational experience that is different from others due to the presence of its high quality parks, waterfront areas, and recreation facilities. Collectively, the City's recreational infrastructure draws usage from residents, visitors and post-secondary students. Facilities and programs are developed in response to different ages, cultural or social backgrounds, income levels and abilities that make up St. Catharines' diverse community.

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### The City Where Everybody Can Play

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By being "The City Where Everybody Can Play", this Master Plan recognizes the contributions of recreation in becoming a healthy community and building upon the City's historical investments in its recreation and sport system. The vision also places considerable value on the facilities and services provided by the City's partners, volunteers, and other non-municipal recreation providers. Collectively, the City and local recreation providers offer a range of services that result in a comprehensive, balanced recreation system where residents have a broad choice of activities to pursue in their free time.

St. Catharines has taken steps towards promoting healthy lifestyles and locally available opportunities to participate in physical activities by investing in its recreation infrastructure in terms of facilities, program delivery, parks and trails. By focusing efforts on facilitating healthy lifestyles, the City recognizes that it has a role to play in providing venues for physical activity, social interaction and wellness. The City of



St. Catharines embodies the spirit of the National Recreation Statement which states: “The basic role of the municipality is to ensure the availability of the broadest range of recreation opportunities for every individual and group consistent with available community resources.”

The City’s Parks, Recreation and Culture Services Department is a sophisticated provider of recreation services whose portfolio also encompasses parks and culture. The Department is a key contributor to achieving a desirable quality of life in St. Catharines. The City and its Parks, Recreation and Culture Services Department embody a progressive philosophy through which strategic and long-range planning is regularly undertaken to ensure that the needed mix of parks, recreation facilities and programs are delivered to the community in a financially responsible manner.

**The RFPMP is a framework to guide decision-making for the City of St. Catharines to the year 2026.** It is intended to update and build upon the City’s 2008 Recreation Facility Master Plan based on St. Catharines’ present and anticipated community profile, the City’s current supply of recreation facilities and programs, and updated recreation participation profiles. The Master Plan is primarily intended for implementation by the Parks, Recreation and Culture Services Department though its recommendations sometimes span other municipal departments, and may also influence the way in which community-based recreation providers and partners deliver their own services.

The importance of recreation is also recognized in St. Catharines’ Sustainability Strategy. The Sustainability Strategy provides an overarching framework that aligns major municipal policy and guiding documents, including the RFPMP, to ensure municipal initiatives are aligned toward achieving common, community-identified sustainability objectives. For example, the Sustainability Plan identifies that recreation can further overarching goals of achieving compact, livable neighbourhoods by encouraging ‘enterprise, culture and recreation clusters for integrated business and lifestyle opportunities’ and using public spaces, including recreational facilities, ‘to increase prosperity and civic interaction in neighbourhoods’. In addition to the Sustainability Strategy and the RFPMP, elements of the recreation system span topic areas contained in other City policy documents such as the Garden City Plan, Urban Forestry Management Plan, Parks Policy Plan, Culture Plan, Museum Strategic Plan, etc.

## 1.2 Accomplishments Since the 2008 Master Plan

In order to effectively manage these municipal and community-based assets to deliver sustainable and high quality services to local residents into the future, a framework is needed to guide decision-making and make sound investments (in terms of human, social and financial capital) through long-range strategic planning. The RFPMP is a tool to assist decision-makers, stakeholders and the general public in determining needs and priorities related to services and facilities encompassing the parks and recreation needs of the City of St. Catharines. City Staff have historically utilized master plans as an overarching guiding framework through which annual prioritizing and project planning take place, including subsequent reporting to City Council for budget and other requisite approvals.

St. Catharines previous master plans guiding the City's long range priorities for the parks and recreation services have culminated in a number of accomplishments that have provided many benefits to local residents. Since the completion of the 2008 Recreation Facility Master Plan and the 2005 Parks Policy Plan, the City has embarked upon a number of initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life in St. Catharines, including the following initiatives that are relevant to the recreation system:

- awarded the 'Age-Friendly' designation as formalized through the World Health Organization;
- creation of an Ice Allocation Policy;
- construction of the St. Catharines Kiwanis Aquatics Centre/Dr. Huq Family Library Branch (S.K.A.C.), the Meridian Centre and the Downtown Performing Arts Centre (scheduled completion for Fall 2015);
- partnership and reciprocal use agreement with the District School Board of Niagara for Harriet Tubman Public School;
- development of the Kiwanis Field and Berkley Park soccer field;
- enhancements to Municipal Beach;
- addition of kayak/canoe launch site at Henley Island;
- development of a leash-free area for dogs at Catharine Street Park;
- Centennial Gardens improvements;
- trail construction (e.g. East Port Weller Spit, bridge connecting Jaycee Park to Rennie Park, etc.); and
- launch of ePlay and the online Leisure Guide.





## 1.3 Guiding Principles of the Master Plan

As defined by the National Framework for Recreation, "Recreation is the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing." In supporting the vision of being "**The City Where Everybody Can Play**", ten Guiding Principles have been largely carried forward from the previous Master Plan. These Guiding Principles are consistent with the themes derived through the research and consultation inputs.

### **Guiding Principle #1 - Building a Healthy Community**

By recognizing the role that recreation plays in promoting healthy lifestyles and social interaction, the City will provide community and political support to ensure that services are properly delivered, maintained and enhanced.

### **Guiding Principle #2 - Making Recreation Accessible for All**

Recreation services will provide accessible and affordable opportunities to all residents, recognizing that different individuals or groups may have different needs and expectations based upon their age, ability, income and background.

### **Guiding Principle #3 - Investing in Opportunities for Youth**

The City will invest in organized and unorganized activities for youth by providing opportunities that engage youth in meaningful physical activity and recreation experiences.

### **Guiding Principle #4 - Enhancing Opportunities for Older Adults**

As the older adult and senior population grows, the City will broaden its complement of active and social recreation programs and services to this age group.

### **Guiding Principle #5 - Embracing the Natural Environment**

The City will continue to embrace its natural surroundings and build upon the opportunities provided by these assets through the exploration of programming options and the promotion of recreation activities associated with these assets.

### **Guiding Principle #6 - Providing the Necessary Infrastructure**

The City will provide and maintain integrated and accessible recreation infrastructure that meets community needs by reflecting a diversity of interests, incomes, ages, abilities and cultural backgrounds.

### **Guiding Principle #7 - Supporting Our Volunteers**

The City will support, recruit, develop, recognize, enable and involve volunteers, as they are an important and integral component of recreation service delivery in St. Catharines.

### **Guiding Principle #8 - Encouraging Positive Partnerships and Alliances**

Where appropriate, the City will pursue partnerships with other public, community and private sector providers in order to facilitate the provision of a diverse range of recreation services.

### **Guiding Principle #9 - Efficient and Effective Service Delivery**

The City, through its role as the primary coordinator of the local recreation system, will ensure that the required tools, resources and supports are available so that recreation opportunities are provided in an efficient and effective manner.

### **Guiding Principle #10 – Sustainable Investments in Recreation Infrastructure**

The City will provide effective asset management to ensure the long term availability and sustainability of its recreation infrastructure, and the achievement of best value from available capital funding resources.



## 1.4 Methodology

Departmental decision-making and service delivery is influenced by a number of plans, policies and procedures. The City's previous Recreation Facility Master Plan has provided guidance over the past several years and culminated in many of the previously noted accomplishments including the development of the S.K.A.C., the Kiwanis Field, and delivery of a focused range of programs and services that respond to community needs.

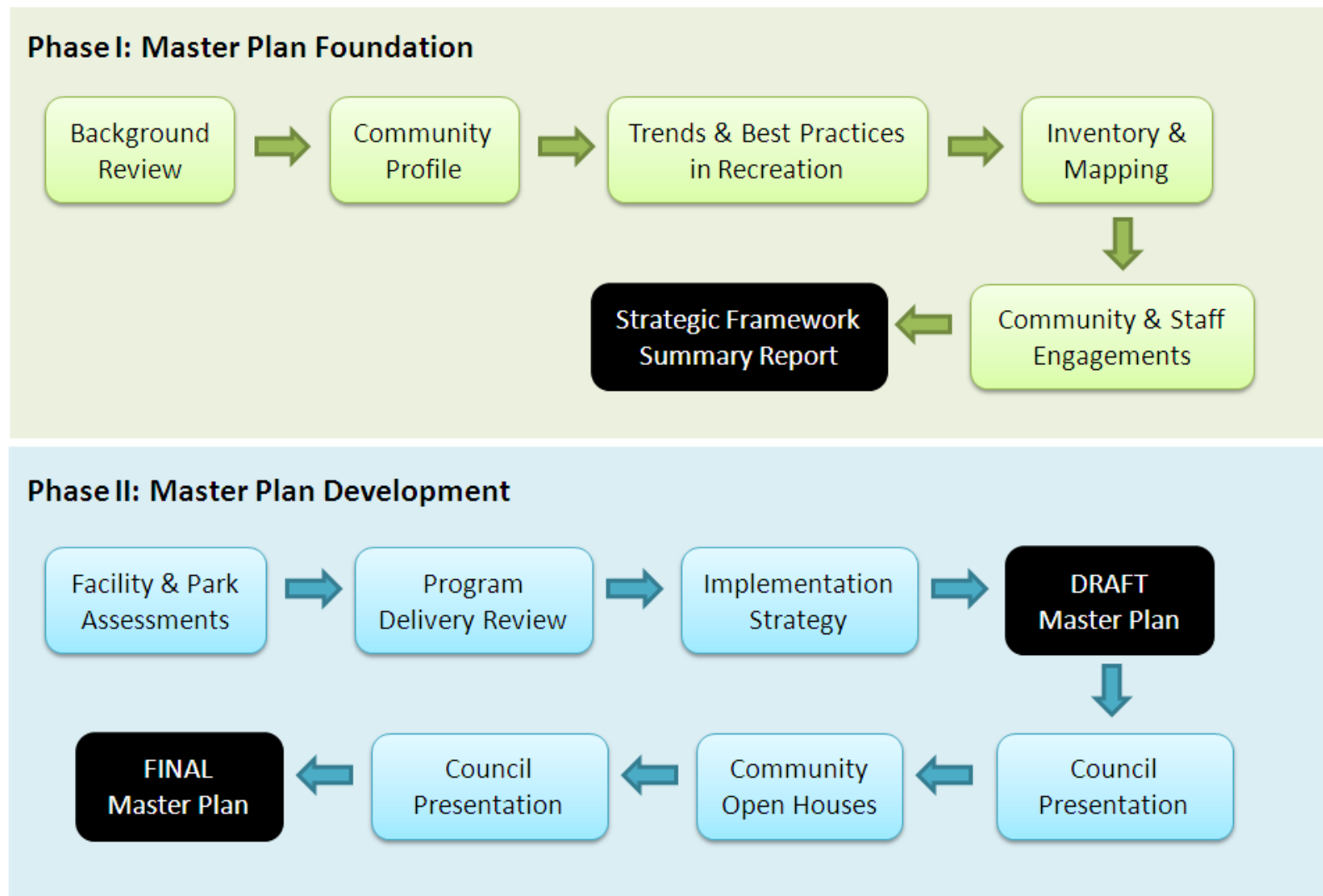
Recognizing that community demographics, recreation user preferences, facility and program utilization profiles, and other important indicators have been continually evolving since the previous Master Plan was approved, the City of St. Catharines released a Request For Proposal in April 2014 to undertake the RFPMP. This new Master Plan will continue to guide the delivery of these services with a sustainable strategy reflective of present circumstances. The Consulting Team of Monteith Brown Planning Consultants and Tucker-Reid and Associates was retained to prepare the Master Plan, with oversight provided by a Technical Committee and a Senior Steering Committee consisting of City Staff and appointed Council representatives.

### Master Planning Process

The Master Plan has been created using qualitative and quantitative research methods. The first phase focused on research and community engagement, the latter of which has been a major point of emphasis in this process. City staff and the Consulting Team devoted significant resources to creating a comprehensive community consultation program. City Staff made a concerted effort to inform, invite, follow-up and engage hundreds of residents, stakeholders, City representatives, institutions and agencies, etc. in the master planning process. Specific details from the research and consultation activities were presented through a Strategic Framework Summary Report, which is a background document to the Master Plan.

The subsequent phase involved assessments using the foundational data that were used to create the RFPMP. The master planning process is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Planning Process for the Recreation Facility and Programming Master Plan





## Alignment with Corporate Frameworks

A number of background documents have been reviewed to understand the planning context surrounding the Master Plan, on the basis that this RFPMP forms part of a broader policy context for the City as a whole. There are a number of documents and provincial policies that affect St. Catharines' growth and land uses; this information must be taken into account during the preparation of the Master Plan. In addition, to meet the demands of its population, the City has proactively undertaken numerous studies and carried out the creation of new facilities and programs. The Master Plan will be utilized, in conjunction with other documents, to guide local planning and decision-making.

For the RFPMP to be effective, it must align with corporate objectives and land use planning policies, as well as other plans specifically guiding the Parks, Recreation and Culture Services Department (e.g. the Culture Plan and Museum Strategic Plan). These documents have provided baseline content for the Master Plan, while integrating and/or reinforcing appropriate findings that support the provision of services falling under the purview of the Plans. Pertinent provincial legislation and a number of documents that have been reviewed as part of the planning process are listed below.

<b>Provincial Legislation</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ontario Planning Act</li><li>• Provincial Policy Statement</li><li>• Greenbelt Plan</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe</li><li>• Niagara Escarpment Plan</li></ul>
<b>Strategic Policy Documents</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Garden City Plan</li><li>• Niagara Region Official Plan</li><li>• Parks Policy Plan, 2005</li><li>• Recreation Facility Master Plan, 2008</li><li>• Facility Accessibility Design Standards</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Downtown Creative Cluster Master Plan</li><li>• Tending Our Garden City: City of St. Catharines Sustainability Strategy</li><li>• Inspire St. Catharines: Culture Plan 2020</li><li>• Museum Strategic Plan</li></ul>

### Other Documents

- 2011 Census Community Profile
- 2011 National Household Survey
- St. Catharines Leisure Guides
- Ice Allocation Policy
- Region of Niagara Development Phasing Strategy (2013) and Development Charges Background Study (2012)
- Morningstar Mill Feasibility and End Use Study (2010)
- Black History Interpretive Centre Interpretive Framework and Feasibility Study (2014)

### Study Focus

This Master Plan builds upon the City's 2008 Recreation Facility Master Plan though the previous plan's cultural assessments have recently been updated by the City's Culture Plan and the Museum Strategic Plan, and are thus not a major point of focus this time around. Also of note, this Master Plan is not intended to duplicate or update work conducted for the City's 2005 Parks Policy Plan but rather will ascertain progress made to date in implementing that Plan and provide input with respect to what priorities should continue to be advanced in relation to the outcomes of this RFPMP.

The inclusion of capital and operating cost estimates associated with individual recommendations do not form part of the RFPMP. This is due largely to the significant degree of cost variability that occurs over a long range plan of this nature (e.g. escalations/deviations in the price of materials, cost of labour, utility rates, etc.). Instead, more accurate pricing can be determined shortly before the implementation of a specific recommendation, which City Staff will articulate through an annual implementation plan that provides the City with a better representation of cost according to prevailing market rates and conditions. Doing so will better attain Guiding Principle #10 (Sustainable Investments in Recreation Infrastructure) and provide the City with the best available information to guide its capital and operating budget planning processes.

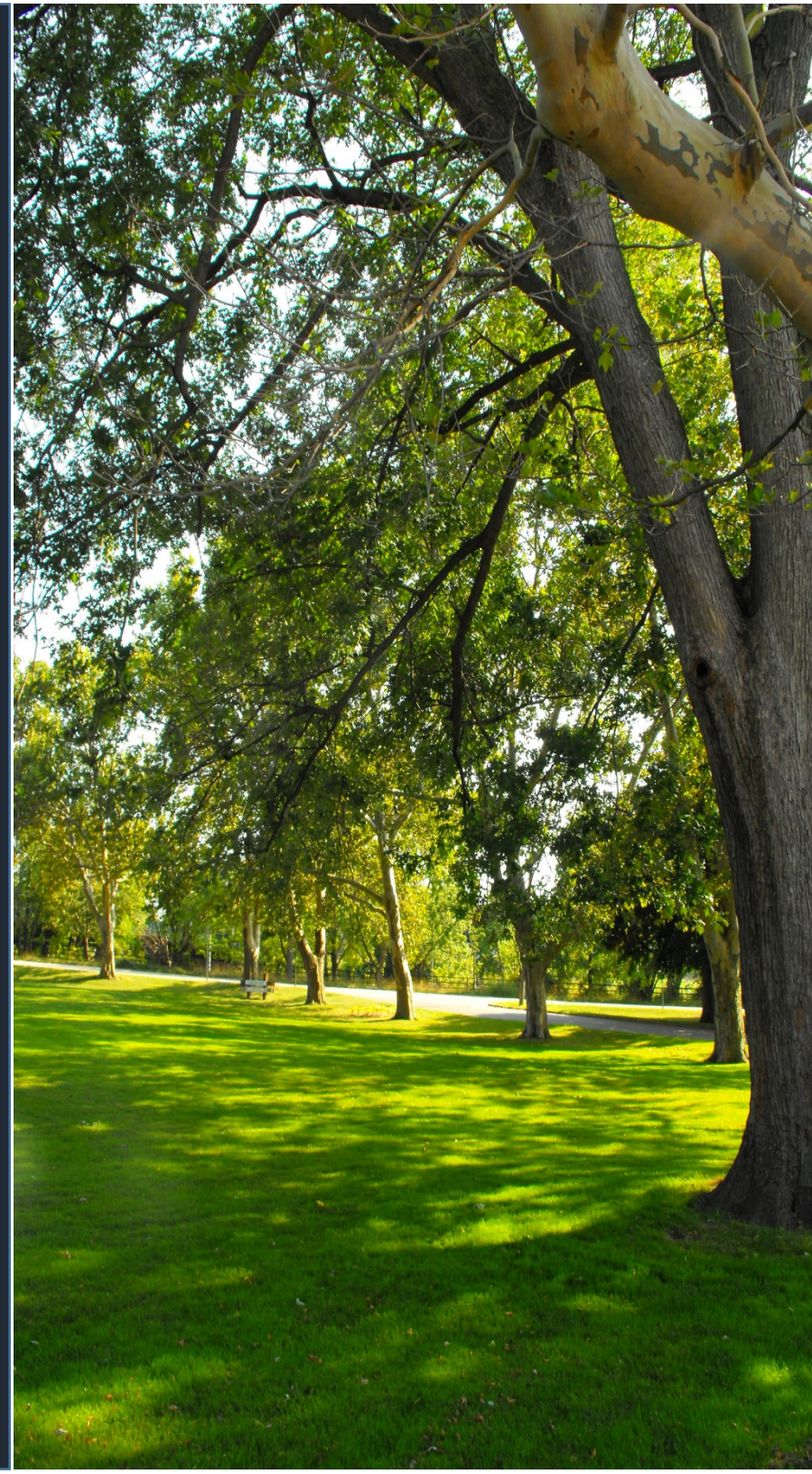


## Section 2

# 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.

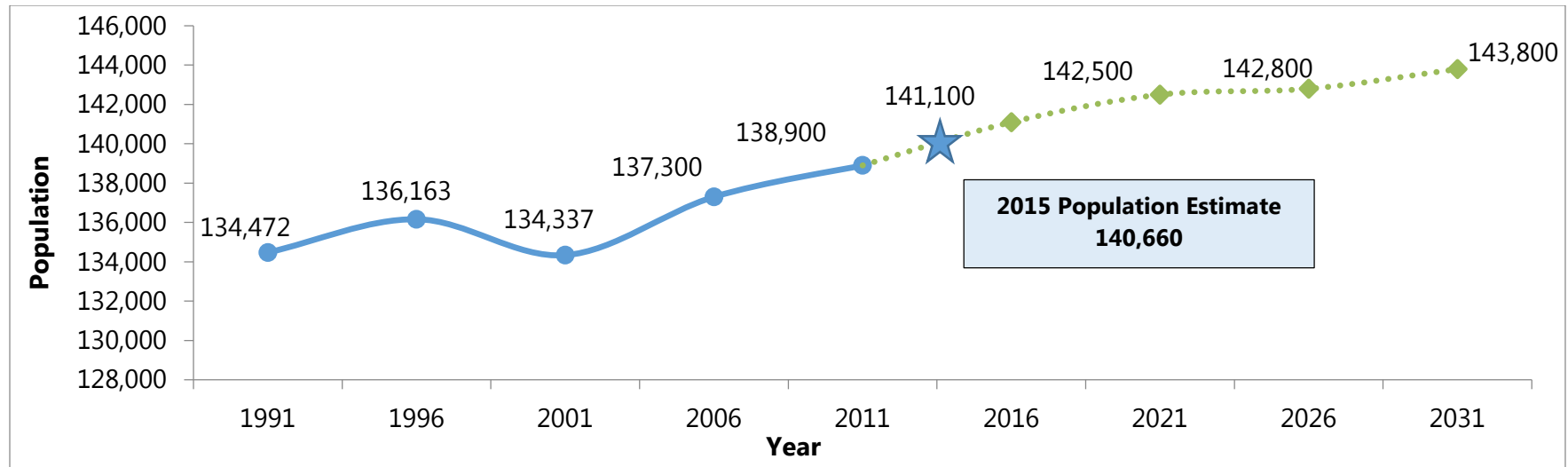
As shown in Figure 2, St. Catharines' population has remained fairly stable over the past 25 years with some modest fluctuations recorded through the Statistics Canada Census. According to Region of Niagara Official Plan Amendment 2-2009, which is the primary population projection guiding the Master 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.

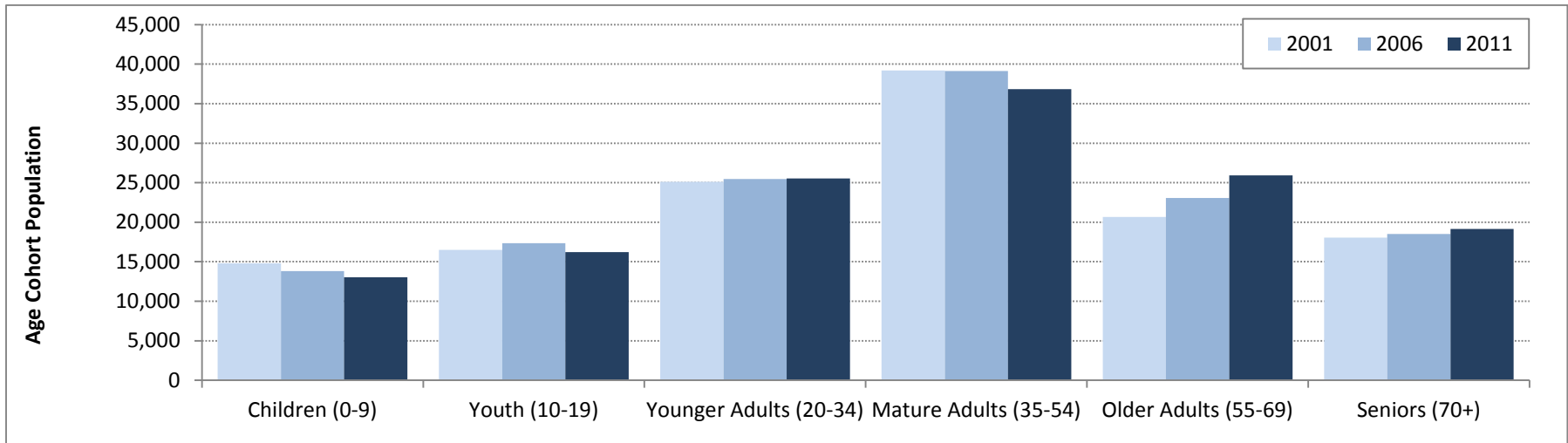
This expected aging of the population is not to say that the City should reduce its focus on serving children, youth and younger adult segments with recreational opportunities. What it suggests is that the City must be prepared to respond to the recreational needs of a growing market of older adults, 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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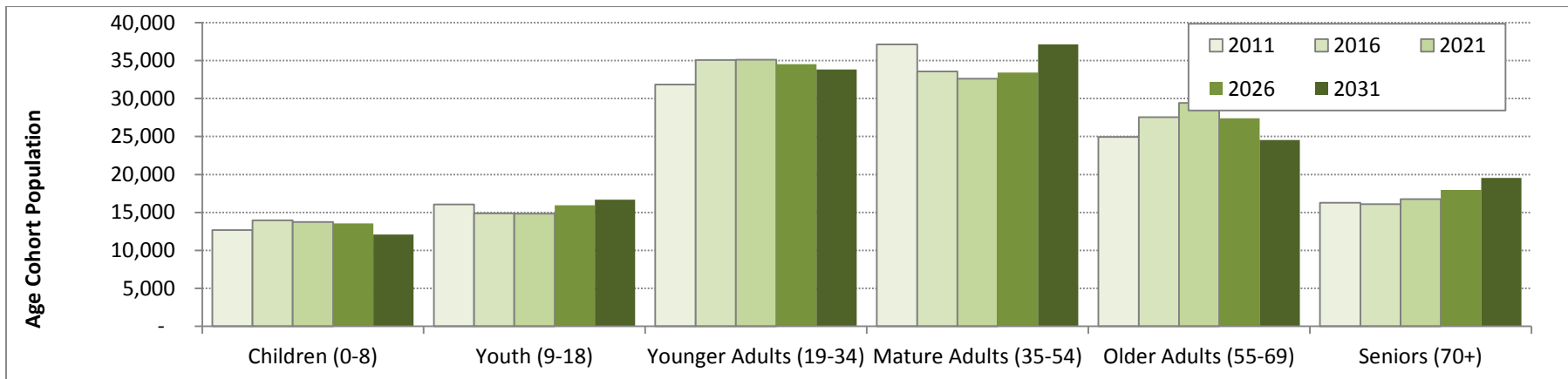
<sup>ii</sup> Region of Niagara. Age Specific Population Forecasts by Area Municipality. December 7, 2012. Prepared by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd.



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.

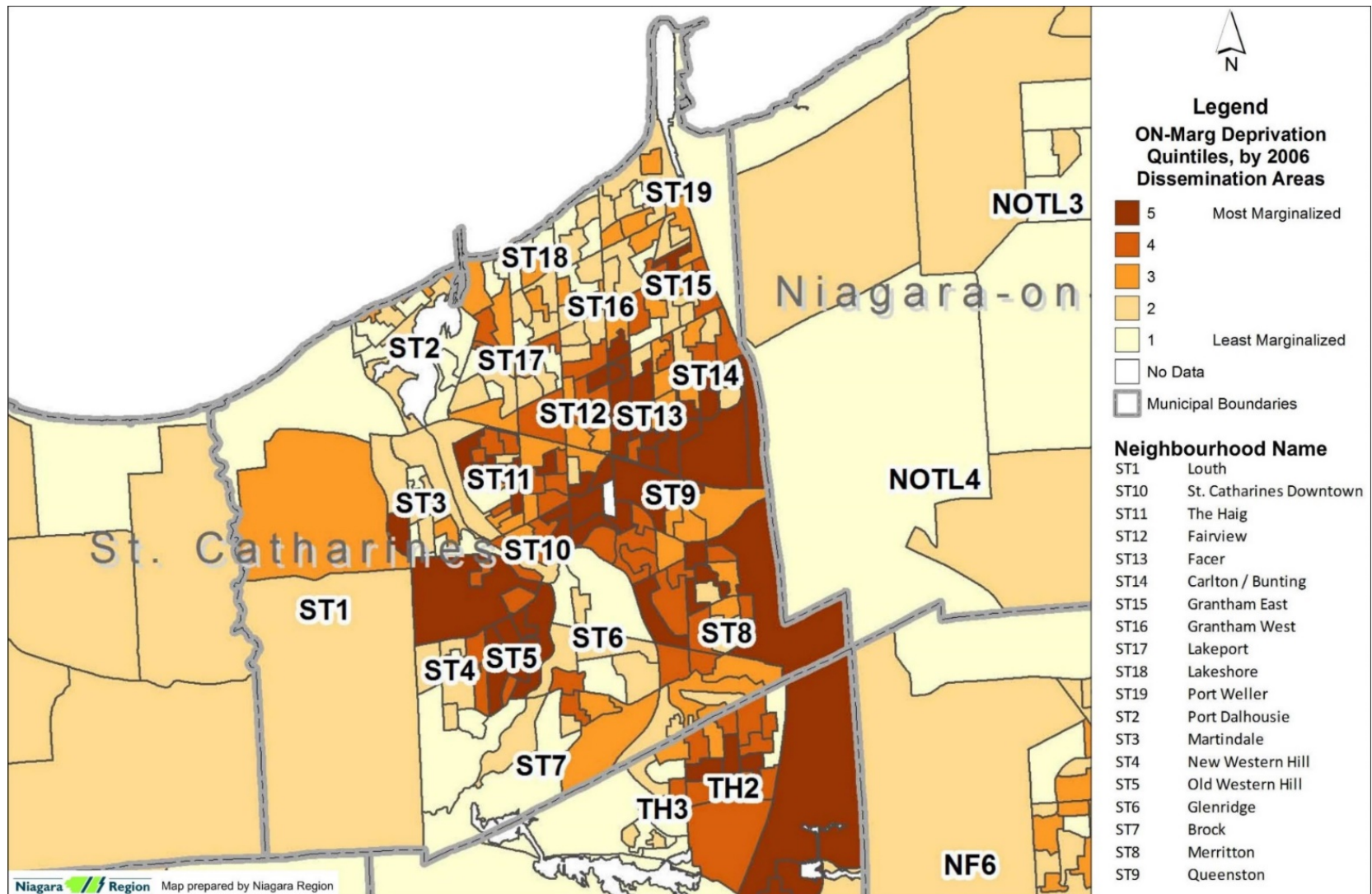
To provide an indication of 'marginalized' communities in St. Catharines, the Region of Niagara has prepared mapping based on the Ontario Marginalization Index and highlights the 'Material deprivation' dimension only. Using 2006 Census data, a score of 1 (least marginalized) to 5 (most marginalized) 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.

## Section 3

# Indoor Recreation Facility Assessments

The City of St. Catharines has a long history of investing in community centres and indoor recreation facilities. Facilities to be examined through this Section include the City's supply of:

- Arenas;
- Indoor Aquatic Centres;
- Indoor Artificial Turf Fields;
- Gymnasiums;
- Older Adult Centres;
- Youth Space; and
- Multi-Purpose Program Spaces



## 3.1 Arenas

**Supply:** 10 Ice Pads under municipal ownership at the following six arenas: Bill Burgoyne Arena (1 ice pad), Garden City Complex (2 ice pads), Haig Bowl (1 decommissioned ice pad as discussed below), Meridian Centre (1 ice pad – which is operated by SMG), Merritton Centennial Arena (1 ice pad – which is operated by the Merritton Lions Club) and the Seymour Hannah Sports and Entertainment Centre (4 ice pads).

The supply includes the Haig Bowl ice pad which was decommissioned in 2014. Haig Bowl is included for the purposes of this assessment on the basis that utilization data contained herein reflects historical ice bookings occurring at that ice pad. City Staff note that Haig Bowl is currently leased to a private operator for dry floor usage, and state that capital investments would be required to accommodate dry floor usage over the long term since this facility was built to function as an arena. However, the supply conservatively discounts the Merritton Arena to be the equivalent of 0.65 ice pads despite it being wholly owned and maintained by the City of St. Catharines and a number of local hockey organizations indicate that they regularly utilize this arena to meet their needs.

Further, the supply counts Meridian Centre as the equivalent of 0.25 ice pads since it is only partially accessible for general public use due to OHL usage and special event programming (just four months after opening, between 15 and 20 hours per week are being rented to community users, a level that is expected to grow as the operation further establishes itself). Both the Merritton Arena and the Meridian Centre have flexibility to allocate ice outside of the parameters of the City's Ice Allocation Policy due to agreements with their third party operators.

For the purposes of the Master Plan's assessments, **the City's 'effective' supply is assumed to be 8.9 ice pads.** This adequately reflects ice pads that the City is responsible for funding to enable community use, recognizing that this falls in between the 'actual' supply of 10 ice pads and the 'City-allocated' supply of 7 ice pads (if excluding Merritton Arena, the Meridian Centre, and the decommissioned Haig Bowl).

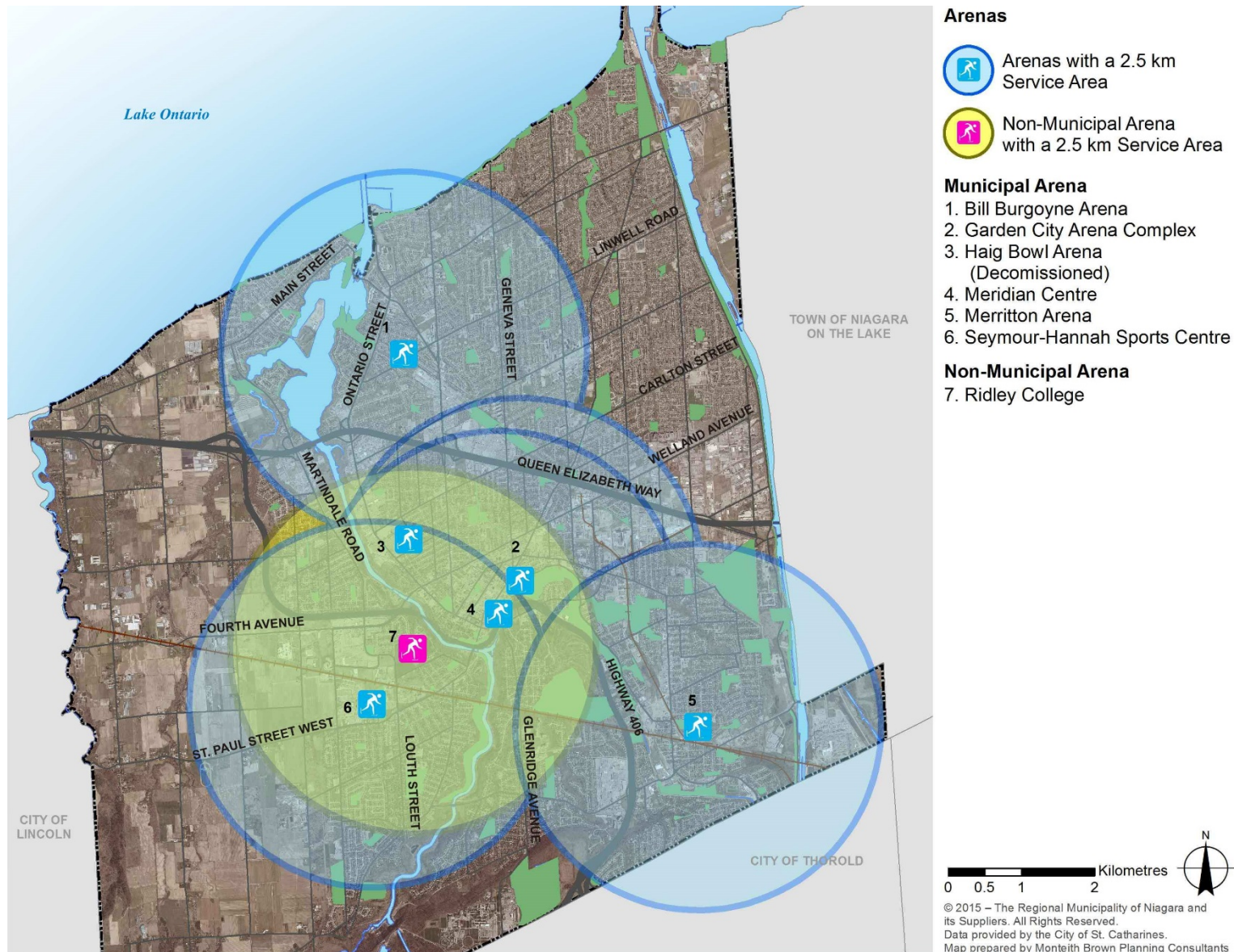
The availability of Ridley College arena to the community is also recognized as a contributor to the supply (though not specifically added to the 8.9 effective ice pads), with groups such as GHL Niagara Co-ed and the Players Hockey League reporting usage of that rink. The College's NHL size ice pad is operated year-round, and is very well utilized for community rentals during prime time throughout the winter season.



- Service Level:** St. Catharines' level of service is one ice pad per 15,805 population which falls within a tolerable range in the Greater Golden Horseshoe where provision typically ranges between an ice pad per 12,000 to 20,000 population. Population-based standards, however, do not necessarily capture market-based demand considerations (such as changing participation rates, aging and diversity characteristics of the population, geographic inequities, etc.). St. Catharines operates an ice pad for every 560 registered arena users (or one per 630 registrants if excluding Haig Bowl) which is higher than what many other urban communities tend to target (one ice pad per 700 to 800 registrants). Furthermore, looking only at children and youth (ages 5-19) who are the primary drivers of arena demand, St. Catharines' provision rate (one municipal ice pad per 2,450 youth) is greater than any of other communities benchmarked (see Appendix B) at an average of one per 3,205 youth. Based purely on these per capita measures, the City of St. Catharines provides more ice pads per population of children and youth than each of the comparator communities, and the second highest level of service overall per total population.
- Distribution:** Application of a 2.5 kilometre service radius (generally representing a 10 to 15 minute drive) around each City-owned arena generally encompasses most areas of St. Catharines. Noted gaps include the eastern neighbourhoods within Grantham and St. George's wards, and further that the Bill Burgoyne Arena is the only such facility located north of the Q.E.W. However, arenas are considered drive-to facilities with all of St. Catharines supply considered to be within reasonable distribution to population.
- Consultation:** The majority of input regarding arenas was provided by the Arena Partners Committee and through arena users that submitted user group questionnaires. Key themes from these stakeholders included a desire for the sustainable management of local arenas, improving how ice time is allocated and scheduled, and investing in a new multi-pad arena to replace the Garden City Complex.
- In terms of general community opinion, the statistically representative survey of St. Catharines' households revealed that nearly half of residents are opposed or strongly opposed to the City spending additional public funds for arenas and curling rinks. This level of support rated the lowest relative to nineteen other recreation facilities. Requests for additional ice pads were not emphasized through other means of consultation.



Map 2: Distribution of Arenas





**Participation:** Data provided by user groups records 4,976 players registered with local ice sport organizations (adjusted to reflect prime time users and residents of St. Catharines). 23% of surveyed households participated in hockey or figure skating over the past year (the ninth most popular activity).

**Utilization:** Usage of prime time hours (5pm to 10pm Monday to Friday, 8am to 9pm Saturday/Sunday) has been relatively steady over the past four ice seasons with an average of approximately 91%. Excluding times when arenas were closed, 837 hours of prime times went unused between October and February while another 933 hours were unbooked in shoulder hours typically identified as prime times in other municipalities (4pm to 5pm and 10pm to 11pm Monday to Friday, plus 6am to 8am and 9pm to 12am on Saturday and Sunday). Collectively, prime and shoulder hour availability amounts to 1,770 unused hours during the 2013/14 season, noting that the previous three winter seasons had unused capacity in excess of this figure. This reaffirms the City's decision to decommission Haig Bowl. Analysis solely of the November and February peak months confirms availability of ice time.

Appendix B contains a comprehensive analysis of ice pad requirements in St. Catharines. Using a variety of metrics and analytics, the assessments conclude that there is available capacity in the existing arena system that is not being utilized by arena organizations, the City or the general population. In fact, the assessment indicates that a supply of 7 ice pads would be adequate for meeting the needs of City of St. Catharines residents for at least the next ten years and likely for some time beyond this period (by comparison, the 2008 Recreation Facility Master Plan also projected that the City would require 7 ice pads by the year 2026). As a result of the Master Plan's assessments, no net additions to the supply of ice pads are recommended during the ten year time frame of the RFPMP based on:

- Analysis revealing that 1,770 unused prime and shoulder operating hours equates to 1.25 ice pads being available over the course of the season (data received from the Merritton Arena suggests that it is well-booked although the facility is not currently required to adhere to the City's Ice Allocation Policy). The amount of available hours reinforces the fact that the City was justified in reducing the supply of one ice pad (i.e. the decommissioning Haig Bowl) for ice use.
- Analysis of total registration and youth registrations in relation to market-driven provision standards yields availability of the equivalent of nearly two ice pads, reinforcing the operating hour assessment.
- The City's high level of service as measured by ice pads per total population, population of children and youth, and registered arena users.
- The statistically valid poll of St. Catharines' households revealing that participation has decreased from 31% to 23% in hockey and figure skating between 2006 and 2014 (and lowering from the sixth to ninth most popular activity during that time). Accurate to

within  $\pm 5\%$ , the current poll suggests arena investments receive the lowest level of public support for arena investments among all recreation facility types except curling (45% are opposed to additional arena investments)

- The City's annual arena operating budget has averaged approximately \$1.35 million in tax subsidy over the past three years. This does not include the ongoing capital investments required to maintain an aging supply of arenas. It is reasonable to expect operating costs to escalate in a status quo scenario due to capital maintenance requirements, increases in utility and/or staffing costs, and if further declines occur in the number of hours rented.
- The City's ability to finance a new multi-million dollar arena is constrained by its existing debt commitments (e.g. the Meridian Centre, St. Catharines Kiwanis Aquatics Centre/Dr. Huq Family Library Branch, etc.), infrastructure deficit for municipal assets beyond just recreation.
- Further, the fact that the City no longer collects development charges potentially increases the reliance of the tax base and debentures to fund new facility construction.

The City is presently providing a level of service that allows many groups to access convenient prime times. The City of St. Catharines has chosen to accept the greater financial costs of doing so, and is willing to do so under a low usage operating profile within its shoulder hours. Ultimately, the City must make a decision on how St. Catharines wishes to rationalize its arena supply in relation to its costs and level of utilization. While no net increases are recommended to the supply of ice pads, the City should turn its efforts to maximizing the effectiveness of the existing arenas using a multi-faceted approach aimed at:

- a) building upon the internal operational efficiency of the Department;
- b) encouraging greater usage during both prime and shoulder hour periods;
- c) aligning Merritton Arena with municipal values; and
- d) providing a greater understanding/visibility of cost accounting and providing more transparency in the financial reporting for the arena system.

Upon implementation of strategies associated with the above-noted objectives within the next three years (which Appendix B describes in greater detail), the City should revisit the supply of ice pads. Based on the current assessment, the mid-term target is likely 7 ice pads (plus the Meridian Centre) unless utilization significantly increases or the City chooses to provide an enhanced level of service by which the City accepts the financial costs of doing so in exchange for its desired level of community benefit in providing excess ice in both prime and shoulder hours.





## Recommendations

- #1. The ice needs assessment has indicated that the supply of current ice pads exceeds the current demands required to serve user groups and the community beyond the next ten years. However, prior to considering a further reduction in the supply of arena ice pads, however, it is recommended that the City maintain its current supply (with Haig continuing to be decommissioned and includes the independently operated Merritton Arena and the Meridian Centre). A two phased approach is recommended to confirm ice pad demand with the first phase taking place over the next three years while the City undertakes the following actions:
- a) Develop strategies aimed at increasing prime, shoulder and weekend hour utilizations through differentiated pricing strategies, alternative scheduling and allocation approaches, encouraging 'spot' bookings, etc.
  - b) Future assessments of operating and utilization performance should include prime time hours as defined by the Ice Allocation Policy for its tracking and reporting purposes (i.e. the 10pm and 11pm time slots for weekday and 9pm to 11pm for weekend rentals, as well as the 7am to 8am weekend time slots). This is consistent with industry norms and will allow for better comparisons with other arena performance in other municipalities.
  - c) Renegotiate the Merritton Centennial Arena agreement to require that City policies be fully implemented thereby ensuring a consistent and equitable approach across the City-owned arena supply in St. Catharines, including implementation of the Ice Allocation policy. As part of this, the agreement should provide the City full access to utilization, registration information and relevant financial information to allow for the City to integrate into its performance measurement exercises.
  - d) Revise the existing Ice Allocation Policy to: i) differentiate the priority of ice allocation of residents versus non-resident and commercial versus community; ii) differentiate with a higher priority given to the allocation of ice for community use versus commercial use; and iii) utilize the 'actual' amount of ice utilized by groups in the preceding year as a starting point for allocation rather than what was initially allocated (to recognize hours turned back after the allocation process from the previous year).
  - e) Review the arena budgeting practices to ensure alignment with best practices and provide greater understandability to the general public.
  - f) Monitor the planning exercise being undertaken by Ridley College for its campus, to determine potential impacts, if any, on the availability of the existing ice pad on community use.
  - g) Continue to decommission Haig Bowl for ice purposes (noting that dry floor uses would continue as long as sustainable to do so) subject to an arena facility provision strategy based upon the findings of the first phase recommendations.

- #2. That City Staff review ice pad performance within three years, to re-evaluate ice needs following the consideration of the actions associated with the first phase recommendations (Recommendation #1). This will involve an updated assessment of user group registrations, utilization during prime and shoulder periods, program fill rates, capital/operating cost requirements, demographics of the community, etc. to confirm longer-term ice needs. It is expected that this process will determine the City's required supply of ice pads to meet community needs in the long-term.
- a) Should surplus ice be determined at this time resulting in further reductions to the supply of ice pads (i.e. over and above the current number of operational ice pads), it is recommended that the City adjust the arena supply after examining a wide range of options guided by geographic location, level of utilization, building condition, financial performance and partnership opportunities at a minimum.
  - b) Should the City determine an over-supply of ice pad exists but decides to continue to retain 8 ice pads (plus the Meridian Centre), the rationale for doing so would be on the basis that over-supplying arena facilities is a means to further recreational objectives, including:
    - i. provision of surplus rental and programming capacity;
    - ii. maximizing the convenience of playing ice sports by increasing availability of prime times, particularly to adult users;
    - iii. maintaining strong geographic coverage, particularly south of the Q.E.W.;
    - iv. accommodate a portion of regional ice demand;
    - v. the City accepts the ongoing financial costs associated with required capital investments in the aging arena infrastructure, along with annual operating deficit of an over-supply; and
    - vi. winter ice sports are deemed to be a higher community need than other possible activities or facilities that are required, but would be otherwise unfunded or underfunded, given finite budgetary resources in the Parks, Recreation and Culture Services portfolio (e.g. spaces for general purpose activities, youth and/or older adult programming, wellness and active living programs, etc.).
- #3. Regardless of the number of pads the City should choose to retain, initiate potential partnership discussions with an educational institution, area municipality, or other suitable partner to construct a new arena complex to replace aging arena infrastructure in St. Catharines with the number of ice pads determined based upon the three year review noted in Recommendation #2. At a minimum, any such agreement should generally align with partnership principles found in Section 5.5 of this Master Plan, ensure sufficient community access for local residents at a competitive rate, require equitable financial contributions to capital and operating requirements relative to the degree of access obtained, and be strategically located within reasonable access to local residents.



## 3.2 Indoor Aquatic Centres

**Supply:** The St. Catharines Kiwanis Aquatics Centre (S.K.A.C.) is the City's premier venue for indoor swimming. The facility contains a 25 metre, eight lane rectangular competition pool plus a separate leisure pool with spray features that is oriented to therapeutic and teaching programs.

Complementing the S.K.A.C. are quasi-public indoor pools at Brock University (50 metre competition pool), Ridley College (25 yard, four lane pool), and the Walker Family Y.M.C.A. of St. Catharines (25 metre, six lane rectangular pool with spray features). These quasi-public pools are not formally associated with the City, but are publicly-accessible at certain times at rates and/or membership requirements established by the operator.

