

Committee of the Whole Meeting Agenda

Tuesday, October 3, 2023, 1:00 p.m.

Council Chambers

Guelph City Hall, 1 Carden Street

Changes to the original agenda are noted with an asterisk "*".

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Pages

1. Call to Order - Mayor

1.1 Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and General Nature Thereof

2. Authority to move into closed meeting

Recommendation:

That the Council of the City of Guelph now hold a meeting that is closed to the public, pursuant to The Municipal Act, to consider:

2.1 Call to Order (closed meeting)

2.2 Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and General Nature Thereof (closed items)

2.3 Clair-Maltby Second Plan Ontario Land Tribunal Update

Section 239(2) (e) and (f) litigation or potential litigation, including matters before administrative tribunals, affecting the municipality or local board and advice that is subject to solicitor-client privilege, including communications necessary for that purpose.

3. Closed Meeting Summary

4. Open Meeting - 2:00 p.m.

4.1 O Canada

4.2 Silent Reflection

4.3 Indigenous Territorial Acknowledgement

4.4 Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and General Nature Thereof

5. Service Area - Public Services

Chair - Councillor Downer

6. Consent Agenda - Public Services

The following resolutions have been prepared to facilitate Council's consideration of various matters and are suggested for consideration. If Council wishes to address a specific report in isolation of the Consent Agenda, please identify the item. It will be extracted and dealt with separately as part of the Items for Discussion.

6.1 Emergency Management By-law and Program Amendments - 2023-342 1

Recommendation:

1. That staff be directed to bring forward a by-law for Council's consideration to repeal Emergency Management Response By-law (2019)-20358 and to implement a new Emergency Management Response By-law, updating the Municipality's obligations in providing an Emergency Management program as set out in the Emergency Management By-law and Program Amendments Report dated October 3, 2023.

6.2 Community Grant Policy Update - 2023-353 31

Recommendation:

1. That the Community Grant Allocation Panel be dissolved and that the authority to award Community Grants be delegated to the Deputy Chief Administration Officer of Public Services, as outlined in the Community Grant Policy Update report dated October 3, 2023.
2. That the Community Grant equity-related policy changes outlined in the Community Grant Policy Update report, dated October 3, 2023, be approved and added to the Community Grant Policy.

7. Items for Discussion - Public Services

The following items have been extracted from Consent Agenda and

will be considered separately. These items have been extracted either at the request of a member of Council or because they include a presentation and/or delegations.

7.1 Public Art Policy Update - 2023-359

37

Presentation:

Tammy Adkin, Manager Guelph Museums
Julia Grady, Chair, Public Art Advisory Committee

Recommendation:

1. That the Public Art Policy Update dated October 3, 2023 be approved.
2. That Appendix A of the General Reserve and Reserve Fund Policy be amended to reflect the change to the Public Art Reserve Fund (#356) sources of funds to include Council approved transfers from the operating budget and approved surplus allocations from the operating budget at year end and amend the authority/timing to include capital budget.
3. That costs associated with the Public Art Policy update be referred to the multi-year budget process.

7.2 Culture Plan 2030 Staff Report - 2023-358

49

Presentation:

Tammy Adkin, Manager Guelph Museums

Recommendation:

1. That Culture Plan 2030 be approved.
2. That costs associated with the implementation of Culture Plan 2030 be referred to the 2024-2027 multi-year budget process.

7.3 Parks and Recreation Master Plan - 2023-320

79

Presentation:

Mallory Lemon, Manager, Park and Trail Development

Recommendation:

That the Parks and Recreation Master Plan dated August 2023, included as Attachment-1 to this report, be approved.

That the funding requirements for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan be referred to future operating and capital budgets in order to implement the recommendations of the plan.

8. Service Area Chair and Staff Announcements

9. Adjournment

Staff Report



To	Committee of the Whole
Service Area	Public Services
Date	Tuesday, October 3, 2023
Subject	Emergency Management By-law and Program Amendments

Recommendation

1. That staff be directed to bring forward a by-law for Council’s consideration to repeal Emergency Management Response By-law (2019)-20358 and to implement a new Emergency Management Response By-law, updating the Municipality’s obligations in providing an Emergency Management program as set out in the Emergency Management By-law and Program Amendments Report dated October 3, 2023.
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Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

To recommend that the City’s Emergency Management Response By-law (2019)-20358 be replaced with a new Emergency Management Response By-law, updating the Municipality’s obligations in providing an Emergency Management program as set out in Attachments 1 to 7.