**Service Level:** The City provides one indoor aquatic centre per 140,660 population. Based solely on a facilities per population metric, this level of service is lower than commonly found among major urban centres in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (G.G.H.) where provision tends to range broadly from one per 40,000 to 80,000 population. The presence of the aforementioned three quasi-public pools has allowed the City of St. Catharines to maintain a lower level of direct service and thereby avoid duplication of community-based aquatic services. In addition, the availability of two programmable pools at the S.K.A.C. including an eight-lane pool represents an elevated level of service in a number of G.G.H. communities where the standard indoor aquatic facility (particularly those constructed over ten years ago) contain only one six lane pool. As such, the City is providing a greater 'bather load' at the S.K.A.C. than is found in a typical indoor aquatic facility.

**Distribution:** The S.K.A.C. is located relatively central within the municipal boundary, and is conveniently located within reasonable proximity to the Q.E.W. That said, neighbourhoods on the outskirts of the City will require a greater amount of time to reach the facility relative to those residing in core neighbourhoods.

**Consultation:** Comments specific to indoor aquatics centres came primarily from the Community Input Event and the Indoor Recreation Facility Users Focus Group, where it was noted that the City provides a lower level of service on a population basis relative to many other municipalities. It is a particular challenge for aquatic clubs who are trying to reconcile their programming demands within prime times which compete with City-run programs for time and space. Certain aquatics clubs are, or are presently exploring, renting time from quasi-public pools including Ridley College. Approximately two-thirds (62%) of residents surveyed through the statistically valid household survey support or strongly support additional public investment in indoor pools, ranking seventh relative to other priorities.

**Participation:** The Master Plan's household survey recorded swimming as the second most popular activity in St. Catharines, with 53% of households engaging in the activity during the past year (either at an indoor or outdoor location, in a public or personal setting).

**Utilization:** Since the opening of the S.K.A.C., aquatics participation has been steadily increasing. In 2012, the West Park Pool averaged around 70 swimmers per day in registered and drop-in programs during the winter session. By comparison, the S.K.A.C. averaged 250 swimmers per day in winter 2013 which grew to over 280 swimmers per day in 2014 winter session. Other notable statistics for the 2013 operating year include: nearly 60,000 leisure swims (lane and leisure swimming, and Deep Water Walking); over 30,500 visits to drop-in aquatic fitness classes; nearly 7,500 persons registered in more than 1,500 aquatics classes (noting that there are multiple classes per program) offered by the City.

The Brock University pool functions as the major competitive venue for the City and Niagara Region, and also offers lessons, junior lifeguard camps, competitive swim teams and recreational drop-in swims. The Y.M.C.A. pool also offers lessons, leadership programs and recreational swims to its members. Ridley College makes their pool available for community rental, with the West Park Aquatics Club being a notable renter.

The S.K.A.C. provides a high quality competition pool and leisure pool that allows the City to deliver a multitude of aquatics programs to a wide range of abilities, ages, and interests. While the City's service level of one indoor aquatic facility per 140,000 population is seemingly low compared to other communities, the fact that the S.K.A.C. was designed to a larger than average specification must be considered, as must the fact that many other communities do not have the same number of quasi-public pools available in their communities (particularly a 50 metre varsity pool). Further with just two years of operation under it, the S.K.A.C. appears to still have capacity to grow its programmed and drop-in swim capabilities as evidenced by increasing utilization rates as City Staff learn to adapt and adjust to community demands, and continue to learn about the operating capabilities of this facility. Accommodating prime time rental demands of local aquatic clubs will likely be the largest challenge faced within the City's aquatics portfolio over the next ten years.

With the recent investment in the S.K.A.C. and projected growth of fewer than 1,300 persons in the 4-18 years of age by 2026 (representing the targeted age range of most aquatic club programs), provision of a second indoor aquatic centre would be a significant risk if all capital and operating costs were to be borne by the City as per the S.K.A.C. model. In fact, the S.K.A.C. required an operating subsidy upwards of \$1.4 million in 2013 which grew to \$1.6 million in 2014.

Instead of assuming capital and operating risk associated with enhancing the pool supply for prime time rental opportunities, it is recommended that the City facilitate discussions between local aquatics clubs and the quasi-public pools. It is recognized that these pools



will also have competing prime time demands (particularly the Y.M.C.A.), but there may be potential for greater community use of education sector pools in prime time not used by students. The City could even explore the willingness of the quasi-public pool operators to partner in some capacity with the City and/or user groups. Although this could entail an at- or above-market rate financial commitment by the City, it would still likely be more cost-effective than building and operating a new municipal pool on its own. Should these or other potential pool operators be looking at capital upgrades, the City should investigate the opportunities for partnership to jointly address new pool developments. For example, it has been noted that Ridley College is undertaking a campus planning process and if they are contemplating a replacement or enhancement to their existing pool then there may be an opportunity for a public-private partnership. The same may exist if an area municipality or institution (e.g. a hospital) has capital development plans.

### **Recommendations**

- #4. Identify and engage potential partners that currently provide, or have an interest in providing indoor aquatics opportunities to determine how the City's residents and user groups may gain improved access to meet demands that cannot be met with the City's existing facility.

## **3.3 Indoor Artificial Turf Fields**

**Supply:** The City of St. Catharines does not own or operate an indoor turf field, though it does provide the Kiwanis Field which is an outdoor artificial turf field that allows for the outdoor season to begin earlier and extend later into the year (e.g., from March to November). An indoor sports field, however, is the only type of facility capable of accommodating year-round field sport activities.

Presently, sports field users looking for indoor space rely upon gymnasiums within the community (through gyms in municipal and educational buildings), albeit each gym may have certain limitations regarding surface, size and ceiling height. Futsal and indoor soccer can also be played in Ridley College's converted former arena building (which is available for community rental) that now houses a multi-use rubberized floor which is a gymnasium-oriented surface (i.e. it also facilitates basketball, volleyball and a number of other activities) that is surrounded by a running track.

**Service Level:** There is no municipal level of service at present. Service levels across the Greater Golden Horseshoe vary, though it is safe to say that many communities with populations between 50,000 and 100,000 are considering or have already developed indoor turf fields either on their own or in partnership with a third party.

- Distribution:** There are currently no municipal indoor turf field house facilities in St. Catharines. However, an outdoor artificial turf field is located at the Seymour Hannah Sports and Entertainment Centre.
- Consultation:** A number of sports field organizations voiced requests for an indoor artificial turf facility in St. Catharines including the Niagara Varsity Football Club, St. Catharines Club Roma Soccer, St. Catharines Concord Soccer Club, St. Catharines Jets Soccer, and St. Catharines Minor Baseball Association. Generally, sports field users were looking to supplement their outdoor programs with year-round opportunities for indoor training, games, and practices. In the absence of indoor artificial fields in St. Catharines, local user groups reported using indoor facilities in adjacent municipalities such as Niagara Falls and Welland. The household survey undertaken for this Master Plan did not solicit input regarding support for investment specifically in indoor sports fields.
- Participation:** Indoor turf sports, particularly indoor soccer and lacrosse, are growing in popularity in many urbanized areas of the province. With no indoor turf facilities presently in the City, it is unknown how many players affiliated with local organizations are using such indoor facilities in other communities.
- Utilization:** The degree to which local groups are using indoor turf facilities in other municipalities is presently unquantified.

While there are no set service levels for the provision of indoor turf facilities, they are generally common in communities with more than 50,000 residents (although there are examples where communities with lesser population have an indoor turf facility). While some municipalities own and operate their own facilities, the most common approach to provision has been through partnerships between municipalities, non-profit sport associations and/or other public institutions (such as school boards). For a municipality such as St. Catharines that is undergoing a transition in its recreation user profile (notably an aging population) and the financial resources that are associated with maintaining a strong but aging number of facilities, having a negotiated partnership agreement in place would be a likely precursor to any decision to add indoor turf field house to the Parks, Recreation and Culture Services Department portfolio (i.e. it would not be a sustainable decision for the City to solely build and operate a field house).

In the absence of local opportunities, it is difficult to quantify the need for such a facility without first undertaking a comprehensive business planning exercise that involves local stakeholders to fully understand the type/size of field required, the number of hours that might be used each week and how they will be allocated to various users, the capital and operating costs of the facility, potential partners and the respective roles of each, and the ongoing funding strategy. A business plan investigating these noted considerations, at a minimum, should be prepared prior to rationalizing any decision as to whether the City is enter into this new level of service.



At a very high level, demand can be estimated based on the number of outdoor soccer players in St. Catharines. As discussed in the Outdoor Recreation Facility Assessment section, there are an estimated 4,300 players in the City. Applying an assumption that 25% of outdoor players participate in indoor soccer, it can be estimated that there are about 1,075 indoor soccer players residing locally. The average indoor soccer program requires one hour per week on an indoor field for approximately every ten players; this ratio can vary slightly depending on the age of the participant (the field can be divided in two for games involving smaller children) and the level of competition (rep teams require more practice time). Based on this metric, there could be demand of 108 hours per week, noting that the assumption is also predicated on the Ridley College multi-use floor and local school gymnasiums continuing to absorb a degree of these hours.

Accordingly, the City should be open to entertaining discussions should a qualified partner(s) express interest in collaborating on the development and operation of an indoor turf field house. Examples of partners could include, but not necessarily be limited to, school boards and private schools, postsecondary education institutions, area municipalities and/or local sports field organizations (either an individual group or a collective) provided they have demonstrated financial capacity to be involved in operations. The City's role in the relationship should be reviewed through the aforementioned business plan as there are many different examples across Ontario if the City could support such a project. For example, the City could provide the financial backing to secure land and/or the initial cost of construction with a partner possibly repaying the investment back over time, or it could contribute towards all or a portion of capital requirements and have the partner be fully responsible for facility operations (or vice versa) provided suitable community access is permitted.

### **Recommendations**

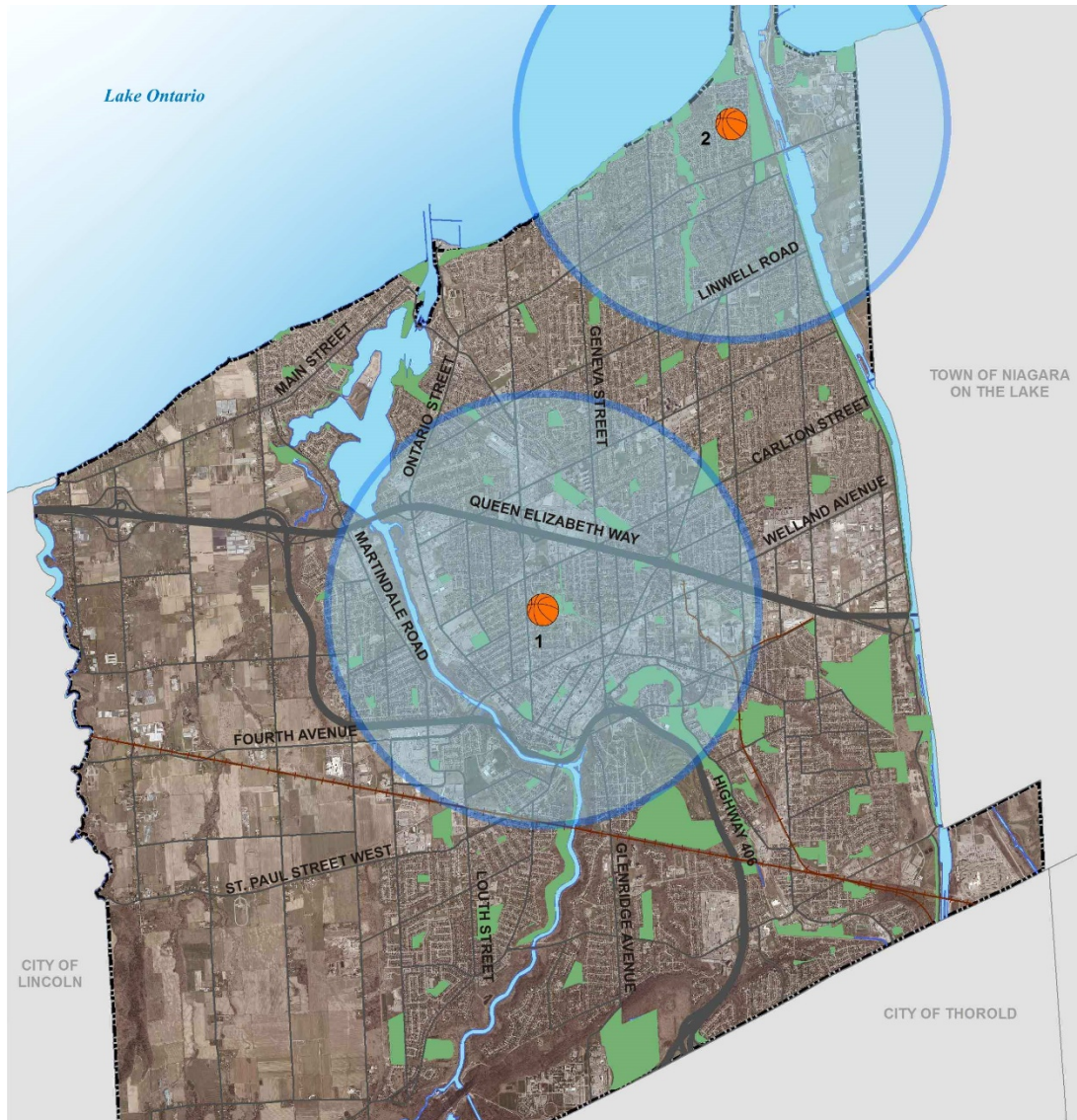
- #5. Municipal entry into the indoor artificial turf market should only be pursued on the basis that a qualified partner(s) can be secured to contribute towards the capital and/or operating commitments and that such investment is first rationalized through a comprehensive business planning exercise.




## 3.4 Gymnasiums

- Supply:** The City owns two gymnasiums, however, the Port Weller Community Centre gymnasium is the only one that is operated and programmed by the City. The gymnasium (along with all other space) within the Queen Elizabeth Community Centre is leased to the Boys and Girls Club of Niagara and thus no municipally-delivered programming occurs at that facility.
- Of note, the Russell Avenue Community Centre also has a large multi-purpose room that is slightly smaller in area than a gymnasium, however, it has functional limitations consisting of low ceiling height and structural columns embedded within the floor space that prohibit most gymnasium sport activities from taking place and thus is not included in the gym supply.
- Gymnasiums are also available throughout St. Catharines at various institutional locations and places of worship. Access to public and separate school board gymnasiums is negotiated through the provincial Community Use of Schools policy through which community rentals are permitted in accordance with the fee/rental schedule established by the school boards. The City has negotiated a reciprocal agreement with the District School Board of Niagara for exclusive use of the double gymnasium and storage area at Harriet Tubman Public School (opening September 2015) during weekday evenings (the City also has priority access at a fee for additional use during non-school days). Additionally, the Walker Family Y.M.C.A. has a double gymnasium, Ridley College has two gymnasiums while Brock University has three gymnasiums, one of which is a double gymnasium that is encircled by a suspended 200 metre, three lane walking/jogging track.
- Service Level:** Including the Port Weller and Queen Elizabeth Community Centre gyms, the City is providing one gymnasium per 70,330 population. Service levels are generally not directly comparable between municipalities given that some communities may provide fewer gymnasium facilities if they have access to school gymnasiums because of strong relationships, partnerships or joint-use agreements with the local boards of education.
- Distribution:** The service areas of the Port Weller and Queen Elizabeth Community Centre gyms (the latter which is programmed exclusive by the Boys and Girls Club, but addresses a portion of child/youth-focused demand) generally encompass communities residing in the north-east areas of the City. The rest of St. Catharines largely relies upon gyms within the educational facilities mentioned above.

Map 3: Distribution of City Gymnasiums




**Gymnasiums**

 Gymnasiums with a 2.5 km Service Area

**Gymnasiums**

- 1. Harriet Tubman Public School
- 2. Port Weller Community Centre

0 0.5 1 2 Kilometres 

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Data provided by the City of St. Catharines.  
Map prepared by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants

Note: Harriet Tubman School gym is available to the City through a partnership and reciprocal agreement with the school board

- Consultation:** Discussions at the Community Input Event and through some Focus Groups noted deficiencies in the local gymnasium supply, and that access to school board gyms in particular is cost prohibitive or has too restrictive scheduling policies (e.g. groups being bumped with little notice, certain activities are not permitted to take place at the school's discretion, etc.). Further, these discussions reinforced a trend that became apparent through the household survey whereby participants reported seeing shifts away from traditional organized sports into more flexibly scheduled, self-directed activities that are frequently take place in gyms (pickleball for older adults was a noted example). Another recurring theme heard throughout many of the consultation activities was residents wishing that the City had constructed a gymnasium as part of the S.K.A.C.
- Participation:** A broad range of activities take place for all age groups within the Port Weller Community Centre gym ranging from active living and wellness programs, indoor gym sports (e.g. floor hockey, volleyball, badminton, etc.), to flying model aircrafts. The household survey reported participation in gym activities (some of which may also take place outside of gyms) such as children's programs (21%), seniors and teen programs (14% each), basketball (11%) and volleyball (9%).
- Utilization:** As the only gymnasium under the direct operational control of the City, the Port Weller Community Centre gym is used fairly extensively due to the range of programs offered through the City. Discussions with the Boys and Girls Club indicate that they heavily depend upon the gym within the Queen Elizabeth Community Centre to deliver daytime and after-school programming. Of note, the Brock University and Ridley College gyms permit community rentals during times not otherwise allocated for student classes and programs. In fact, Ridley College indicates that its gymnasiums are rented by community groups for most nights of the week as the facilities are to a higher design/size specification that many gyms operated through the school boards.

Gymnasiums tend to be strategically co-located in multi-use community centre developments as they are flexible spaces through which a range of programs can be delivered. For example, arena and pool users often benefit from the dry-land training space afforded by gyms while cross-programming potential is enhanced if co-locating a gym with a seniors or youth space. Gymnasiums also assist in facilitating the growing demand for drop-in or spontaneous activities (e.g. basketball, volleyball, pickleball, floor hockey, etc.), something that is important in a community such as St. Catharines where the household survey and discussions with community indicates a shift from traditional sports to more flexible or self-directed forms of programming.

Municipalities tend to target gymnasium service levels around 1:35,000 to 1:50,000 population, typically aligning with indoor aquatic centre targets recognizing the economies of scale and cross-programming potential of developing these facilities together. More often, however, an aquatic centre or an arena is considered to be a facility "driver" through which a gymnasium is added for ancillary support and as such a



gymnasium does not usually provide the sole impetus for new community centre construction. In addition, proximity and ability to access school gymnasiums also has a significant impact on supply and demand. While a gymnasium was not included as a complementary facility in the S.K.A.C., the City indicates that the building was designed to allow for expansion to include a gym if needed in the future.

With respect to operational responsibility, community-oriented programming is heavily reliant upon school gyms (including Ridley College) to address needs across St. Catharines, since the Port Weller Community Centre is located in the northern area of the City while the centrally located Queen Elizabeth Community Centre gym is dedicated to child and youth-serving programs offered by the Boys and Girls Club. Use of school gyms is an efficient use of tax-funded infrastructure, however, community access to these facilities can be challenging in the absence of effective shared use or reciprocal agreements. Municipally-operated gymnasiums are much more likely than school gyms to:

- provide a multi-use recreation and/or cultural experience through co-location with complementary facilities, resulting in a 'one-stop shopping' experience for a wide range of ages and interests.
- be accessible during the daytime (when school is in session) and during the summer months (when schools reduce their staffing);
- provide affordable rental rates, particularly on weekends when school janitorial/supervision costs are subject to overtime wages, or due to a school's mandate towards achieving a greater rate of cost recovery; and
- permit a greater range of uses (some school gyms may restrict certain types of activities) while offering a greater degree of scheduling certainty (schools may 'bump' users if a concurrent school use occurs).

The negotiation of favourable reciprocal or shared-use agreements with school boards, as the City has done for the Harriet Tubman Public School, can mitigate some of these challenges (except, in most cases, for access during times when school is session). Other reasons why a municipal gymnasiums are often considered include contingency options where an existing municipal gymnasium or large multi-purpose space can no longer be utilized (e.g. City Staff indicate that certain structural conditions may warrant considerable capital renewal at the Russell Avenue Community Centre) or if a school may no longer be available thereby causing a loss of community-based program opportunities, which in turn may lead to requests for the City to deliver the program in lieu (the school boards have not provided any indication that access will be reduced but nonetheless a contingency plan would be in the City's best interests should community-based programs become restricted by access/affordability issues in the future).

Within the master planning period, it is recommended that the City expand the S.K.A.C. to include a gymnasium provided that expansion of the building footprint is indeed cost-effective and feasible. The provision of a gym at the S.K.A.C. would likely benefit pool users as a whole as aquatic clubs would have onsite access to dry-land training while casual pool users and library patrons have more choices to participate

in an activity while at the facility. The inclusion of a gym with a fitness studio and/or smaller multi-purpose room would provide a more robust community recreation experience at the S.K.A.C. and afford a greater range of multi-generational activities that can take place (e.g. wellness, sport, community rentals, etc.). Another important factor is this development would increase overall foot traffic within the S.K.A.C. (which would also benefit the St. Catharines Public Library branch), and could potentially result in more monthly or annual swim passes being sold as the S.K.A.C. could provide a more 'club-like' experience. It would also reinforce the entire Lester B. Pearson Park site as one of the City's premier hubs of multi-faceted community activities. Any expansion plans for the S.K.A.C. should involve major stakeholders (e.g. the St. Catharines Public Library, potential gymnasium users, youth representatives and older adult associations, etc.) and the public in the design phase.

A new gymnasium is envisioned to provide many benefits to the community, particularly given the range of programs that stakeholders expressed they wish they could provide but did not have a suitable and/or affordable space to do so. A gym will allow the City to expand on highly valuable programs oriented to youth, thereby providing greater opportunities for safe and positive activities to take place, as well as for the growing population of older adult of which there are a number of Baby Boomers that are still looking for active recreational programs (but do not necessarily have sufficient public or quasi-public spaces in which to do so).

### **Recommendations**

- #6. Subject to confirmation of site conditions and constraints, construct a gymnasium at the St. Catharines Kiwanis Aquatics Centre/Dr. Huq Family Library Branch along with any supporting spaces rationalized through the supporting business plan such as a wellness studio and/or additional multi-purpose program rooms. The design phase should engage stakeholders such as, but not limited to, the St. Catharines Public Library, older adult associations and other potential gymnasium users.
- #7. Continue to maximize programming opportunities at the Port Weller Community Centre.
- #8. Engage in additional shared-use or reciprocal agreements to access existing and new gymnasiums operated by the District School Board of Niagara, Niagara Catholic District School Board and/or any other appropriate partnering agency in order to meet future gymnasium demands.





## 3.5 Fitness Space

**Supply:** The City of St. Catharines delivers active living and wellness programming out of multi-purpose rooms oriented to floor-based fitness, largely at the community centres and the S.K.A.C. The City does not directly operate equipment-based fitness clubs.

There is a sizeable private sector fitness industry in St. Catharines and area municipalities. Within St. Catharines are clubs such as Goodlife, Anytime Fitness, Fulton Fitness, Downtown Health Club, Energy Fitness Studio and Reflexions. The local private clubs provide a wide range of fitness opportunities including traditional weights and personal training, cardio equipment, classes and programs, and squash. The Walker Family Y.M.C.A. also provides a high quality 10,000 square foot fitness centre with cycling studio and three-lane indoor track, while Brock University contains a 5,100 square foot facility.

**Service Level:** While many larger municipalities directly deliver floor-based active living and wellness programming, the provision of equipment-based fitness opportunities is not consistently viewed as part of the core service mandate across municipalities in Ontario. Even among those municipalities providing equipment-based clubs, the operating model differs widely from direct competition with the private sector, indirect competition by focusing on smaller and/or introductory-level spaces, leasing municipal space to third party providers, or partnering with other service providers such as educational institutions or non-profits (e.g. the Y.M.C.A.) to provide fitness centres through negotiated agreements specifically detailing the capital and operating responsibilities of each party.

Due to this variability in municipal fitness facilities or facility provision models, direct comparison between municipal service levels is not a consistent method of gauging how the City is delivering upon its fitness objectives – provision tends to be based upon corporate philosophy more so than a population-based market threshold.

**Distribution:** With municipal fitness programs delivered at the various community centres and older adult centres, distribution of these services occurs across the City.

**Consultation:** Public support for spending on fitness centres was recorded at 47% through the household survey, while 29% were opposed. Focus group discussions generally centred upon the need to provide dry-land training space for athletes, preferably within the facilities that they use for their core activities.

**Participation:** The emphasis being placed on personal health is resulting in growing participation across Ontario for physical fitness activities. This is translating into increasing use of private and public sector fitness services oriented to health and wellness, including active living programming centred on cardiovascular and stretching activities (e.g., aerobics, yoga, pilates, etc.). Such active living programs and classes appear to be the fastest growing segment of fitness, more so than traditional weight-training, given that they are designed to be fun, social activities (e.g., Zumba). Participation in aerobics, fitness and weight-training was the third most popular activity recorded through the Master Plan’s household survey, pursued by 42% of the sample.

**Utilization:** Municipal fitness programs, including aquafit, are observed to contribute significantly to the usage of various facilities in which they take place.

As described above, there are several equipment-based fitness facilities located throughout the City. As the City of St. Catharines has not traditionally provided equipment-based fitness centres as a part of the core service mandate, it is recommended that the City continue to focus on its core strengths of providing floor-based fitness programming (e.g., zumba, yoga, spin, etc.) to encourage holistic health opportunities within its existing community centres. In support of this continued focus, it is recommended that the City construct an active living studio in tandem with the proposed gymnasium at the S.K.A.C., noting that any proposed services offered within this fitness space should be complimentary to, rather than competing with, private sector services. While the S.K.A.C. already has a multi-purpose room that is presently used for some wellness programs (e.g. yoga), the room’s size, aesthetics and configuration appear to be optimally suited for meeting, gathering and instructional types of programs. A new active living studio at the S.K.A.C. should be flexibly designed to accommodate a range of activities, programs and interests, contain mirrored walls, have a wood-sprung floor and ceilings of sufficient height, and provide adequate storage.

### **Recommendations**

- #9. Integrate an active living studio as part of the City’s recreation portfolio. This space should be flexibly designed to accommodate a range of activities, programs and interests, contain mirrored walls, have a wood-sprung floor and ceilings of sufficient height, and provide adequate storage.





## 3.6 Community Centres

**Supply:** The City of St. Catharines owns four community centres that generally provide large multi-program spaces as their core function. Port Weller Community Centre contains a gymnasium while the Russell Avenue Community Centre has a large multi-purpose hall. Both of these facilities also have ancillary spaces such as meeting rooms, kitchens, offices, storage rooms, etc. The City leases its Queen Elizabeth Community Centre to the Boys and Girls Club of Niagara who deliver their own community-based programming out of the facility's gymnasium and various multi-purpose rooms. Similarly, the Merritton Community Centre is leased to the Merritton Lions Club who are responsible for managing the facility. The St. Catharines Museum also provides multi-use opportunity space that is utilized for a diverse range of uses but is not included for the purposes of the RFPMP.

Although the S.K.A.C. contains a multi-purpose room and is intended as a community gathering place, it functions as a community centre with a different focus (i.e. aquatics and library services) than those described above. On this basis, the S.K.A.C. is not reflected in this supply but is assessed primarily in the aquatics and gymnasium section of the Master Plan.

**Service Level:** The four community centres result in a service level of one per 46,887 population. Municipalities no longer tend to construct singular-focused facilities (though many have inherited these assets through a legacy of infrastructure) with the recent prevalence of multi-use, multi-generational designs and thus direct service level comparisons with others is not applicable.

**Distribution:** As shown in Map 1, the community centres are generally located in a manner that provides a degree of service to each quadrant of the City, though Port Dalhousie is noted as a gap in this respect (it does benefit from the older adult centre and a library branch that can be used as meeting space). The Russell Avenue Community Centre and the Queen Elizabeth Community Centre are located within 1.5 kilometres of each other and would duplicate each other's' program catchment area if it were not for the specific program-focus of the Boys and Girls Club.

**Consultation:** Input provided through the consultations suggested an appreciation for the four community centres, but the message was expressed that they are 'not truly multi-use.' Apart from this, limited requests were received regarding community centres, although residents expressed the need for a broader range of programs, building upon the sentiments expressed for a desire for true multi-purpose program spaces. Such programs may include those focused around youth and older adults, active living and fitness, arts and culture, education, and more. The household survey also revealed

that 41% of residents supported additional public investment in community halls or banquet rooms (27% opposed), ranking eighteenth among facility types and suggesting that these types of facilities are not a high community priority at this time.

**Utilization:** The City runs a number of its recreation and cultural programs at these locations, and also makes these facilities available for the community to rent for special events.

These community centres provides opportunities for facility users to access the space within well-established neighbourhoods of St. Catharines for meetings and a number of programs offered by the City. On one hand, the community benefits from having well distributed multi-purpose program space as it provides residents with conveniently located, competitively priced facilities (as compared to private facilities such as hotels, social clubs, etc.) for a variety of gatherings, celebrations and meetings. This space is equally essential to community organizations delivering community programs including local senior's groups, minor sports, cultural groups, etc. These halls can often be focal points of community activity, offering abilities to deliver programs and services to smaller catchment areas in the City (e.g. a neighbourhood or group of neighbourhoods). On the other hand, community halls tend to be used for a homogenous range of uses such as social gatherings, buck and does, etc. and can be costly to operate from a municipal perspective (particularly when looking at them together) due to low rents, and high capital maintenance (the facilities are between 30 and 60 years of age) and utility costs.

Maximizing existing community spaces to accommodate a wider variety of uses is a preferred approach to providing the public with access to new multi-purpose program space. The City should continue to make use of its existing assets and invest in appropriate upgrades in order to ensure that a sufficient distribution of rental and program delivery spaces exist. Prior to any investment in existing facilities, the City will need to assess the costs of carrying out any improvements and rationalize this expense through a cost-benefit evaluation. For example, such spaces could be used for a greater degree of outreach programming delivered by the community or the City (e.g. youth and older adults programs, arts and cultural services, studio-based fitness opportunities, etc.). Ensuring that these spaces are multi-purpose yet actively programmable is an important part of evaluating whether or not to upgrade.

With a new gymnasium being recommended through an expansion of the S.K.A.C. (refer to Section 0), economies of scale in construction should allow for the fairly priced inclusion of smaller multi-purpose space. As will be discussed in subsequent pages, the S.K.A.C. expansion should include a multi-purpose room(s) that assigns program-priority to youth and older adult activities as it would be a relatively low cost capital item and its ongoing operating cost would be nominal due to the manageable square footage. Including this space would allow the City and the St. Catharines Public Library to leverage additional programming opportunities and facilitate a broader and more multi-generational range of activities to take place at the S.K.A.C..



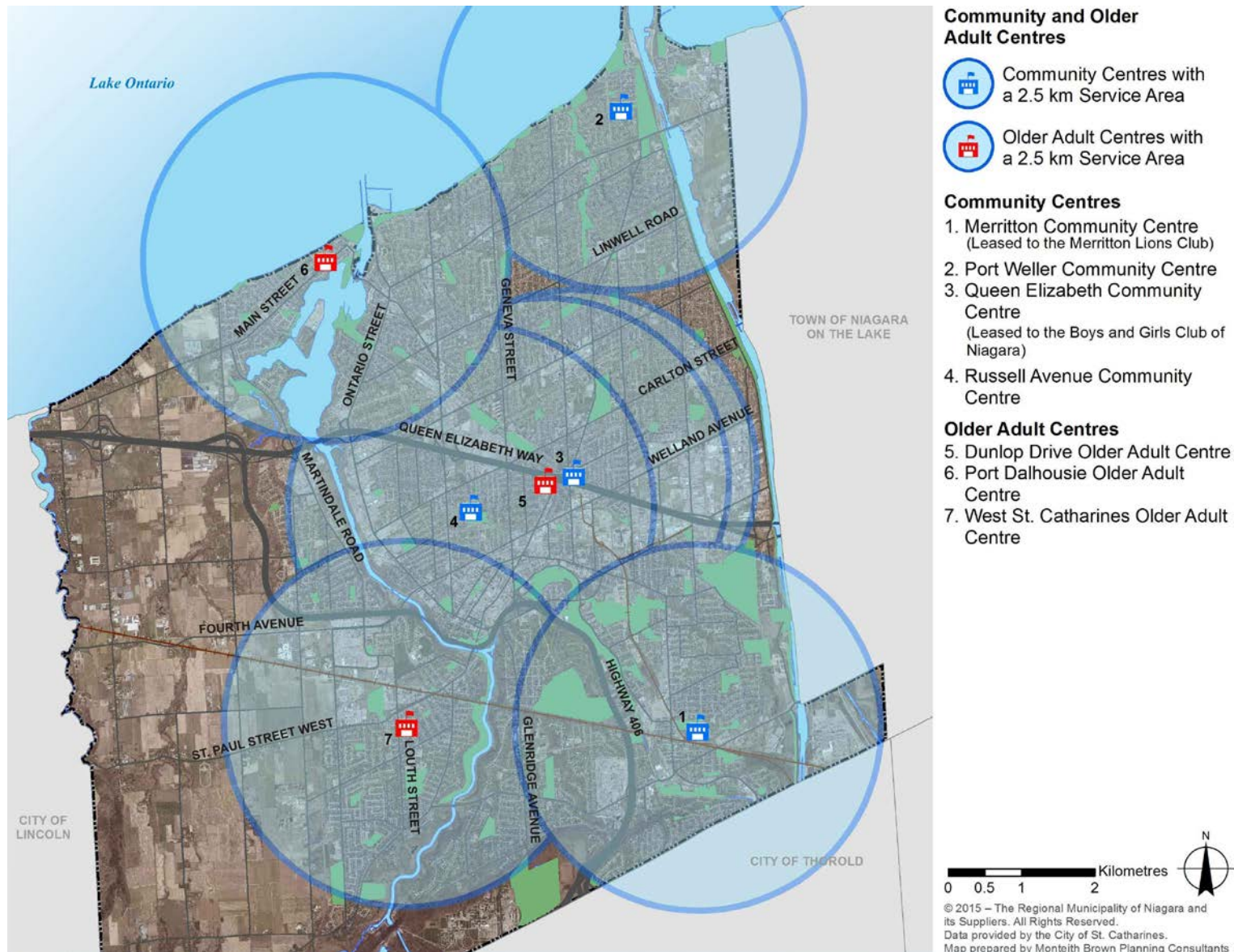
The 2008 Master Plan recommended that the City evaluate the long-term need as to whether it should retain ownership of both the Russell Avenue Community Centre and the Queen Elizabeth Community Centre since both of these facilities contain similar elements. For the Queen Elizabeth Community Centre, a potential sale to the current tenant should be explored and provide them with the right-of-first refusal in the event that municipal divestiture of that facility is rationalized. The 2008 Master Plan also recommended a city-wide review of all its community centre operations in light of their potential to accommodate a broader range of uses as discussed in the preceding paragraphs. City Staff, through their internal implementation schedule of the previous plan, indicated that funds were not available to complete the study nor were funds available to fix the existing building stock.

Through the current master planning process, demand for general programming, older adult and youth programming, cultural programming (as expressed in the Culture Plan and further supported through consultation with organizations), and additional self-directed activities has been significant. The unavailability of financial resources is certainly understood, though a loud message has come from the community that these spaces are as important, if not more than facilities oriented solely to sport (particularly with historically strong financial investments in indoor/outdoor aquatics and the arena supply) and that financial resources need to be better distributed. This RFPMP reinforces the need to undertake a comprehensive review of community centre operations and options, as does the City's internal implementation plan, and it is on the above noted basis that the 2008 recommendation is carried forward for the current master planning period. In particular, the study should also examine the ability of the S.K.A.C. to accommodate a greater share of the program load if one of these facilities is decommissioned, leased or sold through the aforementioned expansion to include additional multi-use program space, particularly since both community centres are located within a ten minute drive of the S.K.A.C.

### **Recommendations**

- #10. Include at least one multi-purpose program room, preferably assigning program priority to youth and older adults, as part of the proposal to add a gymnasium to the St. Catharines Kiwanis Aquatics Centre/Dr. Huq Family Library Branch.
- #11. Undertake a comprehensive review of community centre operations and options. Notable focus should be placed upon the Russell Avenue Community Centre and the Port Weller Community Centre.

Map 4: Distribution of Community Centres and Older Adult Centres





### 3.7 Older Adult Centres

**Supply:** A total of three Older Adult Centres are owned by the City and operated in partnership with local Seniors' Associations. Facilities include the Port Dalhousie, Dunlop Drive and West St. Catharines Older Adult Centres. The facilities generally contain multi-purpose activity spaces, offices, kitchens and storage areas.

**Service Level:** The City provides one older adult centre per 46,890 population or 15,025 persons ages 55 and over.

**Distribution:** The distribution of seniors centres generally results in a strong north to south coverage, though the closure of the Merritton Seniors' Centre leaves a gap in the south-east.

**Consultation:** A strong message was communicated that there is a growing need for older adult spaces and programs in St. Catharines, and that aging trends will place an even greater pressure on existing facilities due to a rapidly increasing 55+ population and diverse program pursuits between 'younger' and 'more elderly' older adults. Considerable discussion in one focus group centred around the fact that the City has not been able to devote resources to keeping its Older Adult Centres open enough during evenings throughout the week, which limits the ability of the Seniors' Associations to attract older adults who are still working during the day. Discussions were also held regarding the need to devote funding to older adult programs so that persons living on small fixed incomes do not become isolated due to an inability to pay for programs or transportation to reach a program, but unfortunately there have been instances where program funding has in fact been cut and thus the Seniors' Associations are no longer able to provide a valued service.

The household survey found that while 64% of residents were satisfied with the recreational opportunities for older adults, residents felt that there were gaps in older adult programming such as those centred on healthy living and fitness, education, arts and culture and travel. The household survey also reported that 70% of residents supported additional public spending on dedicated seniors' spaces (11% opposed). Support for additional investment in this facility type ranked third among 21 recreation facility types, suggesting that older adult spaces are a high priority (it is noted that the survey had a slight overrepresentation of older adults between the ages of 55 and 69). Consultation with various general interest groups also revealed the need to provide accessible services to older adults, particularly with fixed incomes.



**Participation:** The household survey reported that 14% of residents participated in organized seniors programs within the past twelve months. Participation trends have identified the emergence of active older adults who are generally more physically active and healthier than previous generations of seniors. This growing market segment seeks the more rigorous programs and activities typically provided at multi-use community facilities, although at a less intensive pace. Such opportunities include swimming, pickleball, badminton, fitness and wellness, and dancing. Further, there has been an increase in social and cultural programs such as linguistics, cooking, and computer workshops, which have been captured in the growing spectrum of local older adult programming. This trend is not to say that all older adults and seniors are active and seek non-traditional activities, as communities across the GTA have been observed to provide an assortment of recreational opportunities that respond to an array of senior interests and abilities.

**Utilization:** The degree to which Older Adult Associations and other local groups are using the older adult centres is presently unquantified, however, a review of their program offerings suggests a robust range of uses are taking place within (and outside of) the facilities.

Older adult spaces provide venues for residents ages 55 and over to gather, share common interests, hold events and programs, and organize games. These spaces have increasingly become more important as St. Catharines' population continues to age, those among those commonly utilize older adult spaces as a means of social support. Given that local demographic trends expect St. Catharines population to continue to age, it is anticipated that participation in drop-in and registered older adult programs will continue to increase over the planning period, increasing pressures for high quality older adult programming and spaces. The City's existing older adult centres, however, appear geared to most optimally service those in the 70+ age group, reinforcing the concerns heard through the master plan consultations that identified the most pressing concern of local Seniors' Associations to attract younger members.

The 2011 Census identified that the population of residents age 55 and over makes up 30% of the City's population and that by 2026, the 55+ population will have increased by 4,000 persons with one out of every three residents being an older adult. As a result, the increasing proportion of older adults is expected to drive demand for high quality space to support local older adult programming, which has experienced increasing demands based on rising participation rates over the past few years.

The Seniors' Associations correctly identify the concern that operating hours and the types of facilities provided at older adult centres and the community centres is unlikely to appeal to working older adults and younger Baby Boomers. Enhancing the amount of interesting and convenient program opportunities for the current generation of seniors is a proactive way for the Seniors' Associations to maintain their longevity, as it is critical to engage the 55-65 age group as early as possible so that they sustain membership levels and thus also the sustainability of the Associations themselves (and their programs).





The three older adult centres provide the City with a solid foundation upon which to provide services oriented to current and future generations of older adults. The facilities and their volunteers have expertise in delivering programs suited to the membership and can be used to guide the City's future programming efforts recognizing the need to integrate the Baby Boom generation into the older adult centres, community centres and other facilities. The City should look to outreach existing services to the S.K.A.C. in order to leverage cross-programming synergies with the pool (e.g. aquafit and recreational swims are popular among many older adults maintaining their active lifestyles), the St. Catharines Public Library and the onsite kitchen. The programming synergies would be further accentuated with the proposed addition of a new gymnasium, wellness studio and a multi-purpose room(s) that assigns program-priority to older adult and/or youth activities. Using the S.K.A.C. will appeal to the 'new' generation of older adults who are looking for more active living type programs in a multi-generational environment (the fact that the S.K.A.C. is not be branded as a 'seniors centre' will also encourage Baby Boomers to participate, even if programs are delivered in concert with an Older Adult Association). It is emphasized that such a space should only be provided if proceeding with the gymnasium expansion.

### **Recommendations**

- #12. Through feasibility study and business planning process, evaluate the merits of integrating a multi-purpose room that assigns programming priority, in whole or in part, to older adult activities through the proposed expansion of the St. Catharines Kiwanis Aquatics Centre/Dr. Huq Family Library Branch or alternatively examine other municipal properties.

## **3.8 Youth Space**

**Supply:** St. Catharines does not provide any dedicated youth space; however, a range of youth-oriented programs are available are available at the Port Weller and Russell Avenue Community Centres, the S.K.A.C. and certain parks throughout the City. Municipal programs are oriented to 'youth' whose ages span 11 to 13 and 'teens' between the ages of 14 and 17 though the definition of these cohorts can encompass ages as low as 9 and as high as 24 based on evidence in other municipalities and the intended function of their facilities and services.

Supplementing municipal program opportunities are youth programs provided by local community partners such as the Y.M.C.A. of Niagara and Brock University. There also non-profit youth agencies operating within the City. The Deck is a faith-based organization whose facility promotes a safe, positive environment for youth to access drop-in leisure activities and some social services. The Raft is a youth hostel and resource shelter focusing on preventative and reactive services largely for older youth. Both of these facilities are oriented to at-risk youth and teens. Also in the community

are the Grantham Optimist Youth Centre (Linwell Road) and the Optimist Club of St. Catharines Youth Centre (Napier Street) through which those service clubs deliver recreation and educational program opportunities.

- Service Level:** In the absence of a municipal youth centre, a service level is not applicable. Most municipalities do not provide these spaces on a per population basis as such facilities are developed by opportunity, such as including them in a facility designed to promote multi-generational interests, or where community-based youth centres are not available.
- Distribution:** The distribution of the above noted community providers serves a number of pockets throughout the City, which when considered in tandem with the City's programs that are offered through municipal facilities and parks encompasses many areas of the City (recognizing that the type of programs and facilities for youth will vary depending upon the programs offered at each location).
- Consultation:** The need for more programming geared specifically towards local youth was expressed through the Community Launch Event and the household survey. While nearly three-quarters (72%) of residents were satisfied with the recreational opportunities for children under the age of 12, a lower number (43%) of residents were satisfied with the recreational opportunities for teens between the ages of 13 and 18. Research suggests that youth often do not participate, leading to community perceptions that there are not enough opportunities for this age segment. Nevertheless, there is a need to further investigate opportunities for this age group. The household survey found that 68% of residents supported spending additional public funds on improving or developing new dedicated youth spaces. Support for this facility type ranked fifth out of 21 recreation facility types, suggesting that the provision of dedicated youth spaces is relatively a high priority among residents.
- Participation:** The household survey identified that approximately one-fifth (21%) of residents participated in children's programs and 14% of residents participated in organized teen programs. Trends across Ontario reveal a growing preference among youth for unstructured pursuits compared to organized sports, prompting the emergence of drop-in youth centres or community rooms that support a variety of recreational youth opportunities.

Data provided by the Region of Niagara anticipates that in 2016, there will be over 2,300 fewer youth (-14%) in the 9 to 18 age cohort compared to ten years prior. The Region does project, however, a slight recovery with growth of 1,100 persons in the cohort by 2026 but this still represents a net loss in the number of youth since 2006 after which their share as a percentage of the total population would decrease from 13% to 11%. Although the population of youth is not expected to experience the same level of growth compared to older adults, the youth population will continue to be an important segment of the population to serve. The provision of engaging programs



beyond simply organized sports can offer youth much needed access to activities geared to health and self-esteem to combat common concerns surrounding physical and mental health.

The proposed expansion of the S.K.A.C. to include a gymnasium lends a significant opportunity to bolster youth-focused programming that will occur out of that facility. Gymnasiums are one of the most important youth facilities due to the flexibility of the space to be programmed for the great multitude of interests that youth and teens have including drop-in sports and other recreation activities, games, cultural activities, etc. For this reason, it is recommended that a multi-purpose room that assigns priority to youth-focused programs be constructed at the S.K.A.C. as part of the gymnasium program. In addition to broadly serving youth across the City through this initiative, it positions the S.K.A.C. to host a greater range of after-school activities particularly for students at the nearby Laura Secord high school and/or Prince of Wales elementary school. A greater youth presence at the S.K.A.C. may also be congruent with the educational and programming objectives of the St. Catharines Public Library whose branch could lend itself well to youth usage through homework areas, computer access, etc. It is emphasized that a youth-priority space should only be provided if proceeding with the gymnasium expansion.

### **Recommendations**

- #13. Through a feasibility study and business planning process, evaluate the merits of integrating a multi-purpose room that assigns programming priority, in whole or in part, to youth and activities through the proposed expansion of the St. Catharines Kiwanis Aquatics Centre/Dr. Huq Family Library Branch or alternatively examine other municipal properties.

## Section 4

# Outdoor Recreation Facility Assessments

The City's parks contain a broad range of outdoor recreation facilities. Facilities to be examined through this Section include the City's supply of:

- Rectangular Sports Fields;
- Ball Diamonds;
- Splash Pads;
- Outdoor Pools;
- Tennis Courts;
- Basketball and Multi-Use Courts;
- Skateboard Parks;
- Playgrounds;
- Golf Courses; and
- Leash Free Dog Parks.





## 4.1 Rectangular Sports Fields

### Supply:

St. Catharines provides 31 rectangular natural turf sports fields at twenty-three parks, in addition to one artificial turf field (Kiwanis Field) located at the Seymour-Hannah Sports and Entertainment Centre. The City's rectangular sports fields are categorized into three classes – Type A, Type B, and Type C. Type A fields are premier facilities (in terms of field size, surface, irrigation/drainage, frequency of maintenance, etc.) and are lit. Type B fields may have similar level of quality though they are unlit. Type C fields tend to be smaller and best suited for practices.

- Type A Fields: eight senior fields, one artificial turf field (note: the mini fields overlapping Berkley Park Field #1 and the Bogart Street field are not included to avoid double-counting in the supply)
- Type B Fields: eight senior soccer fields and ten junior fields
- Type C Fields: five junior fields

In recognition that a lit field or an artificial turf can accommodate more use than a standard unlit grass field, due to extending play into the evening or after inclement weather, an equivalency factor is applied to the field supply. Each lit natural and artificial turf field is assumed to provide the equivalent capacity of 1.5 and 2.0 unlit natural fields, respectively. With eight lit natural fields and one lit artificial field, St. Catharines maintains an 'effective' supply of 37.0 unlit equivalent rectangular fields.

Of note, Ridley College also has five outdoor soccer fields and two outdoor field hockey fields (all unlit), some of which are well used by local minor and adult soccer organizations throughout the week (largely between 6pm and 8:30pm). Brock University also has a number of sports fields (for soccer, lacrosse, rugby, and intramurals) though it is understood these are primarily used by its student body. Local sports field organizations also make use of fields located on school board property and privately held lands (e.g. churches).

### Service Level:

The effective supply translates into a service level of approximately one rectangular field per 3,800 population or 145 soccer participants, the latter of whom are the primary users of such fields. Although rectangular fields are primarily used for soccer throughout the majority of the operating season, certain fields are also utilized by other field sports such as football, field lacrosse, ultimate frisbee, etc. throughout the core and shoulder seasons. It is noted that for uses occurring in the spring and fall shoulder seasons, there is a greater degree of wear and tear on the fields due to usage during wet weather impacting the field condition for summer sport usage (e.g. soccer).

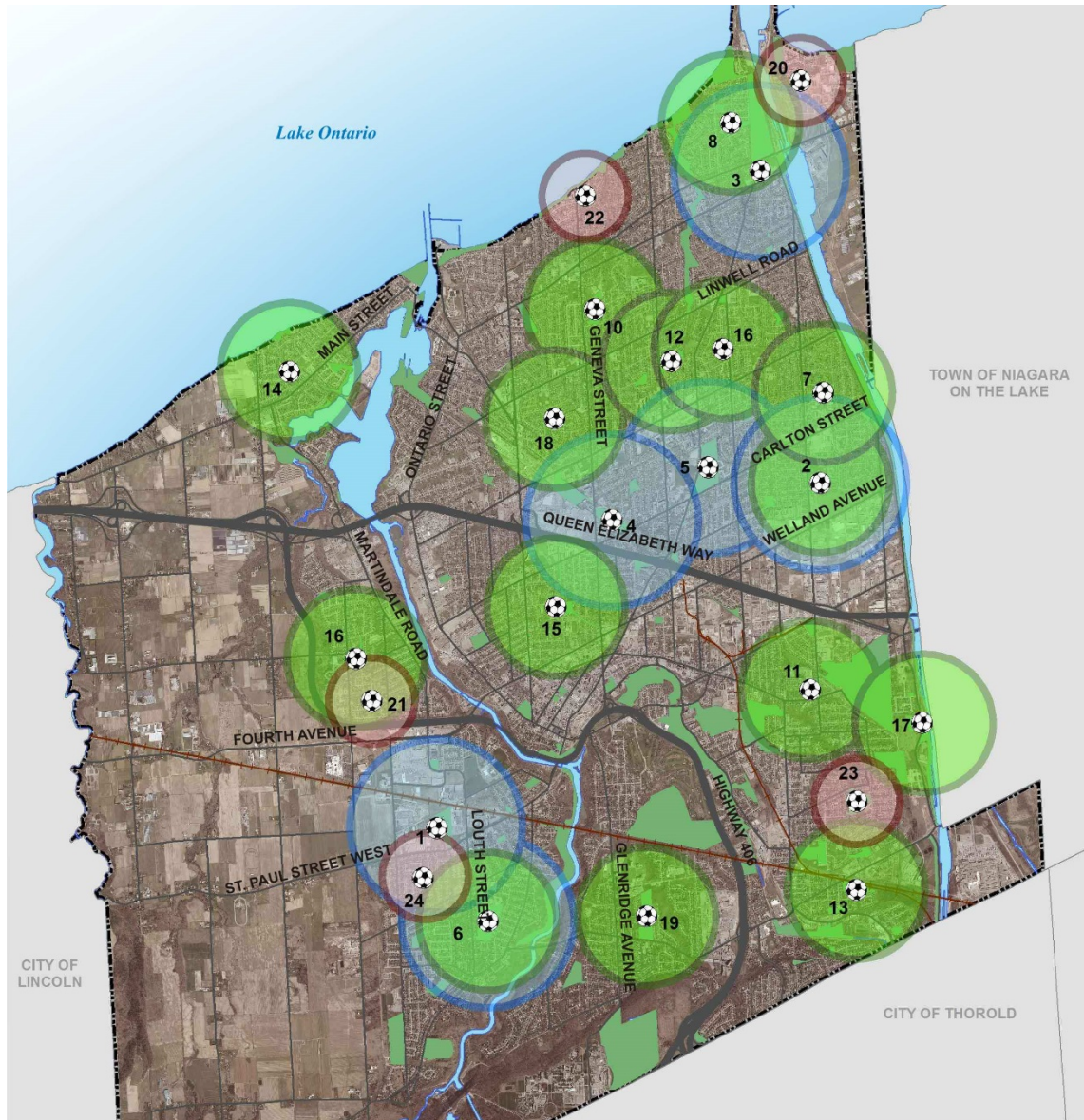
**Distribution:** The City's distribution of rectangular sports fields is fairly satisfactory, particularly in the north east where there is a strong concentration of fields. The most notable gap area is in the central core and just south of Highway 406, where there are limited opportunities to develop new fields due to their built-up nature, though these are well established residential communities where the population of children and youth is likely less than in the peripheral urban areas, the latter of which appear to be generally well served by fields.

**Consultation:** Input from rectangular field users was largely received through the user group questionnaire and the outdoor facility user focus group, with participation largely from soccer and football users. There was a general consensus among soccer groups regarding improvements to the City's supply of rectangular sports fields. The most important concern that was identified, was the need for the City to provide appropriate field sizes that align to Ontario Soccer Association's Long Term Player Development (LTPD) standards, generally for additional micro and mini fields. Requests were also made for enhanced levels of field maintenance and waste collection, as well as a general need for more fields to accommodate growth of each organization. A desire for a more equitable distribution of field time was also expressed.




The statistically significant survey identified that over half (54%) of households supported spending additional public funds on improving or developing new soccer fields.



Map 5: Distribution of Rectangular Sports Fields



**Rectangular Sports Fields**

-  Artificial Turf / Type A Fields with a 1km Service Area
-  Type B Fields with an 800m Service Area
-  Type C Fields with a 500m Service Area

**Artificial Turf Field**

- 1.** Kiwanis Field
- Senior Type A**
- 2. Berkley Park
  - 3. Grantham Lions Park
  - 4. Lancaster Park
  - 5. Lester B. Pearson Park (2)
  - 6. West Park (2)

**Senior Type B**

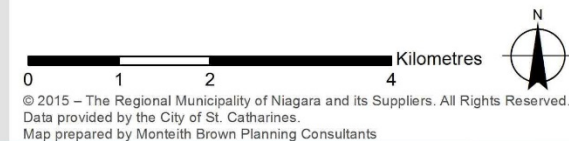
- 7. Bermuda Park
- 8. Bogart Street Park
- 9. Grantham Avenue Park
- 10. Guy Road Park
- 11. Kernahan Park
- 12. Realty Park
- 13. Trapper Leo Park
- 6. West Park

**Junior Type B**

- 2. Berkley Park
- 14. Cambria Drive Park
- 15. Catherine Street Park
- 16. Grapeview Park
- 17. Myles W. Pic Leeson Park (2)
- 18. Linlake Park (2)
- 13. Trapper Leo Park
- 19. Woodgale Park

**Junior Type C**

- 20. Eastport Park
- 21. Fairhaven Park
- 22. Lakeview Park
- 23. Secord Woods Park
- 24. Shauna Park



**Participation:** Soccer continues to be a growth sport in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (G.G.H.), however, there are indications that participation rates are stabilizing. Data provided by the Ontario Soccer Association indicates that enrolment in outdoor soccer activities peaked in 2007 (at just under 400,000 players) and has slightly declined in each year since. While the sport remains popular, participation reductions are most apparent in younger age cohorts.

The household survey in St. Catharines recorded nearly one-fifth (19%) of residents participating in soccer during the past twelve months. This represents a decrease from the 2006 household survey conducted for the previous Master Plan, which recorded household participation in soccer at 25%, and is thus consistent with the overall stable to declining scenario occurring provincially.

A review of group surveys suggests that soccer registrations have plateaued or declined in some local organizations over the past three years as well as when compared to data compiled in the previous Master Plan. Registration data has been provided by Club Roma Soccer, the Concord Soccer Club, Port Weller Soccer League, Niagara Rec. Sports and the St. Catharines Jets who collectively report 5,310 players between them for the 2014 season. Registration data from the Merritton Athletic Association was unavailable at the time of writing (it is noted that City Staff attempted to obtain the data from this group).

**Utilization:** An analysis of hours booked in the peak months between June 15 and August 15 for the 2014 season reveals that Type A natural fields were booked 81% of available weekday prime hours (6pm to 11pm factoring field lighting), which is an acceptable level of use relative to other communities due to periods when a field may be unavailable due to weather. Type B and C field were booked 60% of weekday evenings, suggesting capacity exists at these facilities but their usage could be impeded by their size or quality if not to the expectation of organized users. Weekend bookings at all types of fields were nominal, though it is normal for fields to be rested for at least one day per week to allow turf regeneration.

With respect to the Kiwanis Field, it has generated steady increases in rentals since opening in 2011 (with 130 hours booked) to the 2013 season's 400 hours rented. That being said, under 40% of all prime hours between April and November were rented resulting in unused capacity exceeding 600 hours.

While the 2008 Master Plan projected a declining number of soccer field players (something that appears to have materialized), growth may once again be expected due to new population projections from the Region of Niagara that forecast growth in the 9 to 18 age group between the years 2021 to 2026. Whereas master planning standards across Ontario typically utilize market-driven service level of one



rectangular sports field per 80 to 90 registered soccer players to achieve an optimal balance between supply and demand. Application of the less aggressive standard (i.e. one field per 90 players), however, yields a field deficit between 22 and 25 unlit equivalents.

The one field per 90 player service level continues to be applied in St. Catharines, carried forward from the 2008 Master Plan due to the capacity available within the rectangular field supply (particularly among Type B and C fields), user groups stating focus on field quality more so than quantity, and continued aging of the population. Based upon registration data, the City's current deficit is estimated to be approximately 22 unlit equivalent fields.

	2014	2016	2021	2026
<b>Forecasted Number of Registrants</b>	5,310	5,297	5,300	5,565
<b>Number of Rectangular Fields Required</b> (based a provision target of 1 field per 90 registrants)	<b>59.0</b>	<b>58.9</b>	<b>58.9</b>	<b>61.8</b>
<b>Field Deficit</b> (based on a current supply of 37.0 fields)	22.0	21.9	21.9	24.8

Given the available capacity demonstrated through field rental data (particularly on weekends as well as for Type B/C fields throughout the week), user groups stating a preference for greater field quality (in terms of dimensions of play) more so than quantity, and continued aging of the population, there is concern that building to the one field per 90 player standard would result in addressing a peak demand and thus potentially create an oversupply. In addition, the availability of fields on institutional lands which appear to be well used by St. Catharines soccer organizations (e.g. Brock University, Ridley College and local schools) cannot be over-looked in terms of their contribution to helping to meet rectangular field needs. Since the previous Master Plan, the City has made strides in augmenting its field supply to 37.0 equivalents (the field supply was recorded at 25.5 in 2006) including provision of the artificial turf Kiwanis Field.

To avoid building to an oversupply or peak scenario associated with growth of the 9 to 18 year old cohort, particularly when factoring increasing scarcity of developable land within the City's built urban boundary, the following actions are recommended over the master planning period.

- a) Exploring the potential to install field lighting and/or irrigation systems** at appropriate Type B and C rectangular fields, which will require site-specific investigations that at a minimum consider site servicing capabilities (including ability to provide hydro, install

lighting standards, install irrigation and drainage systems to accommodate the additional use, etc.) and ensure sufficient buffers to nearby residential land uses (to mitigate light spillage). Enhancing the existing supply through strategic field improvements is a cost-effective way to provide additional capacity without having to incur the cost of new land acquisition and facility development.

**b) Preparing a Sports Field Allocation Policy** in consultation with local user groups to create a transparent, rationalized framework aimed at improving the way in which rectangular fields (and ball diamonds) are scheduled. Such a policy would also provide greater clarity regarding the scheduling of the Kiwanis Field. After such a policy is implemented, the City will be in a better position to understand local field needs since part of the process would be to require user groups to submit registration information. Through this Allocation Policy process, sports field users renting time at municipal fields should be required to annually provide their registration information to the City, including by age group/division and by place of residence, which has the added benefit of allowing the City to evaluate the mix of sports fields required to serve St. Catharines' residents as the City develops new facilities over time. Furthermore, a Sports Field Allocation Policy would alleviate the concerns of some sports field users who noted that the historical 'grandfathered' approach to allocating field times does not reflect the needs of all organizations, and expressed frustrations regarding fields not being used despite being permitted when there are organizations seeking times on fields.

**c) Reconfirming the targeted supply of rectangular fields within three years.** Should the need be confirmed for additional fields, the preferred implementation strategy would be to collaborate with rectangular field users and develop the majority of new fields as micro, mini and/or intermediate size that facilitates the five versus five to nine versus nine standards of play set forth through the provincial LTPD model. Further, it is recommended that fields be co-located together and designed in a manner that allows them to easily be used as, or converted to, a full size field (as the City has accomplished with the two minis that span the width of Berkley Park Field #1). This strategy recognizes that younger children using these small fields will eventually grow into divisions requiring senior size fields.

**d) Monitoring field utilization rates** as new rectangular fields are developed to ensure that they are being adequately utilized (i.e. a minimum of 75% of prime times defined through the Sports Field Allocation Policy) prior to continuing to build up the supply. Further, Ridley College indicates that they are in the process of undertaking a planning exercise for its campus, which should be monitored by the City as any change to community access to the sports fields could impact existing user groups' usage. Any change in utilization patterns or quality of fields located on school board property should also be examined for any potential impact to serving local needs through the municipal sports field supply.

**e) Maintain dialogue** with institutions (such as Brock University, Ridley College and local schools) to better position the City to understand the level of service provided by these institutions in helping to meet the overall rectangular sports field needs of St.





Catharines' sports groups. While the assessment suggests a need for additional municipal fields, the continued use and availability of fields provided by these institutions alleviates the need for the City to provide all fields needed.

In addition to soccer fields, multi-use fields form part of the rectangular field supply. The Kiwanis Field accommodates a number of sports field users due to its ability to be programmed during the spring and fall shoulder months when sports such as lacrosse and football begin their seasons. Combined with the fact that Ridley College makes its two field hockey pitches available for community rental along with the availability of certain school fields for sports such as football, the supply of multi-use fields in the City is deemed to be sufficient at present time.

### **Recommendations**

- #14. Undertake an evaluation of Type B and Type C rectangular fields to determine the feasibility of installing field lighting, irrigation and/or drainage systems as a means to increase the playable capacity.
- #15. Prepare a Sports Field Allocation Policy to effectively manage scheduling and booking practices in a manner that maximizes the utilization of all Class A, B, and C sports fields and ensure operational sustainability within the sports field supply. As part of this process, sports field user groups should be required to submit annual registration data to the City to aid in allocation and trend tracking efforts. In addition, the City should maintain dialogue with institutions such as Brock University, Ridley College and local schools to ensure that the rectangular fields they provide that are utilized by St. Catharines' sports groups are incorporated into the assessment of supply/demand for future fields.
- #16. If rationalized through successful implementation of the proposed Sports Field Allocation Policy and ongoing monitoring of field utilization rates, explore opportunities to increase the number of fields through partnership agreements with local school boards and/or other sports field providers. If these agreements are not feasible, develop up to 25 additional unlit field equivalents, strategically co-located to the greatest degree possible. Local sports field users should be consulted prior to construction to facilitate standards of play required through the Ontario Soccer Association's Long Term Player Development model.

## 4.2 Ball Diamonds

**Supply:** There are 22 ball diamonds located in fourteen parks throughout St. Catharines, which are categorized into Type A, Type B, and Type C facilities. Type A diamonds are the City's premier ball fields (in terms of field size, surface, irrigation/drainage, frequency of maintenance, etc.) and are lit. Type B diamonds may have a similar level of quality and amenities though they are unlit. Type C diamonds tend to be smaller, may not have formalized infields, and are best suited for practices and informal neighbourhood use.

- Type A Diamonds: two baseball diamonds (one senior and one minor) and nine softball diamonds (all senior size).
- Type B Diamonds: eight baseball diamonds and three softball diamonds (all minor size).

In recognition that a lit diamond can accommodate more use than an unlit grass field, due to extending play into the evening, an equivalency factor is applied to the field supply. Each lit diamond is assumed to provide the equivalent capacity of 1.5 unlit diamonds, respectively. With eleven lit diamonds, St. Catharines has an 'effective' supply of 27.5 unlit equivalent diamonds.

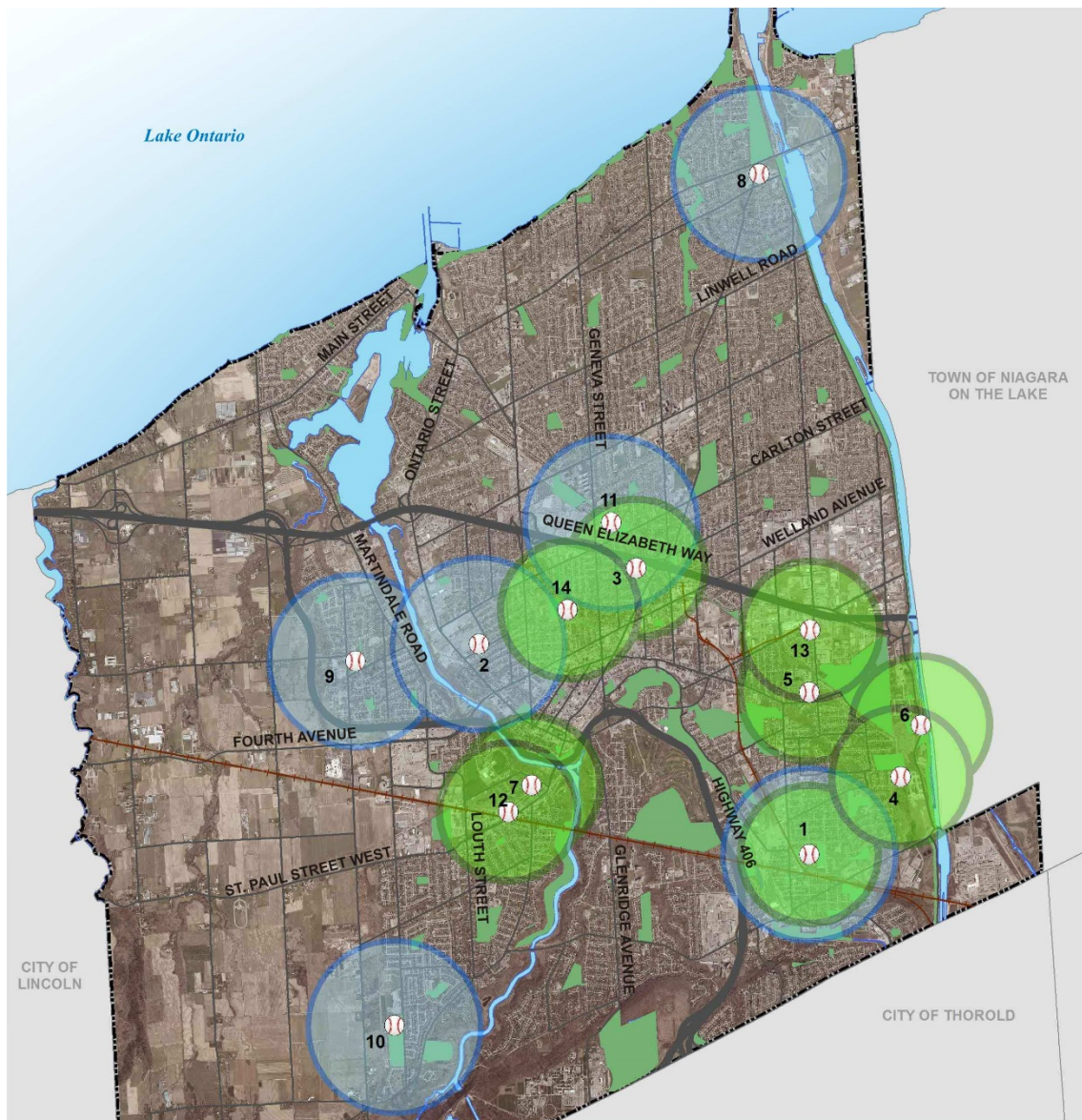
Also contributing to the local supply are four diamonds (one of which is lit) that are owned and maintained by the Grantham Optimist Club, which receive a high degree of use according to City Staff. It is also worth noting that the City provides 14 informal diamonds and backstops that are not permitted for organized use but contribute neighbourhood-level opportunities for play.

**Service Level:** St. Catharines supply of 27.5 unlit equivalent diamonds translates into a service level of one ball diamond per 5,115 population or 72 local ball participants.



**Distribution:** Ball diamonds are generally concentrated in the central and southeast areas of St. Catharines. With just three municipal diamonds and the Grantham Optimist Club located north of the Q.E.W., a number of parks in these (and other) areas contain backstops within grassy open areas of the park that can facilitate a degree of casual, spontaneous play (backstops have not been mapped as they are not permitted to organized users).



Map 6: Distribution of Ball Diamonds



**Ball Diamonds**

-  Type A Diamonds with a 1km Service Area
-  Type B Diamonds with an 800m Service Area

**Hardball**

**Senior Type A**

- 1. Community Park

**Minor Type A**

- 2. Alex Mackenzie Park

**Minor Type B**

- 1. Community Park (2)
- 3. Fitzgerald Park
- 4. John Dempsey Park (2)
- 5. Kernahan Park
- 6. Myles W. Pic Leeson park
- 7. Walkinshaw Park

**Softball**

**Senior Type A**

- 1. Community Park
- 8. Grantham Lions Park
- 9. Grapeview Park
- 10. Joseph McCaffery Park (4)
- 11. Lancaster Park (2)

**Minor Type B**

- 12. Cameron Park
- 13. Douglas Park
- 14. St. Patrick's Park



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Map prepared by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants

**Consultation:** A broad range of comments were received from the public and user groups regarding the provision of ball diamonds. Requests were received from the Community Launch Event for larger ball diamonds that are suitable for adult play, while focus groups with ball users identified the desire for more hardball diamonds. Several ball user groups also completed the User Group Questionnaire and again inferred the need for both youth and adult diamonds to support the growth of their organizations, as well as a request for additional multi-diamond complexes. Improvements to existing diamonds were also expressed such as infield resurfacing, replacement of aging facility components (e.g. fencing), and more supporting amenities such as parking and lighting. Furthermore, concerns were also raised regarding the current fee structure that groups feel has been a challenge for them having to pass on a greater share of costs to their membership.

The household survey identified that 44% of residents supported additional public investment in improving or developing new baseball or softball diamonds, which ranked relatively low as the sixteenth priority (out of twenty-one recreation facility types). This finding may suggest that although ball users identified areas of improvements with respect to the supply of ball diamonds, the general public feels that there are other recreation facilities that should be higher priority.

**Participation:** The household survey identified that 13% of residents participated in baseball over the past twelve months, ranking as the fourteenth most popular activity. Compared to 2006 when the last household survey of recreation was conducted for the previous master plan, ball participation has dropped as at that time 18% of households reported participation and it ranked as the eleventh most popular recreation activity.

Nationally and provincially, ball associations report that participation appears to be stabilizing after years of decline. In St. Catharines, ball participation has decreased with some major ball organizations reporting lower registration numbers than they had reported in 2006. Similar to provincial trends, local organizations may have hit their low point and have begun to rebound although not to the levels of ten years ago.

Registration data collected for the current master plan relies upon information provided by the Niagara Metros, Niagara Regional Men's and Co-ed Slo-Pitch, St. Catharines Cobras, St. Catharines Ladies Softball, Merritton Alliance Seniors Baseball and the St. Catharines Minor Baseball Association who collectively report approximately 1,980 registered players (a 27% rate of growth in the last three years after a general decline in the years before then). The registrations translate into a capture rate of 2% for children and youth, and 1.5% for adults.



**Utilization:**

Review of ball diamond utilization data during the peak period between June 15 and August 15 of the 2014 season reveals that Type A diamonds are used 37% of the time (weekday usage at these diamonds is 53% while weekend usage is a nominal 15%). Usage of Type B and C diamonds is less, with 35% of weekday hours rented and 23% of weekend times in use. In terms of overall trending, between 2010 and 2013 there were fewer hours booked system-wide driven by a 12% decline in lit diamond rentals. While inclement weather conditions and inclusion of shoulder months may contribute to the lower rate of utilization, the capacity available at Type 'A' diamonds suggests diamond quality is not necessarily impacting opportunity for play except for perhaps hardball (of which there is just one senior and one minor Type A diamond City-wide). As such, it appears there is capacity within the system to accommodate additional use.

Consistent with master planning standards across Ontario, a market-driven service level of one ball diamond per 100 registered players is applied. With an estimated 1,980 players in the City, this results in the need for 20 ball diamonds and thus a surplus of approximately 7.5 unlit equivalents at present time. With fairly low capture rates at present combined with modest population growth projected over the next decade, registration numbers and consequently ball diamond needs are expected to remain fairly flat.

	2014	2016	2021	2026
<b>Forecasted Number of Registrants</b>	1,980	1,988	2,004	2,004
<b>Number of Ball Diamonds Required</b> (based a provision target of 1 diamond per 100 registrants)	19.8	19.9	20.0	20.0
<b>Surplus Ball Diamonds</b> (based on a current supply of 27.5 fields)	7.7	7.6	7.5	7.5

Based upon the projections and surplus rental capacity, no additional ball diamonds are recommended for development within the master planning period. In fact, ball diamond deficits have grown since the 2008 Master Plan due to a substantial decrease in user registrations (noting that the upward registration trend in the last three years has not offset the losses over the past ten years). The City has already converted some ball diamonds and reduced its supply to a more sustainable level, as was recommend in the previous plan.

A strategy of no net additions to the supply is consistent with input received from ball organizations, however, these groups express a desire for better quality in the supply. Of particular mention was the lack of regulation size diamonds for older youth and adults, going back to the point that the City's three hardball diamonds may not be sufficient. The City should explore the conversion of at least one of its softball diamonds to a size that is conducive for hardball users.

With preceding pages projecting a deficit in rectangular sports fields, the City should also continue to explore conversion of lower quality, underutilized and/or informal ball diamonds to address other priority needs. Priorities beyond rectangular fields may also include off-leash areas, splash pads, and/or placing a greater focus on creating passive gathering spaces within neighbourhood parks that are responsive to the evolving demographics of nearby homes (particularly in well-established areas that have a growing number of older adults). As was articulated in the rectangular sports field discussion, the City should develop a Sports Field Allocation Policy that provides a rational and consistent process for determining the times that groups can access certain ball diamonds.

### **Recommendations**

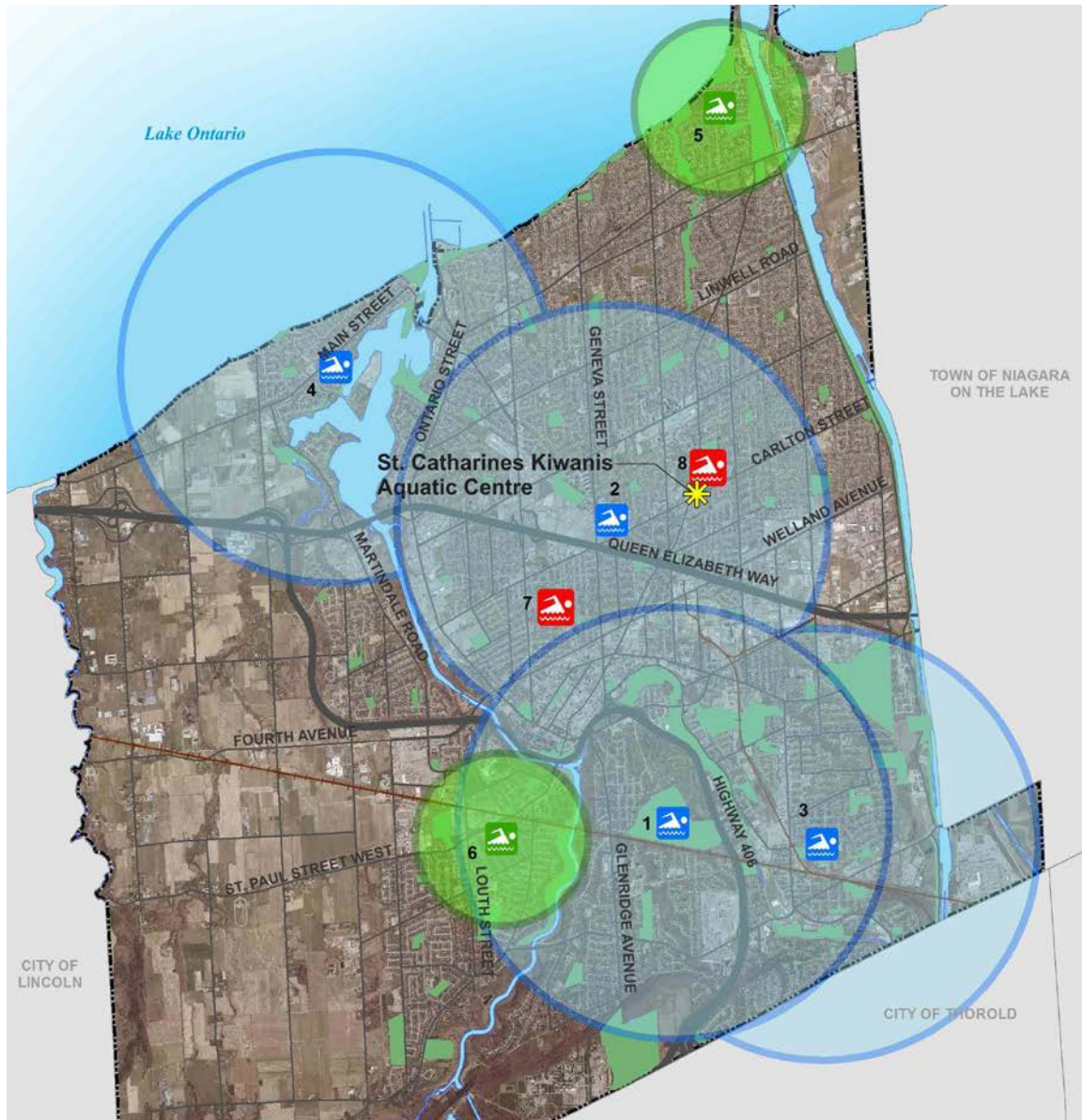
- #17. Redesign at least one softball diamond to a size and specification that is capable of accommodating hardball programming among older youth and adult players.
- #18. Explore opportunities to repurpose lower quality, underutilized or informal ball diamonds to other needed uses.

## **4.3 Splash Pads**

- Supply:** The City operates two outdoor splash pads at Catharine Street Park and Lester B. Pearson Park. Both locations feature a broad range of sophisticated water features such as tipping buckets and interactive components. A splash pad is also located at the Walker Family Y.M.C.A.
- Service Level:** St. Catharines' splash pads translates into one splash pad per 70,330 population or 6,260 children under the age of 9. While this level is lower than observed in other G.G.H. municipalities, the City has historically focused its outdoor aquatic services around outdoor pools to a greater degree than other communities and is thus the likely reason for a lower than average splash pad provision level.



Map 7: Distribution of Outdoor Pools and Splash Pads



**Outdoor Aquatics**

-  Rectangular Pools with a 2.5km Service Area
-  Small Stand-Alone Pools with an 800m Service Area
-  Splash Pads

**Rectangular Pools\***

1. Burgoyne Woods Park
2. Lancaster Park
3. Community Park / Lion Dunc Schooley Pool
4. Port Dalhousie Lions Park

**Stand-Alone Small Pools**

5. Arthur Street Park
6. Lincoln Park

**Splash Pads**

7. Catherine Street Park
8. Lester B. Pearson Park

\* Rectangular pools contain a large pool and a small pool, with the exception of Community Park, which contains a large pool and a wading pool.



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Map prepared by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants

- Distribution:** The City's two splash pads are centrally located in St. Catharines. The size and design of these water play sites are largely reflective of a neighbourhood-level facility, leaving gaps outside of the City core. These gaps, however, are fully reconciled by the service areas of the outdoor pools.
- Consultation:** Persons attending the Community Input Event emphasized a desire for more splash pads, in addition to the provision of associated amenities such as change rooms and seating. Further, 58% of households sampled through the statistically representative survey supported additional spending to improve or develop new splash pads (whereas 19% were opposed), ranking as the ninth highest priority for recreation facility investment in St. Catharines.
- Participation:** The statistical survey recorded 27% of households making use of a splash pad during the past twelve months, ranking its popularity above all organized sports. Apart from some usage for summer camps, splash pads are not actively programmed by the City but instead are intended for drop-in, spontaneous usage.
- Utilization:** St. Catharines does not formally record utilization of its splash pads, though anecdotally the facilities were well used during the time of site visits conducted as part of the master planning process. As neighbourhood facilities, trends suggest that splash pads are generally well used during the summer as they provide residents with a free, quick, and easy way to cool off.

Most urban municipalities in the G.G.H. target the provision of splash pads at a minimum rate of one per 3,000 children under the age of 9 while also considering geographic distribution. On the basis of population to target market, the City would require a minimum supply of 4 splash pads over the master planning period based upon the projected age structure of the future population. However, as noted above, a number of municipalities are now providing splash pads on the basis of maximizing distribution so that each quadrant, ward or planning district has at least one such facility. With this comes a clear differentiation in quality/scale of facilities servicing a City-wide versus a neighbourhood or community level service area.

The splash pad provision strategy must be considered in tandem with the implementation strategy for the City's outdoor pool supply (which is discussed in subsequent pages). Experience in many municipalities reveals a preference to phase out outdoor pools and replace them with splash pad facilities for a myriad of reasons including:

- available capacity in their indoor pools to accommodate lessons and other swims;
- splash pads respond very well to growing demands for unstructured, spontaneous forms of recreation as users can simply drop-in whenever is convenient and make use of the facilities;





- with spray jets, water cannons, buckets, and other amenities, splash pads are more interactive for young children and persons with disabilities/special needs than traditional outdoor pool templates and are viewed as fun destinations often incorporating universal designs that also provide an important social element for both the users and their caregivers;
- most well designed splash pads have a similar (if not lower) cost of capital construction as a rectangular outdoor pool but the true savings are realized on the operational side with savings resulting from eliminating lifeguarding and program delivery costs, and reductions in certain utility costs and resources required to treat standing water; and
- public health and safety that reduces mosquito-borne disease (e.g. West Nile) with the elimination of standing water.

It is recommended that the City provide a minimum of one splash pad per ward. Doing so carries forward the City's historical philosophy of having well-distributed outdoor aquatics opportunities and allows the City to begin phasing out aging outdoor pools. This is deemed to be a financially sustainable approach and is discussed further in the subsequent outdoor pool assessment. On this basis, a total supply of up to 6 splash pads would be required (equating to the addition of 4 new splash pads), depending upon the number of outdoor pools that are retained. At the moment, the Lester B. Pearson Park splash pad serves the St. George's Ward while the Catherine Street Park splash pad services the St. Patrick's Ward, albeit for the latter it is recognized that Twelve Mile Creek poses a natural transportation barrier for those residing west of that waterway (although these residents would have some proximity to an outdoor aquatics facility in Port Dalhousie).

The size and scale of proposed splash pads is contingent upon a number of factors including (but not limited to):

- Whether the City wishes to maintain a neighbourhood serving scale consistent with its existing template at Lester B. Pearson and Catherine Street Parks.
- Whether the City wishes to offer a thematic or child-oriented play experience, or a dual-purpose facility dictated by urban design (e.g. a fountain-based facility within a civic node).
- Whether instead, the City wishes to construct a larger, community or City serving facility that can provide a greater number of interactive waterplay elements than offered at its existing splash pads.
- The type of park (e.g. Neighbourhood, District, or City-wide) that the facility will be located in, along with whether such a location will have sufficient on or off-street parking suitable for the anticipated level of the splash pad.

Another point of consideration is the type of mechanical and/or filtration system that will be installed as this will have capital and ongoing operating cost implications. The City's existing splash pads meter and directly discharge water into the storm sewer, which is the most economical approach as the costs borne are strictly relegated to water consumption. Unlike a recirculating water system, there are no water treatment costs though there is an environmental impact associated with the volume of water that is used and discharged over the course

of the season. While there is a capital cost element with the direct discharge system, it is not usually as significant as with the sophisticated mechanical systems that treat and recirculate the water. Recirculating systems have a greater operating cost as the equipment and treatment processes are similar to those used for indoor pools, albeit on a smaller scale, which adds costs related to water treatment and staff time. The decision as to which system to employ will need to be weighted upon financial and environmental objectives of the municipality, though some municipalities have sought balance in these objectives by designing their meter and discharge systems in a manner that reuses 'grey water' for municipal operations (e.g. irrigation).

### **Recommendation**

- #19. In tandem with the Master Plan's outdoor pool implementation strategy, splash pads should be distributed in a manner that ensures each of the six municipal wards have reasonable geographic access to a splash pad or continue to have access to an outdoor pool. The preferred location of future splash pads is within District or large Neighbourhood level parks.
- #20. Undertake usage and monitoring program at the two existing splash pads to collect information that can be used to rationalize the level of future investment relative to the costs associated with construction and operation of these facilities.

## **4.4 Outdoor Pools**

**Supply:** The City operates ten outdoor pool tanks at six locations in St. Catharines. This supply consists of four large rectangular pools, each of which is supported by a smaller pool, while two additional small outdoor pools are also available at parks as stand-alone templates.

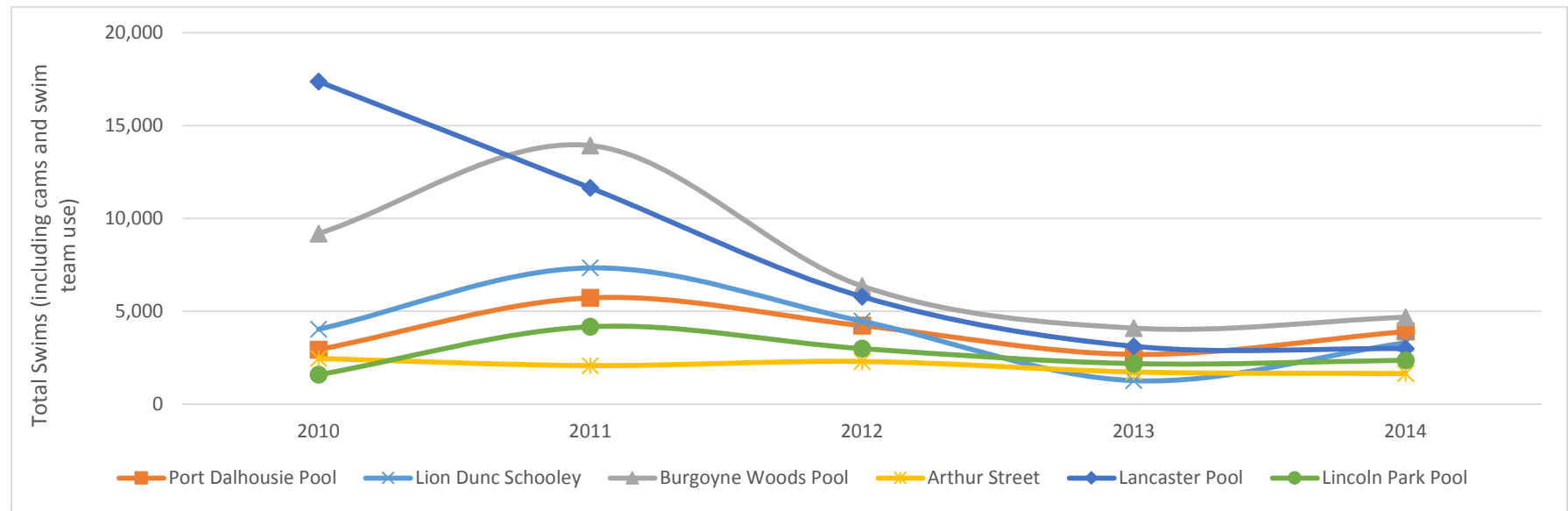
- Rectangular Pools – provided at Burgoyne Woods, Community Park (Lion Dunc Schooley Pool), Lancaster Park, and Port Dalhousie Lions Park
- Small Pools – provided at Arthur Street Park (stand-alone), Burgoyne Woods , Lancaster Park, Lincoln Park (stand-alone) and Port Dalhousie Lions Park
- Wading Pool – provided at Community Park (in tandem with a rectangular pool)

**Service Level:** The supply of outdoor pool tanks translates into a supply of one outdoor pool per 14,066 population. This is an above average level of service compared to other municipalities, largely because many have transitioned away from outdoor pools towards splash pads.



- Distribution:** Map 7 applies a 2.5 kilometre service area around each outdoor rectangular pool and a 1 kilometre radius around the stand-alone small pools, thereby achieving strong coverage throughout the City.
- Consultation:** Little interest was expressed for outdoor pools through in-person consultations with the general community, however some participants highlighted that the distribution of certain pools is conducive to serving some lower income households who may otherwise be unable to travel beyond walking distances to access indoor or outdoor swimming opportunities. The household survey also yielded some insights with 47% of the sample supporting additional investments in outdoor pools and 24% opposed to such spending, making it the twelfth most popular facility choice and suggesting that the provision of outdoor pools may be a lower priority compared to other recreation facilities. Interest, as expressed through the consultation process, was far greater for additional splash pads as is discussed in preceding pages.
- Participation:** Outdoor pools were once a key part of Ontario's community fabric, with many municipalities constructing them in the 1960s and 1970s. With greater affordability and popularity of backyard pools, usage of the typical rectangular outdoor pool has diminished in many parts of the province. While 53% of the household survey sample reported swimming during the past twelve months, making it the second most popular activity, this number does not differentiate between indoor and outdoor swims nor does it distinguish between swims in City pools, private facilities, backyard pools or beaches.
- Utilization:** Data collected by the City reveals that swimming at its outdoor pools has declined significantly over the past three years, as shown in Figure 4. In 2014, St. Catharines' outdoor pools drew nearly 19,000 public swims (including day camps and swim rentals), which is down 58% (or 26,000 swims) from 2011. Based upon this, it can be inferred that the City is operating more outdoor pools than is required by the community and is confirmed by comparisons with many other communities who do not provide the level of service as in St. Catharines.

**Figure 4: Total Number of Swims at City of St. Catharines Outdoor Pools, 2010-2014**



Note: total swims include drop-in recreational swims, camp swims, and swim team usage

Source: City of St. Catharines, 2014

Trends in municipal service delivery suggest that municipalities are moving away from providing outdoor pools altogether due to the high operating cost relative to the short three month usage season (usually June to August), and the ability to offer lessons and other programming within their indoor pools. Municipalities who have chosen to provide new outdoor pools or replace their aging pools have usually done so on the basis of providing a differentiated experience oriented to fun through waterpark designs, sport tourism or rentals, or as part of overarching municipal economic development strategies.

Demand and usage for the City's ten outdoor pools appears to be waning for a variety of reasons:

- None of the facilities are heated, which considerably lowers their appeal and shortens the operating season. St. Catharines' outdoor pools are only open two months of the year from the last week of June until Labour Day weekend, with one facility opening on weekends during the month of June.
- From an aquatics programming and rental perspective, there is significant redundancy in the local pool supply particularly when considering the geographic proximity of indoor and outdoor pools in relation to each other. When the majority of the City's



outdoor pools were originally constructed over forty years ago, there were few indoor pools in St. Catharines resulting in outdoor pools being the focus of City aquatics provision for many years. Now, the presence of the S.K.A.C. and the Y.M.C.A. indoor pool easily address the needs of the local aquatics market for recreation swims and learn-to-swim programs. Most notably, the S.K.A.C. has heavily impacted the nearby Lancaster Park outdoor pool where the number of public swims has decreased by 84% (14,400 fewer swims) since 2010.

- St. Catharines' outdoor pools do not have interactive or fun elements which lessens the appeal to young children and family users. Competition from splash pads or the indoor pools, which offer such interactive waterplay features, has reduced recreational use of the outdoor pools.
- The prevalence of backyard pools has grown considerably in Ontario, not only in terms of the traditional in-ground and above-ground pools but also in terms of very affordable inflatable pools. This has reduced recreational swim demand at municipal pools while learn-to-swim opportunities that would continue to be sought by backyard pool users are now accommodated within indoor pools operated by the City, the Y.M.C.A., Brock University and to a lesser extent Ridley College.
- St. Catharines' outdoor pools and change room buildings are not accessible to persons with disabilities, thereby limiting usage by these individuals.

In addition to diminishing usage of the outdoor pools and the considerable challenge to facilitating use by persons with disabilities, there are a number of mechanical and structural limitations within St. Catharines' outdoor pools. In fact, most the City's outdoor pools rely upon aging mechanical systems that are not as effective and efficient as current systems. The condition of a number of pools and surrounding concrete decks is deteriorating due to their age, as are many of the change room structures supporting the pools.

Compounding the financial reinvestment costs of bringing the outdoor pools back up to a modern standard is the fact that revenue received through the pools has eroded along with the usage. Further, the City's six outdoor aquatic facilities required an operating subsidy of over \$500,000 in 2014 (though this has come down by nearly \$100,000 since 2011) which are over and above the noted capital reinvestment requirements.

Although the City's original strategy of providing a well distributed supply of outdoor pools across St. Catharines has worked very well from a historic standpoint, diminishing community usage resulting from functional limitations and competition from other facilities give ample reason to reconsider the required outdoor pool supply, particularly given the multi-million dollar capital reinvestment cost associated with structural and mechanical remediation. In positioning St. Catharines to sustainably manage its outdoor pool supply, a new course of action must be considered.

The intrinsic value of St. Catharines outdoor pools are recognized, though such value is much more apparent for some pools rather than others particularly in the wake of such a dramatic reduction in use. Some outdoor pools are located in neighbourhoods characterized by a considerable number of ‘vulnerable’ populations (e.g. low income, single parents, at-risk youth, etc.) and are critical pieces of the ‘social’ infrastructure. For this reason, it is recommended that the City consolidate the number of outdoor pools in tandem with the splash pad implementation articulated in the preceding pages. This strategy involves ensuring that there is at least one splash pad or outdoor pool per ward, with a view towards phasing out aging pool facilities. Essentially, the goal is to convert the historical provision of outdoor pools by geography to a similar distribution strategy for splash pads.

In support of a renewed outdoor aquatics provision strategy, one to two outdoor pools should be retained while splash pads would replace decommissioned outdoor pools in their respective wards. Table 2 articulates the high level merits and limitations associated with each outdoor pool location though the City will have to undertake subsequent analyses as part of a comprehensive outdoor pool strategy that looks at which pool(s) to retain. One notable criteria is based upon the social vulnerability of the surrounding population within the pool’s reasonable catchment area. As identified in Section 2.2 of the Master Plan, the Region of Niagara mapped out marginalized populations based upon quintiles associated with the ‘Material Deprivation’ dimension of the Ontario Marginalization Index. The criteria infers that there may be a stronger basis of retention in areas of greater marginalization since a number of residents in those communities may not have the ability to readily travel longer distances as compared to residents who have low levels of marginalization (e.g. lone parent households, persons with disabilities, those unable to afford regular trips using taxis or transit, etc.).