Key Findings

The Emergency Management By-law and Amendment is a provincially legislated requirement under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act. This amended By-law ensures the City is better prepared and has a plan in place which aligns to the City’s Strategic Plan.

Strategic Plan Alignment

This initiative aligns with the Working Together for our Future pillar by improving the emergency preparedness of our City, the City’s resilience and ultimately the protection of critical infrastructure, continuity of government, the public, and the environment in the event disaster occurs.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report.

Report

Program Requirements

The Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter E.9, and Ontario Regulation 380/04 requires every municipality in Ontario to develop

and implement an emergency management program, and formulate an emergency plan. The Emergency Management Program for the City of Guelph sets up the elements of a continuous improvement process to develop, implement, maintain and evaluate emergency management and continuity of operations programs that address prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery that meet and exceed all legislative requirements and standards.

The City of Guelph's obligations as required under provincial legislation and those authorities having jurisdiction are continued within an amending by-law, and Attachments 1 to 7.

Action Required

To direct staff to bring forward a by-law for Council's consideration to repeal Emergency Management Response By-law (2019)-20358 and to implement a new Emergency Management Response By-law, updating the Municipality's obligations in providing an Emergency Management program as set out in Attachments 1 to 7 of this report.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report.

Consultations

Not Applicable

Attachments

Attachment-1 Emergency Management By-law

Attachment-2 Schedule A – Emergency Management Program

Attachment-3 Schedule B – Community Emergency Management Coordinator

Attachment-4 Schedule C Emergency Management Program Committee

Attachment-5 Schedule D – Emergency Operations Centre

Attachment-6 Schedule E – Emergency Information Officer

Attachment-7 Schedule F – Emergency Management Plan

Departmental Approval

Dustin Gronc, Manager – Corporate and Community Safety

Report Author

Eric Lucko, Community Emergency Management Coordinator

This report was approved by:

Doug Godfrey

General Manager, Operations

Public Services

519-922-1260 extension 2520
doug.godfrey@guelph.ca

This report was recommended by:

Colleen Clack-Bush
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Public Services
519-822-1260 extension 2588
colleen.clack-bush@guelph.ca

The Corporation of the City of Guelph Draft By-law

By-law Number (20XX) - XXXXX

A By-law to adopt an Emergency Management Program and Emergency Response Plan and to meet other Requirements under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act; and to repeal the previous By-law (2019)-20358.

WHEREAS under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.9 and (the "Act") Ontario Regulation 380/04 (the "Reg") every municipality in the Province of Ontario is required to:

- Develop and implement an emergency management program, which shall consist of:
 - an emergency plan;
 - training programs and exercises for employees of the municipality and other persons with respect to the provision of necessary services and the procedures to be followed in emergency response and recovery activities;
 - public education on risks to public safety and on public preparedness for emergencies;
 - any other elements required by the standards for emergency management set under the Act or by Emergency Management Ontario;

AND WHEREAS it is prudent that the emergency management program developed under the Act be in accordance with international best practices, including the five core components of emergency management; prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery;

AND WHEREAS the purpose of such a program is to help protect public safety, public health, the environment, critical infrastructure and property during an emergency and to promote economic stability and a disaster resilient community;

The Council of the Corporation of the City of Guelph enacts as follows:

1. The City of Guelph Emergency Management Program and Emergency Response Plan attached hereto as Schedule "A" to this by-law, is hereby adopted.
2. The City of Guelph Community Emergency Management Coordinator attached hereto as Schedule "B" to this by-law, is hereby adopted.
3. The City of Guelph Emergency Management Program Committee and Municipal Emergency Control Group attached hereto as Schedule "C" to this by-law, is hereby adopted.
4. The City of Guelph Emergency Operations Centre attached hereto as Schedule "D" to this by-law, is hereby adopted.
5. The City of Guelph Emergency Information Officer attached hereto as Schedule "E" to this by-law, is hereby adopted.
6. The City of Guelph Emergency Response Plan attached hereto as Schedule "F" to this by-law, is hereby adopted.