**Table 2: Outdoor Pool Considerations**

Location	Major Considerations
<b>Arthur Street Park</b>	<p><b>Possible Reasons to Retain</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None rationalized at this time.</li> </ul> <p><b>Possible Reasons to Decommission</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located in an area that has a lower proportion of marginalized residents (refer to Map 1).</li> <li>• Located in proximity to other outdoor aquatic opportunities including the beach.</li> <li>• Limited programming options due to size/design of pool</li> <li>• Aerial scans of the immediate area shows a sizeable concentration of backyard pools.</li> <li>• Small size and topographical constraints of the park, along with no onsite parking.</li> <li>• Public swims have decreased by 800 (-33%) since 2010 (excluding camps and rentals).</li> <li>• Capital reinvestment costs.</li> </ul>



Location	Major Considerations
<b>Burgoyne Woods</b>	<p><b>Possible Reasons to Retain</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large site with ability to expand footprint and already contains onsite parking.</li> <li>• Located in a destination park with multi-use components.</li> <li>• Hosted the greatest number of public swims (3,350) of all outdoor pools in 2014 (excluding camps and rentals).</li> </ul> <p><b>Possible Reasons to Decommission</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located in an area that has a lower proportion of marginalized residents (refer to Map 1).</li> <li>• Aerial scans of the immediate area shows a sizeable concentration of backyard pools.</li> <li>• Presently no sanitary servicing at this location which could add significant infrastructure costs.</li> <li>• Had the second highest rate of attrition with over 5,800 fewer public swims (-64%) between 2010 and 2014.</li> <li>• Capital reinvestment costs.</li> </ul>
<b>Community Park</b> (Lion Dunc Schooley Pool)	<p><b>Possible Reasons to Retain</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located in an area that has a high proportion of marginalized residents who may not otherwise be able to access aquatic programming (refer to Map 1).</li> <li>• Located in a destination park with multi-use components.</li> <li>• Hosted the second greatest number of public swims (3,300) of all outdoor pools in 2014 (excluding camps and rentals).</li> </ul> <p><b>Possible Reasons to Decommission</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public swims have decreased by 730 (-18%) since 2010 (excluding camps and rentals).</li> <li>• Capital reinvestment costs.</li> </ul>
<b>Lancaster Park</b>	<p><b>Possible Reasons to Retain</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located in a destination park with multi-use components.</li> <li>• Centralized location with strong access to the Q.E.W. and multiple transit routes.</li> </ul> <p><b>Possible Reasons to Decommission</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located in close proximity to S.K.A.C. and Y.M.C.A. pools, resulting in service overlap and competition with these pools.</li> <li>• Addition of another sports field could improve tournament opportunities and league play.</li> <li>• Had the greatest attrition with over 14,400 fewer public swims (-83%) between 2010 and 2014.</li> <li>• Capital reinvestment costs.</li> </ul>

Location	Major Considerations
Lincoln Park	<p><b>Possible Reasons to Retain</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located in an area that has a high proportion of marginalized residents who may not otherwise be able to access aquatic programming (refer to Map 1).</li> </ul> <p><b>Possible Reasons to Decommission</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small size of park limits expansion abilities.</li> <li>• No onsite parking.</li> <li>• Limited programming options due to size/design of pool</li> <li>• Capital reinvestment costs.</li> </ul>
Port Dalhousie Lions Park	<p><b>Possible Reasons to Retain</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None rationalized at this time.</li> </ul> <p><b>Possible Reasons to Decommission</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located in an area that has a lower proportion of marginalized residents (refer to Map 1).</li> <li>• Located in proximity to other outdoor aquatic opportunities including the beach.</li> <li>• Aerial scans of the immediate area shows a notable concentration of backyard pools</li> <li>• Public swims have decreased by 1,150 (-40%) since 2011 though the City has offset this through directing a greater share of swim team rentals.</li> <li>• Capital reinvestment costs</li> </ul>

In reinvesting in an outdoor pool, the City should ensure that functional design limitations are eliminated to the greatest extent possible. At a minimum, a pool and its supporting structure should comply with AODA standards to provide barrier-free access and service. The pool should ideally be attractive and comfortable to facilitate use by the full spectrum of ages and abilities through the provision of heated water, interactive waterplay elements, viewing areas, etc. A pool should also be supported by onsite parking and is preferably located in proximity to major transit routes and arterial road corridors to enable ease of access. A redevelopment of this magnitude should be supported by a comprehensive business plan that identifies at a minimum, target market to be served (including whether a pool is intended to function as a regional destination), the optimal design and placement within the park (through an architectural/engineering analysis), the short and long-term capital costs of reinvestment, and the estimated operating costs using a Zero Based Budgeting approach (that should account for heating and/or additional lifeguarding costs among other costs).



With respect to decommissioned outdoor pools, splash pads are recommended to take their place so that each City ward has at least one splash pad unless otherwise served by an outdoor pool (noting that a maximum of two outdoor pools should be retained, and that a splash pad may be provided in tandem with a retained pool). While it may make sense to provide splash pads at decommissioned pool sites themselves, there may be merit in relocating splash pads to an alternative location within the City ward in question. For example, instead of constructing a splash pad at Port Dalhousie Lions Park, it may be better to provide a splash pad at a park that already contains complementary child-focused features. Further study would need to be undertaken to confirm the ability of another park to accommodate the added intensity of use and the space requirements associated with a splash pad (e.g. parking, washrooms, etc.) and Port Dalhousie Lions Park would need to be redesigned.

Again, it is important to emphasize that the rationale for shifting the focus of outdoor aquatics services to splash pads from outdoor pools is largely based on input provided through the Master Plan's initial consultations and the fact that usage of the pools has eroded considerably over the past decade. This RFPMP finds that the degree of investment required to bring the pools up to code and modern expectations is not a priority in terms of meeting community recreational needs since the City's investment in the S.K.A.C. created a premier aquatics destination, while investing in splash pads would be a cost-effective way of meeting a strongly stated community need.

Actual capital costs associated with improving any retained outdoor pool(s) would need to be established through architectural and/or engineering studies as there is great variability depending upon the scope of work to be undertaken (not only for the pool but any associated buildings). Experience across the province suggests that typical outdoor pool refurbishments (to maintain a similar level of service) can be upwards of \$1 million while complete pool and building redesigns can range from \$1.5 million to \$3.5+ million depending upon size, scale, number of pool tanks or waterplay features, inclusion/scale of changerooms, etc. (some examples of municipalities recently constructing or renewing outdoor pools in recent years include Ajax, Mississauga, London, Kingston and Strathroy). Any multi-million dollar investment into one or two outdoor pools may be rationalized on the basis that it is a conscious and strategic decision to create a destination pool(s) as a means to offer residents an enhanced level of service (and thus over and above what is considered a 'need') and/or furthering economic development objectives.

## **Recommendations**

- #21. Develop criteria to be used to establish the feasibility of operating outdoor pools in certain locations by factoring remediation costs related to building code and accessibility standards, heating and projected operating costs.

- #22. In tandem with the recommended capital and operating budget exercises and the results of the performance analysis, initiate a business plan associated with the rejuvenation of outdoor rectangular pools selected for retention on the basis that they are to provide a more inclusive leisure and destination-themed experience.
- #23. Subject to the results of the recommended capital and operating budget exercises and the results of the performance analysis, leverage current outdoor pool sites and identify locations for splash pads to replace aging and non-compliant assets.

## 4.5 Tennis Courts

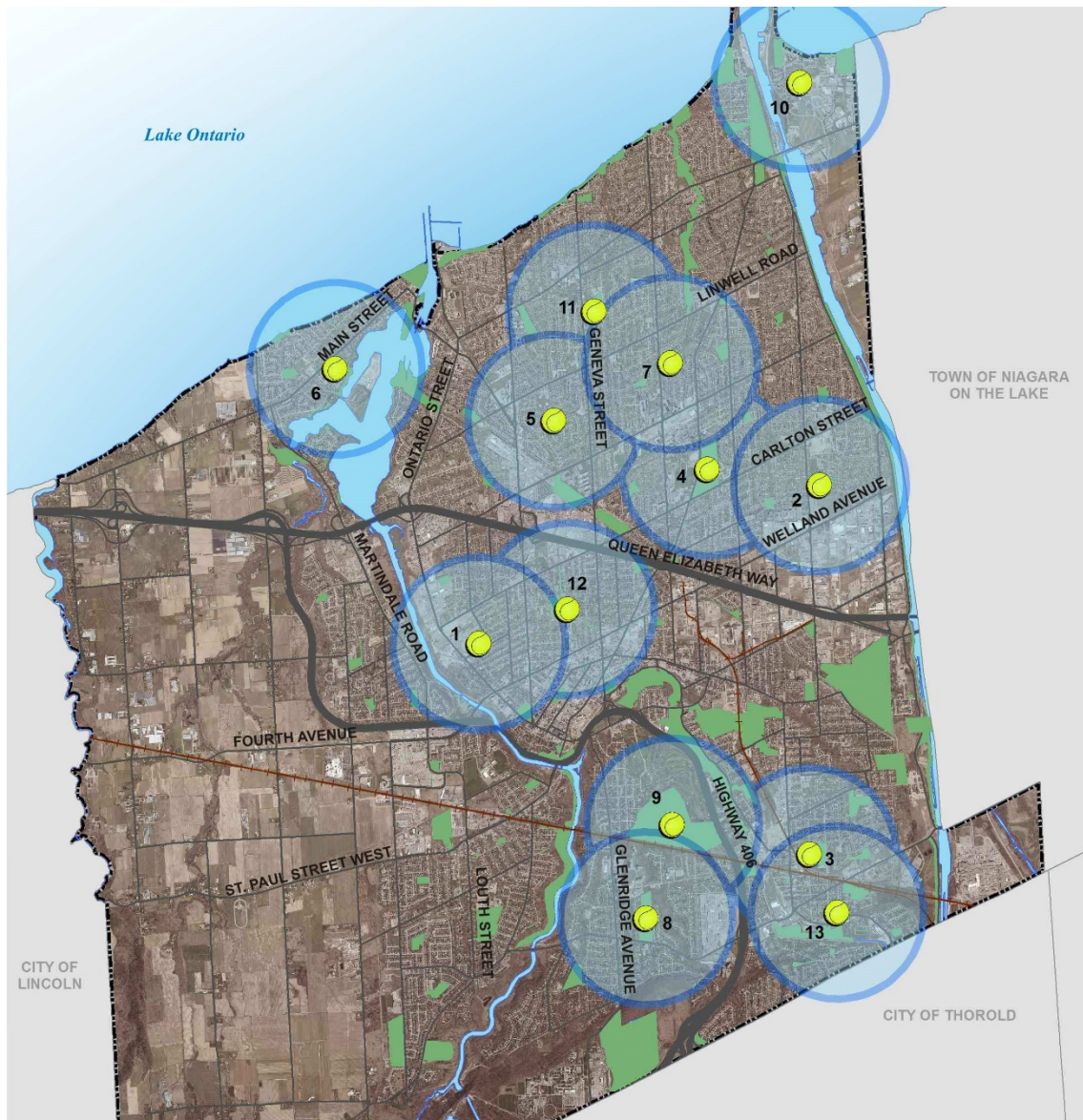
**Supply:** St Catharines provides 28 tennis courts located in thirteen municipal parks, 18 of which are lit and 10 are unlit. All of the City's tennis courts are provided in pods of two with the exception of Community Park and Realty Park, both of which are three court templates. The Realty Park courts are available only on a membership basis for interested members of the public, of which annual dues are remitted directly to the City. All other courts are publically-accessible courts oriented to free, casual play.

Of note, the supply does not include the tennis courts at Bogart Park or West Park. Nets are no longer installed at the two tennis courts at Bogart Park (posts and line markings remain) as they are heavily used for handball. Nets are no longer installed at the four tennis courts at West Park because of issues with vandalism; one of these courts is now used for ball hockey. The supply also does not include non-municipal courts such as those at Brock University, the BallHockey.com Athletic Centre, or other courts located on private or institutional lands.

**Service Level:** St Catharines' supply translates into a service level of one tennis court per 5,025 population, which is generally consistent with other similarly-sized communities.

**Distribution:** Application of a one-kilometre service area suggests that the supply of tennis courts are generally well distributed throughout St. Catharines, though there some gap areas in the southwest corner of the City as well as the area immediately south of Queen Elizabeth Way, east of Geneva Street.

Map 8: Distribution of Tennis Courts



**Tennis Courts**

 Tennis Courts with a 1km Service Area

**Lit Tennis Courts**

- 1. Alex McKenzie Park (2)
- 2. Berkley Park (2)
- 3. Community Park (3)
- 4. Lester B. Pearson Park (2)
- 5. Linlake Park (2)
- 6. Port Dalhousie Lions Park (2)
- 7. Realty Park (3)\*
- 8. Woodgate Park (2)

\* Membership required for access

**Unlit Tennis Courts**

- 9. Burgoyne Woods Park (2)
- 10. Eastport Park (2)
- 11. Guy Road Park (2)
- 12. St. Patrick's Park (2)
- 13. Valleyview Park (2)



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Data provided by the City of St. Catharines.  
Map prepared by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants



- Consultation:** Through the community consultations, a notable emphasis was received with respect to a desire for the Realty Park courts to be managed by a non-profit community tennis club, an entity that presently does not exist in St. Catharines but one that is being contemplated by interested individuals with support of the Ontario Tennis Association. Individuals interested in forming a club participated in the Community Input Event, provided email submissions, and completed a stakeholder survey for consideration. The household survey participants did not place a high priority on further investments in the tennis court supply, with the 45% level of support ranking as the fifteen most important priority out of twenty-one recreation facility types.
- Participation:** The household survey found that over the past twelve months, 12% of residents participated in tennis. Realty Park membership data reveals that adults represent three-quarters (75%) of all memberships sold with other membership types including Family (14%), Youth (10%), and Child (2%). It is noted that adults tend to make up the largest users of membership-based courts and thus this age breakdown is not necessarily reflective of the age profile of persons using the City's free courts.
- Utilization:** As is common in other communities, the City does not track casual, spontaneous use of its free tennis courts. Membership data provided by the City reveals that the 52 memberships sold in 2014 at Realty Park represents a decline of 26% over the past four years, however, it is worth noting that Realty Park memberships are unlike most community tennis clubs as there is no structured programming or leagues included in the dues – instead, it is up to members themselves to organize play with others as the dues simply permit access to the courts (which receive a greater level of investment and maintenance than the City's free courts).

The City has maintained its tennis court supply in fairly close alignment with a one court per 5,000 population service level. Carrying this level of service forward throughout the master planning period suggests that the existing supply of tennis courts is largely sufficient based upon a population metric (though not necessarily from a geographic distribution standpoint).





	2015	2016	2021	2026
<b>Forecasted Population</b>	140,660	141,100	142,500	142,800
<b>Number of Tennis Courts Required</b> (based a provision target of 1 tennis courts per 5,000 population)	28	28	28.5	28.5
<b>Tennis Court Deficit</b> (based on a current supply of 28 tennis courts)	0	0	0.5	0.5

The City’s focus with respect to tennis courts, therefore, should not be based upon new court development (unless done so on the basis of geographic distribution, such as west of Twelve Mile Creek). Instead, it should be largely to facilitate ways in which to grow the sport particularly with the decline in members at Realty Park. Research conducted across the province suggests that organized tennis, largely through tennis clubs, is the most effective way to increase participation levels in the sport. On this basis, the City should engage individuals interested in forming a non-profit community tennis club for their potential interest in leasing and/or managing the Realty Park courts.

Allowing a community tennis club to utilize these courts benefits the City in that it does not have to devote resources to marketing or managing opportunities for organized play. A partnering club would be able to organize, administer and deliver programming highly sought after by most membership-based players such as leagues, round-robins, tournaments, skill development clinics, etc. With a declining and relatively low membership at present, the City’s risk to transfer membership-based tennis opportunities to a third party is fairly small in comparison to the opportunity for club’s ability to grow the number of persons using the Realty Park courts.

The City has been approached by representatives of the Ontario Tennis Association (the sanctioning body for community tennis clubs) who have shown an interest in forming a local tennis club which is a model that is common across Ontario. Furthermore, as non-profits many community clubs have been able to leverage external funding (e.g. Trillium grants) to reinvest into their courts and often partner with their host municipalities to direct proceeds from memberships and fundraising into the court improvements as well. In exchange, these clubs seek dedicated times for their members at municipal courts, either exclusively year round or at specific times of the day thereby restricting access to the general public (although this is already the case at Realty Park). By empowering the community to deliver quality tennis programming, the City will be able to shift the existing resources it devotes to maintaining its own membership-based system to other priority areas.

Additional consultations will be required with those interested in forming a community club, as well as with the current 52 members of the City-administered group in implementing this strategy. Important to discuss will be financial and usage agreement envisioned for a club's access to the courts, whether additional front-end investments are required (and who will fund them), roles and responsibilities regarding court maintenance or reserve fund contributions, and whether a transition period is required for City members to receive allocated times in conjunction with community tennis club members (though it is emphasized that the City should absolve itself from administering its own membership-based system shortly after a non-profit club is formed). It is noted that there are a couple limitations with Realty Park for a community club, notably the lack of a clubhouse structure which is often sought for socialization, and the lack of a fourth court which is often crucial for the long-term sustainability of a club as it allows for small tournaments with a round robin format that is deemed to be essential for establishing regular participation. These and other limitations could potentially be reconciled through subsequent funding agreements with a club through grant applications, facility improvement surcharges, fundraising, etc.

### **Recommendation**

- #24. Engage persons and organizations interested in forming a community tennis club, along with existing Realty Park members, to discuss how best to transition responsibilities to a qualified community provider that delivers organized tennis programming out of Realty Park on a non-profit basis.
- #25. Explore opportunities to construct tennis courts in strategic gap areas, such as in the St. Andrew's Ward and the northern Merritton Ward, while ensuring existing tennis courts are maintained to facilitate an acceptable quality of play (see Recommendation #27).

## **4.6 Multi-Use Courts**

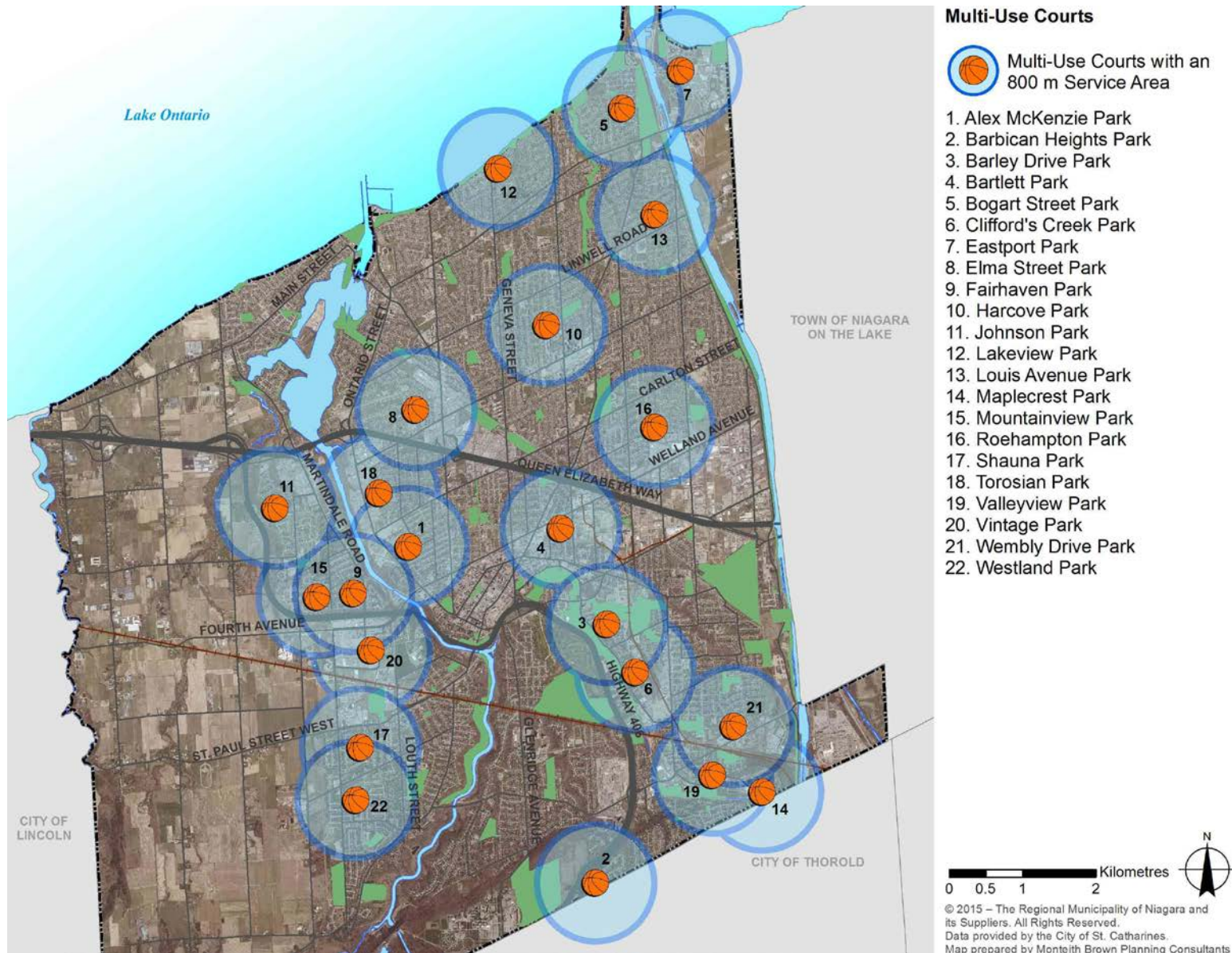
**Supply:** The City maintains 22 full size multi-use courts at municipal parks, all of which allow for full court basketball play, with the exception of Barley Drive Park and Westland Park that only have one hoop along with the multi-use pad at Harcove Park where the hoops have been removed (although the painted surface markings remain).

Of note, tennis courts were formerly provided at Bogart Street Park. While the posts and line markings remain (along with a basketball hoop), the courts are presently used for handball (with programs delivered by a community group), and thus these courts are actually more oriented as 'multi-use' courts that can facilitate a range of activities and are thus included in the multi-use court supply. The supply excludes basketball courts located on school sites though it is recognized that these courts contribute to meeting self-directed opportunities for play.



- Service Level:** The City provides one multi-use court per 6,400 population or 685 youth between the ages of 9 and 18. The youth service level is consistent with the range targeted across the province (one court per 700 to 800 youth), though many municipalities also target balanced geographic distribution of such facilities since they are frequented by children and youth who rely on active forms of transportation (e.g. walking, cycling, etc.).
- Distribution:** Application of an 800 metre service area (generally representing a 10 minute walk) around each municipal multi-use court shows generally satisfactory distribution though there are some overlapping coverage on the west side of Twelve Mile Creek, as well as in the southeast corner in the area south of Queenston Street and east of Glenridge Avenue. Some notable gap areas are also observed in Port Dalhousie and the area south of the CN Railway and east of Twelve Mile Creek, although these and other gaps may be served by schools.
- Consultation:** The household survey identified that 43% of residents supported public investment in improving or developing new basketball courts, ranking seventeenth among facility types, suggesting that there are other higher priority facilities to consider (though this must be considered in light of a higher than average age of respondent who may not consider courts a priority compared to a youth).
- Participation:** The household survey recorded 11% of its sample as having played basketball (indoors and outdoors) over the past twelve months. Over the past decade, research has shown a healthy participation in basketball particularly among male youths due to its regional appeal (including a large Toronto Raptors fan base). The popularity of basketball is also driven by low barriers to participation; compared to other organized sports such as hockey, basketball is easy to learn, safe and inexpensive to play, and can be played with one person or in small groups.
- Utilization:** Due to its drop-in, self-directed format of multi-use courts, it is difficult to quantify the degree to which local basketball courts are used though the site visits conducted as part of the master planning process anecdotally revealed use of these facilities for basketball, ball hockey or general 'hang out' space largely among teens.

Map 9: Distribution of Multi-Use Courts





Similar to other recreation facilities that are targeted to specific age groups, an age-specific provision level target is used. St. Catharines' multi-use courts are presently provided at one per 685 youth which is a strong level of service that is due in part to the City's proactive emphasis distributing these facilities across the City. Further, the level of service is consistent with the one court per 700 youth standard established in the 2008 Recreation Facility Master Plan, a level of service that is appropriate to carry forward for the current master planning period.

Doing so will require two new multi-use courts to be developed around the year 2026. In deciding where to locate these future courts, it is recommended that the City evaluate potential park sites in the identified gap areas to provide at least one new multi-use court. Key areas that should be considered are gap areas with a higher proportion of youth or gap areas that lack existing school courts. Consideration should also be given to new growth areas, as well as co-locating new multi-use courts with existing or proposed tennis courts given the similarities in facility footprint, construction methods, and uses. New multi-use courts should be flexibly designed to accommodate a range of activities, but should utilize a full size basketball court template with two basketball nets, at a minimum.

	2015	2016	2021	2026
<b>Forecasted Youth Population</b> (ages 9 to 18)	15,112	14,874	14,852	15,956
<b>Number of Multi-Use Courts Required</b> (based a provision target of 1 multi-use court per 700 youth)	21.5	21	21	23
<b>Deficit Multi-Use Courts</b> (based on a current supply of 21 multi-use courts)	0.5	0	0	2

### Recommendations

- #26. Construct 2 new multi-use courts, located in a manner that reconciles existing service gaps and/or where required to service new areas of residential development. Multi-use courts should be flexibly designed to accommodate a range of hard surface court activities, but should utilize a full size basketball court template with two basketball nets, at a minimum, as per the City's current design specification.



#27. Create a capital renewal strategy for the City's hard surface courts (consisting of basketball and tennis courts) that defines the cost of replacing aging facilities and the proposed timeframe for doing so, while also exploring ways in which to fund these reinvestments potentially through partnerships, fundraising, and other means.

## 4.7 Skateboard Parks

- Supply:** St. Catharines provides one large concrete skateboard park at the Seymour-Hannah Sports and Entertainment Centre. Beyond skateboarding, this facility is used by BMX cyclists, children on scooters, and inline skaters which demonstrates its broad appeal to a range of children, youth and younger adults. Complementing St. Catharines' skatepark is SUD Skates, a private indoor skatepark located approximately 2 kilometres from the Seymour-Hannah Sports & Entertainment Centre.
- Service Level:** The City's supply of skateparks represents a service level of one skatepark per 140,660 population or 15,112 youth. This service level for youth is low compared to other similar communities, although the provision of skateparks is often dependent on a number of factors such as the demographic make-up of each community and the distribution of youth.
- Distribution:** The City's skatepark is located in the southwest area of St. Catharines, while the privately-operated SUD Skates is located a short distance away. While the Seymour Hannah skateboard park generally serves youth in the immediate area (as the majority of users come from within walking distance of their home or school), its design accommodates a degree of City-wide demand as it is a high quality destination facility known by the local skateboarding community, and it is located along transit routes.
- Consultation:** Consultation with the public revealed relatively modest levels of demand for skateboard parks. However, the household survey's 37% level of support for investments in these facilities represents an increase in support compared to the survey undertaken in 2006 where 28% supported new skateboard parks. This may be a result of community perception seeing the benefits of such facilities in providing positive opportunities for youth, and the negative stigma associated with skateparks diminishing. That being said, 33% of the current household survey sample opposed additional spending on skateboard parks generally splitting the support (30% were indifferent on spending for this facility type).
- Participation:** The household survey identified that 7% of residents participated in skateboarding in the past twelve months, which ranked as the second least popular activity out of 21 facility types. This may indicate that skateboarding is not a very





popular past time in St. Catharines though it may also be a result of a higher than average age of persons that responded to the household survey.

**Utilization:** As skateboarding and similar pursuits are informal, self-directed activities, the City does not formally track utilization of the skatepark. Anecdotal observations, however, suggest a good degree of use occurs at the skateboard park during the summer months.

Once viewed as a fad in pastime leisure, skateboarding has demonstrated sustained longevity. This is driven by several factors, including youths' desire for more informal activities that can be structured around their schedules. The previous Master Plan recommended a provision target of one skatepark per 7,500 youth, which is lower compared to other communities that utilize a standard of one skatepark per 5,000 residents. Given that the consultation process did not reveal any latent demand for this type of facility, it is recommended that the City continue to use the target of one skatepark per 7,500 youth for this Master Plan.

	2015	2016	2021	2026
<b>Forecasted Youth Population</b> (ages 9 to 18)	15,112	14,874	14,852	15,956
<b>Number of Skateboard Parks Required</b> (based a provision target of 1 skateboard park per 7,500 youth)	2	2	2	2
<b>Deficit of Skateboard Parks</b> (based on a current supply of 1 skateboard park)	1	1	1	1

Although the projected number of youth is expected to grow into the future, and so thus the need for skateparks, the fact that the Seymour Hannah skateboard park was designed to a larger than typical specification (it is approximately 17,000 square feet) means that this facility is anticipated to serve City-wide needs for the foreseeable future. The preferred strategy moving forward is to develop one additional skateboard park that is smaller in size than the Seymour Hannah skatepark template but still provides an intermediate level (or above) experience (e.g. it may contain a concrete or asphalt pad with modular components, it could be a smaller-scale concrete bowl template, or it could be a 'plaza style' skatepark that replicates an urban environment). The design of this skateboard park should be formed in consultation with local youth and the skateboard, BMX and inline skating community. Its location should consider a number of factors including a strong degree of visibility from the street, proximity to an area with a high concentration of youth, along active

transportation or public transportation routes, co-location with other appropriate recreation facilities (community centre sites with a full time staff presence can also lend additional supervision capabilities) or amenities (e.g. where water fountains or benches exist), etc.

It is also recommended that the City develop a number of “skate zones” or “micro” skateboard parks, which contain one or two basic curbs and rails in a designated area of a park, in strategic gap areas of the City. These minor skateboarding areas can be integrated fairly easily within neighbourhood-level parks and provide venues where beginner to intermediate level users can hone their skills and gain confidence to transition to the Seymour Hannah or proposed new skateboard park. It is important to note that these are not to be considered as skateboard parks in the traditional form but instead a few components or features to hone one’s skills.

This strategy is deemed to be the most cost-effective approach given the historical and forecasted aging trends in the City, and the fact that lower cost skate zones can be better distributed with only a finite amount of resources to devote to the facility type. The enhanced distribution is also a benefit since these skateboarding areas are targeted to children and youth who rely upon amenities located within walking/cycling distance. Priority areas for skate zones are largely City-wide since skateboarding opportunities do not exist beyond the Seymour Hannah Sports Centre, while the proposed new skateboard park is preferably located in a manner that allows youth living north of the Fourth Avenue/Welland Avenue corridor to have access to such a facility.

### **Recommendations**

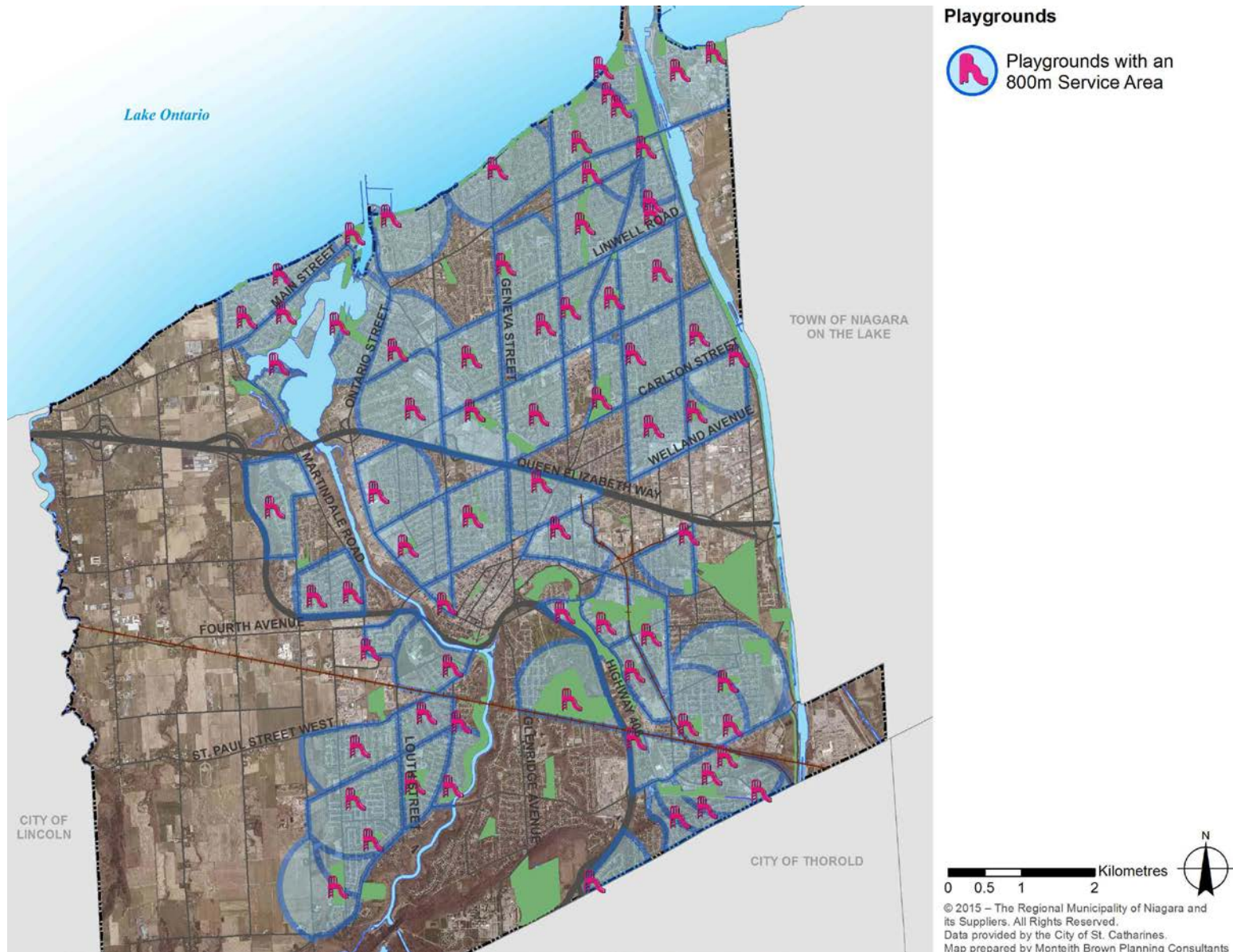
- #28. Construct one new skateboard park in a location that permits a better degree of geographic accessibility to populations residing north of the Q.E.W. This skateboard park should be a smaller-scale facility, as compared to the skatepark at the Seymour Hannah Sports and Entertainment Centre, and should be designed in consultation with local youth.
- #29. Integrate beginner level “skate zones” or “micro” skateboard parks into appropriate neighbourhood-serving parks as the existing skateboard park at the Seymour Hannah Sports and Entertainment Centre is expected to meet intermediate to advanced level needs over the long term.



## 4.8 Playgrounds

- Supply:** A total of 90 playground structures are provided across 70 parks, comprising of senior and junior creative play equipment. Most playgrounds are supported by swing sets with ground surface of mulch, pea stone, or sand, although a few playgrounds have a rubberized surface. An accessible playground structure is located at Lester B. Pearson Park, which offers play equipment integrated with on-grade ramps, contrasting colours, and tactile elements while certain other sites offer a smaller degree of accessible play features. Local schools also provide play equipment though these are not factored into the supply.
- Service Level:** St. Catharines' supply of playground locations represents a service level of one playground location per 2,705 residents or 264 children under the age of nine.
- Distribution:** Map 10 utilizes an 800 metre service area (generally representing a 10 minute walk) around each playground, with service coverage cut-off by major pedestrian obstructions such as arterial roads and highways, railways, and waterbodies. Doing so illustrates a notable gap area in the south end of the City, generally south of the CN railway line to the east of Twelve Mile Creek, although this gap is partly addressed by a number of school sites such as Oakridge Public School, and St. Peter Catholic School (and recognizes that there is a large university student housing component in this area). Select pockets of gap areas are also observed in St. Catharines' north end that are also addressed by schools such as Pine Grove Public School, Saint Alfred Catholic School and Heritage French Elementary School.
- Consultation:** The consultation process revealed that playgrounds are highly valued and desirable in St. Catharines. The household survey found that nearly three-quarters (74%) of residents also supported spending additional public funds on improving or developing new playgrounds, ranking as the second highest investment priority for recreation facility provision.
- Participation:** The household survey reported that over the past twelve months, 38% of residents reported using playground equipment, which ranked as the fifth-most popular recreation activity.
- Utilization:** No utilization data is available for playgrounds as they are intended for drop-in, self-directed use.

Map 10: Distribution of Playgrounds





Maintaining equitable access to playgrounds in St. Catharines supports healthy development among children by facilitating leisure opportunities and community interaction. St. Catharines' previous master plan utilized a standard of one creative playground within an 800 metre radius of built-up residential areas, without crossing major barriers, which is a similar standard utilized in comparable communities. In fact in some communities, proximity to playgrounds range from 400 metres to 800 metres as walkability becomes a higher priority. It is recommended that the City continue to maintain an 800 metre level of service to ensure that residents have reasonable walkable access to these neighbourhood level facilities to allow the City to concentrate on exploring opportunities to provide creative playground structures in the identified gap areas, where possible, as well as in emerging growth areas.

The modern design template for playgrounds focuses on providing safe creative structures that are consistent with the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) guidelines. The majority of the City's playground supply has been built within the past 15 years, with a cursory review of municipal inventory data estimating that the average age of playground structures is about 12 years old. The City conducts regular inspections of its playground equipment in line with safety standards and as part of these audits, identify where replacements may be required. This is considered to be best practice and should be continued.

While the City regularly inspects its playgrounds for safety, part of the evaluation process should also be to explore potential upgrades to allow for greater accessibility among persons with disabilities and special needs. Site visits conducted as part of the master planning process revealed instances where the playground structure appeared to be conducive for use by children and caregivers with a disability but where there was a barrier to accessing the structure itself. For example, the Vintage Park and Wembley Drive Park playgrounds integrate internal ramps and appears suitably designed for children with disabilities, however, there is no barrier-free entryway from the pathway into the playground (their entry ramps are not flush with the ground). Another example is the playground at Montebello Park, which has a rubberized surface but the lack of a ramp into the playground structure reduces its potential to be even more inclusive. While accessible playgrounds are desirable, such as the one at Lester B. Pearson Park, augmenting the ability of neighbourhood-serving playgrounds with accessible components is a cost-effective way to be more inclusive across the entire City. The Accessibility Advisory Committee should be engaged to assist in determining how playgrounds (and the parks in which they are located) can be more inclusive to persons with disabilities. To align safety, inclusivity and other related improvements with funding capabilities and long-range financial planning, the City should create a capital renewal strategy specific to playground structures. This will allow the City to prioritize investments through a rationalized decision-making and planning process that will also distribute replacement costs over a defined period of time.

### **Recommendation**

#30. Provide creative playground structures in underserved areas and emerging growth areas, so that built-up residential areas have access to a playground within an 800 metre service radius, unobstructed by major pedestrian barriers.



- #31. As part of the playground inspection process, identify opportunities to integrate accessible/barrier-free components as a means to improve access to and within the playground structure for children and caregivers with disabilities.
- #32. Prepare a playground renewal strategy that defines the cost and timeframe associated with replacing aging structures, while considering needed improvements to facilitate safe, inclusive and interactive play. This renewal strategy should also include a community engagement component to engage neighbourhoods in the design process of playground structures and/or other elements within the broader park.

## 4.9 Golf Courses

- Supply:** Two municipal golf courses are located in St. Catharines, known as the Garden City Golf Course and Fairview Golf & Mini-Putt. Garden City Golf Course is an 18-hole, par 60 executive course, while Fairview Golf & Mini-Putt is a 9-hole, par 27 course with an 18-hole mini putt course (parking at the latter is leased from a neighbouring property). These municipal golf courses are complemented by the private sector St. Catharines Golf & Country Club, a premier 18-hole, par 72 course with a 6-sheet curling rink, fitness centre, pool, and full service clubhouse.
- Service Level:** St. Catharines' supply of municipal golf courses translates into a service level of one golf course per 70,330 population. Golf courses are not normally provided within the scope of municipal service provision (though there are some provincial examples such as Hamilton, London, Burlington and Mississauga), and as a result there is limited data available to review against comparable municipalities.
- Distribution:** Residents of St. Catharines are well served with municipal golf courses as these facility types generally serve not only local residents, but draw from regional user markets.
- Consultation:** No comments regarding municipal golf courses were received through any of the public engagement sessions that were undertaken, which suggests that demand for this facility type is not a high priority at this time.
- Participation:** The household survey found that approximately 37% of residents participated in golf within the past twelve months. This represents a considerable increase since 2006 when the survey conducted for the previous Master Plan recorded a participation rate of 11%. Further, the current survey finds that at least 20% of golfers have participated in this activity outside of the City.





### **Utilization:**

A total of 15,000 rounds were played at the Garden City Golf Course in 2014, representing an increase of 1,000 rounds played over the previous year. The 1,250 rounds played in 2014 on Fairview's 9 hole course represented a slight decline from the year before (4% or 50 rounds) while the 4,250 mini putt rounds decreased by 5% (250 rounds). In 2014, the City initiated a soccer golf initiative at Fairview that generated 700 rounds played, offsetting the decline in traditional golf rounds (the time dedicated to soccer golf may also have contributed to the aforementioned decline). Although only 23 memberships were sold across both golf courses, the City has traditionally focused more towards selling 'activity packs' (e.g. packages of 10, 20, 30 or 45 rounds) rather than memberships.

By all indications, the City's public golf courses are adequately utilized and provide access to any resident interested in golf-related opportunities, thereby promoting the City's objectives surrounding inclusion. It is believed that municipal involvement in golf course operations is appropriate at its current level and there is no need to expand the number of municipal golf course given the existing public and private opportunities available regionally, and the fact that municipal investment may better be suited for other and more needed leisure activities. The City should continue to look for innovative opportunities to maximize use of its golf courses, and could potentially explore partnership opportunities with other institutions or agencies that may have an interest in utilizing the facilities (e.g. creating a 'teaching' course for a postsecondary golf course management program).

Studies regarding the operations of both golf facilities have been undertaken in the past ten years (the Fairview Golf Course and Mini Putt Land Use Options Study, and the Garden City Golf Course Master Plan). These studies, along with any future business plans that may be prepared if deemed necessary due to future operating circumstances, should form the basis that guides municipal decision-making in these assets.

### **Recommendations**

- #33. Monitor key performance and utilization indicators for both the Garden City Golf Course and the Fairview Golf Course to determine their long-term viability and revenue contributions to the City. In the event that future market conditions and operating profile of either golf course is not deemed to be favourable to the interests of the community, consideration may be given to repurposing the lands to another form of passive and/or active parkland provided that this is supported through a comprehensive business plan regarding municipal golf course operations.

## 4.10 Leash-Free Dog Parks

- Supply:** Two leash-free dog parks are currently provided at Burgoyne Woods and Catharine Street Park. The leash free dog parks are situated on municipally-owned lands and both are operated by PALZ (People Advocating Leash-Free Zones), a local community group that works in partnership with the City of St. Catharines.
- Service Level:** The City provides one-leash free dog park per 70,330 population. The provision of this type of facility differs in each community due to the variation of the service delivery model. Some dog parks are operated by the municipality, while others are operated by a local community group as is the case in St. Catharines.
- Distribution:** Both of St. Catharines' dog parks are located south of Queen Elizabeth Way and north of the CN railway. Although these facility types generally serve the entire community, a gap exists in the north area of the City for residents seeking a dog park within walking distance or a short drive.
- Consultation:** Moderate support for dog parks was expressed through the consultation inputs for this Master Plan. The household survey reported that 45% of residents supported spending additional public funds on improving or developing new dog parks whereas 32% of the sample was opposed. Through the user group questionnaire, PALZ expressed that there is a need to provide more dog parks in St. Catharines (suggesting one per ward would be most desirable), as well as shade shelters at existing dog parks to better serve the growing the rapidly growing number of dog park users.
- Participation:** Participation data for off-leash areas is not formally tracked, though if any indication, PALZ has nearly doubled its membership within the past three years, growing from 350 people in 2011 to 600 people in 2013. Further, research across the country has shown that older adults are forming a greater share of dog owners and are seeking off leash areas as a way to exercise their pets as well as to gain social opportunities for dog owners. This trend may be part of the reason that nearly half of the household survey sample were in support of off-leash areas. It is important to note that dog parks should not be viewed as being facilities strictly for pets as input provided by PALZ confirms that these areas are as much a venue for exercise and social interaction among humans (consistent with observations in other communities).
- Utilization:** The City does not collect utilization data on its leash free dog parks.



Off-leash areas have become much more common in Ontario municipalities over the past decade, though there are no measurable provision standards for the development of leash-free dog parks, as this facility type is generally assessed based on qualitative needs. Municipalities typically consider the provision of leash-free dog parks on a case-by-case basis if significant local demand exists for such a facility and if there is a willing community organization with the ability and resources to operate a leash free dog park. The partnership with PALZ appears to have been a success with the development and management of two off-leash areas.

If PALZ has the capacity to fundraise for the capital costs, and has the resources necessary to operate a third off-leash area, then the City should explore the establishment of one additional off-leash park in the near-term with a medium to longer-term need for additional dog parks based upon evidence of increased demand, a reasonable distribution across the City and the ability of the existing or other third party to maintain operations. To balance geographic distribution, the proposed third dog park should be located north of the Q.E.W. pending the results of a site-selection process to evaluate and identify the preferred location in consultation with the public and local stakeholders (such as PALZ, the Accessibility Advisory Committee, local neighbourhood associations, etc.). This site-selection process should consider a number of criteria including, but not limited to:

- safety of other park users and residents;
- appropriate zoning and compatibility with adjacent land uses;
- providing an appropriate buffer from residences, schools and environmentally sensitive areas (buffers can range anywhere from 15 metres to 100 metres);
- ensuring long-term access for dog parks (i.e. a site should not be chosen if it is intended to be redeveloped in the short to medium term);
- the park is of appropriate size (1.0 to 1.5 hectares is an ideal size for high volume dog parks) – as an example, the previously noted surplus in ball diamonds may create an opportunity through adaptive re-use;
- the site is accessible from an arterial or primary collector road, and provides sufficient parking, provision of benches, water fountains, waste containers, etc.

Ongoing monitoring of the existing and proposed off-leash areas should subsequently be undertaken to determine whether additional off-leash areas need to be provided within or after the current master planning period.

## Recommendation

- #34. Establish a third leash-free dog park provided that a local community organization can demonstrate a commitment to maintaining ongoing operations of the dog park as per the terms of the current agreement with PALZ. The location of the proposed off-leash should be determined in consultation with the public and local stakeholders, and should be located north of the Queen Elizabeth Way in order to balance geographic distribution across the City.
- #35. Continue to monitor utilization of existing and proposed dog parks with a view of providing additional off-leash opportunities based on distribution and ability of a third party to maintain operations (also refer to Recommendation #34).