The Emergency Response Plan shall be made available to the public for inspection and copying at the City Clerk's Office, 1 Carden St. during regular business hours; and also available on the City's website:

<https://guelph.ca/wp-content/uploads/EmergencyResponsePlan.pdf>

The Plan, or any amendments to the Plan, shall be submitted to Emergency Management Ontario as identified in the Act.

By-law Number (2019) - 20358 is hereby repealed.

Passed this [day of the month] day of [month], 20XX.

Schedules:

Schedule A: Emergency Management Program

Schedule B: Community Emergency Management Coordinator

Schedule C: Emergency Management Program Committee

Schedule D: Emergency Operations Centre

Schedule E: Emergency Information Officer

Schedule F: Emergency Management Plan

Cam Guthrie, Mayor

**Stephen O'Brien, City Clerk [or]
Dylan McMahon, Deputy City Clerk**

Draft Schedule "A"

By-law (20XX) - XXXXX

Emergency Management Program

1. An Emergency Management Program for the municipality will be developed and reviewed annually by the Emergency Management Program Committee consistent with and in accordance with the Act, the Reg, and international best practices, including the five components of emergency management, namely: prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery, and such program shall include:
 - a. training programs and exercises for employees of the municipality and other persons with respect to the provision of necessary services and the procedures to be followed in emergency response and recovery activities;
 - b. public education on risks to public safety and on public preparedness for emergencies; and
 - c. any other elements required by the standards for emergency management set under the Act or by Emergency Management Ontario.
2. The Emergency Management Program shall be consistent with the objectives of protecting public safety, public health, the environment, critical infrastructure and property, and to promote economic stability and a disaster-resilient community.

Emergency Response Plan

3. The Emergency Response Plan, which has been developed in accordance with the requirements of the Act and Reg and international best practices, and which is attached hereto as Schedule "F" is hereby adopted (the "Plan").
4. The Plan shall be reviewed annually by the CEMC and the Emergency Management Program Committee. The CEMC is authorized to make such administrative changes to the Plan as appropriate to keep the Plan current, such as personnel, organizational and contact information updates. Any significant revision to the body of the Plan shall be presented to Council for approval.
5. When an emergency exists but has not yet been declared to exist, employees and the Emergency Control Group may take such action under the Plan as may be required to protect property and the health, safety and welfare of the inhabitants of the City of Guelph.

Draft Schedule "B"

By-Law (20XX) - XXXXX

Community Emergency Management Coordinator

1. An employee hired by the City of Guelph is hereby appointed as the primary community emergency management coordinator (the "CEMC") responsible for the emergency management program for the City including maintenance of the Plan, training, exercises, public education and such other duties and responsibilities as outlined in the Act.
2. Three employees as follows are hereby appointed as alternate CEMCs to act in place of the primary CEMC in his/her absence: Deputy Fire Chief, Guelph Fire Services/Deputy Paramedic Chief, Guelph Wellington Paramedic Service/Guelph Police Services designated alternate.

Draft Schedule "C"

By-Law (20XX) - XXXXX

Emergency Management Program Committee

1. The persons holding the following positions in the municipality shall be members of the Emergency Management Program Committee:
 - a. Deputy Chief Administrative Officer (DCAO), Public Services
 - b. Manager – Corporate and Community Safety Division (CCSD) or alternate CCSD management
 - c. CEMC
 - d. Alternate CEMC – Deputy Fire Chief, Guelph Fire Services/Deputy Paramedic Chief, Guelph Wellington Paramedic Service/Guelph Police Services designated alternate
2. Deputy Chief Administrative Officer (DCAO), Public Services is hereby appointed as chair of the Emergency Management Program Committee.
3. The Emergency Management Program Committee shall advise Council on the development and implementation of the municipality's Emergency Management Program and shall review the program annually.

Municipal Emergency Control Group

4. The persons holding the following positions in the municipality shall be members of the Municipal Emergency Control Group (MECG):

Executive:

- a. Head of Council – Mayor
- b. CAO
- c. Deputy CAO – Public Services
- d. Deputy CAO – Corporate Services
- e. Deputy CAO – Infrastructure, Development and Enterprise Services
- f. Chief – Guelph Police Services
- g. Chief – Guelph Fire Services
- h. Chief – Guelph-Wellington Paramedic Services
- i. CEMC

Command Structure of Emergency Operations Centre:

- a. Emergency Operations Centre Director
- b. Emergency Information Officer
- c. Liaison Officer
- d. Recording Clerk
- e. Operations Section Chief
- f. Planning Section Chief
- g. Logistics Section Chief
- h. Finance and Administration Section Chief

Draft Schedule "D"

By-Law (20XX) - XXXXX

Emergency Operations Centre

1. A primary and an alternate Emergency Operations Centre have been established for use by the MCEG in an emergency and with the appropriate technological and telecommunications systems to ensure effective communication in an emergency. The locations of the Emergency Operations Centres are identified in an annex to the Plan.