## 4.11 Parks, Beaches and Trails

The City of St. Catharines maintains 562.5 hectares across 129 parks. Input provided through consultations generally suggested satisfaction with the parks, beaches and trails with noted improvements generally centred upon making these spaces more accessible to persons with disabilities, incorporating best practices in terms of safe designs, offering greater assistance to those hosting special events in parks (particularly when having to contact multiple City Departments), and integration of comfort and wayfinding features such as benches, maps, shade structures, etc. The Master Plan's household survey showed that 71% are satisfied with the location of parks and open spaces in St. Catharines, and supported further investments in parks/open spaces as the highest priority (76%). Support for nature trails (69%) and paved trails (58%) ranked as the fourth and eighth highest priorities, respectively.

The parks system is guided by the City's 2005 Parks Policy Plan that establishes strategies for the planning, maintenance and management of the municipal parks, open space, and trails system. St. Catharines parks are categorized as per Section 13.1 of the Garden City Plan (the City's Official Plan) into the following typologies:

- i) **Neighbourhood Parks and Playgrounds** - designed primarily for children's activities and passive recreation;
- ii) **District Parks and Playfields** - primarily designed with emphasis on facilities for organized and non- organized active outdoor playing fields, with opportunities for passive recreational use and provision for public art and cultural expression;
- iii) **City-Wide Parks and Regional Open Spaces** - designed for opportunities that may include passive and active indoor and/outdoor recreation, social, and cultural activities, and promotion and preservation of natural and cultural heritage amenities, cultural expression and public art, and may include multi-purpose or specialized facilities;



- iv) **Linear Parks** - walking and cycling trails to support a connected network of active transportation linkages within and between other parkland, open space, natural areas, downtown, residential, employment, commercial and mixed use neighbourhoods, community facilities and other activity use areas. The level of development of linear parks can range from minimal to extensive, and may include trailhead parking, restroom, pavilion, public art and other amenities;
- v) **Special Urban Parks** - smaller specialized parks, such as parkettes, urban squares or plazas suitable to fit within higher density urban areas such as the Downtown or other higher use activity centers and nodes, or to support the acquisition and development of smaller parks within underserved areas where the acquisition of larger parks is not possible. These park settings are intended to serve as interesting public spaces for passive social, cultural and leisure activities and should emphasize opportunities for the provision of public art and cultural expression.

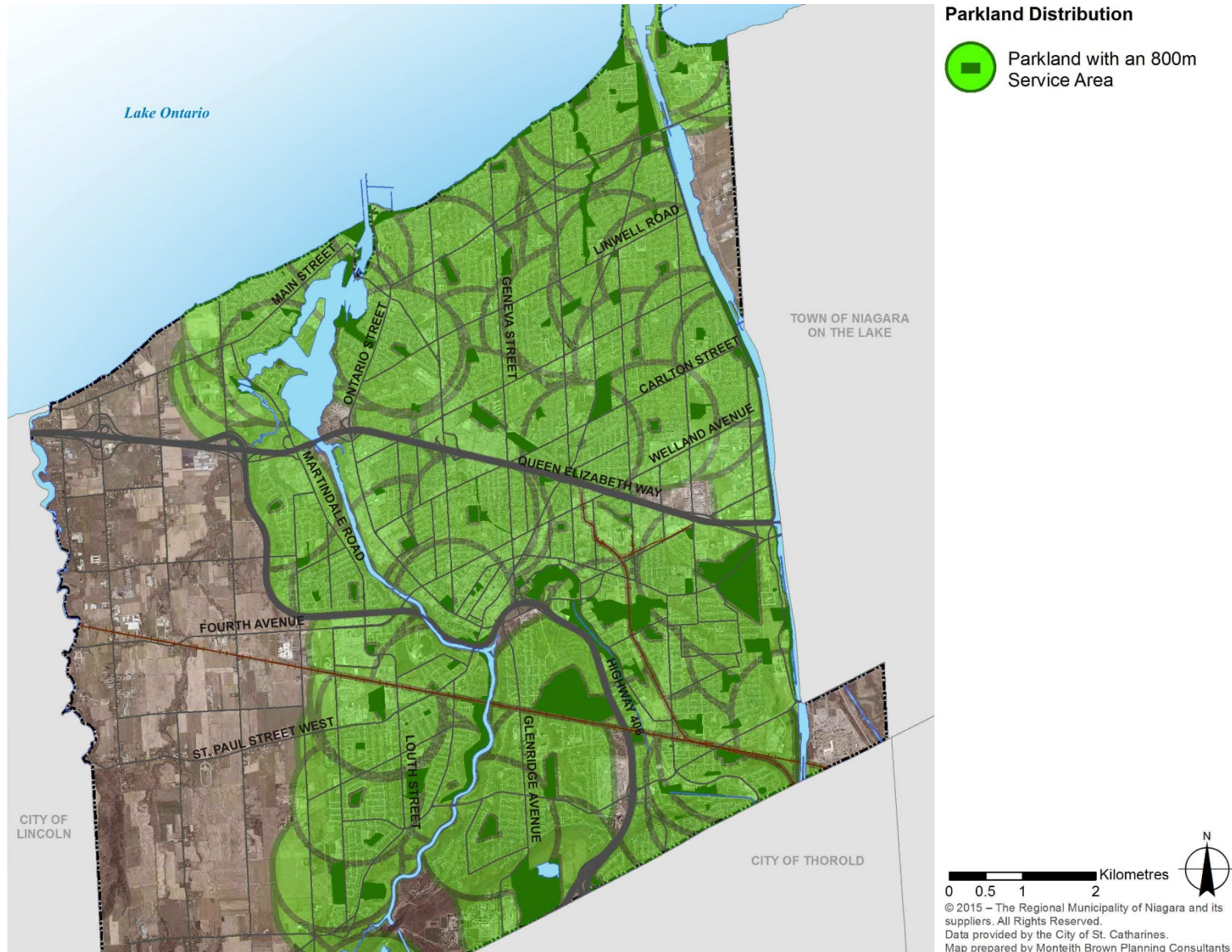
This classification of parkland is consistent with best practices and definitions employed in other Ontario municipalities, and most importantly, are deemed to adequately reflect the structure and intended function in which the local parks system has been designed. A deeper review into the parkland classification structure reveals the following:

- The City's supply of 562 hectares represents a level of service in the range of 4.0 hectares per 1,000 population, which is a healthy supply particularly in the context of the Parks Policy Plan which targets parks at 3.0 hectares per 1,000 and thus indicates that St. Catharines has done well in providing a broad range of parkland to its community. It is recognized that this level of service includes Victoria Lawn Cemetery (48.5 hectares) and a number of parks that are operated by, but not owned by, the City, such as 63.5 hectares of land along the Welland Canal Trail, Grantham Lions Park, Lakeside Park, etc. that are publically accessible open spaces.
- Service radii recommended in the Parks Policy Plan for each park typology remain adequate for the current master planning period.
- Existing service levels for Special Urban Parks and Neighbourhood Parks (0.95 hectares per 1,000), District Parks (0.52 hectares per 1,000) and City-wide Parks (1.96 hectares per 1,000) align extremely well with those established in the Parks Policy Plan. As noted in that plan, however, there continues to be differences in the service level of each park typology in different areas of the City.

Forecasting the level of service to the year 2026 (assuming the parkland supply remains constant), parkland is anticipated to be provided at a rate of 3.9 hectares per 1,000 persons, remaining above the Parks Policy Plan target. Another indicator of strength of the parkland system is the excellent geographic coverage achieved in St. Catharines. An 800 metre service radius is applied to all municipal parks (recognizing that the Parks Policy Plan identifies larger radii for higher order parks) as the intent is to show general walkability within ten to fifteen minutes, unobstructed by major pedestrian barriers (i.e. arterial roads, highways, railways and waterways). Doing so shows that most residential areas of the City are located within reasonable walking distance of a park, recognizing that the quality or function of each park will vary.



Map 11: Distribution of City Parks







From a fiscal and land availability perspective, there are few opportunities to add significant amounts of open space to the existing supply of parkland due to a shortage of available land and the high cost of land. In moving forward with the implementation of the Parks Policy Plan, the City should continue to emphasize the following:

- Providing parkland in new residential growth areas and any potential gap areas, using parkland dedication set forth in the Ontario Planning Act where permissible to do so. This may include identifying areas where there may be shortfalls in certain parkland typologies (e.g. District Parks, particularly since the noted deficit in rectangular sports fields may place a greater requirement for these types of parks).
- Striving to acquire 'lands to complete gaps in the trail system along the Lake Ontario waterfront, increasing public access to the waterfront, and improve waterfront parkland' as per Section 13.1.3 of the Garden City Plan.
- Designing parks and trailways in accordance with generally accepted standards for accessibility and safety.
- Integration of comfort elements (e.g. shade shelters, benches, washrooms, etc.) and wayfinding (e.g. signage) into parks and trails design, which would be particularly useful for aging populations but also be beneficial for residents and visitors of all ages.

As noted, it is a municipal objective to increase public access to waterfront areas recognizing that such space is highly valued by the entire community. In addition to the waterfront lands along the Welland Canal Trail and the Merritt Trail, the City of St. Catharines maintains three beach sites consisting of:

- Lakeside Park Beach that forms part of the larger park. Sand volleyball courts are also located within the beach. Of note, the City will be installing rubberized mats at the beach entry to facilitate access by persons with mobility-related disabilities.
- Municipal Beach which provides 365 metres (1,200 feet) of sandy beach along Lake Ontario, located along the Waterfront Trail and in close proximity to the Welland Canals Parkway Trail.
- Jones Beach which does not have any formal amenities beyond a parking lot.

The City should continue to enhance its waterfront by adding amenities (i.e. washrooms at key locations), ongoing beautification efforts (i.e. tree plantings, horticultural displays) and infrastructure development (i.e. paved pathways in strategic locations, lighting, etc.). The waterfront areas are also a space that can provide opportunities for a number of other marine uses such as angling, boating, canoeing/kayaking, kite flying, etc. and should continue to be supported with appropriate amenities (e.g. piers, boat launches, beach areas, etc.), where appropriate, as recently done with the addition of the kayak launch.

In addition and complementary to municipal parkland, there are many trail routes and pathways in the City of St. Catharines, some of which are described below:

- Welland Canals Parkway Trail – A multi-use trail spanning 9 km in length and offers a walking, biking and in-line skating path. Provides links to the Flight Locks, the St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre, Malcolmson Eco-Park and the Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail.
- Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail – The St. Catharines section of this provincial multi-use trail is approximately 9 km, and is suitable for both cyclists and hikers.
- Port Dalhousie Harbourfront Walkway Waterfront Trail – Makes up a small but vital section of the larger provincial Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail, following the shoreline and winding past historical sites, connecting Lakeside Park and the East and West Piers.
- Merritt Trail – An 11 km long segmented trail that connects with the Green Ribbon Trail. The pathway consists of stone dust providing a surface for pedestrian and bicycle use.
- Green Ribbon Trail – A 0.5 km trail surrounded by a class one wetland. The trail is ideally suited for year round activities such as fishing, jogging and canoeing.
- Participark Trail – A 2 km trail with a link to the Merritt Trail.
- Burgoyne Woods - The pathway is conducive for walking, jogging or cycling, while there are also nature trails provided in the central portion of the park.
- Terry Fox Trail – A 1.5 km trail.
- Walker's Creek Trail – A 1.5 km multi-season trail with stone dust surface.
- Bruce Trail - St. Catharines contains a 20 km section and associated side trails of this provincial footpath, which follows the Niagara Escarpment, extending from Niagara-on-the-Lake to Tobermory. Of note, the Morningstar Mill is along the Bruce Trail.
- Short Hills Provincial Park – Hiking, cycling and horseback riding are uses for the trails provided in this provincially-owned natural open space, which also connects with the Bruce Trail.

The Parks Policy Plan recommended a number of trail acquisition and development priorities, a number of which have been pursued by the City. Categorized into three levels of priority, these actions from the Parks Policy Plan are summarized below. It is recommended that the City continue to strive to attain its trail related objectives as articulated through the Parks Policy Plan and other strategic documents, largely by rounding out any remaining Priority One Actions and placing a focus on Priority Two Actions.



### Priority One

- Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail
- Extension of Welland Canal Parkway North to St. Lawrence Seaway Authority Piers
- Port Master Park to Dalemere Park
- Green Ribbon/Merritt Trail extension to EPA lands along 406 east corridor
- Burgoyne Woods Trails
- Joe McCaffrey Sports Park hydro corridor
- Southerly extension of Participark Trail/Laura Secord Trail along Twelve Mile Creek, including discussions with Ontario Power Generation

### Priority Two

- CNR spur line rail-to-trail conversion
- Centennial Gardens connection to Merritt Trail
- Yale Crescent rail conversion corridor
- Walker's Creek trail improvements

### Priority Three

- Green Ribbon/Merritt Trail extension to EPA lands along Highway 406 east corridor crossing the Q.E.W.
- CNR south to hydro corridor, crossing Q.E.W. to Merritt and Bruce Trails
- Centennial Gardens connection to Merritt and Bruce Trails, crossing Highway 406

## **Recommendations**

- #36. Continue to implement the Parks Policy Plan, along with its parkland classification system and service levels, as a guiding document that directs investment and management within the municipal parks system. Specific attention should be paid to pursuing parkland dedication and acquisition objectives of the Parks Policy Plan and the Garden City Plan, while outstanding Priority One and Priority Two trail-related actions should also be implemented where feasible, to continue to move towards an interconnected and comprehensive parks and active transportation system.
- #37. Continue to enhance the design and redesign of parks and trails through strategic improvements focused on accessibility for persons with disabilities and special needs, user comfort, safety, wayfinding and interpretative signage, at a minimum.
- #38. Continue to enhance public access, experience and connectivity within waterfront areas through strategic land acquisitions and park/trail improvements as per above.

Section 5

# Programming and Service Reviews

The way in which the City provides services to its residents is as critical as the types of recreation facilities and programs that are offered. This Section is intended to provide guidance to the City of St. Catharines with respect to the planning and delivery of its outdoor spaces and amenities and its indoor recreation facilities and respective programming.







## 5.1 Program and Service Delivery Review

The critical questions that are addressed in the Recreation Facility and Program Master Plan's Service Delivery Review include:

- a) What is the role of the City in providing and enabling recreation programs and services in maximizing participation and what is the service delivery model?
- b) What influences impact the delivery of services, for example - diversity, participation rates, demographics, trends, promising practices in other jurisdictions and the voice of residents heard during the consultations to support the development of the plan?
- c) How can related partners and stakeholders address priorities in the delivery of service to contribute in providing a broad range of choices for residents?
- d) What are the recommended service delivery priorities for the future and how can these be developed in a timely and effective manner?
- e) How can the City demonstrate to the public and stakeholders that progress is being made on the implementation of the service delivery recommendations?

Priority actions are offered as a result of quantified data, community engagement, consultation and research articulated in previous sections of this document. The focus is on the delivery of programs and services and priorities for further planning, implementation and continuous evaluation. Developed in concert with the facility assessment, the Program and Service Delivery Review creates a framework for policy development and effective administration of the City's recreation programs and services in continuing to meet the needs of the residents.

### Increasing Resident's Participation in Safe and Welcoming Environments

Delivering relevant, quality driven and safe programs and services in St. Catharines requires synergistic efforts amongst the public, staff, partners, sponsors and volunteers. Energies are spent identifying the changing makeup and needs of the community, interpreting current research, developing plans, and developing program and services that are meaningful and well utilized. Implementing programs and services through marketing, registration, delivery and evaluation requires coordination and a thoughtful approach. There is no one solution in a city with such diverse needs as St. Catharines; varying approaches need to be taken to reach out and include all residents in leisure

time pursuits. It is therefore critical that all service providers keep focussed in a similar direction to ensure that there is alignment in these effective yet differing approaches.

The approach to service delivery is as important as the facilities that are provided, as the programs and service needs determine how the assets will be designed and utilized. Continued emphasis should be placed on delivering services in an integrated manner by providing programs directly and enabling community organizations to deliver quality programs and services within a blended model. This harmonized approach takes great effort and serves to avoid duplication of resources and capitalizes on limited funding.

The vision for programs and services must include the notion that participation in active and passive leisure opportunities is key to the quality of life in St. Catharines and key to the health and wellness of each individual resident. All efforts must be coordinated and focussed on including as many residents as possible to garner the social, physical, psychological and emotional benefits. Maximizing participation in quality recreational pursuits is the key to healthy individuals, thriving families and a strong community. Everyone that is engaged in providing or enabling recreation in St. Catharines must see themselves as playing a part in reaching out to more residents to be included in quality leisure pursuits; the community is stronger when it works together toward one simple but compelling vision. The focus of the Department for 2015 to 2020 will have all energies on more people participating in recreation more often through exploring strategic partnerships and by renewing efforts to include all residents in physical activity.

This section of the Master Plan focusses on the four key areas of focus from a service delivery perspective and addresses the question as to how recreation service delivery to the citizens of St. Catharines can increase participation in safe and welcoming environments. The four key areas of focus includes:

1. Program and Service Delivery Priorities
2. Inclusion and Diversity
3. Building Capacity through Partnerships, Community Development and Volunteers
4. Maximizing Participation and Increasing the Use of Facilities and Programs

### The Role of Local Government

Similar to other municipal and local governments, St. Catharines has an inherent part in providing and enabling recreational opportunities for the community. The role of local government is to ensure that active and social activities and like services for residents are provided in the most cost effective and efficient manner. Typically, communities enable various methods to ensure that residents can enjoy active and healthy lifestyles. Council must ensure that these approaches are sustainable over time and can adapt to changing conditions like population growth, income disparity, diversity and varying backgrounds of residents. The role of the municipality is to anticipate and plan for these changes and develop the tools necessary to be proactive and respond in partnership with other providers. Most successful





communities demonstrate strong communications, promotion and awareness of opportunities, the development of a common vision and guiding principles, partnerships, joint development and planning initiatives, financial assistance and/or in-kind support for new initiatives and evaluation mechanisms. The most proactive municipalities continuously have their pulse on the community, build cohesion and a sense of purpose with all providers and move toward the same vision and goals.

Related service providers may have a distinct mandate from a health promotions and social services perspective, or a faith-based mandate to engage residents through recreation and social pursuits. Private providers have a profit driven mandate and may well have a discount in order to better penetrate various markets like youth and older adults. All providers have a common objective in providing market driven services although their motivation may differ. Effective communities provide forums for discussions including all providers; common communications and training tools; and one stop shopping mechanisms for similar age cohorts and segments. The collective responsively evaluates the complete system to proactively respond to trends and current and anticipated issues.

### Current Service Delivery Model

The current program and service delivery model for recreation utilizes a two tiered approach. Programs and services are provided **directly** through both the City and other providers. Staff members and volunteers determine needs in concert with community and member research/consultation and follow a continuum of developing, implementing, delivering, evaluating and improving service and program delivery. Other programs and opportunities are provided through community groups, faith groups, non-profit organizations and the private sector which is considered **indirect delivery**. Through a combination of direct program delivery and indirect delivery as well as community development tools (where staff support community organization initiatives), the municipality strives to ensure a diverse and a barrier free range of recreational programs and/or opportunities for all residents, regardless of their background.

## 5.2 Program and Service Delivery Methods

### Direct Program and Service Delivery

The Parks, Recreation and Culture Services Department delivers programs and services across the municipality in a variety of facilities and spaces and these programs and services are either offered as registered programs or as drop-in and casual opportunities. Staff design, develop and execute programs based on resident interests and new trends. A registered program and member based activity (e.g., fitness) is a supervised activity/course; and residents register for the programs and commit to attend the workshops or series of classes. Most often there is learning and skill development involved in a structured environment and many of the programs are standardized so the same program can be offered in multiple locations. In addition to registered programs, flexible drop-in activities are offered.

Drop-in programs offer the ability to participate in a range of recreation activities without having to register beforehand. This provides an element of flexibility for residents' busy schedules. These programs are generally offered at a lower cost and can be accessed when the services are scheduled in the recreation facilities. Drop-in opportunities are becoming more popular as busy schedules dictate the need for more casual form of recreation.

### Indirect Program and Service Delivery

Beyond direct provision, St. Catharines supports the delivery of recreation programs and services through partnerships with volunteers, not-for-profit organizations and other local service providers. A recent review of volunteer stakeholder groups notes that there are 140 groups and organizations providing services and recreational pursuits. Support from the municipality is provided in a variety of ways:

#### *Permits*

Recreation facilities are distributed throughout the municipality and provide valuable local space to many community based recreation service providers. Permits are provided for a wide range of activities including sports, special events, arts, aquatics, meetings, social gatherings, fundraisers, and general activities. These leased facility spaces are available to all groups servicing residents for both recreation and other uses.

#### *Community Development and Enabling Self-Determining Groups*

St. Catharines partners with local community organizations to facilitate the development of strong relationships and build the group's capacity to sustain their recreation activities over time. Organizations that rely on volunteers often do not have the capacity to recruit and train individuals to assist with the program delivery. The municipality often assists these groups with volunteer recruitment, governance structures, and policy templates and generally provides guidance to ensure the groups have access to information on grants, fundraising and networking opportunities.

#### *Grants Program*

St. Catharines provides annual grants to non-profit groups for a variety of purposes, including the provision of recreational experiences for community members. The grant program is an excellent way to broaden the reach of recreational opportunities and support volunteer efforts in the community.

Various methods are used to provide a range of choices and deliver quality recreational pursuits in St. Catharines. It is important to understand the full range of service providers as demographics change and the older adult population increases. It will be important to



understand how groups can work better in partnership to garner the greatest efficiencies in order to provide the number and scope of recreation programs and services that will be needed. St. Catharines needs to begin to understand the penetration rate of these combined groups and what numbers can be anticipated in the future. Developing some baseline metrics around inputs, outputs, efficiencies and effectiveness will better determine the reach and effectiveness of these various approaches over time.

It cannot and should not be assumed that additional resources will be readily available to support increased participation; resources and supports must be geared to the organizations who can self-organize, have little overhead and have significant reach in including increasing participation. Further, the focus on the delivery of programs and services must be geared to residents that most need assistance in terms of subsidized programs and services. This is the only way that adequate recreational opportunities for residents can be sustained in St. Catharines over time.

### **Trends in the Delivery of Recreation Services**

The initial stages of the Master Plan's development included a research component, community engagement, compilation of a demographic profile of the community and a detailed analysis of current recreation and leisure trends (which are summarized in Section 2.2). Trends must be considered as part of the service delivery assessment as they have an impact on what communities across Ontario are considering as they develop a broad range of program and service opportunities. Trends can describe current approaches to service delivery, quality assurance initiatives or focus on a specific age group or segment of the population. The following summary of trends (built upon the Master Plan's background research) describes what is relevant in St. Catharines, while considering the community input that has been received in the development of this plan.

- Addressing lack of free time to participate with a greater focus on drop-in and casual opportunities.
- Seeking ways to combat escalating rates of physical inactivity and obesity, potential in partnership with like-minded agencies and organizations.
- Continuing to focus on youth through program and facility delivery, participating in the 'Youth Friendly Communities' initiative through the Play Works Partnership (St. Catharines received approval from Council in 2013 to submit an application to Play Works to have St. Catharines considered as a Youth Friendly Community).
- Engaging the aging population (particularly the Baby Boom generation), understanding their needs and providing support for self-directed older adult groups.

- Furthering the work of having received an Age Friendly City designation by developing an Age Friendly Action Plan with specific focus on social cohesion and inclusion, aging in place, civic engagement and empowerment, intergenerational opportunities, active transportation at a minimum. Other cities having received the designation (e.g. Windsor, Ottawa, and Toronto) have developed multi-year action plans by including the voice of older adults in the research and development of community specific actions.
- Working within the Canadian Sport for Life (CS4L) and its Long Term Athlete Development Program (LTAD) by bringing sport groups together to discuss common challenges and work with the municipality to address sport development issues and concerns under a common framework. This approach will remain an important consideration of St. Catharines as sport preferences change and the need to keep residents engaged increases.
- As a waterfront community, continuing to emphasize learn-to-swim opportunities as a means of drowning prevention. The Lifesaving Society has developed the “Swim to Survive” program that enables non-swimmers to be able to swim to safety and survive a potential water incident. St. Catharines actively promotes the Swim to Survive program with schools and this initiative requires continued support.
- Striving to integrate principles and best practices surrounding cultural diversity, inclusion and accessibility into the design and administration of City recreation facilities and programs. This may include adoption of gender-specific programs (such as learn to play hockey for girls and women), introduction of ‘Safe Spaces’ philosophies, broadening the availability of low to no cost program options.
- Working with residents and stakeholders to strengthen neighbourhoods and create community hubs through collaborative delivery of recreation services. Staff work with community leaders to create a dialogue and assist residents in discussing and creating opportunities for social interaction and address community issues. The end goal is to create a greater sense of belonging, empowerment, pride and cohesion within local neighbourhoods.
- Building capacity through community development, partnerships, and volunteers as a means to provide quality, accessible services in spite of budget pressures, reductions in traditional forms of funding, and changes in the way resources are allocated. The trend is for innovative departments to seek out community development and partnership opportunities as well as augment services through the use of volunteers. These combined approaches provide better choices with fewer burdens to the taxpayer than trying to provide all services municipally.



## 5.3 Key Focus Area One: Recreation Service Delivery Priorities

**Goal: To ensure that the provision of programs and services reflect current and anticipated community needs.**

The delivery of recreation services is a complex operation with thousands of programs and services offered annually and with hundreds of thousands of visitors and participants. The City and its community partners will continue to place a priority on their own sport or programs to ensure that they can respond to the needs of athletes and participants in order to grow these opportunities. It must be noted that the review of programs and services found that staff are nimble and responsive in providing meaningful services and specific directives on program gaps are not needed. Staff are proactive in terms of trends and are empowered to develop new opportunities.

Community input, current demographics and/or health and quality of life issues prompt the City to place focus on certain service delivery priorities. This does not imply that resources should be reduced in other program areas; it does imply, however, that continued dialogue and working with community partners is required to address these priorities. It is suggested that specific focus is required for the duration of the plan on the delivery of recreation services for:

- Children/youth;
- Older adults;
- Promotion of physical activity and sport;
- Cultural experiences for residents of all ages and abilities;
- Learn to swim opportunities and prevention of water incidents;
- Casual and drop-in opportunities; and
- Life-long sport development for all residents.

### **Recommendations – Service Delivery Priority**

- #39. Host bi-annual meetings with other recreation service providers within St. Catharines to determine joint priorities (diversity, access and inclusion, casual opportunities, drowning prevention, sport development etc.) and an approach to working better together.
- #40. Continue to promote all City-wide casual and drop-in (non-registered, low cost/ no cost) opportunities (trails, public skate and swim, public tennis opportunities, picnics, St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre, etc.) opportunities for residents and families. Market availability of opportunities between City program sessions to provide additional drop-in program opportunities.

- #41. Complete a survey every other year on the satisfaction levels of residents, participants and volunteers with a view to maintain a minimum 85% satisfaction level and continually seek solutions to improve service delivery.
- #42. Host full-staff workshops at least twice annually to brainstorm, share information on key departmental issues and discuss the status of the Master Plan implementation.

### **Recommendations - Children and Youth**

- #43. Continue to implement the Parks and Recreation Ontario High 5 Quality Assurance Program in the delivery of programs and aquatics.
- #44. Work collectively with supportive community partners to ensure that youth engagement / empowerment and the resulting benefits to youth and to the community continue to be a priority.
- #45. Continue to meet the designation requirements of the "Youth Friendly Community" through the Play Works Partnership in order to promote successes in engaging youth and address any gaps in the provision and enabling of youth services.

### **Recommendations - Older Adult**

- #46. Develop a multi-year Age Friendly City Action Plan to further the work in having received the Age Friendly City designation. Ensure that older adults are included in the development and implementation of the plan and further that social inclusion and cohesion, aging in place, active transportation, civic engagement and empowerment, intergenerational opportunities and broadening the reach of recreation, culture and parks opportunities to older adults becomes one of the key result areas of the plan.
- #47. Develop an outreach program with the Region of Niagara and social agencies to ensure that older adults from low income backgrounds can participate in recreation programs.
- #48. Host annual focus groups with older residents (non-members of the older adult clubs) to ensure that programs and services are accessible.
- #49. Investigate available software programs that promote all casual and drop-in opportunities and invite residents to participate on a weekly basis.





- #50. Address any transportation issues with St. Catharines Transit to negotiate drop-off /pick-up services in front of centres offering opportunities for older adults (and other residents that require transportation).
- #51. Gain an understanding of the participation rates of older adults in St. Catharines (of services provided municipally and by other stakeholders) with a view to providing the capacity needed to adequately respond to the number of older adults. With this understanding, the City should develop a strategy to attract a wider range of older adults at its older adult centres and community centres through innovative programming and scheduling.

### **Recommendations – Physical Activity**

- #52. Develop a portal on the City of St. Catharines' website that promotes all available activities and resources supporting recreation and cultural opportunities for local residents. Ensure that a balance of physical and cultural programs and opportunities exist for all age and abilities.
- #53. Develop a working group with allied community partners (Health and Fitness, Public Health, Education, Social Services, etc.) to support efforts to increase the level, duration and intensity of physical activity in St. Catharines. Further, specific targets should be set that include awareness and increasing physical activity levels.
- #54. Denote all active choices in the Leisure Guide with a symbol to demonstrate that the active choice will assist in improving physical activity levels.

### **Recommendations - Sport Development and Sport for Life**

- #55. Coordinate a forum in concert with sport groups, the Niagara Accessibility Sport Council and support organizations to discuss the Canadian Sport for Life Model in St. Catharines. Discuss the CS4L model, strengths and gaps in sport delivery to inform further planning and consideration.

### **Recommendations - Learn to Swim**

- #56. Develop an annual communications/marketing plan on the importance of learning to swim and surviving in and around the water. Utilize the Leisure Guide to impart seasonal water safety messaging.

- #57. Continue to offer the Swim to Survive program offered to students, given its strong success relative to other municipalities, and quantify the number of students engaged in the program year over year.
- #58. Form relationships with groups representing diverse populations to impart the importance of learning to swim in Ontario and safety measures in and around water.

## 5.4 Key Focus Area Two: Inclusion and Diversity – Recreation for All

**Goal: To ensure that all residents feel included and welcomed to participate in safe and enjoyable parks and recreational activities.**

Responding to the diverse needs of residents is seen as a strategic advantage in gaining more participation in recreation programs. It is not seen so much as a social responsibility but as a way of responding to different markets and growing the customer base. The development of programs and services must include reaching out to diverse populations to provide for better customer insight. Forming relationships and partnerships with diverse groups is key to understanding needs and developing programs that are reflective of the needs of a diverse population.

Communities, agencies, and the business sector are broadening their definition of diversity to include all groups that are under-represented or marginalized as a result of their backgrounds and/or abilities. This definition includes but is not limited to persons from culturally diverse backgrounds, persons with disabilities, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Questioning (LGBTQ) community, gender equity, etc. The principle of equitable access to parks, recreation and cultural services is strengthened by identifying groups that may require taking different approaches to feeling included. Often building a relationship with representative groups and key leaders within a given social community is the first step in understanding needs and the capacity of the group to independently deliver and/or join in on municipally delivered opportunities. Joint efforts are developed based on what assistance can be offered by the municipality and what can be better accomplished by working together.

Greater efforts are being made to educate, train and enable staff, volunteers and residents to ensure that everyone is welcome and that all residents are entitled to barrier-free access. The term “Cultural Competency” is used to capture a broader notion of diversity and expand on what varying group’s require in terms of inclusive services. Efforts are also made to have a staff / volunteer mix that is representative of the community they serve; this is done in an effort to ensure that centres and services are more welcoming.



### Including Residents from Low Income Backgrounds

Staff have worked over the years to engage residents from lower income backgrounds as the benefits to the individual and family are critical to positive outcomes. The approach to including these residents has been to offer a blend of fee based programs and casual drop in activities that are free or carry low fees. The Fee Assistance in Recreation (F.A.I.R.) program has assisted families from low income backgrounds to participate by having fees accommodated.

### An Assessment of the Fee Assistance in Recreation Program (F.A.I.R.)

F.A.I.R. is a policy that embraces the principle that recreation opportunities should be accessible to all residents regardless of income levels. The benefits to residents participating in recreation, culture and sport opportunities are well known and increasing participation is an important element of individual, family and community wellness.

Residents who are eligible for financial assistance under the F.A.I.R. program are required to show proof of residency and an indication of their income status (in a confidential setting). The Program provides residents with a 50% reduction in the following:

- All programs and memberships
- Individual and family passes
- Four programs per annum

The policy and application is promoted in the Leisure Guide and on the City's website. Residents have become more aware of the F.A.I.R. policy to a certain extent and participation in the subsidy program has increased over the last four years. While it is positive to see that the number of residents utilizing the F.A.I.R. program has increased, the initiative has captured a very small portion of the nearly 20,000 low-income residents in St. Catharines (National Household Survey, 2010).

**Table 3: St. Catharines Recreation Subsidies, 2011 – 2014**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Residents Receiving Subsidy</b>	<b>Value of the Subsidies (rounded to the closest \$1.00)</b>	<b>Average Value Per Participant (rounded to the closest \$1.00)</b>
2011	2	\$50	\$25
2012	43	\$2,098	\$49
2013	79	\$3,357	\$42
2014	53 (Part year)	\$2,146	\$40

Many communities are becoming more proactive in reaching out to residents from low income backgrounds to increase participation from this demographic. Multi-level approaches need to be developed to promote the benefits and garner meaningful participation. Such initiatives include:

- Providing a range of no cost and low cost opportunities and promoting these opportunities in low income neighbourhoods. Offering leadership training at no cost in low income neighbourhoods to ensure that youth are well prepared to apply for part-time positions in recreation.
- Obtaining sponsorships for programs in low income neighbourhoods to offset costs of providing recreation activities.
- Furnishing entrances to community centres in low income neighbourhoods to provide welcoming spaces and opportunities for residents to become engaged in recreational pursuits.
- Engaging Social Service Agency staff to promote the City's no cost/ low cost activities and subsidy policies. Some municipalities have gone to the point of sharing the approval process for subsidies with Social Agency workers.
- Durham Region has formed a collective of recreation, education, social service and non-profit service providers called "Advancing Access to Affordable Recreation in Durham" (A.A.A.R.D.) to proactively increase the number of residents from low income backgrounds participating in recreation. The collective developed a multi-year strategy based on best practices and gaining a better understanding of the barriers to full access by surveying low income residents. The collective is keeping statistics of participation in subsidized opportunities and have set a target to capture 15% of low income residents in recreation programs. Some of the barriers that the collective is currently addressing is transportation and the cost of equipment to participate.
- Some municipalities are working with all sport groups using publically funded facilities to waive fees so that low income residents can participate in their sport or activity of choice. Other service providers list and promote all of the no cost / low cost and subsidized opportunities to allow a wide range of choices for low income residents.
- The City of Mississauga is developing partnerships to begin contracting service providers to deliver and enable a full range of recreation programs in low income neighbourhoods.

**The Equity Lens** – The City of Toronto developed an "Equity Lens" which is a simple tool that assists staff to be more inclusive as they review the effectiveness of existing policies/programs and develop new ones. The lens poses three questions for staff to address as programs and services are developed and/or reviewed.



1. How did you identify the barriers faced by diverse groups and assess the impact of the policy/program on them? What diverse groups are impacted by the identified barriers?
2. How did you reduce or remove the barriers? What changes have you made to the policy/program so that the diverse groups will benefit from the policy/program?
3. How do you measure the results of the policy/program to see if it works to benefit diverse groups?

**Persons with Disabilities:** Physical access to recreational facilities is imperative and a legislative requirement in Ontario as a baseline criteria in treating all residents equitably. The development and delivery of recreation programs and services for persons with disabilities should be viewed as a collective responsibility within the community. Often, municipalities take a leadership role in bringing all support agencies together to begin a more holistic discussion on the strengths, challenges and gaps of program and service provision. These discussions often are the impetus in developing priorities and strengthening the ability of the collective to share resources, increase penetration and to develop innovative and meaningful programs. The City of Hamilton recently developed a recreation plan for persons with disabilities by engaging all support organizations and agencies and by reaching out to residents with disabilities and has seen stronger relationships and meaningful recreation services as a result.

**Safe Spaces:** The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Questioning (LGBTQ) community often experience exclusionary behaviours. The introduction of "Safe Spaces" is one way of welcoming this community to public places. Safe Spaces was developed by Safe Spaces Canada whereby signage on the front door of a community space indicates that staff have been trained in reducing homophobic gestures and slurs and in creating welcoming environments.

**Positive Spaces:** The Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants developed the Positive Spaces Initiative through Citizen and Immigration Canada to denote public spaces that are safe for and welcoming to the LGBTQ community. Signage including the Pride flag in the graphic denotes that the space is positive for the LGBTQ population.

### **Recommendations – Inclusion and Diversity – Recreation for All**

#59. Develop a Diversity / Inclusion Policy and Practice model for the delivery/enabling of recreation programs and services that addresses but is not limited to the following elements:

- i. Define diversity, access and inclusion in the broadest sense including but not limited to, visible cultures, cultural diversity, persons with disabilities, gender equity, sexual orientation, persons from low income backgrounds, and other predominant yet marginalized groups.
- ii. Develop and implement an “Equity Lens” that ensures inclusive language and approaches in the development and delivery of services. The lens / checklist will be used to identify and remove barriers as programs and services are planned, executed and evaluated.
- iii. Form a reference group of representatives from diverse populations to ensure programs and services are reflective of the changing needs of the community.
- iv. Ensure that all correspondence and written materials are reflective of Plain Language principles and that training in Plain Language communications training is provided to relevant staff.
- v. Ensure that all community recreation centres can be considered Safe and/or Positive Spaces with the required training and identification to enable staff and volunteers to prevent homophobic slurs and gestures in creating safe recreational centres.
- vi. Review service delivery plans in each program area (aquatics, youth, older adults, fitness, culture, parks, etc.) to ensure that programs and services are welcoming and accessible to diverse and underrepresented populations within the community.

### **Recommendations – Residents from Low Income Backgrounds**

- #60. Continue to provide a blend of no cost low cost programs and opportunities for residents to ensure that the recreation system is open and accessible to all. Further consider where there are fee based programs that might be cost prohibitive, extend efforts to:
- i. Promote the F.A.I.R. policy and local recreation and sport opportunities to Niagara Regional Housing and Ontario Works staff;
  - ii. Continue to address other barriers to program participation, such as transportation and equipment;
  - iii. Consider a policy revision that requires recreation and sport groups that use subsidized City spaces to offer community outreach and subsidized/no cost registration for residents of low income backgrounds;
  - iv. Expand on the number of opportunities for at risk children and youth through corporate sponsorship opportunities;





- v. Provide more casual/drop-in and no cost/low cost recreational experiences and youth leadership opportunities in at risk neighbourhoods; and
- vi. Consider expanding the annual grants program to assist groups in providing recreational opportunities in lower income neighbourhoods.

### **Recommendations – Persons with Disabilities**

- #61. Develop and foster a working group with agencies and groups that provide services to persons with disabilities to enable a seamless system and barrier free access to recreation pursuits. Continue to provide one point of contact for residents with disabilities to receive the needed supports and advice in order to access and benefit from participation in recreation.
- #62. Continue to develop partnerships in reaching more residents with disabilities; quantify participation numbers on an annual basis and monitor the effectiveness of inclusion policies, practices and program offerings.

## **5.5 Key Focus Area Three: Building Community Capacity**

**Goal: To work more effectively with recreation service delivery stakeholders in order to increase the number and quality of recreational opportunities available to the public.**

Residents have demonstrated a willingness to actively support the delivery of recreation programs and services through organizing leagues and events and as well as volunteering. Partnerships have demonstrated an ability to increase opportunities for residents with little burden to the taxpayer. With growing interest in recreational pursuits, alternative delivery strategies are needed to augment directly offered programs and services. The City will need to continue to build and strengthen the current recreation service delivery system through partnerships, community development and volunteers.

Parks, Recreation and Culture departments in Ontario continue to work in a climate that demands broadening their reach to all residents by finding internal efficiencies. This requires the ability to be innovative and to enable staff to do more with equal or fewer resources. Municipalities have risen to this challenge and are beginning to work better together with institutions and organizations that have complementary mandates. The trend is for more innovative departments to proactively seek out community partnership opportunities as well as augment services through the use of other providers and volunteers. This combined approach provides better choices with less burden to the taxpayer than trying to provide all programs and services directly through the department.

It is helpful to utilize a common partnership framework to determine when and how partnerships should be developed and sustained. The use of the following Partnership Framework will enable all staff to seek out partnerships in their respective discipline to broaden the reach of their service efficiently and effectively.

**Partnership Goal** – To efficiently increase the number of residents participating in quality parks, recreation and culture experiences in St. Catharines by working in partnership with complementary organizations, agencies and institutions.

### Types of Partnerships in a Municipal Parks, Recreation and Culture Setting

In all partnership arrangements, specifications and requirements must ensure that the partner will respect and align with the Department’s vision, mandate, values, strategic priorities and service standards.

**Table 4: Partnership Types**

Partnership Types	Description	Formalized Relationship
Not-for-Profit Community Groups	Community groups exist to provide services, leagues, education etc. through the use of volunteers for the most part and are not-for-profit. They may require assistance in forming as a group but most likely require space and consideration for a not-for-profit rate for rental fees.	Typically community groups abide by an allocation policy or a Community Development Policy and thrive more effectively through sharing of information, cross-marketing of opportunities and regular communications to enhance the delivery system.
Complementary Institutions and Agencies	Working more effectively with school boards, hospitals and other agencies such as the Y and the Boys and Girls Clubs can benefit the community through the development of joint programs and initiatives and sharing of resources. This will broaden the reach of like programs and services and reduce duplication.	Requires a service level agreement or a reciprocal agreement that spells out the rights, obligations and deliverables of each agency.
Private Service Providers	Private service providers have a for-profit mandate and may provide specialized programs and services not necessarily in the municipal mandate. Often profit	A contract will articulate the rights, obligations and deliverables of each party. Specific consideration must be given to ensuring that



Partnership Types	Description	Formalized Relationship
	sharing can provide an alternate form of revenue to the municipality.	quality assurance, risk management and service levels are equal to that of the municipality.

**Guiding Principles**

Each partnership must be considered with the following guiding principles in mind:

- a) The outcome of the partnership is aligned with, and supported by, the municipal values, mandate and priorities;
- b) There is an articulated need for the proposed service in the community;
- c) The financial and liability risks to the municipality is shared or reduced;
- d) The proponent is best equipped and qualified to deliver the service through identified efficiencies, and the ability to reach an identified segment of the population;
- e) The quality of the program or service provided through the partnership meets municipal quality assurance and risk management requirements and complies with legislation;
- f) Unsolicited for-profit partnership proposals are dealt with transparently and through a competitive process as identified in the City's procurement process;
- g) Accountabilities and responsibilities can be clearly defined and complied with; and
- h) Annual reporting requirements capture participation numbers and alignment with departmental objectives.

**Making the Most Out of Existing and Future Partnerships**

Partnerships can increase the capacity of the municipality to deliver quality programs and services and therefore should be considered an integral part of the delivery system. Continued discussions should centre on how each organization can promote each organization's work and their respective contribution to the quality of life in St. Catharines. Annual reporting can demonstrate linkages to similar priorities, innovative partnership arrangements, outcomes and participation numbers as well as volunteer hours. The Department is encouraged to proactively seek out partnerships in the key priority areas for programs and services.

### **Recommendations – Program Partnership**

- #63. Proactively seek out partnerships based on the needs of the residents in the delivery of recreation services such as reaching diverse populations, greater access for low income residents, specialized equipment for persons with disabilities, expanded program provision, increasing the time and intensity of physical activity, providing casual, low fee / no fee programs and opportunities.
- #64. Establish opportunities for regular, ongoing dialogue with the St. Catharines Public Library with respect to long-term strategic planning and delivery objectives as it pertains to the role that the City and Library play in program and facility provision, including the continued co-location of recreational and library facilities, and coordinating program delivery.
- #65. Host an annual think tank with existing and potential partners to recognize excellence, determine current issues and trends, and to discuss opportunities for partnerships and strengthened approaches to integrated service delivery.
- #66. Determine where sponsorships can enhance the delivery of service and seek out sponsorships in an equitable and transparent fashion.

### **Recommendations – Community Development**

- #67. Expand the role of staff in the level of support that is provided to community and stakeholder groups from a maintenance role to a more proactive role. Begin to develop new groups and assist groups in their development based on gaps in city-wide and local needs such as diverse groups and building capacity within neighbourhoods.
- #68. Increase the supports provided to community groups (including, but not limited to, service clubs, sports organizations, older adult associations, arts and cultural groups, etc.) to better assist in their ongoing operations (communications, helping groups better reach out to diverse populations, training, posting of opportunities, etc.).

### **Recommendations – Volunteer**

- #69. Expand on the support to community groups through the creation of a Volunteer Development Strategy, which will include but not be limited to the recruitment, selection, training, retention and recognition of volunteers.
- #70. Develop training programs and an E-Tool kit based on identified priorities regarding recruitment, training, retention etc. for use by stakeholder groups.



- #71. Procure Volunteer software that serves to develop a database of community volunteers and match them with the volunteer opportunities that are available. The software should also track the number of active community volunteers and the number of volunteer hours annually.
- #72. Raise the profile of volunteers and their value within the broader community, in order to recruit and retain volunteers, and to increase volunteer satisfaction through meaningful experiences and appropriate recognition.

## 5.6 Key Focus Area Four: Maximizing Participation and the Use of Facilities

**Goal: To maximize the use of publicly-owned recreation facilities in order to derive the greatest social and physical benefits for the community.**

Many municipalities in Ontario are experiencing a decline in registered programs and an increase the number of residents attracted to casual and drop in opportunities. This trend is beginning to erode revenue targets associated with directly operated programs. This could be due to many reasons, including the levelling or slight decline in children and youth populations, diversity and differing needs, the time that is needed to dedicate to a set of lessons and/ or cost. The response by recreation service providers has been to look to a combination of approaches that fit with the needs of their communities and includes:

- Strengthening neighbourhoods through the creation of community hubs to better understand needs and deliver at the local level. A community hub is defined as a central meeting place where everyone is welcome to participate, socialize and learn about active and cultural opportunities in the community.
- Seeking out sponsorships to introduce innovative programs and services and alternate forms of revenue to offset costs;
- Intentional programming to address social issues (inactivity, drowning prevention, after-school programming) to attract residents into the program stream; and
- Forming strategic partnerships in offering programs and services to lessen the cost burden on all agencies.

Some trends in fully utilizing recreation facilities in response to social and leisure needs include:

### Increase Casual and Drop-In Opportunities – Pay As You Go

Busy schedules, commuting and getting children to activities are often reasons cited for not taking part in registered programs offered by recreation departments. Drop-in and casual opportunities are gaining in popularity.

### Memberships

Municipalities and other service providers are increasing their offerings of resident membership opportunities that allow residents' unlimited access to facilities and casual drop-in opportunities according to the membership options that they have chosen. A consistent schedule of drop-in and casual opportunities is posted and promoted to the community including indoor skating, shinny, public swim, drop-in basketball etc. A discount is generally offered for continued use of facilities through the membership option.

### Strengthening Neighbourhoods

The strong neighbourhood movement is gaining in popularity in southern Ontario. The goal is to recognize that neighbourhoods do not all have the same needs and engaging residents in discussions about their recreation needs prompts the formation of neighbourhood groups to self-organize and self-determine. Recreation Staff often have strong relationships at the local level and they should be seen as facilitators to gather relevant community leaders, groups and residents together to initiate these conversations. The use of community centres will most likely see a change as a result of this work to include other community agencies and organizations, although core recreation services must still be seen as the key deliverable in addressing local social issues.

### Increasing Program Registrations

Municipalities are looking to non-traditional means of increasing participation in recreation programs and are witnessing an increase as a result. One approach is to contract out the provision of specialized programs and offerings where there is a need for specialized skills and equipment. The municipality avoids many of the direct costs through a service agreement. Revenues are shared with contracted service providers and none of the hiring, training, program supply and supervisory costs are accrued to the municipality. The programs are listed in the community recreation guide and registrations are processed through the municipal computerized registration system. Samples of contracted and specialized programs include children's computer, science and theatre classes, film making, golf, photography, yoga and Sportball. Programs may or may not take place in municipal facilities.

### Promotion and the Use of Social Media

Continuous efforts to promote recreational opportunities and its benefits is an ongoing necessity in keeping residents informed. The use of the Leisure Guide, the St. Catharines website, the use of social media and are excellent communications mechanisms. An annual strategy to





communicate and promote recreation opportunities using additional mechanisms, such as cross promoting with other providers, would assist in increasing the number and frequency of communication impressions.

### Maximizing Technology in the Delivery of Services

The use of technology has enhanced service provision over the last decade. Requirements to manage social media, maintain websites and blogs as well as seek new solutions has required new levels of expertise and some very creative thinking. Innovative departments are committed and are willing to devote the funding and resources into ensuring that they understand the needs of their staff, users and non-users and develop technology based solutions centred on these needs. Some current examples of the use of technology to enhance the parks, recreation and cultural experience include:

#### **Code Scanning**

Bar codes are being inserted on promotional communications to enable residents to use their phones to scan them in order to enable immediate access to more information.

#### **Promotion of Casual Opportunities by Self-Determining Groups**

The use of technology to promote and engage residents in casual opportunities is also witnessing results in increased participation. Residents “join” a website and customize what activities they would like to receive information on. Each week residents receive a listing of the respective opportunities and are invited to “join in”. The respondent replies as to which opportunities he/she will be attending and a list of attendees is provided to the program/opportunity organizer. This approach is especially successful to those who are busy and cannot attend regimented multi- week opportunities. “Meet-Up” in Durham Region and “Socialable Sisters” in Southern Georgian Bay are both excellent examples of this approach.

#### **People Counters**

Laser people counters have been installed in parks, trails and recreation and cultural facilities to count the number of users in a day, month year etc. This information provides data on peak time usage and can address efficiencies such as energy use, staffing and maintenance scheduling.

#### **Active Networks and Exware Solutions**

Active Networks is an example of a cloud-based solution that is used to promote, register, secure payment and management data for activities and events. Exware Solutions is one example of an IT solution utilized to manage membership based opportunities.

### **Population Segmentation**

Oakville, Ajax, Markham and many other municipalities are using a software program by Environics that segments the population into 64 predominant types of residents and predicts their leisure (amongst other) preferences and behaviours. This program assists municipal staff and agencies in aptly predicting program and service types and levels of service. It also creates greater awareness of the types of residents living within their communities in terms of communications and engagement efforts.

### **Webinars for Professional Development and Staff Training**

Organizations with a large staff complement both in full and part-time staff are developing training and professional development webinars. This approach reduces the cost of facilitators, as webinars can be accessed collectively or individually. This approach to training, although it cannot fully replace the use of trainers, creates efficiencies in training staff in common professional development and training subject areas.

### **Virtual Meetings**

Travel time and the cost for staff to get to staff meetings is being reduced by the promotion of virtual meetings either by Skyping, or the use of FaceTime or Conference Calls. Major corporations are trying to reduce the number and frequency of meetings to create greater efficiencies.

### **Parks Interpretation and Points of Interest Enhancement Applications**

Parks Canada has introduced a GPS based application that allows parks users to learn more about points of interest in national parks through the use of their mobile phone. Two other applications that Parks Canada had introduced include a "How to Camp" application for new campers and a "Heritage Gourmet" application that lists Canadian heritage cooking recipes.

### **Forestry Tree Maintenance**

Many communities are tagging trees with chips that link the maintenance of the municipally-owned tree canopy to a data base. The data base can determine ordered tree trimming by streets and geographical areas as well as the age and type of tree stock. This technology assists with the more efficient way to maintain the tree canopy and provide other efficiency measures. This application could be extended to other maintenance applications such as playground inspections, and maintenance of parks amenities.



### **Linking Physical Activity to Brainpower**

FitBit and Lumosity (a program to boost mental reaction time and memory amongst other mental skills) have partnered to link their programs. An individual that has a FitBit and a subscription to Lumosity can agree to submit the results of their daily steps taken and their Lumosity exercises to a North American research project. The research is set to determine if physical activity is linked to the ability of the brain functions. This may have applicability within communities with efforts to increase physical activity levels and prevent mental decline in an aging population. There may be an innovative opportunity to determine the impacts on certain age cohorts within a geographical area.

These uses of technology are provided as examples and food for thought for the use of Council, staff and stakeholders. There may be applications or spin-off of applications that can create efficiencies and enhance the parks, recreation and culture experience in St. Catharines. As well there may be an ability to work with other like agencies and organizations to create meaningful applications and share in the resources that it takes to develop and launch them.

### **Recommendations – Increasing Participation and Maximizing Facility Use**

- #73. Coordinate a meeting with other recreation service providers (including, but not limited to, educational institutions, service clubs, the Y.M.C.A., Boys and Girls Club, etc.) to initiate the discussion on community and respective service priorities and how the collective can work better together toward common goals.
- #74. Investigate the feasibility of developing a “bundled” services membership to allow greater casual use of facilities and increase participation.
- #75. Investigate increasing the use of technology to increase participation in recreation services by connecting residents and groups with like interests.
- #76. In tandem with Corporate Communications and the Recreation Business Development Division, develop an annual promotions and communications plan that seeks to promote the benefits of participating in recreation, parks and cultural services and increase participation including the use of cross promotional opportunities.

## 5.7 Performance Measures

### Positioning Recreation in St. Catharines – Telling the Inspiring Story

Measuring performance can bring substantial benefits to any organization in the form of greater efficiency, effectiveness and accountability. This is an ongoing process of determining how well or how poorly a program, service or initiative is being delivered and or perceived. It involves the continuous collection of data and progress made towards achieving pre-established targets, goals or outcomes. Performance indicators, or measures, are developed as standards for assessing the extent to which goals or outcomes are achieved, alongside already established expectations of desired levels of performance.

The use of benchmarks with other communities comes with its challenges; there are many differing factors that can influence results such as demographics, subsidy levels, service provision mandates etc. The real measure is to compare performance year after year within St. Catharines to evaluate how effectively the City and its partners have addressed its goals to provide efficient and effective program and services.

A performance measurement framework is recommended as an effective tool for monitoring, capturing, and reporting information on the key goals identified in this plan. The intent is that the performance management framework will be used to evaluate, motivate, budget, celebrate, communicate, recognize, learn and improve service delivery. The following framework suggests measures to articulate baseline operational requirements. This should be put in place while developing methods of demonstrating the return on investment in parks, recreation and culture to individuals and the community as a whole. For example; how does a healthy tree canopy reduce the carbon footprint? How does increased physical activity reduce the investment in healthcare costs? What is the return on youth engagement in terms of completing education, reducing harmful behaviours and drug use? What is the economic impact of sport tourism in St. Catharines? The answers to these questions and others can demonstrate to the public that the investment in parks, recreation and culture are good and sound investments.

### Recommendations

- #77. Develop and implement performance measurement metrics as a part of the annual evaluation process to determine Departmental efficiencies and opportunities. Compare year to year results and report out annually to Council, the public and stakeholders. Suggested performance measures are provided in Table 5.
- #78. Develop an enhanced performance measures framework that demonstrates and quantifies where possible the return on the investment in parks, recreation and culture to individuals, respective age cohorts and the community as a whole.



**Table 5: Suggested Performance Measures**

<b>Performance Measure Category</b>	<b>Measures</b>	<b>Description</b>
Inputs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gross Operating Budget</li> <li>2. Net Operating Budget</li> <li>3. Staffing in Full-Time Equivalent</li> <li>4. Investment per capita in each of facilities, parks, culture and programs/camps</li> </ol>	This data provides an overview of the municipal investment in parks, recreation and culture.
Outputs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Number of hours of community spaces and programs available for use</li> <li>2. Capacity and fill-rates of facilities and programs</li> <li>3. Age groups and abilities served</li> <li>4. Number of users of the facilities</li> </ol>	This information compares the return on the investment year to year. This data responds to the question: How have these outputs increased/improved through staff and stakeholder efforts?
Efficiencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Operational cost per hour /per facility, operation and program type.</li> <li>2. Percent of cost recovery as a result of enhancements</li> <li>3. Facility use as a result of outreach and promotion</li> <li>4. Efficiencies (reduced costs)</li> </ol>	This data will demonstrate what has been done to become more efficient. How have expenditures been reduced through efficiencies and revenues been enhanced by increasing the use of facilities and participation in programs.
Effectiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. User and visitor satisfaction levels</li> </ol>	User and visitor satisfaction levels can indicate what staff are doing well and what can be done to improve the user's experience.



Section 6

# Implementation Strategy

This Section summarizes the Recreation Facility and Programming Master Plan's recommendations into an overarching implementation strategy that will guide planning and management of St. Catharines' recreation system over the next ten years.







## 6.1 Assessing the Need for Other Facilities and Programs

Through community consultations and a review of facilities and programs typically provided by the City of St. Catharines and other communities, the Master Plan assessed the need for a variety of recreation services. For facilities or programs that do not currently have sufficient demand to warrant a specific recommendation in the Master Plan, the City must be prepared to respond to future requests.

Such demands may arise for existing activities/facilities or for those that evolve according to future trends and preferences. When requests are brought forward for investment in non-traditional, emerging and/or non-core municipal services, the City should evaluate the need for these pursuits contingent upon the level of community requests and sound business planning. This should involve an examination into (but not be limited to):

- local/regional/provincial trends pertaining to usage and popularity of the activity/facility;
- examples of delivery models in other municipalities;
- local demand for the activity/facility;
- the ability of existing municipal facilities to accommodate the new service;
- whether the request can be addressed in partnership with a community-based provider;
- the feasibility for the City to reasonably and cost-effectively provide the service/facility as a core level of service;
- the willingness and ability of the requesting organization to provide the service if provided with appropriate municipal supports.

### Recommendations

#79. Requests for services and facilities falling beyond the spectrum of the City's core service delivery mandate should be investigated on their individual merits after considering at minimum the City's role and ability to cost-effectively deliver a needed service, its ability to jointly deliver the service through partnership, and if it has the resources available to deliver the service.

## 6.2 Site Selection Criteria for Major Recreation Facilities

In evaluating and selecting preferred sites for new and/or redeveloped recreation facilities, the City should use the minimum site selection criteria presented in Table 6.

**Table 6: Possible Site Selection Criteria for New and Expanded Recreation Facilities**

Criteria	Considerations
<b>Location and Access</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The site is within reasonable proximity to existing and future residential areas.</li> <li>• The site is located along an arterial or collector road, is in the vicinity of a sidewalk or walkway with lighting during the evening, and has barrier-free access.</li> <li>• The site is reasonably serviced by public transit</li> </ul>
<b>Focal Point Potential</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The site is located at or has the potential to be a community focal point and the site is at a highly visible location.</li> </ul>
<b>Site Development Potential</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The site area and shape are sufficient for the proposed use and provide a reasonable level of flexibility in design.</li> <li>• The site is able to accommodate enough on-site and/or nearby parking for both patrons and staff.</li> </ul>
<b>Community Compatibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The facility would be compatible (in terms of building design, scale, landscaping, setbacks, etc.) with the surrounding area/buildings.</li> </ul>
<b>Known Constraints</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The site is not unduly impacted by a geographic barrier (e.g. watercourse, rail line), is not restricted by easement/man-made obstructions, does not require site decommissioning (e.g. brownfield), and is relatively flat.</li> <li>• Suitable infrastructure exists (e.g. sewers, water, etc.) on or adjacent to the site.</li> <li>• The site does not require the demolition of an existing and needed building or elimination of necessary parkland, parking or other vital land use.</li> </ul>

Criteria	Considerations
<b>Planning Approval Status</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The site complies with Environmental Assessment Act and Official Plan policies, and has acceptable Zoning By-Law regulations or there is planning support for amending the planning documents.</li> </ul>
<b>Availability of Site</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The site is owned by the City (preferable), the site is currently for sale, and/or the site presents a viable partnership opportunity.</li> </ul>
<b>Expansion Potential</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The site possesses long-term expansion potential.</li> </ul>
<b>Amenity Opportunity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The site has the ability to enhance and/or support other facilities or parkland, accommodate potential partners, and generate increased usage due to proximity to other locations.</li> <li>The site offers the potential for economies of scale in construction and/or operation due to the co-location of other municipal and/or community services.</li> </ul>
<b>Enhanced Design Potential</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The site has the ability to incorporate outdoor parkland/features and architecturally integrate with surrounding buildings.</li> </ul>

### 6.3 Costing and Pricing Programs and Services

Developing a Rates and Fees By-Law and posting user fees for public information is a provincial legislative requirement as one of many ways of ensuring transparency in municipal governance. User and rental fees in a parks, recreation and culture setting are often seen as a way of recovering a portion of the costs of offering programs and services. There is no doubt that the provision of many services are subsidized by the tax payer within municipalities; the cost to operate buildings and public spaces cannot possibly be fully recovered through user fees. The benefits of participating in recreation experiences to individuals, families and the community are seen as a good investment. Municipalities continually seek ways and means of reducing costs through operational efficiencies and obtaining alternate forms of revenue (sponsorships, grants, advertising etc.). Even the most successful municipalities that are competent at reducing the bottom line costs of parks, recreation and culture still experience an operating loss that is subsidized through the tax base.

The question is typically asked as to how to defend certain prices and fees for the multitude of programs and services offered through parks, recreation and culture. Many municipalities base their fees on fee comparisons with other similar sized and surrounding municipalities and service providers, a determination as to what the market will bear and what certain age groups are able to pay such as youth and older adults. Further there is a growing need to offer a range of services that include no fee, low fee and fee based opportunities in order to include all residents and especially those from low income backgrounds. There is a growing number of municipal organizations that are producing defensible pricing schedules based on what the program or rental actually costs. Once a unit cost (an hour of ice, cost to maintain a hectare of parkland, cost for a learn to swim program etc.) is known, a level of subsidy can be determined based on the value of the service to the community. This approach of costing services is highly recommended as Council who are accountable to the public for this information can determine what is fair and equitable based on defensible criteria and approved principles.

### **Costing of Programs and Services**

Activity Based Costing is a method of determining what processes are used to develop and offer a program and their respective costs. For example the cost of offering swimming lessons includes:

- Staff costs to design and manage the operation
- Promotion of the opportunity through the Leisure Guide and other communications vehicles
- The cost of registering residents in a program
- The cost of instructors and on deck staff
- The cost of materials and supplies to offer the program
- An allocation of the operational cost to provide the space

Once costs are fairly understood and allocated (software programs are available) there is a determination of unit costs. The importance of understanding the costs of the various processes in producing a service or program is that it allows staff to isolate costs and look for ways to reduce costs within elements of the process. Knowing unit costs prompts staff to look to efficiencies versus increasing pricing as a way to recover a portion of the cost of programs and services. It prompts greater innovation and creativity. An example of this is the recent analysis of the leisure guide production and subsequent elimination of the cost of the design, printing and distribution through an external provider.

### **Pricing of Programs and Services**

Setting fees for services is often based on what the market will bear and not based on actual costs and the value of the program or service to the community. It should not be lost that there needs to be a full range of parks, recreation and culture opportunities that are accessible



to all residents regardless of income and that is not to say that all service fees should be set at the lowest possible level. Rates and fees should be set by their value and the Subsidy (F.A.I.R) Policy is designed to encourage persons from low income backgrounds to participate in any program that they choose. The mandate of the Parks, Recreation and Culture Services Department is to maximize participation in order to garner the benefits that these services will benefit individuals, families and the community as a whole and there are many approaches that need to be taken to engage underrepresented populations.

The Town of Oakville has a full pricing policy based on the true costs of services where pricing is based on the respective value of the program or service. The policy was developed using a multi-disciplinary team of representatives from the Finance Department and Recreation and Culture. The development of the policy sought out community engagement to assist in developing guiding principles and a fair and equitable approach over time. The City of Windsor also developed a policy that based pricing on the value that the program or service brings to the community. The process to determine costs and allocate indirect costs can be a lengthy process, but once an equation is determined; updates can be easily adjusted. Other communities such as Burlington consider what the market can bear and a pricing comparison with other like municipalities. The most comprehensive and successful policies utilize a combination of true costing, market penetration, what the market can bear and a comparison to surrounding and similar sized municipalities.

Most pricing policies include guiding principles and respective categorization of services based on their program type and/or the level of cost recovery associated with the program type.

### **Recommended Pricing Policy Guiding Principles**

- a) Pricing will be based on the true costs to provide the service (direct costs and indirect costs)
- b) An equitable and reasonable portion of the costs of programs and services will be recovered through user fees and rental rates based on the program's benefit to the community
- c) Staff will seek out ways to reduce the cost of providing the service and to obtain sponsorships and partnerships to augment revenue streams.
- d) The pricing of programs and services will attempt to recover all direct costs at a minimum (staffing, supplies, etc.). Further recovery of indirect costs will be pursued over time as is reasonable.
- e) Programs and services available to all residents all the time will and require little supervision shall be offered at no fee such as the use of trails and parks, playgrounds, splash pads, public tennis courts, sports courts etc. because of the public good that they bring to the community in terms of pride and cohesion.
- f) Categorization of service types will be based on their value to the general population.

Programs and services are then categorized under different classifications to denote the program type – No Cost /Low Cost, General and Specialized. Cost Recovery targets are then applied to each of the programs and services within the classification. The following is a list of some examples of programs and services that fall under each classification.

<b>Program &amp; Service Classifications</b>	<b>Description of Classification</b>	<b>Examples of Programs and Services within each Classification</b>
No Cost / Low Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Open to all residents</li> <li>- Provides opportunities for significant attendance</li> <li>- Casual and drop-in opportunities</li> <li>-Provides opportunities for specific populations such as youth and persons with disabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trails</li> <li>Public Tennis</li> <li>Public Swim</li> <li>Public Skate</li> <li>Special Events</li> </ul>
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Open to all residents</li> <li>- Provides a continuum of learning</li> <li>- Provides qualified instruction</li> <li>- Registration is required</li> <li>- Limited number of participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn to Swim</li> <li>Learn to Skate</li> <li>Aquatic Leadership Training</li> <li>Arts and culture lessons and clinics</li> <li>Rentals for ice, pools etc.</li> </ul>
Specialized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exclusive use of a facility</li> <li>- Participation is exclusive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Private swim lessons</li> <li>Rentals for private parties and events</li> <li>Commercial events</li> </ul>

### Developing Pricing Based on True Costs of Programs and Services

The purpose of a Pricing Policy is to determine a fair and equitable way to recover some of the costs of providing service without reducing participation. As completed in many municipalities (e.g. Windsor, Oakville, London, etc.), the development of a pricing policy requires community input on the purpose, principles and subsequently the testing of the pricing once cost recovery percentages have been applied. The task of costing services can take time to sort out what percentage of an administrative process (registration, promotion etc.) should be applied to a program type (aquatics, fitness, general programs, camps etc.). The advantage is that the setting of fees becomes a formula based approach and allows departments to provide 3 year fee schedules (based on anticipated costs) to allow volunteer community groups





to build longer term budgets and fundraising efforts. As part of the price determination process, the City should also explore potential new revenue streams such as user fee surcharges allocated to various facilities (e.g. to fund capital asset rehabilitation or replacement), commitment to reserve fund contributions, etc.

### **Recommendation**

#80. Develop a Pricing Policy to establish program and service pricing based on true costs, the benefit of the various programs and services to the community, and considering what the market will bear.

## **6.4 The Importance of Annual Monitoring, Reporting and Prioritization**

### **Monitoring and Reporting**

Ongoing trend tracking and monitoring is an essential step to ensure the Master Plan's recommendations remain relevant in the context of future circumstances. The City of St. Catharines undertakes long-term growth planning for the community as a whole. The directions of this Master Plan are driven in part by the historical and projected population growth trends for the community. Implications of historical growth patterns and socio-demographic characteristics are fairly easily contemplated, however, future demographic variables may be different than envisioned in the present day. As a result, ongoing monitoring of community demographics and growth patterns in relation to the assessments contained in this Plan is crucial.

The Parks, Recreation and Culture Services Department collects a great deal of information regarding the performance of its recreation facilities and programs. For example, CLASS software provides City Staff with a range of statistics which can be used to scrutinize performance and efficiencies over time. Building on the capabilities of this software and monitoring new information (e.g., trends and participation, changing utilization patterns, etc.) will be of great assistance to the City as it manages its recreation facility and service delivery system.

The City's information tracking system is completed by staff with some data gathered annually from stakeholder groups. Moving forward, continued engagement with community and stakeholder groups is considered to be an essential part of the planning and management of facilities. User groups should continue to be consulted to determine the trends, needs and capacity affecting them, recognizing that the long-term sustainability of community-based organizations to deliver services is critical to the local recreational system. As an example, the City should continue to collect registration information from major users of municipal sport facilities to assist in facility planning to assist in decision-making beyond facility allocation and booking processes.

Through continued professional development and appropriate allocation of staff time to research, Parks, Recreation and Culture Services Department staff should have the opportunity to remain apprised of emerging trends and best practices in their respective fields. The tracking of trends external to St. Catharines (e.g. throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe, as well as provincially and nationally) can provide Staff with ideas to anticipate local implications or bring efficiencies into their day-to-day operations.

By having the best information possible, the City is putting itself in a position to make informed decisions with respect to the planning and management of its recreation system. Relating this information back to the Master Plan on a regular basis is also critical. It is essential to prepare an annual implementation plan to track priorities that have been completed, ongoing, or deferred (e.g., matching the Master Plan's Implementation Strategy against the City's capital and operating budget). These implementation plans allow the Master Plan to remain a "living" document and its recommendations to be reconfirmed based on monitoring participation trends, facility utilization and program fill rates in relation to past levels. Performance measures (as advanced in the Program & Service Delivery section) are also good indicators to track progress and benchmark success.

It is strongly recommended that an update to the RFPMP be undertaken every five years in order to ensure that recommendations contained herein remain relevant based on future demographic and market characteristics, as well as providing a basis for the City to update its critical plans such as long-range capital plans.

### Decision-Making and Determining Priorities

The City, as with all municipalities in Ontario, has limited resources and cannot complete everything that the community desires. Although the City of St. Catharines may be challenged in providing the appropriate financial resources to meet the Master Plan's recommendations, there is an obligation to make every reasonable effort to implement these strategies through appropriate and acceptable means. Readjusting resource allocations is critical in a climate where base funding is not increasing substantially and resources need to be maximized in order to garner the greatest gain to the community. Full implementation of Master Plan requires the use of grants, alternative funding sources, development charges (which the City no longer collects), and the establishment of various partnerships and collaborations with community organizations, schools, agencies, and other partners. Accordingly, City Staff will need to remain apprised of ongoing capital and operating costs associated with implementing the Master Plan's recommendations and should continue to explore the most appropriate and alternate funding sources where possible. It is also appropriate to expect that the community build its own internal capacity to offer services that are delivered through City parks and facilities.

Priority/timing of recommendations has been determined based on an assessment of need, as identified throughout the RFPMP process (including community consultation, trend and demographic analysis, assessments of facilities, programs, and services, etc.) and is based



upon ideal circumstances. Budget pressures, changes in participation rates or demographics, availability of resources, and other factors may impact the City's implementation of the proposed recommendations.

The following matrix will assist staff in determining priorities as they develop long range and annual plans to reflect budget and resourcing implications. Staff will apply the criteria to each project, recommendation or initiative and determine its priority rating. It is important to put forward an annual balance of initiatives reflecting the supporting criteria for mandatory, critical and enhancement based projects in order to continually improve services and the facility and amenity stock. Significant weighting must be placed on mandatory projects.

Priority	Defined As:
<b>#1. Mandatory</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There is a prior legally binding commitment.</li> <li>2. There is a mandated requirement through legislation and health and safety.</li> <li>3. The project will prevent and/or reduce future risk to patrons, staff and/or the municipality.</li> <li>4. The initiative cannot be avoided, prolonged or stopped.</li> </ol>
<b>#2. Critical</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Aligned with a strategic priority defined in the strategic and/or master plans.</li> <li>2. Maintains equipment and facilities in a state of good repair and/or avoids a service disruption.</li> <li>3. Maintains current and relevant service levels.</li> <li>4. There is alternate funding available to implement the project and/or provide ongoing funding.</li> <li>5. Provides service equity throughout the municipality and better includes under-represented populations (low income, diverse backgrounds, persons with disabilities etc.)</li> <li>6. Ongoing operating and maintenance costs are financially sustainable without impacting existing service levels.</li> <li>7. Can be implemented quickly, have a positive impact in a short timeframe and has little to no budget and resourcing implications (Quick win).</li> </ol>
<b>#3. Service Enhancement</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improves service delivery as a priority identified by residents and industry best practises.</li> <li>2. Creates efficiencies by increasing revenues and/or decreasing expenditures so that funds can be utilized for other service enhancements.</li> <li>3. Increases participation by the general public or specific segments of the population.</li> <li>4. Better engages the community in the delivery of service.</li> </ol>

## Recommendations

- #81. Develop annual implementation plans that are prioritized utilizing the Plan's decision making matrix; support the implementation plan with ongoing monitoring and performance measurement and report progress annually.
- #82. Create a 25 year capital plan specific to recreational infrastructure to align with City-wide principles surrounding fiscal sustainability.
- #83. Update the Recreation Facility and Programming Master Plan after five years in order to ensure that its assessments and recommendations are reflective of future market circumstances (e.g. population levels, utilization and operating profiles, demographic profile, recreation preferences, etc.).

## 6.5 Implementation Strategy

Recommendations contained within the RFPMP have been organized into two broad categories. '**Strategic**' recommendations are those that articulate a recommended level of service or targeted number of facilities. '**Tactical**' recommendations are those that require investigation of an opportunity or the development of a policy.

Priority is generally synonymous with timing – the higher the priority, the sooner the recommendation should be implemented. All recommendations are important and, if properly implemented, will benefit community services within St. Catharines. The priority of recommendations is organized into three categories:

- **Short-term** (S) = High Priority (1-3 years) – 2015 to 2018
- **Medium-term** (M) = Medium Priority (4-6 years) – 2019 to 2021
- **Longer-term** (L) = Lower Priority (7-10 years) – 2022 to 2026

The RFPMP recognizes the need for phased implementation for certain action plans as they are based upon what is needed and not necessarily what is financially achievable at the present time. As such, the timing proposed for some action plans may not align with funding capacities as time goes by. As part of the annual budget process, the Master Plan will be reviewed to identify areas where the availability of resources may affect the timing of implementation (also see Section 6.4 for other variables that may influence priority/timing).

Recreation Facility Recommendations	Type	Timing		
		S	M	L
<b>Arenas</b>				
#1. The ice needs assessment has indicated that the supply of current ice pads exceeds the current demands required to serve user groups and the community beyond the next ten years. However, prior to considering a further reduction in the supply of arena ice pads, however, it is recommended that the City maintain its current supply (with Haig continuing to be decommissioned and includes the independently operated Merritton Arena and the Meridian Centre). A two phased approach is recommended to confirm ice pad demand with the first phase taking place over the next three years while the City undertakes the following actions:	Strategic	•		
a) Develop strategies aimed at increasing prime, shoulder and weekend hour utilizations through differentiated pricing strategies, alternative scheduling and allocation approaches, encouraging 'spot' bookings, etc.	Tactical	•		
b) Future assessments of operating and utilization performance should include prime time hours as defined by the Ice Allocation Policy for its tracking and reporting purposes (i.e. the 10pm and 11pm time slots for weekday and 9pm to 11pm for weekend rentals, as well as the 7am to 8am weekend time slots). This is consistent with industry norms and will allow for better comparisons with other arena performance in other municipalities.	Tactical	•		
c) Renegotiate the Merritton Centennial Arena agreement to require that City policies be fully implemented thereby ensuring a consistent and equitable approach across the City-owned arena supply in St. Catharines, including implementation of the Ice Allocation policy. As part of this, the agreement should provide the City full access to utilization, registration information and relevant financial information to allow for the City to integrate into its performance measurement exercises.	Tactical	•		

Recreation Facility Recommendations	Type	Timing		
		S	M	L
d) Revise the existing Ice Allocation Policy to: i) differentiate the priority of ice allocation of residents versus non-resident and commercial versus community; ii) differentiate with a higher priority given to the allocation of ice for community use versus commercial use; and iii) utilize the 'actual' amount of ice utilized by groups in the preceding year as a starting point for allocation rather than what was initially allocated (to recognize hours turned back after the allocation process from the previous year).	Tactical	•		
e) Review the arena budgeting practices to ensure alignment with best practices and provide greater understandability to the general public.	Tactical	•		
f) Monitor the planning exercise being undertaken by Ridley College for its campus, to determine potential impacts, if any, on the availability of the existing ice pad on community use.	Tactical	•		
g) Continue to decommission Haig Bowl for ice purposes (noting that dry floor uses would continue as long as sustainable to do so) subject to an arena facility provision strategy based upon the findings of the first phase recommendations.	Strategic	•		
#2. That City Staff review ice pad performance within three years, to re-evaluate ice needs following the consideration of the actions associated with the first phase recommendations (Recommendation #1). This will involve an updated assessment of user group registrations, utilization during prime and shoulder periods, program fill rates, capital/operating cost requirements, demographics of the community, etc. to confirm longer-term ice needs. It is expected that this process will determine the City's required supply of ice pads to meet community needs in the long-term.	Tactical		•	
a) Should surplus ice be determined at this time resulting in further reductions to the supply of ice pads (i.e. over and above the current number of operational ice pads), it is recommended that the City adjust the arena supply after examining a wide range of options guided by geographic location, level of utilization, building condition, financial performance and partnership opportunities at a minimum.	Strategic		•	



Recreation Facility Recommendations	Type	Timing		
		S	M	L
<p>b) Should the City determine an over-supply of ice pad exists but decides to continue to retain 8 ice pads (plus the Meridian Centre), the rationale for doing so would be on the basis that over-supplying arena facilities is a means to further recreational objectives, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. provision of surplus rental and programming capacity;</li> <li>ii. maximizing the convenience of playing ice sports by increasing availability of prime times, particularly to adult users;</li> <li>iii. maintaining strong geographic coverage, particularly south of the Q.E.W.;</li> <li>iv. accommodate a portion of regional ice demand;</li> <li>v. the City accepts the ongoing financial costs associated with required capital investments in the aging arena infrastructure, along with annual operating deficit of an over-supply; and</li> <li>vi. winter ice sports are deemed to be a higher community need than other possible activities or facilities that are required, but would be otherwise unfunded or underfunded, given finite budgetary resources in the Parks, Recreation and Culture Services portfolio (e.g. spaces for general purpose activities, youth and/or older adult programming, wellness and active living programs, etc.).</li> </ul>	Strategic		•	
<p>#3. Regardless of the number of pads the City should choose to retain, initiate potential partnership discussions with an educational institution, area municipality, or other suitable partner to construct a new arena complex to replace aging arena infrastructure in St. Catharines with the number of ice pads determined based upon the three year review noted in Recommendation #2. At a minimum, any such agreement should generally align with partnership principles found in Section 5.5 of this Master Plan, ensure sufficient community access for local residents at a competitive rate, require equitable financial contributions to capital and operating requirements relative to the degree of access obtained, and be strategically located within reasonable access to local residents.</p>	Tactical	•		

Recreation Facility Recommendations	Type	Timing		
		S	M	L
<b>Indoor Aquatics Centres</b>				
#4. Identify and engage potential partners that currently provide, or have an interest in providing indoor aquatics opportunities to determine how the City's residents and user groups may gain improved access to meet demands that cannot be met with the City's existing facility.	Tactical	•		
<b>Indoor Artificial Turf Fields</b>				
#5. Municipal entry into the indoor artificial turf market should only be pursued on the basis that a qualified partner(s) can be secured to contribute towards the capital and/or operating commitments and that such investment is first rationalized through a comprehensive business planning exercise.	Tactical			•
<b>Gymnasiums</b>				
#6. Subject to confirmation of site conditions and constraints, construct a gymnasium at the St. Catharines Kiwanis Aquatics Centre/Dr. Huq Family Library Branch along with any supporting spaces rationalized through the supporting business plan such as a wellness studio and/or additional multi-purpose program rooms. The design phase should engage stakeholders such as, but not limited to, the St. Catharines Public Library, older adult associations and other potential gymnasium users.	Strategic		•	
#7. Continue to maximize programming opportunities at the Port Weller Community Centre.	Strategic	ongoing		
#8. Engage in additional shared-use or reciprocal agreements to access existing and new gymnasiums operated by the District School Board of Niagara, Niagara Catholic District School Board and/or any other appropriate partnering agency in order to meet future gymnasium demands.	Tactical	ongoing		

Recreation Facility Recommendations	Type	Timing		
		S	M	L
<b>Fitness Space</b>				
#9. Integrate an active living studio as part of the City's recreation portfolio. This space should be flexibly designed to accommodate a range of activities, programs and interests, contain mirrored walls, have a wood-sprung floor and ceilings of sufficient height, and provide adequate storage.	Strategic		•	
<b>Community Centres</b>				
#10. Include at least one multi-purpose program room, preferably assigning program priority to youth and older adults, as part of the proposal to add a gymnasium to the St. Catharines Kiwanis Aquatics Centre/Dr. Huq Family Library Branch.	Strategic		•	
#11. Undertake a comprehensive review of community centre operations and options. Notable focus should be placed upon the Russell Avenue Community Centre and the Port Weller Community Centre.	Tactical	•		
<b>Older Adult Centres</b>				
#12. Through feasibility study and business planning process, evaluate the merits of integrating a multi-purpose room that assigns programming priority, in whole or in part, to older adult activities through the proposed expansion of the St. Catharines Kiwanis Aquatics Centre/Dr. Huq Family Library Branch or alternatively examine other municipal properties.	Strategic		•	
<b>Youth Space</b>				
#13. Through a feasibility study and business planning process, evaluate the merits of integrating a multi-purpose room that assigns programming priority, in whole or in part, to youth and activities through the proposed expansion of the St. Catharines Kiwanis Aquatics Centre/Dr. Huq Family Library Branch or alternatively examine other municipal properties.	Strategic		•	

Recreation Facility Recommendations	Type	Timing		
		S	M	L
<b>Rectangular Sports Fields</b>				
#14. Undertake an evaluation of Type B and Type C rectangular fields to determine the feasibility of installing field lighting, irrigation and/or drainage systems as a means to increase the playable capacity.	Tactical	•	•	
#15. Prepare a Sports Field Allocation Policy to effectively manage scheduling and booking practices in a manner that maximizes the utilization of all Class A, B, and C sports fields and ensure operational sustainability within the sports field supply. As part of this process, sports field user groups should be required to submit annual registration data to the City to aid in allocation and trend tracking efforts. In addition, the City should maintain dialogue with institutions such as Brock University, Ridley College and local schools to ensure that the rectangular fields they provide that are utilized by St. Catharines' sports groups are incorporated into the assessment of supply/demand for future fields.	Tactical	•		
#16. If rationalized through successful implementation of the proposed Sports Field Allocation Policy and ongoing monitoring of field utilization rates, explore opportunities to increase the number of fields through partnership agreements with local school boards and/or other sports field providers. If these agreements are not feasible, develop up to 25 additional unlit field equivalents, strategically co-located to the greatest degree possible. Local sports field users should be consulted prior to construction to facilitate standards of play required through the Ontario Soccer Association's Long Term Player Development model.	Tactical	•		
<b>Ball Diamonds</b>				
#17. Redesign at least one softball diamond to a size and specification that is capable of accommodating hardball programming among older youth and adult players.	Strategic	•		
#18. Explore opportunities to repurpose lower quality, underutilized or informal ball diamonds to other needed uses.	Tactical	ongoing		



Recreation Facility Recommendations	Type	Timing		
		S	M	L
<b>Splash Pads</b>				
#19. In tandem with the Master Plan's outdoor pool implementation strategy, splash pads should be distributed in a manner that ensures each of the six municipal wards have reasonable geographic access to a splash pad or continue to have access to an outdoor pool. The preferred location of future splash pads is within District or large Neighbourhood level parks.	Strategic	ongoing		
#20. Undertake usage and monitoring program at the two existing splash pads to collect information that can be used to rationalize the level of future investment relative to the costs associated with construction and operation of these facilities.	Tactical	•		
<b>Outdoor Pools</b>				
#21. Develop criteria to be used to establish the feasibility of operating outdoor pools in certain locations by factoring remediation costs related to building code and accessibility standards, heating and projected operating costs.	Tactical	•		
#22. In tandem with the recommended capital and operating budget exercises and the results of the performance analysis, initiate a business plan associated with the rejuvenation of outdoor rectangular pools selected for retention on the basis that they are to provide a more inclusive leisure and destination-themed experience.	Tactical	•		
#23. Subject to the results of the recommended capital and operating budget exercises and the results of the performance analysis, leverage current outdoor pool sites and identify locations for splash pads to replace aging and non-compliant assets.	Tactical		•	
<b>Tennis Courts</b>				
#24. Engage persons and organizations interested in forming a community tennis club, along with existing Realty Park members, to discuss how best to transition responsibilities to a qualified community provider that delivers organized tennis programming out of Realty Park on a non-profit basis.	Tactical	•		

Recreation Facility Recommendations	Type	Timing		
		S	M	L
#25. Explore opportunities to construct tennis courts in strategic gap areas, such as in the St. Andrew's Ward and the northern Merritton Ward, while ensuring existing tennis courts are maintained to facilitate an acceptable quality of play (see Recommendation #27).	Strategic			•
<b>Multi-Use Courts</b>				
#26. Construct 2 new multi-use courts, located in a manner that reconciles existing service gaps and/or where required to service new areas of residential development. Multi-use courts should be flexibly designed to accommodate a range of hard surface court activities, but should utilize a full size basketball court template with two basketball nets, at a minimum, as per the City's current design specification.	Strategic			•
#27. Create a capital renewal strategy for the City's hard surface courts (consisting of basketball and tennis courts) that defines the cost of replacing aging facilities and the proposed timeframe for doing so, while also exploring ways in which to fund these reinvestments potentially through partnerships, fundraising, and other means.	Tactical			•
<b>Skateboard Parks</b>				
#28. Construct one new skateboard park in a location that permits a better degree of geographic accessibility to populations residing north of the Q.E.W. This skateboard park should be a smaller-scale facility, as compared to the skatepark at the Seymour Hannah Sports and Entertainment Centre, and should be designed in consultation with local youth.	Strategic		•	
#29. Integrate beginner level "skate zones" or "micro" skateboard parks into appropriate neighbourhood-serving parks as the existing skateboard park at the Seymour Hannah Sports and Entertainment Centre is expected to meet intermediate to advanced level needs over the long term.	Tactical	ongoing		





Recreation Facility Recommendations	Type	Timing		
		S	M	L
<b>Playgrounds</b>				
#30. Provide creative playground structures in underserved areas and emerging growth areas, so that built-up residential areas have access to a playground within an 800 metre service radius, unobstructed by major pedestrian barriers.	Strategic	ongoing		
#31. As part of the playground inspection process, identify opportunities to integrate accessible/barrier-free components as a means to improve access to and within the playground structure for children and caregivers with disabilities.	Tactical	•		
#32. Prepare a playground renewal strategy that defines the cost and timeframe associated with replacing aging structures, while considering needed improvements to facilitate safe, inclusive and interactive play. This renewal strategy should also include a community engagement component to engage neighbourhoods in the design process of playground structures and/or other elements within the broader park.	Tactical	•		
<b>Golf Courses</b>				
#33. Monitor key performance and utilization indicators for both the Garden City Golf Course and the Fairview Golf Course to determine their long-term viability and revenue contributions to the City. In the event that future market conditions and operating profile of either golf course is not deemed to be favourable to the interests of the community, consideration may be given to repurposing the lands to another form of passive and/or active parkland provided that this is supported through a comprehensive business plan regarding municipal golf course operations.	Tactical	ongoing		

Recreation Facility Recommendations	Type	Timing		
		S	M	L
<b>Off-Leash Parks</b>				
#34. Establish a third leash-free dog park provided that a local community organization can demonstrate a commitment to maintaining ongoing operations of the dog park as per the terms of the current agreement with PALZ. The location of the proposed off-leash should be determined in consultation with the public and local stakeholders, and should be located north of the Queen Elizabeth Way in order to balance geographic distribution across the City.	Strategic	•		
#35. Continue to monitor utilization of existing and proposed dog parks with a view of providing additional off-leash opportunities based on distribution and ability of a third party to maintain operations (also refer to Recommendation #34).	Tactical	ongoing		
<b>Parks, Beaches and Trails</b>				
#36. Continue to implement the Parks Policy Plan, along with its parkland classification system and service levels, as a guiding document that directs investment and management within the municipal parks system. Specific attention should be paid to pursuing parkland dedication and acquisition objectives of the Parks Policy Plan and the Garden City Plan, while outstanding Priority One and Priority Two trail-related actions should also be implemented where feasible, to continue to move towards an interconnected and comprehensive parks and active transportation system.	Tactical	ongoing		
#37. Continue to enhance the design and redesign of parks and trails through strategic improvements focused on accessibility for persons with disabilities and special needs, user comfort, safety, wayfinding and interpretative signage, at a minimum.	Tactical	ongoing		
#38. Continue to enhance public access, experience and connectivity within waterfront areas through strategic land acquisitions and park/trail improvements as per above.	Tactical	ongoing		



Programming and Service Recommendations	Type	Timing		
		S	M	L
<b>Recreation Service Delivery Priorities</b>				
#39. Host bi-annual meetings with other recreation service providers within St. Catharines to determine joint priorities (diversity, access and inclusion, casual opportunities, drowning prevention, sport development etc.) and an approach to working better together.	Tactical	ongoing		
#40. Continue to promote all City-wide casual and drop-in (non-registered, low cost/ no cost) opportunities (trails, public skate and swim, public tennis opportunities, picnics, St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre, etc.) opportunities for residents and families. Market availability of opportunities between City program sessions to provide additional drop-in program opportunities.	Tactical	ongoing		
#41. Complete a survey every other year on the satisfaction levels of residents, participants and volunteers with a view to maintain a minimum 85% satisfaction level and continually seek solutions to improve service delivery.	Tactical	ongoing		
#42. Host full-staff workshops at least twice annually to brainstorm, share information on key departmental issues and discuss the status of the Master Plan implementation.	Tactical	ongoing		
#43. Continue to implement the Parks and Recreation Ontario High 5 Quality Assurance Program in the delivery of programs and aquatics.	Tactical	ongoing		
#44. Work collectively with supportive community partners to ensure that youth engagement / empowerment and the resulting benefits to youth and to the community continue to be a priority.	Tactical	ongoing		
#45. Continue to meet the designation requirements of the "Youth Friendly Community" through the Play Works Partnership in order to promote successes in engaging youth and address any gaps in the provision and enabling of youth services.	Tactical	ongoing		

Programming and Service Recommendations		Type	Timing		
			S	M	L
#46.	Develop a multi-year Age Friendly City Action Plan to further the work in having received the Age Friendly City designation. Ensure that older adults are included in the development and implementation of the plan and further that social inclusion and cohesion, aging in place, active transportation, civic engagement and empowerment, intergenerational opportunities and broadening the reach of recreation, culture and parks opportunities to older adults becomes one of the key result areas of the plan.	Tactical	•		
#47.	Develop an outreach program with the Region of Niagara and social agencies to ensure that older adults from low income backgrounds can participate in recreation programs.	Tactical	•		
#48.	Host annual focus groups with older residents (non-members of the older adult clubs) to ensure that programs and services are accessible.	Tactical	ongoing		
#49.	Investigate available software programs that promote all casual and drop-in opportunities and invite residents to participate on a weekly basis.	Tactical	•		
#50.	Address any transportation issues with St. Catharines Transit to negotiate drop-off /pick-up services in front of centres offering opportunities for older adults (and other residents that require transportation).	Tactical	•		
#51.	Gain an understanding of the participation rates of older adults in St. Catharines (of services provided municipally and by other stakeholders) with a view to providing the capacity needed to adequately respond to the number of older adults. With this understanding, the City should develop a strategy to attract a wider range of older adults at its older adult centres and community centres through innovative programming and scheduling.	Tactical	•		
#52.	Develop a portal on the City of St. Catharines' website that promotes all available activities and resources supporting recreation opportunities for local residents.	Tactical	•		

Programming and Service Recommendations	Type	Timing		
		S	M	L
#53. Develop a working group with allied community partners (Health and Fitness, Public Health, Education, Social Services, etc.) to support efforts to increase the level, duration and intensity of physical activity in St. Catharines. Further, specific targets should be set that include awareness and increasing physical activity levels.	Tactical	•		
#54. Denote all active choices in the Leisure Guide with a symbol to demonstrate that the active choice will assist in improving physical activity levels.	Tactical	ongoing		
#55. Coordinate a forum in concert with sport groups, the Niagara Accessibility Sport Council and support organizations to discuss the Canadian Sport for Life Model in St. Catharines. Discuss the CS4L model, strengths and gaps in sport delivery to inform further planning and consideration.	Tactical	•		
#56. Develop an annual communications/marketing plan on the importance of learning to swim and surviving in and around the water. Utilize the Leisure Guide to impart seasonal water safety messaging.	Tactical	•		
#57. Continue to offer the Swim to Survive program offered to students, given its strong success relative to other municipalities, and quantify the number of students engaged in the program year over year.	Tactical	ongoing		
#58. Form relationships with groups representing diverse populations to impart the importance of learning to swim in Ontario and safety measures in and around water.	Tactical	ongoing		
<b>Inclusion and Diversity – Recreation for All</b>				
#59. Develop a Diversity / Inclusion Policy and Practice model for the delivery/enabling of recreation programs and services that addresses but is not limited to the following elements:  i. Define diversity, access and inclusion in the broadest sense including but not limited to, visible cultures, cultural diversity, persons with disabilities, gender equity, sexual orientation, persons from low income backgrounds, and other predominant yet marginalized groups.	Tactical	•		
	Tactical	•		

Programming and Service Recommendations	Type	Timing		
		S	M	L
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ii. Develop and implement an “Equity Lens” that ensures inclusive language and approaches in the development and delivery of services. The lens / checklist will be used to identify and remove barriers as programs and services are planned, executed and evaluated.</li> <li>iii. Form a reference group of representatives from diverse populations to ensure programs and services are reflective of the changing needs of the community.</li> <li>iv. Ensure that all correspondence and written materials are reflective of Plain Language principles and that training in Plain Language communications training is provided to relevant staff.</li> <li>v. Ensure that all community recreation centres can be considered Safe and/or Positive Spaces with the required training and identification to enable staff and volunteers to prevent homophobic slurs and gestures in creating safe recreational centres.</li> <li>vi. Review service delivery plans in each program area (aquatics, youth, older adults, fitness, culture, parks, etc.) to ensure that programs and services are welcoming and accessible to diverse and underrepresented populations within the community.</li> </ul>	Tactical	•		
	Tactical	•		
	Tactical	•		
	Tactical	•		
	Tactical	•		
#60. Continue to provide a blend of no cost low cost programs and opportunities for residents to ensure that the recreation system is open and accessible to all. Further consider where there are fee based programs that might be cost prohibitive, extend efforts to:	Tactical	•		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Promote the F.A.I.R. policy and local recreation and sport opportunities to Niagara Regional Housing and Ontario Works staff;</li> <li>ii. Continue to address other barriers to program participation, such as transportation and equipment;</li> <li>iii. Consider a policy revision that requires recreation and sport groups that use subsidized City spaces to offer community outreach and subsidized/no cost registration for residents of low income backgrounds;</li> </ul>	Tactical	•		
	Tactical	•		
	Tactical	•		



Programming and Service Recommendations	Type	Timing		
		S	M	L
iv. Expand on the number of opportunities for at risk children and youth through corporate sponsorship opportunities;	Tactical	•		
v. Provide more casual/drop-in and no cost/low cost recreational experiences and youth leadership opportunities in at risk neighbourhoods; and	Tactical	•		
vi. Consider expanding the annual grants program to assist groups in providing recreational opportunities in lower income neighbourhoods.	Tactical	•		
#61. Develop and foster a working group with agencies and groups that provide services to persons with disabilities to enable a seamless system and barrier free access to recreation pursuits. Continue to provide one point of contact for residents with disabilities to receive the needed supports and advice in order to access and benefit from participation in recreation.	Tactical	•		
#62. Continue to develop partnerships in reaching more residents with disabilities; quantify participation numbers on an annual basis and monitor the effectiveness of inclusion policies, practices and program offerings.	Tactical	ongoing		
<b>Building Community Capacity</b>				
#63. Proactively seek out partnerships based on the needs of the residents in the delivery of recreation services such as reaching diverse populations, greater access for low income residents, specialized equipment for persons with disabilities, expanded program provision, increasing the time and intensity of physical activity, providing casual, low fee / no fee programs and opportunities.	Tactical	ongoing		
#64. Establish opportunities for regular, ongoing dialogue with the St. Catharines Public Library with respect to long-term strategic planning and delivery objectives as it pertains to the role that the City and Library play in program and facility provision, including the continued co-location of recreational and library facilities, and coordinating program delivery.	Tactical	ongoing		

Programming and Service Recommendations	Type	Timing		
		S	M	L
#65. Host an annual think tank with existing and potential partners to recognize excellence, determine current issues and trends, and to discuss opportunities for partnerships and strengthened approaches to integrated service delivery.	Tactical	ongoing		
#66. Determine where sponsorships can enhance the delivery of service and seek out sponsorships in an equitable and transparent fashion.	Tactical	ongoing		
#67. Expand the role of staff in the level of support that is provided to community and stakeholder groups from a maintenance role to a more proactive role. Begin to develop new groups and assist groups in their development based on gaps in city-wide and local needs such as diverse groups and building capacity within neighbourhoods.	Tactical		•	
#68. Increase the supports provided to community groups (including, but not limited to, service clubs, sports organizations, older adult associations, arts and cultural groups, etc.) to better assist in their ongoing operations (communications, helping groups better reach out to diverse populations, training, posting of opportunities, etc.).	Tactical	ongoing		
#69. Expand on the support to community groups through the creation of a Volunteer Development Strategy, which will include but not be limited to the recruitment, selection, training, retention and recognition of volunteers.	Tactical	•		
#70. Develop training programs and an E-Tool kit based on identified priorities regarding recruitment, training, retention etc. for use by stakeholder groups.	Tactical		•	
#71. Procure Volunteer software that serves to develop a database of community volunteers and match them with the volunteer opportunities that are available. The software should also track the number of active community volunteers and the number of volunteer hours annually.	Tactical	•		
#72. Raise the profile of volunteers and their value within the broader community, in order to recruit and retain volunteers, and to increase volunteer satisfaction through meaningful experiences and appropriate recognition.	Tactical	ongoing		



Programming and Service Recommendations	Type	Timing		
		S	M	L
<b>Maximizing Participation and Use of Facilities</b>				
#73. Coordinate a meeting with other recreation service providers (including, but not limited to, educational institutions, service clubs, the Y.M.C.A., Boys and Girls Club, etc.) to initiate the discussion on community and respective service priorities and how the collective can work better together toward common goals.	Tactical	•		
#74. Investigate the feasibility of developing a “bundled” services membership to allow greater casual use of facilities and increase participation.	Tactical		•	
#75. Investigate increasing the use of technology to increase participation in recreation services by connecting residents and groups with like interests.	Tactical	ongoing		
#76. In tandem with Corporate Communications and the Recreation Business Development Division, develop an annual promotions and communications plan that seeks to promote the benefits of participating in recreation, parks and cultural services and increase participation including the use of cross promotional opportunities.	Tactical	•		
<b>Performance Measures</b>				
#77. Develop and implement performance measurement metrics as a part of the annual evaluation process to determine Departmental efficiencies and opportunities.	Tactical	•		
#78. Develop an enhanced performance measures framework that demonstrates and quantifies where possible the return on the investment in parks, recreation and culture to individuals, respective age cohorts and the community as a whole.	Tactical		•	
<b>Master Plan Implementation</b>				
#79. Requests for services and facilities falling beyond the spectrum of the City’s core service delivery mandate should be investigated on their individual merits after considering at minimum the City’s role and ability to cost-effectively deliver a needed service, its ability to jointly deliver the service through partnership, and if it has the resources available to deliver the service.	Strategic		•	

Programming and Service Recommendations	Type	Timing		
		S	M	L
#80. Develop a Pricing Policy to establish program and service pricing based on true costs, the benefit of the various programs and services to the community, and considering what the market will bear.	Tactical		•	
#81. Develop annual implementation plans that are prioritized utilizing the Plan’s decision making matrix; support the implementation plan with ongoing monitoring and performance measurement and report progress annually.	Tactical	ongoing		
#82. Create a 25 year capital plan specific to recreational infrastructure to align with City-wide principles surrounding fiscal sustainability.	Tactical	•		
#83. Update the Recreation Facility and Programming Master Plan after five years in order to ensure that its assessments and recommendations are reflective of future market circumstances (e.g. population levels, utilization and operating profiles, demographic profile, recreation preferences, etc.).	Tactical		•	

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## Appendix A: Community Consultations

### 1. Community Input Event

A Community Input Event for the Master Plan was held on October 2, 2014 at the St. Catharines Kiwanis Aquatics Centre (S.K.A.C.). City Staff extended invitations to over 140 organizations and individuals via emails and phone calls, in addition to advertising the event through print and social media, resulting in attendance of 29 persons who represented the general public as well several local stakeholder groups.