Draft Schedule "E"

By-Law (20XX) - XXXXX

Emergency Information Officer

1. The City of Guelph General Manager of Strategic Communications and Community Engagement is hereby appointed as the Emergency Information Officer for the municipality to act as the primary media and public contact for the municipality in an emergency.

**By-Law (2023) - 20358
Schedule "F"**



City of Guelph
Emergency Response Plan

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1. Introduction

The City of Guelph (the “City”) is vulnerable to numerous hazards. These can be human caused such as a cyber-attack, technological such as those involving hazardous materials, or natural such as severe weather or flooding.

The City’s Emergency Response Plan (the “plan”) establishes the framework that ensures the City is prepared to deal with any of these hazards. It is an important component of an integrated emergency management program, which works within the parameters outlined by the Emergency Management Doctrine for Ontario pertaining to prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.

The City has developed this emergency response plan in accordance with the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, RSO 1990.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Plan during an emergency is to facilitate the effective coordination of human and physical resources, services and activities necessary to:

1. Protect and preserve life and property,
2. Minimize and/or mitigate the effects of the emergency on the residents and physical infrastructure of the City, and
3. Quickly and efficiently enable the recovery and return of normal services.

The Plan also makes provision for the efficient administration, coordination and implementation of extraordinary arrangements and response measures taken by the City to protect the health, safety and welfare of the residents of the City during any emergency by:

1. Identifying the governance structure for emergency response within the City,
2. Identifying roles and responsibilities required in mitigating, preparing for, responding to and recovering from emergencies and disasters,
3. Identifying standard response goals for emergency response operations and decision making, and
4. Providing for a coordinated response by the municipality and partner agencies in managing emergencies.

1.2 Legal Authorities

The legislation under which the municipality and its employees are authorized to respond to an emergency are:

- The Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter E.9, as amended (the "Act")
- Ontario Regulation 380/04
- The City's Emergency Management Program and Plan By-Law (2023) - 20358

1.3 Protection from Liability

Section 11 of the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act states:

“No action or other proceeding lies or shall be instituted against a member of council, an employee of a municipality, an employee of a local services board, an employee of a district social services administration board, a minister of the Crown, a public servant or any other individual acting pursuant to this Act or an order made under this Act for any act done in good faith in the exercise or performance or the intended exercise or performance of any power or duty under this Act or an order under this Act or for neglect or default in the good faith exercise or performance of such a power or duty.” [2006, c. 13, s. 1(6)]

1.4 Emergency Definition

Emergencies are distinct from the normal daily operations carried out by municipal first response agencies and City services. The Act defines an emergency as:

“A situation or an impending situation that constitutes a danger of major proportions that could result in serious harm to persons or substantial damage to property and that is caused by the forces of nature, a disease or other health risk, an accident whether intentional or otherwise.”

1.5 Municipal Emergency Control Group

The Municipal Emergency Control Group (MECG) is comprised of persons holding the following positions:

1. Head of Council - Mayor
2. Chief Administrative Officer
3. Deputy CAO Public Services
4. Deputy CAO Corporate Services
5. Deputy CAO Infrastructure, Development and Enterprise Services
6. Chief – Guelph Police Services
7. Chief – Guelph Fire Services

8. Chief – Guelph-Wellington Paramedic Services
9. Community Emergency Management Coordinator
10. Any other officials, experts or representatives from within the organization or private sector as deemed necessary by the Municipal Emergency Control Group may be appointed to the group on an as needed basis.

The primary responsibility of the Municipal Emergency Control Group (MECG) is to provide for the overall management and coordination of site support activities and consequence management issues. It is the responsibility of the MECG to ensure that response priorities are established, and that planning and response activities are coordinated between the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), emergency site and partner agencies.

1.6 Emergency Management Program Committee

The intention of the Emergency Management Program Committee is to develop and implement the emergency management program and adopt it by by-law. The Act requires every Emergency Management Program consist of:

- An emergency plan
- Training programs and emergency exercises for the municipality and partners
- Public Education on risks to public safety that could prompt an emergency
- An assessment of various hazards and risks to public safety
- Any other element required by the standards for emergency management programs set under Section 14 of the Act

1.7 Head of Council

The head of council of a municipality (HOC) is the Mayor or designate.

Under section 4 of the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.9 (the "Act"), the **head of council** of a municipality **may**:

11. **Declare** that an emergency exists in the municipality or in any part thereof;
and
12. **May take such action** and make such orders as he or she **considers necessary** and **are not contrary to law** to **implement the emergency plan** of the municipality and to protect property and the health, safety and welfare of the inhabitants of the emergency area.

When a municipal emergency is declared, the head of the municipality is given the power to make any emergency orders that are not “contrary to law”.

2. Concept of Operations

First responders and municipal departments manage many emergencies that occur on a day-to-day basis. As the magnitude of an emergency increases, so will the requirement for additional support from within the City. The MECG may elect to request for additional assistance. Information on requesting assistance can be found in Section 5 of this plan.

2.1 Response Goals

The following response goals are applied to all emergency situations. In order of priority they are:

1. Provide for the health and safety of all responders,
2. Save lives,
3. Reduce suffering,
4. Protect public health,
5. Protect critical infrastructure,
6. Protect property,
7. Protect the environment, and
8. Reduce economic and social losses.

The City has adopted Ontario's Incident Management System (IMS) for emergency response and management. IMS is flexible and can be used in any size or type of emergency.

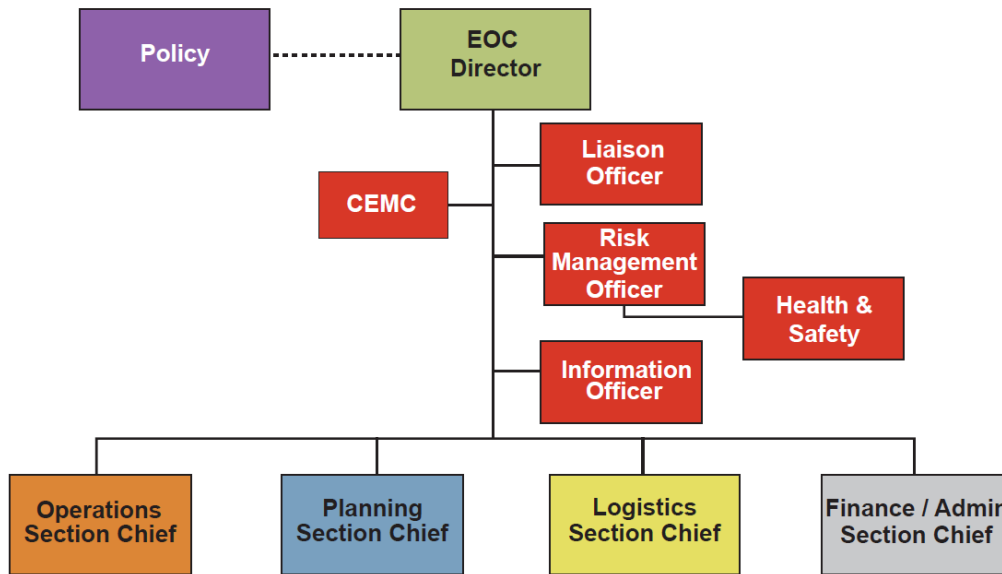
2.2 Incident Management System

The Province of Ontario developed the Incident Management System (IMS) Doctrine as a standardized approach to emergency management that was built on international best practices and designed to reflect the unique needs of municipalities across Ontario.

IMS encompasses all the areas that are needed for managing an emergency, including personnel, facilities, equipment, procedures, communications, and operating within a common organizational structure. IMS is predicated on the understanding that in any and every incident, there are certain management functions that must be carried out regardless of the number of persons who are available or involved in the emergency response. The key management functions

are: Command (Green/Red), Operations (Orange), Planning (Blue), Logistics (Yellow), and Finance (Grey). These functions are organized as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: EOC Partial Activation Organization Chart



2.3 IMS Section Responsibilities:

The general roles and responsibilities of the IMS sections are as follows:

Command:

The Command section is responsible for decisions that give strategic direction to the overall response to the event. The positions highlighted in red are considered Command staff and support the incident with risk management, communications, health and safety, Emergency Operations Centre and liaising with partners and government agencies.