Following a brief introduction to the Master Plan's objectives and planning process, discussions on wide variety of topics were held. While not a complete transcription of the dialogue, the following key themes (listed in no particular order) emerged from the Community Input Event with respect to parks and recreation facilities and services in St. Catharines.

- Those in attendance generally appreciated the overall distribution of parks, trails and recreation facilities throughout the City and also thought that these assets are fairly well maintained. Cited examples of highly valued facilities included the waterfront and Waterfront Trail, the S.K.A.C., the Port Weller Community Centre, Garden City Complex, and the Seymour Hannah Sports and Entertainment Centre.
- Another key value mentioned was the fact that recreational spaces in St. Catharines are fairly inclusive for

all residents regardless of ability, class, cultural background, or income and that there is a good range of program opportunities for a broad range of interests or backgrounds.

- Although programs were highly valued, a need for greater programming was identified specifically for teens and older adults, those oriented to healthy living, additional cultural programs, and more low-to-no cost outdoor programs.
- From an indoor facility perspective, a major stated need centred upon a new indoor recreation complex oriented to field sports and indoor tennis, possibly by converting an existing underutilized facility. Additional indoor facility needs included securing additional times at arenas, provision of a second indoor pool or rehabilitating/repurposing the former West Park Pool, and potentially constructing a new multi-use community centre and/or trade show centre that concentrates multiple activities at one site.
- Requests for outdoor recreation facilities generally focused upon more playgrounds (including those designed specifically for adults and older adults), ball diamonds suitable for adult play (i.e. larger fields), outdoor skating areas, tennis courts (including some oriented to a community tennis club), multi-use open spaces for day camps and to bring indoor activities to the outdoors, and more splash pads.





- Improvements to the aesthetics, comfort and functionality of the parks system was discussed. In particular, cleaning up the beach and waterfront areas was a major priority area for attendees as was enhancing waterfront facilities such as public boat launches. Other suggestions included updating washrooms, adding more seating, improving signage and wayfinding, more regular maintenance activities such as garbage pickup, etc. Another major point of emphasis was to improve trail connectivity, especially in between parks, with a stated desire for enhanced trail management practices year-round and better accessibility.
- Better communication and marketing was stated by attendees, particularly through digital media by way of using electronic media and QR codes (and supplemented by traditional advertising such as the Leisure Guide and brochures) to promote awareness of the parks and recreation system. Promoting parks and recreation facilities as destinations was believed to give people a reason to visit these assets.
- Partnerships with school boards and other service providers (identified as a broad range including the Y.M.C.A., curling club, golf courses, etc.) were seen as a way to expand community access to facilities that already exist in the community.

## 2. Household Survey

To assist with the Master Plan, a statistically significant random sample household telephone survey was initiated on September 15, 2014 over a two week period. The purpose of this survey was

to collect representative data from 388 households, yielding a confidence level of  $\pm 5\%$  (19 times out of 20). The survey focused on participation, opinions and priorities of various recreation facilities and programs in St. Catharines. This section summarizes the principal findings of the household survey. A more detailed summary can be found in Appendix A.

### Household Participation in Recreation Activities

Walking and hiking for leisure was identified as the most popular activity in St. Catharines over the past 12 months, with 82% of surveyed households participated in these activities. Other popular recreation activities included: swimming (53%); aerobics, fitness, and weight-training (42%); cycling or mountain biking (41%); and use of playground equipment (38%). The fact that these top five recreational pursuits are generally unstructured is indicative that many people in the City are looking for unstructured activities where they can flexibly schedule their participation or spontaneously drop-in.

### Barriers to Participation in Recreation Activities

Nearly two-thirds of the survey sample (61%) stated that their household is able to participate in parks and recreation facilities as often as they would like. For the remaining 39% of households who were not able to participate in parks and recreation activities as often as they desired, the most common barrier was the lack of personal time/too busy (56%) followed by health problems/disability/age (32%).

In most scientific polls conducted in Ontario, the lack of time is often cited as the primary barrier to participation. There are a number of strategies that municipalities can employ to address this common participation constraint by providing appropriate

opportunities for self-scheduled recreation pursuits, adjusting or extending hours of operation, or lighting sports fields. The fact that health or age was a barrier for one third of persons unable to participate is indicative that St. Catharines has an older age profile relative to other communities, something that correlates to the older than average age of this survey's respondents. It also suggests that the City may be pressed to explore service options including (but not limited to) to improving facility accessibility, integrating a greater complement of programs that are not physically intensive, or possibly investigating more therapeutic or rehabilitative activities within its facilities in order to respond to the needs of an aging population.

### Location of Recreation Activities

60% of surveyed households indicate that all of their recreation needs are met within St. Catharines. The remaining 40% reported that they participate in a broad range of activities and programs outside of the City, primarily consisting of walking and hiking, followed by golf, cycling, hockey, skating, camping, and swimming. Of the households that participate in recreation activities outside of the City, the most popular reason is because the facility or program is not available in St. Catharines (30%) while other common responses were that they seek more variety outside of the City and change of scenery (25%), and that the quality of facility or program is superior compared to St. Catharines (14%).

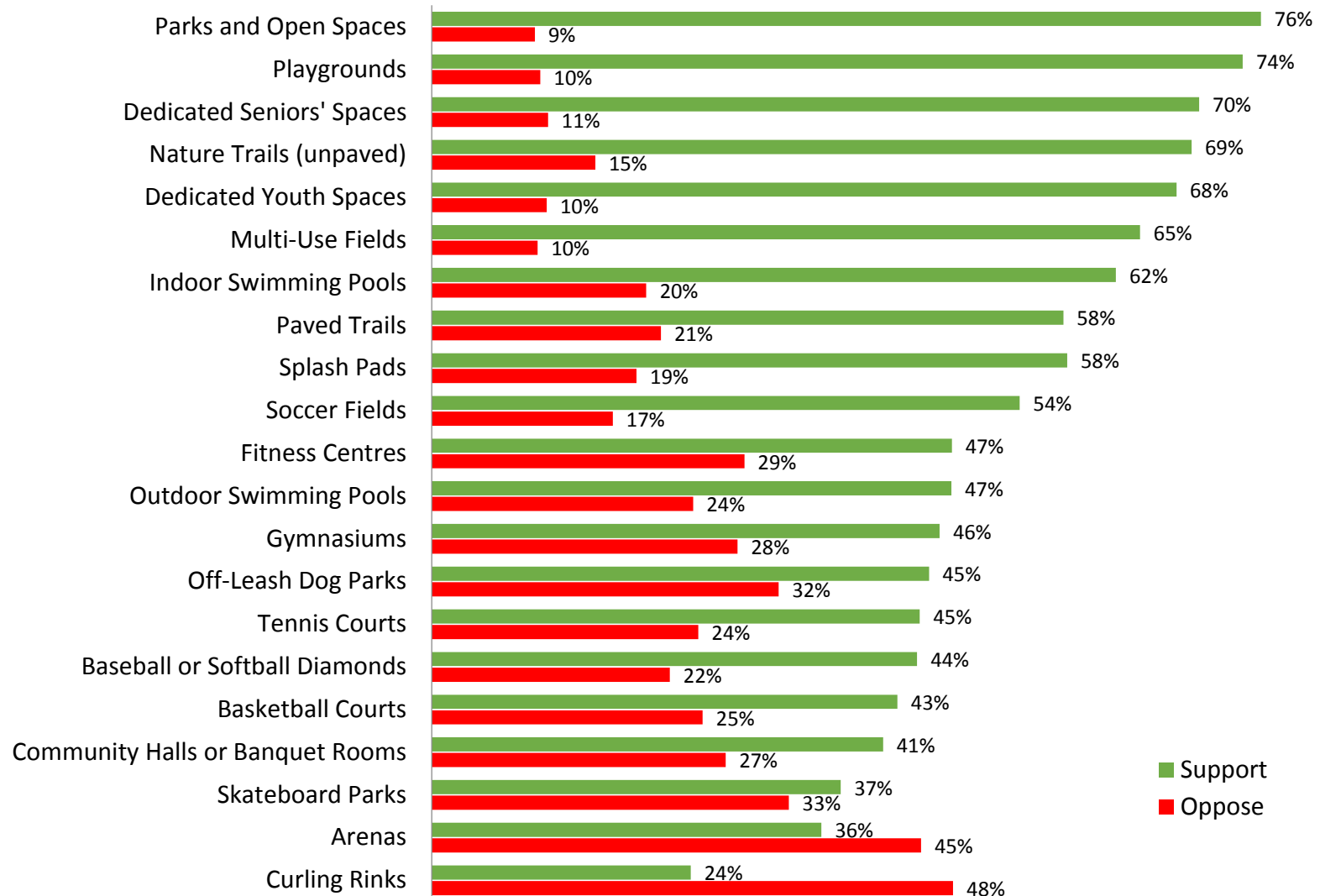
### Provision of New Facilities and Programs

About one-fifth of the survey sample identified that there were new facilities and programs (22% and 19%, respectively) that they would like to see offered that did not already exist. It is important to note that each of the responses accounted for less than 3% of

the total sample and thus they are not considered to be significant gap areas.

It is also worth noting that four of the top five facilities were already provided by the City of St. Catharines. The exception was a multi-use community centre, which is an understandable sentiment given many of the City's facilities are focused on single activities though the S.K.A.C. could be considered multi-use due to the inclusion of the library branch. Additionally, the City also provides many of the stated programs through their fitness/wellness and aquatics portfolio. The fact that these facilities and programs were identified likely speaks to the fact that respondents either wanted more of these services or that they were unaware that the City provides them.

### Support and Opposition for Additional Spending by Recreation Facility Type



### Satisfaction with Recreation Opportunities by Age Group

Survey respondents identified that they are most satisfied with the recreation opportunities in St. Catharines for children between the ages of 0 and 12 (72%). This is followed by adults (age 19-54), older adults (age 55+), and teens (ages 13-18). Recreation opportunities for teens typically rank the lowest in this type of survey, which is often attributed to the respondent being unaware of what is available for this age group, which may be the case given the higher than average age of this survey. Research has also revealed that teens often do not participate, leading to community perceptions that there are not enough opportunities for youth. However, the results suggest a need to further investigate opportunities for this age group.

### Importance and Satisfaction for Parks and Recreation Facilities

The survey sample rated their level of importance and their level of satisfaction with various facility types in St. Catharines. Parks for passive uses were the most important recreation facility type (91%), followed by trails and pathways (81%), outdoor recreation facilities (74%), and indoor recreation facilities (67%). Lower levels of satisfaction were reported for each recreation facility type which provides an indication that expectations are currently not being met. Although passive parks had the greatest satisfaction rating, they also had the largest deviation between its importance score (-21%) which suggests that the community sees this as an area for improvement (a similar situation exists for trails).

### Priorities for Spending

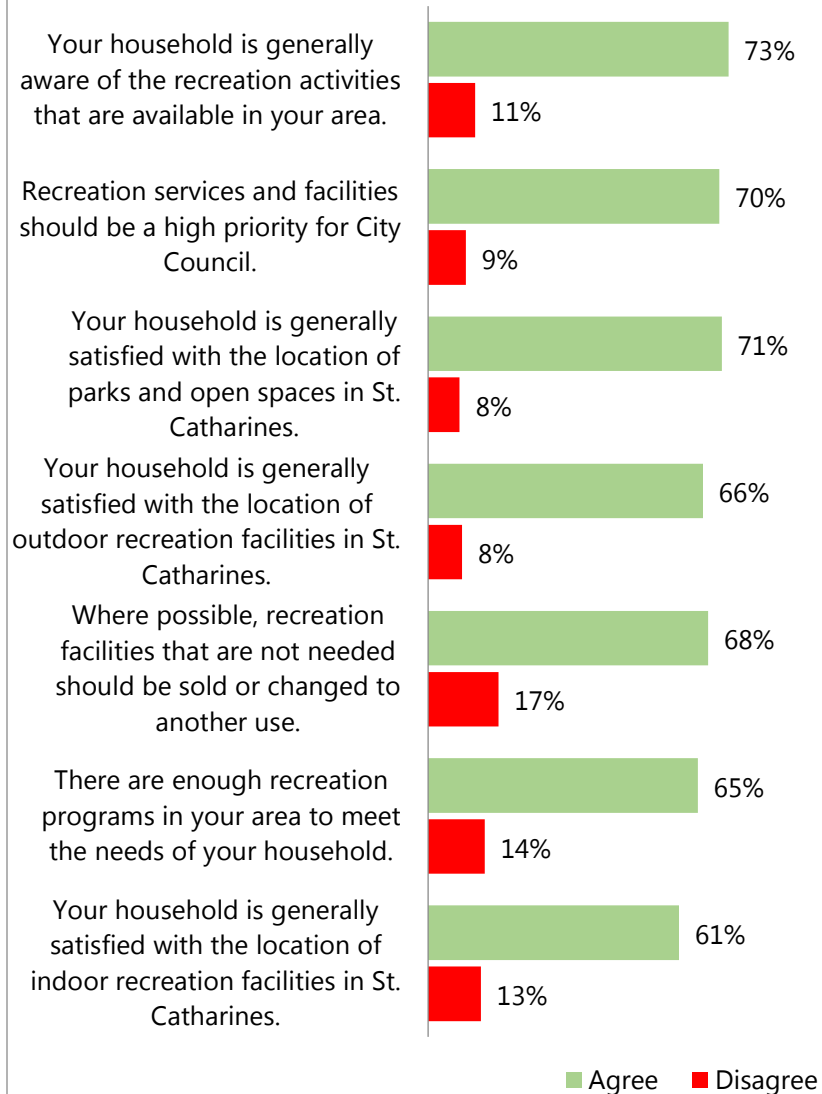
Respondents were asked to rate their level of support for additional spending on various municipal facilities based on whether they 'strongly support', 'support', 'indifferent', 'oppose' or 'strongly oppose' such spending. The strongest level of support were for parks and open space, playgrounds, and seniors' spaces that all received over 70% support. Opposition was greatest towards additional spending curling rinks and arenas at over 45% of the sample.

Another observation from this question was that the top five supported facilities are focused towards multi-use, unstructured, and self-scheduled activities. By contrast, organized sports and single-use facilities ranked lower in support.

### Level of Agreement

Using a scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree', households were asked to respond to a series of statements regarding the provision of recreation facilities and programs in St. Catharines.

### Level of Agreement with Recreation Statements



### Profile of Survey Respondents

The median age of respondent was 57 (the average age was 56), which is higher than the median age of 43.5 recorded in the 2011 Census, suggesting that the age of the responding sample was generally older than the representative population. That being said, a review of the age structure of responding households suggests closer representation to Census data particularly for the number of persons under 19 years of age, between the ages and 35 and 54, and over 70. The survey appears to over-represent those between the ages of 55 to 69 and under-represent persons between the ages of 20 and 34. Furthermore, the average size of surveyed households was 2.6 persons, slightly less than the average number of persons identified in the Census (2.8 persons). Nonetheless, survey responses are considered to be generally representative of the City's age and household structure within an acceptable threshold, and the higher median age may indicate that the person actually providing the responses was a head of the household.

**Table 7: Household Age Structure of Survey Respondents**

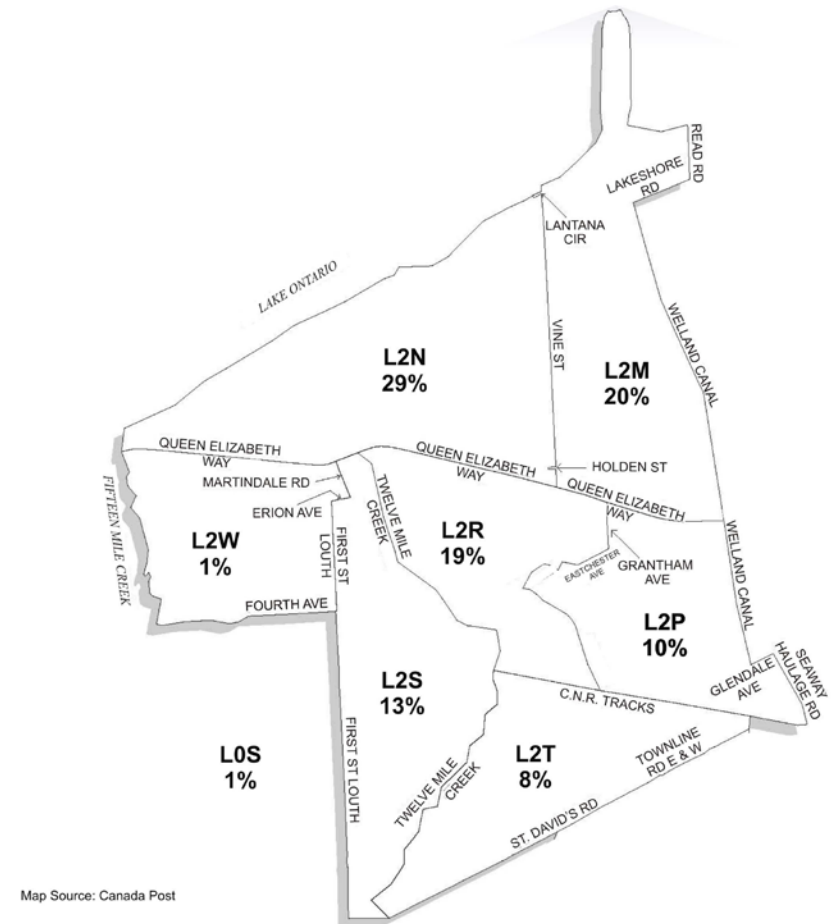
	Sample	2011 Census
Children (under 10 years)	10%	10%
Youth (10 to 19 years)	11%	12%
Young Adults (20 to 34 years)	11%	19%
Mature Adults (35 to 54 years)	29%	27%
Older Adults (55 to 69 years)	25%	19%
Seniors (70 years and over)	13%	14%
Total	100%	100%

As shown in Figure 5, 49% of the survey sample resided north of the Queen Elizabeth Way (L2M and L2N postal codes), 37% resided in the south-east (L2R, L2P and L2T postal codes), and the remaining 14% resided in the south-west (L2S and L2W postal codes). Distribution of responses is representative of household counts as recorded by Canada Post.

	#	%	Canada Post*
L2M	78	20%	24%
L2N	109	29%	23%
L2P	39	10%	11%
L2R	74	19%	20%
L2S	48	13%	12%
L2T	29	8%	9%
L2W	2	1%	1%
L0S	2	1%	Data not available
<b>Total</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* represents the percentage of households within each postal code area as recorded through Canada Post household counts

**Figure 5: Geographic Distribution of Survey Respondents**







### 3. Online Survey

An online community survey was established as a vehicle for input from residents not randomly selected for the household telephone survey. The survey questions focused on a select number of topics while also providing one dedicated open-ended question for residents to provide any pertinent thought regarding recreation in St. Catharines. The online survey was active for a period of seven weeks commencing on August 27, 2014, which coincided with the launch of the City's Fall program registration so that the survey could be advertised during the registration process. The online survey was also promoted through the City's social media accounts and targeted advertising efforts including setting up a Kiosk at the S.K.A.C., press releases, and Department Staff directly asking people to complete the survey.

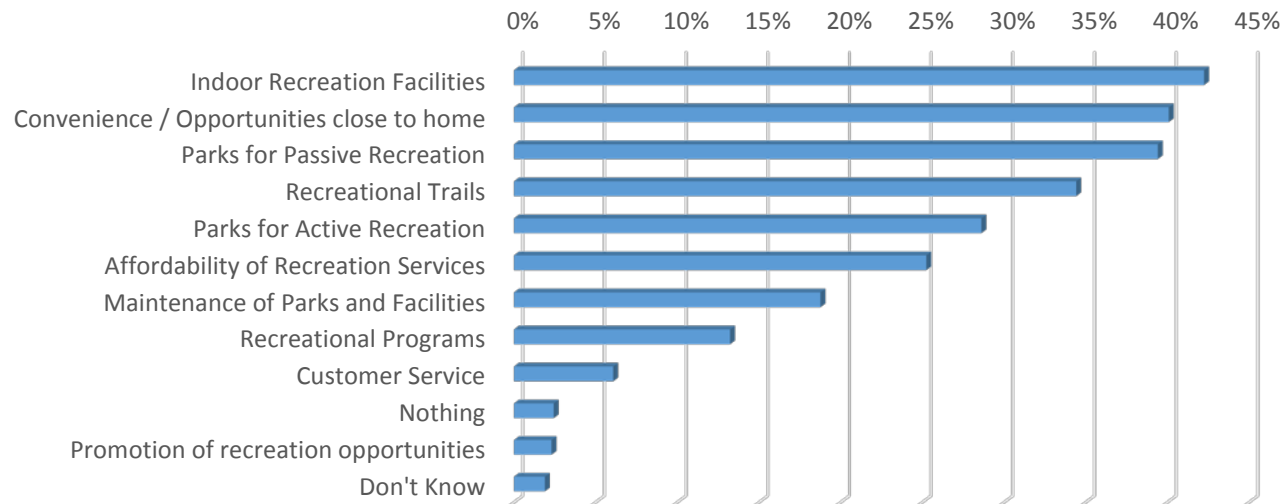
Hosted on the City of St. Catharines' website created for the Master Plan, a total of 741 online surveys were submitted, representing the views of over 2,000 residents living within responding households. The median and average age of survey respondents was 43 and 45 years, respectively with the average size of participating households recorded at 2.7 persons. Approximately 44% of responses were received from households living north of the Q.E.W., 52% resided south of the Q.E.W., and the remaining did not disclose their postal code or were from outside of the City.

Unlike the telephone survey undertaken for this Master Plan, the online survey results cannot be considered to be statistically representative of the City's population since the survey was self-administered and non-random. Survey results should be interpreted as generalized input based on the volume of surveys

received from interested residents, and will be considered with all other consultation activities from the master planning process.

In terms of survey findings, indoor recreation facilities were the most liked aspect of the City's parks and recreation system, followed by how convenient and close to home recreation services are. St. Catharines' passive park system was also highly valued by survey participants. Survey participants most frequently stated that the provision of new recreational trails were most likely to increase their own participation in parks and recreation activities. Other common suggestions were to provide more affordable recreation services, additional indoor recreation facilities, and new or improved parks for passive recreational activity.

### Things People Like the Most About Parks and Recreation in St. Catharines



### Ways the City Could Increase Participation in Parks and Recreation Activities





When asked their level of agreement towards four statements (using a scale of 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'), the following outcomes were observed:

- 75% agreed or strongly agreed that their household is generally aware of the recreation activities that are available in their area. Conversely, 13% disagreed in some form with this statement (the balance of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed).
- 73% agreed in some form that "where possible, surplus recreation facilities should be repurposed to other needed uses." Conversely, 12% disagreed in some form with this statement.
- 68% agreed in some form that recreation facilities and programs offered by the City are generally affordable to their household while 15% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 38% suggested that they would be willing to pay more for new or improved parks and recreation facilities while 36% indicated they would not be willing to do so. 26% of the sample neither agreed nor disagreed with paying more.

## 4. Parks and Recreation User Focus Groups

Four focus groups were held in October 2014 at the Meridian Centre to discuss various topics pertaining to the Master Plan with organizations and user groups having an interest in the City's parks and recreation system. City Staff extended invitations to over 200 organizations and individuals via emails and phone

calls, in addition to advertising the event through print and social media, resulting in attendance of over 50 persons who represented the general public as well as the following 35 stakeholder groups:

- Adult Hockey League
- Ballhockey.com
- Brock Badgers Ringette Club
- Dirty Runner Productions
- Dunlop Drive Older Adult Centre
- Friends of Malcolmson Eco-Park
- Friends of Walker's Creek
- Garden City Aquatic Club
- Garden City Kiwanis Hockey
- Greening Niagara
- Gymnastics Energy
- Henley Rowing Club
- Mayor's Advisory Committee on Accessibility
- Merritton Arena
- Niagara Roller Girls
- Niagara Sport Commission
- Niagara Tennis Academy
- Player's Hockey League
- Port Dalhousie Works Committee
- Ridley College
- Russell Avenue Community Centre
- Special Olympics - Sea Otters
- St. Catharines Athletics JR. A. Lacrosse
- St. Catharines Falcons Hockey
- St. Catharines Female Hockey
- St. Catharines Islamic Society
- St. Catharines Jets Girls Soccer

- St. Catharines Minor Baseball
- St. Catharines Recreational Skate
- St. Catharines Rowing Club
- St. Catharines MD Hurricanes & CYO
- Total Hockey Experience & Hockey School
- Turbo Turtle Running Club
- West Park Aquatics Club
- Y.M.C.A. of Niagara

The above noted organizations were segmented into four focus groups: Arena Partners Focus Group; Indoor Recreation Facility Users; Parks and Outdoor Recreation Facility Users; and General Community Interest Users. Groups were permitted to attend multiple focus groups where they had multiple interests, areas of focus, or types of facilities being used (e.g. those using both indoor and outdoor facilities).

### Arena Partners Focus Group

A focus group was held on October 22<sup>nd</sup> with members of the Arena Partners Committee, a civic advisory committee formed in 2008 to bring the City and various local arena user groups together to discuss various topics pertaining to arena usage in St. Catharines. Arena users who do not have formal representation on the Committee were also invited to attend this session.

The general discussion centred upon the need for the City to be strategic and proactive in meeting arena needs rather than taking the historically reactive approach. Key themes emerging from the focus group included:

- supporting the need for arenas to be financially sustainable and for financial reporting of operating performance to be transparent;
- identifying that with only the Bill Burgoyne Arena available to serve the north end of the City, equitable distribution of arenas should be considered;
- considering how St. Catharines' arena service level compares to other communities;
- improving how ice time is scheduled between rentals and City programs;
- recognizing that while a new twin pad arena is preferred to potentially replace the Garden City Complex, the City as a whole has financial limitations due to its existing infrastructure commitments and thus the existing twin pad should not be discounted simply on the basis of its age; and
- a desire for dry floor arena users such as lacrosse, roller skaters, ball hockey, soccer, etc. to have representation on the Arena Partners Committee.

At the conclusion of the focus group, the Arena Partners Committee resolved that they would work with the City and the Consulting Team in providing financial and operating performance assessments that were previously prepared by the local arena users.

### Indoor Recreation Facility Users

A focus group was held on October 22<sup>nd</sup> with twelve representatives of local organizations using the City's indoor



recreation facilities. Key themes emerging from this session included:

- extending operating hours of older adult centres into more evenings so that programs and services sought by those ages 50 to 65 who still may be working, and rebranding programs and facilities to serve a “55+” market rather than “older adults or seniors”;
- desire for a multi-use, multi-generational facility combining a number of facility components that offers a diverse range of programs and services while moving away from the traditional model of single-focused facilities such as arenas and community halls;
- support to revitalize underutilized recreation facilities for other needed uses, with the dedication of the Haig Bowl to dry floor uses (e.g. ball hockey) cited as an example;
- making sure recreation facilities are well served by transit and/or along trail routes to maximize inclusivity to those who do not have access to a private automobile (e.g. youth, older adults, persons with disabilities, low income users, etc.);
- request for a second municipal indoor pool as service level is presently one per 140,000 residents which is lower than many other municipalities, recognizing that residents and swim teams have some access to pool time at Ridley College, the Y.M.C.A. and Brock University (which is not perceived to be as convenient or affordable as a municipal pool would be) and thus partnerships could be explored with those providers;

- requests for another municipal gymnasium as Port Weller is the only true gym apart from Queen Elizabeth Community Centre (leased to the Boys and Girls Club) and Russell Avenue Community Centre that is simply a large room with limited ceiling height and structural limitations associated with the pillars in the programmable space;
- finding ways to make sure there are low to no cost opportunities available, and ensuring overall affordability through continuing to improve the City’s F.A.I.R. program, exploring ways to minimize the high cost of insurance, better transit, etc.
- exploring whether the City has a role in providing equipment-based fitness centres to provide a more affordable alternative to the private sector; and
- improving the way in which services are delivered and communicated to the public such as improvements to customer service, better marketing of facilities and services, training staff (accessibility training was noted in particular), better interdepartmental communication and reducing bureaucracy in processing permits and providing consistent advice, etc.

### Parks and Outdoor Recreation Facility Users

A focus group was held on October 29<sup>th</sup> with seventeen representatives of local organizations using parks and outdoor recreation facilities. Key themes emerging from this session included:

- improving accessibility for persons with disabilities in parks through playground improvements, adding change

- rooms beside splash pads, accessible seating areas at sports fields and the beach;
- provide appropriate comforts within parks, trails and facilities such as seating areas, water stations, shade, etc. and providing amenities and facilities in parks that are oriented to the growing population of older adults;
- making sure that parks in established areas, notably those that will densify over time, continue to address needs of the surrounding community;
- ensure that passive recreational activities and facilities are emphasized, particularly within the trails system and natural areas such as the Eco-Park and Walker's Creek, and continuing to support the Urban Forestry Management Plan;
- desire for more community allotment gardens within parks or creation of an urban farm, particularly in keeping with the "Garden City" brand and fostering social inclusion/equity;
- requests for additional facilities such as hardball diamonds, off-leash areas, outdoor skating rinks and to facilitate the creation of a community tennis club to run programs and leagues;
- greater Departmental focus on community development approaches, particularly to assist local stakeholders and community providers to become self-sustaining and successful, and more regular communication with stakeholders including a liaison to provide a single point of contact;

- less bureaucracy and red-tape when enabling volunteers to undertake works such as park clean-ups, and explore enabling more "Friends Of" models given the success of many such local organizations in taking an active role in stewardship; and
- general improvements requested to parks and sports fields, including more frequent garbage collection and cleaning municipal washrooms/change rooms, with a desire for better communication with groups in this respect.

### General Community Interest Users

A focus group was held on October 29, 2014 with a broad cross-section of local recreation-oriented service providers using the City's recreation facilities. A total of nine people attended the focus group, highlighting the following key themes:

- there are a wealth of physical assets in St. Catharines consisting of active and natural parks, the pier and waterfront, quality trails and facilities, etc.;
- improve accessibility of parks for children and caregivers with disabilities, through visual markings, surface treatments, removal of steps and curbs – while new parks seem to be satisfactory in this respect, it is time to look at renewal of existing parks through the accessibility lens;
- a stated imbalance of recreation facilities from a geographic distribution perspective, with the west and north ends most frequently noted as gap areas for services in general;





- request for a second indoor pool, with a stated preference for an Olympic regulation pool, to improve the overall level of service relative to other communities;
- requests for additional facilities including a municipally-run fitness centre, indoor walking track, outdoor rinks, and gymnasium;
- desire for multi-use facilities rather than singular focused templates that have been historically provided;
- growing needs for older adult programs, along with requests for greater funding in order to make services viable and accessible to those on fixed incomes; and
- looking at how to keep volunteerism levels strong while the City still has a base of volunteers to draw from; and
- exploring partnerships with other parties to deliver facilities and services aimed at improving the overall physical activity levels in St. Catharines.

## 5. User Group Questionnaire

A self-administered online User Group Questionnaire was initiated in September 2014. The City sent out a web link to the questionnaire to over 800 local and regional stakeholders who utilize St. Catharines' parks and recreation facilities. The survey was open for a five week period during which City Staff followed up multiple times with major users of municipal facilities to encourage their participation.

A total of 46 questionnaires were received. By identifiable category, arena users accounted for the largest portion of the respondents (16 groups or 35%), followed by sports field users

(10 groups), arts and cultural groups (7 groups). Other groups spanned aquatics, parks and trail users, and other community providers and institutions. The following is a listing of all groups submitting a survey for the Master Plan, followed by a summary of key findings collected from the questionnaires.

- Ballhockey.com
- Brock Badgers Ringette Club
- Carousel Players
- Choralis Camerata
- Chorus Niagara
- Department of Dramatic Arts, Brock University
- Dirty Runner Productions
- Dunlop Drive Seniors Recreational Club
- Friends of Malcolmson Eco-Park
- Friends of Walker's Creek
- Garden City Aquatic Club
- Garden City Minor Hockey Association
- GHL Niagara Beginners Coed Hockey
- Greater Niagara Baseball Association
- Greening Niagara
- International Silver Stick
- Islamic Society of St. Catharines
- Kiwanis Hockey League
- Kiwanis Select Hockey
- Niagara Bauer Hockey Challenge & Niagara Hockey Summer League
- Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre
- Niagara Grape and Wine Festival
- Niagara Metros "AAA" Major Baseball Club
- Niagara Regional Slo-Pitch League - Men's & Coed
- Niagara Sport & Social Club

- Niagara Sport Commission
- Niagara Varsity Football Club
- PALZ
- Players Hockey League
- Port Dalhousie Works Committee
- Rankin Cancer Run
- Ridley College
- Sara Bauer Academy
- St Catharines Jets Soccer
- St Catharines CYO Minor Hockey Association
- St. Catharines Athletics Jr A Lacrosse Club
- St. Catharines Club Roma Soccer
- St. Catharines Community Tennis Club
- St. Catharines Concord Soccer Club
- St. Catharines Female Hockey Association
- St. Catharines Junior B Falcons
- St. Catharines Minor Baseball Association
- St. Catharines Minor Hockey School
- St. Catharines Recreational Skate
- St. Catharines Senior Cobras Baseball
- Suitcase in Point Theatre Company

### Expanding Programming and Services

A majority of responding user groups (72%) indicated that they expect to expand the scope of their programs and/or services over the next three to five years, and suggests that a number of groups envision growing demands for quality parks and recreation facilities in St. Catharines. While no groups expected to reduce their scope of services, 22% indicated that they expect no changes to their scope of services.

Of the groups that identified expanding the scope of their programs and/or services, 85% indicated that they have the capacity to accommodate additional community demand/interest for their services. 12% of groups identified that they were not and 3% of groups were unsure. Groups who identified that they are unable to accommodate additional interest indicated that they are unable to expand due to barriers including the lack of regular ice time, the need to provide lit beach volleyball courts, and limited support/resources required to operate.

### Locations of Play

Over half (54%) of user groups reported regular use of facilities outside of St. Catharines, generally reflecting the regional focus of many organizations though a number of groups also stated that they ventured outside of the City to access additional or more convenient facility time slots, or to access services presently not available in St. Catharines. Communities most frequently mentioned included Niagara Falls, Thorold, and Welland largely for arenas and indoor sports fields (use of the Gale Centre and Youngs Sportsplex were commonly stated), while Ridley College's facilities also received use. On the other hand, 39% of user groups indicated that they only use recreation facilities located within the City of St. Catharines.

### Facility Design & Distribution

The majority (59%) of user groups indicated that the design of St. Catharines' recreation facilities meets the needs of their organization. Conversely, facility design was not optimal for 17% of groups while 24% were indifferent or unsure about the design of facilities that they used. As an example, soccer groups articulated difficulties in delivering programs arising out of the Ontario Soccer Association's long-term player development



model which requires smaller fields, stating that the City's fields or field lining practices were not conducive to younger age groups (where five versus five or nine versus nine play is now mandated). Sports field users as a whole also mentioned the need for broad improvements related to turf maintenance, additional amenities (e.g. lighting), and more frequent garbage collection.

About half of responding user groups (52%) were also satisfied with the distribution of St. Catharines' recreation facilities. One-quarter of user groups were unsatisfied and 9% were neutral (13% were unsure).

### Access to Facilities

Nearly half (46%) of user groups indicated that they were satisfied with their ability to access recreation facilities at desired times throughout the week. Conversely, just over one third of groups (35%) were dissatisfied with their ability to access facilities when they wanted, while 20% were either indifferent or unsure.

However, nearly half of user groups (48%) also requested additional access to existing recreation facilities in St. Catharines, largely to accommodate growing participation or to expand the scope of their programming. Arena users, in particular, noted that they require additional access to prime ice times especially with the removal of the Haig Bowl from the supply. On the other hand, 39% of responding groups indicated that they did not foresee the need to book additional time in municipal facilities (2% were unsure and 11% not applicable).

### Providing New Recreation Facilities

Nearly two-thirds of user groups (61%) reported that they anticipate the need for new recreation facilities to support growth and to support new program opportunities, while 26% of groups said they did not (13% of groups were unsure). Examples of facilities mentioned as pressing needs by the groups included, in no particular order:

- Additional sports fields, particularly an indoor artificial turf venue;
- Ice pads, especially if the City eventually decides to decommission Garden City Complex and/or a single pad arena;
- An indoor pool, gymnasium, and multi-use community centre (which could presumably accommodate such indoor recreation facilities);
- Affordable and/or improved venues for arts and cultural programming; and
- More parks, trails and an off-leash dog park.

43% of groups stated that they were willing to contribute to the development or operation of new or expanded recreation facilities through partnerships with shared resources or responsibilities (42% of willing groups), followed closely by fundraising (39%). Other solutions included payment of higher rental fees (13%) or other options (5%) such as seeking funding or partnerships from senior level government or private organizations. 34% of groups indicated that they were unwilling or unable to contribute financially towards new facilities (23% of groups were unsure).

### Volunteers and Additional Supports

Approximately 59% of user groups indicated that their organization is able to attract enough volunteers, while 13% of groups indicated that they were not. 20% of groups were neutral and 9% of groups indicated “Don’t Know” or “Not Applicable”. These results suggest that the ability for user groups to attract volunteers is not a pressing issue.

When user groups were asked if their organization could benefit from additional supports from the City, 39% of groups identified that they would benefit from additional supports. User groups indicated that they would benefit from a range of supporting opportunities such as additional funding, assistance with marketing programs, coordinating between groups to leverage resources, providing sports equipment, more affordable rental costs, enhanced front-line customer service, and improved facility maintenance. One third (33%) of groups indicated that they did not require any municipal support while 28% of groups were either unsure or the question was not applicable to them.

## 6. Interviews with Key Project Informants

Interviews were held in January 2015 with members of Council, City and Library Staff, and various agencies (e.g. educational institutions, arts and cultural sector representatives, regional sport and recreation providers, etc.) operating in St. Catharines. Due to the confidential nature of these interviews, statements attributable to specific individuals were not reproduced but were explored in the context of the master planning assessments, where appropriate.

## 7. City Staff Workshops

Two workshops were held with City Staff on November 19, 2014. The first workshop was held with front-line Staff who have the most frequent and direct contact with the community, while the second workshop was held with supervisory and management level staff. The workshops focused on: the Departmental vision and mandate; strengths, challenges and opportunities associated with support services, Department programs, and facilities and assets; key priorities for the future; and ways to measure success. In order to ensure maintain confidentiality of comments provided by Staff, the discussions were documented for internal use by the Consulting Team. Ideas and opinions will be considered, as appropriate, through the Master Plan’s facility and service delivery assessments.

## 8. Community Open Houses

Two community open houses were held during the afternoon and evening of February 18, 2015. A total of 30 people signed in though total attendance was slightly higher after accounting for persons not signing in, as well as attendance by a number of City Councillors and Staff. The open houses provided residents with the opportunity to engage members of the Consulting Team and Senior Steering Committee in discussing the Draft RFPMP prior to its finalization. In addition to verbal discussions, written feedback was provided through dozens of comment sheets provided at the Open Houses along with email submissions received after the Draft Master Plan was posted on the project’s website.



Generally speaking, those attending the Open Houses expressed their support for the Draft Master Plan and noted an appreciation for how many facilities and services were assessed. Broad themes arising through the afternoon and evening discussions included:

- One of the most prevalent and recurring themes of the sessions was a desire for the City to invest in a broader range of recreational facilities and programs oriented to a wider set of ages, interests, incomes and abilities.
- Often, the above noted theme was prefaced with a statement that the City provides arenas with far more resources relative to other recreational interests. Many people expressed a sentiment that investments in the parks and recreation system must be much more balanced, and reflect the priorities of a broader set of ages, interests, abilities and incomes. There were persons in attendance who supported further investments in the local arena system but comments provided verbally and through comment sheets were more heavily weighted to reducing investments in the City's arenas, questioning whether the City requires the number of ice pads that it currently provides, and making arena operations more cost-effective (e.g. reducing operating hours during low use times at most arenas and shift usage in those times to the quad pad arena instead).
- Often, the above noted theme was prefaced with a statement that the City provides arenas with far more resources relative to other interests and priorities reflective of the broader community, which has resulted in unbalanced provision. There were persons in attendance who supported further investments in the local arena

system but comments provided verbally and through comment sheets were more heavily weighted to reducing investments in the City's arenas (including closure of an ice pad) and being more cost-effective (e.g. reducing operating hours during low use times at most arenas and shift usage in those times to the quad pad arena instead).

- Requests for more programs and facilities for older adults and seniors residing in St. Catharines, usually stated on the basis that the population is aging and that there are gaps (real or perceived) in funding for the 55+ market relative to many organized sports.
- A need to augment the City's trails systems, particularly through wayfinding and provision of on and off-road bicycle routes. Regular formal updates of the Parks Policy Plan were also requested since a comprehensive assessment of the parks and trails system was not included as part of the RFPMP's terms of reference.
- Requests were received for higher quality outdoor facilities in terms of design, maintenance and renewal. Sports fields and multi-use courts were specifically referenced examples of which included a request for a ball diamond complex (i.e. at least two diamonds on one site) designed for younger age divisions while another comment was received regarding the antiquated state of many tennis and basketball courts.
- General agreement that splash pads would be a cost-effective and modern way to meet outdoor aquatic demands in each ward, referencing the high level of use at the City's existing splash pads. There was support to retain

some outdoor pools on the basis that these facilities provide a different experience than indoor pools.

- A need to explore ways to optimize meeting rooms in arenas, community centres and other facilities to accommodate a broader range of arts and cultural uses. A specific comment was to ensure proper acoustics through room designs and conversions (to stop sounds coming from outside the rooms as well as to make sure sound within the rooms is sufficiently audible).
- A desire for greater cooperation between the City and School Boards to gain affordable, convenient access to school gymnasiums. This could reduce the need for the

City to build a new gym (recognizing that this would not serve daytime demands during the school year). Similarly, some responses suggested making use of surplus/closed schools for parks and recreational use.

- Greater accessibility for persons with disabilities within parks and trails (e.g. stone pathways), which facilitates greater movement and usage in these areas for persons with restricted mobility.
- Involving residents more in planning and design processes when developing parks and recreation facilities and services at the neighbourhood/community level.





## Appendix B: Detailed Analysis of Ice Pad Requirements

### Supply and Distribution

The City of St. Catharines has a municipally owned supply of 10 ice pads at the following 6 arenas:

- Bill Burgoyne Arena (1 ice pad);
- Garden City Complex (2 ice pads);
- Haig Bowl (1 ice pad – *see notes below*);
- Merritton Centennial Arena (1 ice pad – *see notes below*);
- Seymour Hannah Sports and Entertainment Centre (4 ice pads); and
- Meridian Centre (1 ice pad – *see notes below*).

#### **For the purposes of this assessment, the supply:**

##### **Includes the Haig Bowl Ice Pad**

Despite being decommissioned at the end of the 2013/14 season (and now leased to a private operator for dry floor use), Haig Bowl is included for the purposes of this assessment on the basis that utilization and user group registration data contained herein reflects historical ice bookings occurring at that ice pad. The current 2014/15 season, which is the first winter season without Haig Bowl, is presently ongoing and is not factored into the City's utilization reports.

##### **Counts the Meridian Centre as 0.25 Ice Pads**

Recognizes that the Meridian Centre is only partially accessible for general public use due to OHL usage and special event programming. Facility operations are overseen by a private sector management firm that is not subject to the City's Ice Allocation Policy, but whose business model benefits from selling ice time for community use when not booked for special events. Original expectations were that the City and community would receive up to 30 hours per week for rentals at the Meridian Centre, though the majority of these hours would be last minute bookings given the uncertainty surrounding OHL games and practices, as well as special events.

Just four months after opening, the arena operator indicates that it is renting between 15 and 20 hours per week to community users, and expects that number to grow as the operation further establishes itself. Further, community groups will have greater access to

prime time ice at the Garden City Complex due to the relocation of the OHL team to the Meridian Centre. Nonetheless, a conservative estimate is applied to the Meridian Centre whereby it is counted as one-quarter of an ice pad (i.e. 0.25) rather than half an ice pad (i.e. 30 hours per week that represents about half of all weekly prime and shoulder hours).

### **Counts the Merritton Arena as 0.65 Ice Pads**

Once again, a conservative approach is employed whereby the Merritton Arena's ice pad has been discounted by 35% to reflect the fact that the arena is not, and does not employ the City's Ice Allocation Policy making a fair comparison of utilization to other City-owned arena facilities not possible at this time. The lack of City policy requirements for the Merritton Arena results in the City not presently having a strong understanding of this arena's utilization and how it serves the City of St. Catharines' ice users. It is noted that the Merritton Arena is wholly owned and maintained by the City of St. Catharines, who is responsible for financing the ongoing capital maintenance of the facility, and a number of local hockey organizations indicate that they regularly utilize this arena to meet their needs (many of these groups supplied registration data that included players using the Merritton Arena).

The supply recognizes that the City does not allocate the Merritton Arena but instead delegates this responsibility to the Merritton Lions Club who have the flexibility to allocate ice outside of the parameters of the City's Ice Allocation Policy. This arrangement appears to result in a higher than typical level of adult usage during prime times since the Lions Club has autonomy to allocate time to groups at its sole discretion. Nonetheless, the degree of public access is consistent with municipal/quasi-municipal arena operating parameters and when combined with City's funding responsibilities, forms the basis for including this arena in the supply. For the purposes of this assessment, Merritton Arena is counted as providing 0.65 ice pads rather than a full ice pad, noting the City will need to undertake further analysis of the demand and operating profile of the Merritton Arena subsequent to the conclusion of this master planning process.

### **Excludes the Ridley College Arena**

This arena is excluded on the basis that it is privately owned, funded and scheduled. However, the arena is a contributor to the local arena market since it is available to the community with organizations such as GHL Niagara Co-ed and the Players Hockey League reporting regular usage of that rink. The College's NHL size ice pad is operated year-round, and is very well utilized for community prime time rentals throughout the winter season. Ridley College is in the process of undertaking a planning exercise for its campus, which should be monitored by the City as any change to community access to the arena facility could impact existing user groups' usage of this facility.

**Accordingly, the City's 'effective' supply is considered to be 8.9 ice pads for the purposes of this assessment.** This is deemed to adequately reflect ice pads that the City is responsible for funding for community use, recognizing that this falls in between the 'actual'



supply of 10 ice pads and the 'City-allocated' supply of 7 ice pads (if excluding Merritton Arena, the Meridian Centre, and the now decommissioned Haig Bowl).

Application of a 2.5 kilometre service radius (generally representing a 10 to 15 minute drive, as shown in Map 2) around each City-owned arena generally encompasses most areas of St. Catharines. Noted gaps include the eastern neighbourhoods within Grantham and St. George's wards, and further that the Bill Burgoyne Arena is the only such facility located north of the Q.E.W. However, it must be noted that distance or access to all arena facilities in St. Catharines is considered reasonable as ice sports tend to be considered drive-to facilities due to the need to transport equipment and travel in the winter.

From a regional perspective, there are a number of arenas in area municipalities such as Thorold (2 ice pads), Niagara-On-The-Lake (2), Welland (2), Niagara Falls (5), and Lincoln (2). While these are not necessarily considered to fully service St. Catharines' residents, they do alleviate regional demands and in fact may be attractive to certain organizations such as regional associations and local residents playing in adult leagues.

## Consultation

The majority of input regarding arenas was provided by the Arena Partners Committee and through arena users that submitted user group questionnaires. Key themes from these stakeholders included:

- Emphasizing that arenas should be **financially sustainable** and that financial reporting of operating performance should be transparent;
- identifying that with only the Bill Burgoyne Arena available to serve the north end of the City, **equitable distribution** of arenas should be considered;
- considering how St. Catharines' arena service level compares to other communities;
- improving **how ice time is scheduled**;
- recognizing that while a new multi-pad arena is preferred to potentially replace the Garden City Complex, **the City as a whole has financial limitations** due to its existing infrastructure commitments and thus the existing twin pad should not be discounted simply on the basis of its age; and
- a desire for **dry floor arena users** such as lacrosse, roller skaters, ball hockey, soccer, etc. to have representation on the Arena Partners Committee.

In terms of general community opinion, the statistically representative survey of St. Catharines' households revealed that **nearly half of residents are opposed or strongly opposed to the City spending additional public funds for arenas and curling rinks**. This was the lowest rated level of support (and the highest level of opposition) for funding relative to nineteen other recreation facilities. Requests for additional ice pads were not emphasized through other means of consultation beyond meetings with the Arena Partners Committee. The household survey also revealed that 23% of surveyed households participated in hockey or figure skating over the past year (the ninth most popular activity) which represents a decline from the statistically valid survey conducted in 2006 for the previous Master Plan when 31% of households participated in these winter ice sports (it was the sixth most popular activity at that time).

## Utilization

The data in this analysis has been provided by the City of St. Catharines Parks, Recreation and Culture Services Department, **using assumptions generated in collaboration, and agreed upon with the Arena Partners Committee**. This data, which is derived from arena usage over the past three seasons, is highly useful in understanding trends over this time period; however, the data must be interpreted with caution as the way in which the City has recorded usage has evolved over time and may not be fully consistent from year to year or rink to rink. Furthermore, the hours analyzed are not reflective of the prime time hours identified in the City's Ice Allocation Policy, but rather are based on a smaller prime time operating window relative to most other communities to align with the expectations of peak usage periods as determined by the Arena Partners Committee. When examining the data, it is also important to note that the City's supply of municipal ice pads has changed over this time period, with the opening of the Meridian Centre (which has limited availability for community rental relative to the other arenas) and the recent decommissioning of the Haig Bowl at the end of the 2013/14 winter season.

The City's arenas are generally available for booking between 6am and 12am, although there are very few early morning bookings and weekday daytime rentals. Most City arenas are available for ice bookings from September/October to March/April, although this varies from rink to rink and year to year (some arenas open early/late or close early/late, and some are open year-round).



The focus of this analysis is on ice usage during the winter season as this is the time of year when demand for ice sports is greatest. More notably, this analysis provides added focus on the peak months of November and February, as these are months that tend to not be impacted by program start-up, playoffs, or major holidays. The peak usage periods, rather than a broader seasonal perspective, help to form the basis upon which future facility needs are determined.

An examination of schedules and rental data supplied by the City<sup>i</sup> for the past three seasons (during the peak months of November and February) reveals the following:

- Usage of prime time hours (5pm to 10pm Monday to Friday, 8am to 9pm Saturday/Sunday) has been relatively steady over the past four ice seasons with an average of approximately 91%. As these are the hours generating the greatest amount of demand, and as agreed to with the Arena Partners Committee to exclude holidays and ice maintenance periods, arena operations in comparable communities expect a minimum of 95% and often full utilization during these prime times. Over the past three seasons, the City’s prime time usage rate in peak usage months has decreased modestly from 93% to 91% over this time period.
- In the 2013/14 peak months, prime time usage was highest at Bill Burgoyne Arena (98%) and all the Seymour Hannah rinks (ranging from 91% to 96%); prime time usage was lowest at the Rex Stimers rink (76%).
- Across all rinks in 2013/14, prime time usage on weekdays was 93%, while prime time usage on weekends was 88%.
- The number of shoulder hours (4pm to 5pm and 10pm to 11pm Monday to Friday, plus 6am to 8am and 9pm to 12am Saturday/Sunday) used during peak months declined by 7% between the 2010/11 and 2013/14 seasons.

**Table B1: Prime Time Ice Usage in Peak Months, 2010 to 2014**

Peak Months	Prime Time Utilization Rate	
<b>November 2010</b>	93%	93%
<b>February 2011</b>	92%	
<b>November 2011</b>	92%	90%
<b>February 2012</b>	88%	
<b>November 2012</b>	92%	90%
<b>February 2013</b>	88%	
<b>November 2013</b>	92%	91%
<b>February 2014</b>	89%	

Source: City of St. Catharines rental data, 2014

<sup>i</sup> Includes the Haig Bowl, which was operational in February 2014, but does not include the Merritton Arena (data is analyzed separately as it is administered through a third party) or the Meridian Centre (which opened in October 2014).

- Across all rinks in 2013/14, shoulder hour utilization on weekdays was 75% while shoulder hour usage on weekends was 42%. This suggests that groups are able to secure access to convenient/favourable ice times and are not facing any great pressures to book ice during less desirable, but generally acceptable time slots as compared to other communities. For example, there were 90 unbooked hours between 10 and 11pm on weekdays (an average of 11 hours per week system-wide) while there were 113 unbooked hours between 6am and 8am on weekends (a system-wide average of 14 hours per week).

Looking at the **entire 2013/14 season** (i.e. October to February, exclusive of days in which arenas were closed):

- There were a total of 837 unbooked prime time hours. Using the prime hour definition agreed to between the City and the Arena Partners Committee, there are 51 such hours in a week which applied to the 22 weeks that season results in each ice pad providing a total of 1,122 hours. This means that the capacity equivalent of three-quarters of an ice pad (i.e. 75%) was idle during the most desirable time slots. Another way to view this metric is that on average, nearly 5 hours per week per pad were unused in prime time.
- For the entire 2013/14 season, there were also a total of 933 unbooked shoulder hours. This equates to another 5 hours per week per pad, on average, remaining idle during times which would be historically filled during periods of peak demand.
- Collectively, **prime and shoulder availability results in a total of 1,770 hours of unused/unrented time** in arenas that are typically booked (to varying degrees) in most municipalities across Ontario.
- The data indicates that good prime time slots are accessible to adult-focused organizations, providing an indication of surplus capacity as adult rentals tend to be relegated to shoulder periods or to the less desirable 'prime' time window in communities operating under supply pressures.

With respect to the definition how 'prime' hours were analyzed, it is important to note presently the weekday and weekend 10pm to 11pm time slot is not included, nor is the weekend 7am to 8am slot despite the inclusion of these as prime in the Ice Allocation Policy. While the City categorizes these as shoulders in its operating performance report, many municipalities across the province have historically considered these to be prime times (the weekend mornings for minor use and the late evening for adult use). Integration of these shoulder slots into the prime time definition of operating performance reporting would lower the prime utilization rate as just 75% of weekday 10pm slots were booked while only 25% of weekend 6am to 8am slots were used (data regarding only the 7am slot was not available).

Data received from the Merritton Arena was useful in confirming that the arena is well-utilized in both prime and non-prime (shoulder hours). In fact, 54.5 prime time hours are sold weekly and 46 non-prime or shoulder hours are sold weekly. Participant numbers are very





high for the facility at 2,255 which includes significant numbers of adult users in teams and pick-up play (although all 2,255 players are not exclusive to the Merritton with a portion of these users also booking time at City-allocated arenas as well).

## Participation

In addition to hours rented, another indicator of demand is the number of participants registered in ice sports for the past three seasons as noted in Table B2. Note these number are only reflective of groups that rent ice from City operated facilities and include groups that also use Ridley College, Merritton Arena or the Meridian Centre. However, user groups that only use Ridley College, Merritton Arena and/or the Meridian Centre are not included (unless otherwise noted) as the City does not currently have the ability to track their registration or usage.

**Table B2: Registration in Organized Ice Activities – 2010/11 to 2014/15**

Age Group	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
<b>Youth / Core Registration</b>			
Garden City Kiwanis Hockey League	560	520	536
Garden City Minor Hockey Association	421	470	495
Kiwanis Select Hockey	96	96	96
Niagara Bauer Hockey Challenge & Niagara Hockey Summer League (NHSL)	40	50	50
Sara Bauer Academy	0	50	100
St Catharines CYO Minor Hockey Association	950*	938	997
St. Catharines MD Hurricanes	153*	153*	153
St Catharines Minor Hockey School	114	89	82
St. Catharines Female Hockey Association	416	430	402
St. Catharines Recreational Skate – Children**	351	351	352
St. Catharines Ringette Association	140*	140*	140
Team Winter Club of St. Catharines	75	75	75
<b>Sub-Total - Youth</b>	<b>3,316</b>	<b>3,362</b>	<b>3,478</b>
<b>Adult / Other Registration</b>			
Adult Hockey League*	500*	500*	500

Age Group	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Brock Badgers Ringette Club	24	21	18
Brock University Men's and Women's Hockey	51*	51*	51
GHL Niagara Beginners Coed Hockey	169	169	169
Niagara North AAA Hockey	153*	153*	153
Players Hockey League	195	225	240
St. Catharines Jr B Falcons	14	14	14
St. Catharines Recreational Skate - Adults**	88	88	88
Pick-Up Leagues and Bookings*	265	265	265
<b>Sub-Total – Adult / Other</b>	<b>1,459</b>	<b>1,486</b>	<b>1,498</b>
<b>TOTAL REPORTED REGISTRATION</b>	<b>4,775</b>	<b>4,848</b>	<b>4,976</b>

\* Estimate as data was not provided. \*\* Group registrations discounted by 33% to reflect their bookings during non-prime time.

Source: User Groups and City of St. Catharines, adjusted to reflect St. Catharines residents only and include waiting lists, where applicable.

Based upon data provided by user groups, 5% growth (162 registrants) in youth-focused organizations is remarkable in light of national and provincial declines, modest population growth, and the ongoing aging of the population in the City over the past three years. With about 22,500 residents between the ages of 4 and 18 in St. Catharines (2015 estimate), this means 15% of children and youth participate in organized ice sports; this is on the lower end of the common range observed in similar Greater Golden Horseshoe communities (typically between 15% and 25%), although higher than the national average which is closer to 9%. Projections prepared by the Region of Niagara estimate that the number of residents in St. Catharines' 9 to 18 cohort will increase to 23,800 (1,300 persons) by 2026 after which it is expected to plateau until 2031 due to a projected drop in the 0 to 8 year old population which needs to be considered as part of a long-term arena strategy.

While children and youth constitute the primary users of ice time in St. Catharines, the adult market must not be overlooked. Adults and non-core users represent 30% of all reported registrants and registration levels have been fairly stable over the past three seasons (although showing a 4% growth). Adults, however, constitute a lesser share of the overall arena market compared to ten years ago when they were estimated to form about 40% of all arena users. It is important to note that many adult groups are quite mobile and are willing/able to rent time at other arenas in the area based on ice availability and rates. In fact, many groups responding to the stakeholder survey reported using facilities such as Ridley College, the Gale Centre in Niagara Falls, the Jordan Arena, and the Centennial Arena in Virgil.



It is also noteworthy that provincial norms suggest that about 5% of adults ages 20 to 49 are involved in ice sports. Based upon the reported participation, it is estimated that about 2.5% of St. Catharines adults in that age range are active users of the City's arenas, suggesting that **the local adult ice sport participation may be lower than the norm** or that non-City operated arenas are capturing a considerable share of adult players who are not affiliated with groups that book time at City of St. Catharines rinks. It is predicted that adult participation will fluctuate at a rate similar for population changes in this age cohort (i.e. any percentage change in the size of the 20-49 age cohort will result in a similar rate of change for arena participation), all other factors being equal.

The projected number of ice participants is calculated by applying participation rates to the forecasted population of the identified age groups. In doing so, the needs assessment model makes a number of assumptions relating to participation and population growth. First of all, it is assumed that the City will grow at the rates identified in the Master Plan. Changes in the population forecasts could impact the estimated ice demand for St. Catharines; therefore, it is recommended that the population projections and their impact on the arena assessment be closely monitored over the coming years. In addition, except where otherwise noted, this analysis assumes that participation rates in hockey, figure skating, and their related disciplines will grow in proportion to population growth over the course of the planning period. With national trends (and trends across many communities in Ontario) indicating a decrease in the participation rate in hockey (see below) over the past number of years, this assumption will need to be monitored closely by the City in the coming years.

Over the past several decades, hockey has been a staple of traditional Canadian winter sports. However, recent research suggests that participation in organized hockey has experienced declining participation levels across the Province, since a registration peak in the 2008/09 season. This trend is driven by a number of factors that include the high cost to participate, safety concerns, declining popularity of organized sports, and growing immigration from countries where hockey isn't played. These factors have led to declining arena utilization across Ontario and municipalities have had to undertake a variety of strategies to cope with shifting arena needs and underutilized ice pads.

With this in mind, Table B3 forecasts the youth and adult registration levels for the City of St. Catharines assuming that ice supplies are not unduly constricted.

**Table B3: Projection of Registered Ice Sport Participants, City of St. Catharines, 2014-2031**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>2014 (actual)</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2026</b>
<b>Youth/Core Registrants</b> (based on a 15% participation rate for residents ages 4 to 18)	3,478	3,362	3,372	3,567
<b>Adult/Other Registrants</b> (based on a 2.5% participation rate for residents ages 19 to 54)	1,498	1,455	1,503	1,515
<b>Total Registrants</b>	<b>4,976</b>	<b>4,816</b>	<b>4,875</b>	<b>5,083</b>

Based upon application of current participation rates over the master planning period, the number of participants may increase largely due to aforementioned projected increased to the 4 to 18 age group. Despite a projected stabilization in adult registration, collectively local arena organizations could increase from 4,976 registrants to 5,083 registrants (107 skaters or 2%). This is not necessarily to say that ice demands will increase by 2%, as the specific ice needs of users may change over time, particularly since aging and modest population growth trends will have significant implications on the number of participants making regular usage of the City's arenas.

It is worth noting that the assumption that current participation rates can be expected to continue into the future should be cautiously applied. As an example, arena registrations in the City's previous Recreation Facility Master Plan were recorded at nearly 5,600 skaters (for the 2005/06 season), meaning that there are about 600 fewer players registered now than compared to nine years ago, while the current participation rate is also lower for arena users as a whole.

## Benchmarking

For benchmarking purposes, we have examined municipal ice pad provision in relation to population. While it is recognized that every community has a slightly different socio-demographic composition and different sport participation rates, requests are often made to understand how one community compares to others. In the case of St. Catharines, several comparator communities with similar characteristics (e.g., OHL teams, population size, labour force profile, etc.) and/or regional interest were chosen.



**Table B4: Service Level Comparisons in Selected Municipalities**

Municipality	Estimated Population	No. of Ice Pads	Pop. Per Ice Pad (Total)	Pop. per Ice Pad (Ages 5-19)*
Niagara Falls	94,000	5	18,800	2,871
Pickering	94,400	5	18,880	3,675
Milton	95,879	6	15,980	2,793
Ajax	119,800	5	23,960 (low)	4,857 (low)
Whitby	131,600	10	13,160 (high)	2,727
<b>St. Catharines</b>	<b>140,660</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>15,805</b>	<b>2,450 (high)</b>
Barrie	142,000	7.5	18,935	3,776
Oshawa	158,400	9.5	16,675	2,812
Burlington	175,779	11	15,980	2,879
Hamilton	519,949	23	22,605	4,108
<b>Benchmark Avg.</b>	<b>167,247</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>17,960</b>	<b>3,205</b>

Notes: Population of 5 to 19 year olds derived from 2011 Census. Quarter or half unit pads reflect event rinks where community access is limited. St. Catharines 2015 population estimate as noted in Section 2.2 of the Master Plan.

In terms of total population per ice pad, there is currently one municipal rink per 15,805 residents in St. Catharines. This rate is greater than all but one of the comparator communities, a higher level of service than the benchmark average which stands at one ice pad per 17,960 population. It is noted that a number of benchmarked communities have younger age profiles and/or are experiencing more significant population growth which has influenced their service levels, but still provide fewer ice pads per population than St. Catharines where the population is aging and is in a lower growth scenario. That being said, the population-based indicator is within a range found among many Greater Golden Horseshoe communities (usually falling between one pad per 12,000 to 20,000 population). Non-municipal ice pads have not been included in the analysis as many have different markets and operating profiles than municipal rinks (e.g. Barrie, Oshawa and Hamilton all have private sector arena operators in their respective communities).

These population-based standards, however, do not necessarily capture market-based demand considerations (such as changing participation rates, aging and diversity characteristics, geographic inequities, etc.). It is widely accepted that children and youth are the primary user of municipal arenas. Looking only at children and youth (ages 5-19), St. Catharines' provision rate (one municipal ice pad per 2,450 youth) is also higher than any of other communities benchmarked at an average of one per 3,205 youth. Based purely on these per capita measures, **the City of St. Catharines offers an above average level of provision with more ice pads per population of children and youth than each of the comparator communities.**

Of note, the City is achieving a service level of one ice pad per 560 registered arena participants (or one per 630 players if excluding Haig Bowl), based upon the registration data articulated in preceding paragraphs. By this metric, the City once again lies favourably on the upper end of the service spectrum when measured by the number of participants (usually communities target one ice pad per 600 to 700 registered participants in more rural communities and 700 to 800 registered users in urban communities). The 2008 Master Plan for St. Catharines utilized one pad per 700 registered participants (at the higher end of the provision standard).

## Operating Performance

Actual arena operating revenues and costs have been scrutinized for the 2009 to 2014 years, based upon data provided by the City of St. Catharines. Table B5 articulates that over this time, the annual subsidy borne by the City has increased by over \$640,000 (67%) to reach \$1.6 million in 2014. The City's has also recovered a lower portion of its operating costs through revenue. Unfortunately, revenues received have been trending downwards (possibly related to the number of unbooked prime hours) with the City collecting approximately \$229,000 less revenue in 2014 compared to 2009.

Meetings with arena users interested in the arena budgeting and reporting process indicate there is confusion and lack of clarity into how budget items are presented. A cursory review of the operating budgets suggests there is merit in exploring whether the City's accounting of these facilities conforms to generally accepted municipal reporting standards and best practices in a manner that can be understood by both finance experts and the general public. For example, a review of the Garden City Complex budget references allocations (for both revenue and cost items) from other arenas that is not easily understood. It is noted that there is a fairly low utilization rate of 76% at the Rex Stimers Rink which would also impact revenue significantly at this facility. In addition, the revenue numbers (and therefore the operating deficit) are also affected by the lack of historic revenue from the Ice Dogs OHL Team and the Falcons Junior B team at the Garden City Complex. Clarity and transparency regarding the arena budgets should be pursued.





**Table B5: Annual Reported Subsidy by Arena, 2009-2014**

	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
Seymour Hannah S.E.C.	156,554	(39,896)	161,456	102,069	(95,744)	(365,566)
Merritton Arena	44,333	49,037	38,976	86,412	34,892	69,481
Haig Bowl	118,601	132,152	104,890	110,026	123,173	136,211
Bill Burgoyne Arena	201,272	105,253	97,970	105,345	167,526	130,646
Garden City Complex	1,092,299	1,103,081	995,736	1,125,921	898,670	996,074
<b>Municipal Subsidy</b>	<b>\$1,613,059</b>	<b>\$1,349,627</b>	<b>\$1,399,028</b>	<b>\$1,529,773</b>	<b>\$1,128,517</b>	<b>\$966,846</b>
<b>% of Operating Costs Recovered Through Revenue</b>	65%	69%	68%	66%	73%	77%

Source: City of St. Catharines financial reports, 2014

A cursory review of arena rental rates was also undertaken. In 2014, the City of St. Catharines levies a charge of \$148 per hour for youth and \$155 per hour for adult in prime time (exclusive of H.S.T.). A \$10 plus H.S.T. per hour surcharge is also applied to the noted rates. Compared to other major urban centres in Ontario, the City's rates are quite competitive as youth rates are anywhere in the range of \$145 to \$175 per hour while adult rates often fall between \$175 and \$200 per hour. Within Niagara Region, the City's youth and adult prime time rates are more affordable than Welland (\$181 per hour), Thorold (\$174 to \$181 per hour), and Fort Erie (\$165 to \$186 per hour), all of whose rates are standard for youth and adults. In comparison to Niagara Falls, St. Catharines is once again more affordable for adults (\$159 to \$194 per hour) and is competitive with their youth rate (\$149). On this basis, it can be inferred that arena pricing is not a major contributor to the number of unbooked prime and shoulder hours.

## Arena Needs

The projection of arena needs is based upon a market-driven level of service, consistent with assessment methodologies utilized across the province. A market-driven standard is able to consider the impact of participation trends, population growth, and demographic factors. It can also be set at a level that is consistent with local circumstances and public expectations, making it responsive to the specific needs of

the City of St. Catharines. In addition, this approach is then compared to actual utilization data (as discussed above) to rationalize the outcome of these results.

As mentioned, the current estimated level of provision in the City of St. Catharines is approximately 1 ice pad per 560 participants (based on 4,976 players for 8.9 ice pads), which by experience is a very high level of service considerably higher than the 700 to 800 participants typically achieved in other urbanized communities (even if excluding Haig Bowl, the service level of one ice pad per 630 registrants is on the high end). Looking just at youth, the City is currently providing one rink per 390 youth registrants (or one per 440 if excluding Haig Bowl) at the present time. From our experience, this level of service for youth participants per ice pad is fairly high; depending on the nature of the programming (most notably rep/travel hockey, which requires more ice time), we normally see a range of 400 to 500 youth participants in more rural communities and 500 to 600 youth participants per pad in urban communities.

The 2008 Recreation Facility Master Plan applied a provision standard of one ice pad per 700 registered arena participants. Despite the City continuing to exhibit higher than average aging trends, considerable erosion in shoulder hour rentals and the availability of prime time ice, and the fact that youth registration rates have somewhat stabilized and rebounded in the past three years (although not to the levels reached ten years ago) provides a basis to carry forward the 1:700 standard for the current assessment of arena needs, rather than decrease the targeted level of service. There is no merit in increasing this level of service particularly with the amount of prime time and shoulder hour ice being available in St. Catharines.

Based upon Table B6, our assessment indicates that the City has available capacity equivalent to approximately 1.8 ice pads based upon the number of St. Catharines residents involved in winter ice sports, and is supported by 837 unbooked prime hours plus another 937 unused shoulder hours (using definitions agreed to by the City and the Arena Partners Committee). This reinforces the City's decision to decommission Haig Bowl as of the current 2014/15 season.

It is recognized that local arenas address a degree of regional demand as there are various user groups whose affiliations span multiple municipalities throughout Niagara Region. In the case of these regional groups, however, the arenas in those various area municipalities address a portion of their demands as those group's memberships are likely to use rinks closer to their homes more often. Further, the current availability of the Ridley College arena for community use provides additional opportunity for user groups (the use of which is likely contributing to the unused prime and shoulder hours at St. Catharines' ice pads as groups seek more desirable prime time hours). In addition, the Meridian Centre and Merritton Arena provide ice availability that is not fully accounted for in the operating hour analyses due to a lack of utilization data.



**Table B6: Projection of Ice Pad Needs, City of St. Catharines**

	<b>2014</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2026</b>
<b>Forecasted Number of Registrants</b>	4,976	4,816	4,875	5,083
<b>Number of Ice Pads Required</b> (based a provision target of 1 ice pad per 700 registrants)	7.1	6.9	7.0	7.3
<b>Available Ice Pads</b> (based on a current supply of 8.9 ice pads*)	<b>1.8</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>1.6</b>

\* Supply has been discounted by 1.1 ice pads to account for limitations in community rental opportunities for the Meridian Centre and third party administration of the Merritton Arena.

In addition to the above analysis (which was consistent with the 2008 Master Plan approach) is an alternative evaluation scenario presented with a focus placed squarely on youth users (who constitute the majority of prime time usage). Differentiation between youth and adults is useful since these two groups utilize ice very differently. For example, adult demand is more elastic (i.e. an ability to use non-prime hours or to discontinue play for seasons at a time) and there is greater mobility (i.e. they can use arenas outside the municipality), whereas youth are the dominant user of local prime time ice, which is in limited supply. As previously mentioned, the City is currently providing one rink per 390 youth registrants at the present time.

Based on the aforementioned factors, a provision target of 1 ice pad per 500 youth registrants (ages 5 to 19) is deemed appropriate and applied as a secondary measure for assessing City-wide ice pad needs. This target, which is a slightly more conservative version of one that has been successfully applied in several other communities, assumes the following:

- that youth will continue to use a significant amount of prime time hours;
- that the City will attempt to accommodate the majority of adult ice groups in shoulder or non-prime times, recognizing that certain prime hours not conducive to youth may continue to be used for adult rentals;
- that the intent is to accommodate the needs of all local groups within City (i.e., not regularly renting time outside of the municipality); and
- that groups will be willing and able to pay for the entirety of their ice needs.

Table B7 illustrates application of the preferred provision target, assuming the existing rate of participation is maintained (i.e., at 16%) and that the youth market segment (age 5 to 19) changes at the forecasted rate.

**Table B7: Projection of Ice Pad Needs by Youth Users, City of St. Catharines**

	2014	2016	2021	2026
<b>Forecasted Number of Youth Registrants</b>	3,478	3,362	3,372	3,567
<b>Number of Ice Pads Required</b> (based a provision target of 1 ice pad per 500 youth registrants)	7.0	6.7	6.7	7.1
<b>Available Ice Pads</b> (based on a current supply of 8.9 ice pads*)	<b>1.9</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>1.8</b>

\* Supply has been discounted by 1.1 ice pads to account for limitations in community rental opportunities for the Meridian Centre and lack of operating data for the Merritton Arena.

As with the projection using total number of registrants, the youth user projection also yields a ten year availability of two ice pads over and above what would be needed and again justifies the decision to decommission Haig Bowl for ice usage. Forecasted growth in the 5 to 19 age group results in modest growth in the projected number of youth players, due to the assumption that the penetration rate will remain constant (but recognizing that provincial and national trends are showing a decreasing participation rate). Therefore, ice pad demand is forecasted to slightly increase but again to a level where supply continues to exceed demand.

The higher than required supply of ice pads that are noted in the total registrant and youth registrant calculations are reinforced by the 1,770 unbooked prime time (837 hours or 47% of all unused time) and shoulder hours (933 hours or 53% of unused time). Averaged across the 22 week season, this equates to 80 surplus hours per week, and assuming a 64 hour prime and shoulder operating week per pad, equates to 1.25 surplus ice pads. On the basis of unused time and pad per participant metrics, the Master Plan's assessment indicates that the City of St. Catharines is providing 1.5 to 2.0 more ice pads than needed, a level which is expected to carry through until the end of this master planning period assuming no net changes to the ice pad supply and penetration rates in winter ice sports. On the basis that Haig Bowl permanently remains decommissioned for ice usage over the next ten years, the City would be providing 0.5 to 1.0 more ice pads than required.

## Future Directions

Barring any unforeseen developments, a supply of 7 municipal ice pads (including Merritton Arena but excluding the Meridian Centre) is anticipated to be adequate for meeting the needs of City of St. Catharines residents for the next ten years and likely for some time beyond this period. By comparison, the 2008 Recreation Facility Master Plan also projected that the City would require 7 ice pads by the year 2026 when applying the 1:700 total registrant standard. With a current supply of 8.9 ice pad equivalents, **no net additions to the supply of ice pads are recommended during the ten year time frame of the Recreation Facility and Programming Master Plan.** The decision to not provide additional ice pads is based on the following summary of notable factors articulated in this assessment:

- Analysis revealing that 1,770 unused optimal prime and shoulder operating hours equates to 1.25 ice pads being available over the course of the season (noting that data provided for the Merritton Arena suggests that the facility is well-utilized but does not employ the City's Ice Allocation Policy). The amount of available hours reinforces the fact that the City was justified in reducing its ice supply by one ice pad (i.e. decommissioning the Haig Bowl) and leasing it for dry floor uses.
- Analysis of total registration and youth registrations in relation to market-driven provision standards yields availability of the equivalent of nearly two ice pads, reinforcing the operating hour assessment.
- The City currently provides more ice pads per children and youth than any of the nine other benchmarked municipalities, and the second highest level of service overall.
- The statistically valid poll of St. Catharines' households revealing that participation has decreased from 31% to 23% in hockey and figure skating between 2006 and 2014 (and lowering from the sixth to ninth most popular activity during that time). Accurate to within  $\pm 5\%$ , the current poll suggests arena investments receive the lowest level of public support for arena investments among all recreation facility types except curling (45% are opposed to additional arena investments)
- The City's annual arena operating budget has averaged approximately \$1.35 million in tax subsidy over the past three years, plus the ongoing capital investments required with maintaining an aging supply of arenas. It is reasonable to expect operating costs to escalate in a status quo scenario due to capital maintenance requirements, increases in utility and/or staffing costs, and if further declines occur in the number of hours rented.
- The City's ability to finance a new multi-million dollar arena is constrained by its existing debt commitments (e.g. the Meridian Centre, Performing Arts Centre, St. Catharines Kiwanis Aquatics Centre/Dr. Huq Family Library Branch, etc.), infrastructure deficit for all municipal assets beyond just recreation, and the fact that the City no longer collects development charges thereby increasing the reliance of the tax base and debentures to fund new facility construction.

With no net increases to the supply of ice pads recommended, focus must initially be placed on maximizing the effectiveness of the existing arena supply. This involves a multi-pronged approach aimed at:

- a) building upon the internal operational efficiency of the Department;
- b) encouraging greater usage during both prime and shoulder hour periods;
- c) aligning Merritton Arena with municipal values; and
- d) providing a greater understanding/visibility of cost accounting and providing more transparency in the financial reporting for the arena system.

By striving to meet these goals (which will be elaborated upon in the following paragraphs), the City will put itself in a stronger position to truly understand and determine how effectively its arena system is addressing local needs. While the assessments contained herein have demonstrated that there is ice available over and above what is needed, part of the unused time may be filled by having a different system in place that maximizes usage of all City-funded arenas. The experience and information that will be gained through implementation of these goals will then provide a foundation upon which the City can make an informed decision regarding the most appropriate number of ice pads required to serve short and long-term needs.

#### a) Building Operational Efficiency

In the next three years, it is recommended that the City employ a number of measures aimed at improving its operational efficiency and performance measurement, consistent with the Master Plan's service delivery assessments. Specifically for the arena system, the City should continue to monitor local participation and population forecasts, as well as the regional ice arena market as these factors could impact local demand and decisions regarding future facility provision. Longer term with provincial and national trends showing decreasing levels of participation in organized hockey, and with the aging of the St. Catharines' population, the City will need to closely monitor participation levels particularly if participation levels begin to decline.

In this regard, requirements should be in place for affiliated user groups to provide 'actual' participant numbers and addresses of registered players (separately reporting City of St. Catharines' residents versus non-resident participants) to allow for ease in trend analysis and ensuring the provision of ice pads is consistent with demand. To support such efforts, the City's Ice Allocation Policy should be revised to provide local residents with the greatest priority to prime time slots, potentially by differentiating affiliation status of groups by the percentage of local residents in their membership, as well as providing non-profit organizations greater priority than commercial users. The City should also utilize, as a starting point for allocation, the 'actual' amount of ice utilized by groups in the preceding year rather than what was initially allocated (to recognize hours turned back after the allocation process from the previous year).





The use of technology as a performance tool should continue to be explored on a regular basis. As an example, the City's existing system is not conducive to allowing last-minute rentals or 'spot bookings'. If the systems is improved to allow these to take place, and combined with a marketing strategy to effectively communicate if/when ice time is available within a 24 or 48 hour window, the City could potentially generate additional bookings in prime and shoulder hours (this also aligns with another one of the goals stated above). Representatives from the Arena Partners Committee have indicated that such measures would increase their user groups' utilization of available ice time.

#### b) Encouraging Greater Use in Prime and Shoulder Times

The City should explore a variety of strategies aimed to stimulate greater usage, particularly during shoulder hours. As discussed above, communication processes regarding last minute rental opportunities should be improved so that local users are aware of available ice and could potentially book this time at a discounted rate. In this way, users benefit from lower cost ice time while the City recovers a portion of revenue that would otherwise be lost through 'burnt ice'. Other strategies aimed at increasing bookings could centre upon different scheduling practices that maximizes the number of contiguous blocks of time (e.g. potentially by altering when City programs take place, requiring users to take a slot that is based on scheduling efficiency rather than their historical start time, etc.) and/or by setting a differentiated rate for shoulder rentals thereby providing a financial incentive for groups to book these times.

#### c) Aligning Merritton Arena with Municipal Values

At present, the Merritton Arena is operated autonomously by the Merritton Lions Club while receiving capital and operating funding support from the City of St. Catharines. While there is no evidence at present to suggest that the Lions Club should not operate the facility, as a City-owned arena it is important that this facility embody the spirit of municipal values. Therefore, the City should renegotiate the current agreement for Merritton Centennial Arena to ensure that City policies, including the Ice Allocation Policy, are required to be applied consistently across all municipally owned arenas/ice pads in St. Catharines. As part of this, the City should take a more proactive role in reviewing which organizations are utilizing the Merritton Arena, the number of participants associated with these groups, and monitoring prime time and shoulder hour utilization rates at this facility. In doing so, the City should become more engaged/aware of how the Merritton Arena is operating on a year-to-year basis and how its provision of ice relates to the overall supply/demand for ice time among St. Catharines' arena users and residents.

#### d) Understandable, Transparent Financial Reporting

As discussed earlier in this assessment, user groups have noted that it is difficult to understand the financial reporting and budgeting documents prepared for the arenas. Of particular concern is the Garden City Complex and the lack of clarity as to what costs and revenues are (or are not) reported within the budgets. Clarity and transparency regarding the arena budgets, if not already in

accordance with generally accepted standards, should be pursued so that residents, user groups, City Staff and City Council understand the true costs associated with maintaining the arena supply at its present level.

Upon implementation of the above-noted and other appropriate strategies within the next three years, the City should revisit the supply of ice pads. The City's current supply of 7.9 ice pads (exclusive of the currently decommissioned Haig Bowl) would suffice if utilization rates increase as a result of improved efficiencies, policies and procedures. Depending upon how well the Merritton Arena performs in the future after better aligning with municipal values, **it is important to remember that the supply could in fact be considered as the equivalent of up to 8.25 ice pads** (as Merritton Arena has been discounted in the supply due to independent administration that deviates from the Ice Allocation Policy, resulting in the City's lack of ownership of the utilization and registration levels for this facility, and the ability to accurately determine how this facility contributes to meeting City ice user needs.

However, if utilization rates remain at current levels or decreases despite implementation of the noted strategies, an adjustment to the supply should then be considered unless the City of St. Catharines makes a conscious decision to oversupply ice pads, and thus operate under a low usage model and accept the financial costs of doing so. An adjustment to the supply of ice pads should be rationalized through the second phase ice facility strategy (i.e. after measures to improve arena efficiencies, align Merritton Arena with municipal values, etc.) that considers alternatives to meeting the long-term need which could consider a wide range of options guided by geographic location, level of utilization, building condition, financial performance and partnership opportunities at a minimum.

Ultimately, the City must make a decision on how St. Catharines wishes to rationalize its arena supply in relation to its costs and level of utilization. **It is recommended that the City of St. Catharines re-evaluate within a three year time frame the appropriate supply of ice pads once a number of short-term recommendations have been considered. Based on our current assessment, the mid-term target is likely 7 ice pads (plus the Meridian Centre) over the master planning period** unless utilization significantly increases or the City chooses to provide an enhanced level of service by which the City accepts the financial costs of doing so in exchange for its desired level of community benefit in providing excess ice in both prime and shoulder hours.

## Recommendations

- #1 The ice needs assessment has indicated that the supply of current ice pads exceeds the current demands required to serve user groups and the community beyond the next ten years. However, prior to considering a further reduction in the supply of arena ice pads, however, it is recommended that the City maintain its current supply (with Haig continuing to be decommissioned and includes the independently operated Merritton Arena and the Meridian Centre). A two phased approach is recommended to confirm ice pad demand with the first phase taking place over the next three years while the City undertakes the following actions:



- a) Develop strategies aimed at increasing prime, shoulder and weekend hour utilizations through differentiated pricing strategies, alternative scheduling and allocation approaches, encouraging 'spot' bookings, etc.
  - b) Future assessments of operating and utilization performance should include prime time hours as defined by the Ice Allocation Policy for its tracking and reporting purposes (i.e. the 10pm and 11pm time slots for weekday and 9pm to 11pm for weekend rentals, as well as the 7am to 8am weekend time slots).
  - c) Renegotiate the Merritton Centennial Arena agreement to require that City policies be fully implemented thereby ensuring a consistent and equitable approach across the City-owned arena supply in St. Catharines, including implementation of the Ice Allocation policy. As part of this, the agreement should provide the City full access to utilization, registration information and relevant financial information to allow for the City to integrate into its performance measurement exercises.
  - d) Revise the existing Ice Allocation Policy to: i) differentiate the priority of ice allocation of residents versus non-resident and commercial versus community; ii) differentiate with a higher priority given to the allocation of ice for community use versus commercial use; and iii) utilize the 'actual' amount of ice utilized by groups in the preceding year as a starting point for allocation rather than what was initially allocated (to recognize hours turned back after the allocation process from the previous year).
  - e) Review the arena budgeting practices to ensure alignment with best practices and optimize understandability to the general public.
  - f) Monitor the planning exercise being undertaken by Ridley College for its campus, to determine potential impacts, if any, on the availability of the existing ice pad on community use.
  - g) Continue to decommission Haig Bowl for ice purposes (noting that dry floor uses would continue as long as sustainable to do so) subject to an arena facility provision strategy based upon the findings of the first phase recommendations.
- #2 That City Staff review ice pad performance within three years, to re-evaluate ice needs following the consideration of the actions associated with the first phase recommendations (Recommendation #1). This will involve an updated assessment of user group registrations, utilization during prime and shoulder periods, program fill rates, capital/operating cost requirements, demographics of the community, etc. to confirm longer-term ice needs. It is expected that this process will determine the City's required supply of ice pads to meet community needs in the long-term.

- a) Should surplus ice be determined at this time resulting in further reductions to the supply of ice pads (i.e. over and above the current number of operational ice pads), it is recommended that the City adjust the arena supply after examining a wide range of options guided by geographic location, level of utilization, building condition, financial performance and partnership opportunities at a minimum.
  - b) Should the City determine an over-supply of ice pad exists but decides to continue to retain 8 ice pads (plus the Meridian Centre), the rationale for doing so would be on the basis that over-supplying arena facilities is a means to further recreational objectives, including:
    - i. provision of surplus rental and programming capacity;
    - ii. maximizing the convenience of playing ice sports by increasing availability of prime times, particularly to adult users;
    - iii. maintaining strong geographic coverage, particularly south of the Q.E.W.;
    - iv. accommodate a portion of regional ice demand;
    - v. the City accepts the ongoing financial costs associated with required capital investments in the aging arena infrastructure, along with annual operating deficit of an over-supply; and
    - vi. winter ice sports are deemed to be a higher community need than other possible activities or facilities that are required, but would be otherwise unfunded or underfunded, given finite budgetary resources in the Parks, Recreation and Culture Services portfolio (e.g. spaces for general purpose activities, youth and/or older adult programming, wellness and active living programs, etc.).
- #3 Regardless of the number of pads the City should choose to retain, initiate potential partnership discussions with an educational institution, area municipality, or other suitable partner to construct a new arena complex to replace aging arena infrastructure in St. Catharines with the number of ice pads determined based upon the three year review noted in Recommendation #2. At a minimum, any such agreement should generally align with partnership principles found in Section 5.5 of this Master Plan, ensure sufficient community access for local residents at a competitive rate, require equitable financial contributions to capital and operating requirements relative to the degree of access obtained, and be strategically located within reasonable access to local residents.



## Appendix C: Listing of Key Non-Municipal Recreation Facilities

This Appendix lists major non-municipal recreation facilities in St. Catharines. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list and represents best available information at the time of writing.

### **Arenas**

Ridley College

### **Indoor Aquatics Centres**

Brock University  
Ridley College  
Walker Family Y.M.C.A.  
Certain hotels

### **Gymnasiums**

Brock University  
Gymnastics Energy (gymnastics facility)  
Ridley College  
Walker Family Y.M.C.A.  
Various elementary and secondary schools

### **Fitness Centres**

Brock University  
Ridley College  
Walker Family Y.M.C.A.  
Various private sector fitness clubs

### **Youth Centres**

The Deck  
The Raft  
Grantham Optimist Youth Centre

### **Outdoor Sports Fields**

Brock University  
Club Roma  
Grantham Optimist Club  
Ridley College  
Various elementary and secondary schools

### **Splash Pads**

Walker Family Y.M.C.A.

### **Hard Surface Courts**

Ballhockey.com Athletic Centre  
Various elementary and secondary schools  
Certain residential complexes

### **Playgrounds**

Various schools, churches, etc.

## Appendix D: Parks and Recreation Facility Information Sheets

The Parks and Recreation Facility Information Sheets are intended for internal use but are available to the public by request from the City of St. Catharines.