Policy:

The purpose of the Policy Group is to provide a structure to allow for advice and assistance with Council in order to make the best informed decisions regarding the emergency situation.

Operations:

The Operations section will provide minute-by-minute support to emergency responders in the field. Operations is in contact with staff in the field to ensure they have the information about the emergency, that requests for supplies, equipment, or personnel are processed, and that there is coordination between the agencies involved.

Planning:

The Planning section will be responsible for gathering, analyzing and evaluating the situational information from the emergency in order to develop recommendations on an appropriate Incident Action Plan (IAP), to be approved by Command. This section also provides periodic predictions on the potential disruptions and impacts of the emergency.

Logistics:

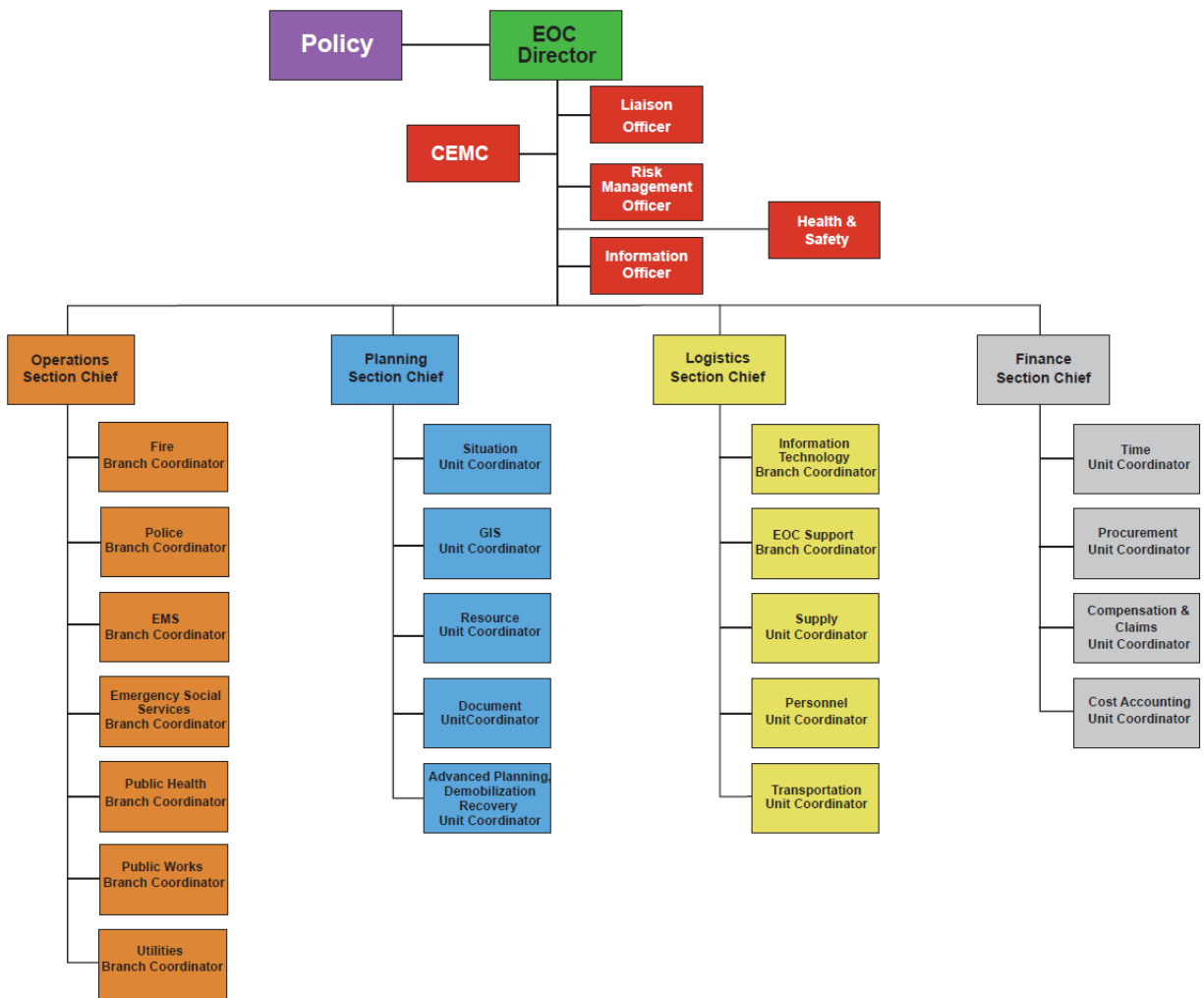
The Logistics section is primarily responsible for locating and acquiring all the necessary personnel, equipment, and material items needed by the municipality to manage the emergency.

Finance:

The Finance section is responsible for the financial management of the operations, which includes tracking all expenses and preparing claims where possible.

These functions can be expanded or contracted to meet the requirements as the event progresses. Figure 2 below shows an expanded organizational response which would likely be used during a large-scale emergency.

Figure 2: EOC Full Activation Organizational Chart



The City has created an EOC IMS Handbook in Appendix 6 which contains further information on the IMS system including roles and responsibilities, position descriptions, and forms.

2.4 Site Response

The emergency responders at the site or sites of the emergency provide tactical response to the emergency as they attempt to mitigate its effects and bring the emergency under control.

2.5 Corporate Response

The MECG provides for the overall management and coordination of site support activities and consequence management.

The MECG is responsible for:

- Notifying response agencies and coordinating the activities of the various municipal services and organizations which are needed to effectively respond to and recover from the emergency,
- Providing support to the incident commander and site personnel,
- Collecting situational awareness information and prioritizing, evaluating, summarizing it, as well as disseminating and displaying it,
- Establishing priorities based on all the information gathered and developing incident action plans,
- Obtaining, coordinating and managing payment of any additional resources (both personnel and equipment) needed to support the emergency,
- Coordinating all internal and external information including communicating emergency information to the general public, and
- Maintaining the day-to-day activities of the community outside of the emergency area.

2.6 City Council Response

City Council can support the emergency by relaying information to residents, attending community meetings, reassuring residents, and supporting the action taking place in the community. Councillors will follow the leadership of the Mayor and Acting Mayor and liaise back through the Mayor's Office regarding any concerns from within the wards.

3. Implementation

The Plan can be implemented as soon as an emergency occurs, or is expected to occur, which is considered to be of such magnitude as to warrant its implementation. An official declaration of an "emergency" does not have to be made for the Plan to be implemented to protect the lives and property of the inhabitants of the City.

3.1 Internal Notification - Callout

The Chief Administration Officer (CAO) or alternate has the authority to implement the Emergency Response Plan and activate the EOC. Other members of the MECG can request activation of the Plan and EOC through the CAO.

The City's internal notification system will be used to notify EOC staff members of the activation. In the event of an emergency situation where managing the event will require mobilizing City resources, either the CEMC or any member of the Municipal Emergency

Control Group may request that the CAO or alternate authorize the activation of the Internal Notification procedure. Further information on the Internal Notification process can be found in Appendix 2 – Emergency Notifications.

3.2 External Notification - Emergency

In the event of a confirmed incident or emergency where there is an immediate or imminent threat to life, serious threat to public health, safety and security or substantial damage to property, the CEMC or alternate can request a Broadcast Immediate alert through the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre. The Chief Administration Officer (or their alternates) and the Emergency Services Chiefs have the approving authority for the CEMC to make this request. Other members of the MECG can request an External Emergency Notification through consultation with the CAO and (or) Emergency Services Chiefs.

Further information on the External Emergency Notification process can be found in Appendix 2 – Emergency Notifications.

3.3 Emergency Operations Centre

The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) is a location where the MECG may gather to collectively and collaboratively support emergency response, and manage the consequences of an emergency. The EOC is utilized, where necessary, to centralize and coordinate efforts occurring at the emergency site(s).

There is a primary and alternate location designated as the EOC. In the event of implementation of the Plan for a declared or undeclared emergency, EOC personnel and MECG will be notified to assemble at one of the designated locations.

The City also has the ability to conduct a virtual EOC using video conferencing software's, shared City network drives and other technology.

3.4 Activation Levels

The City will use a tiered emergency management response structure as a guide before, during and following emergencies. Each level signifies the variation of the impact to the community caused by an emergency. Please see figure 3 for the Levels of Activation Chart.

Figure 3: Levels of Activation Chart

Levels of Activation	Activities
(i) Routine Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Routine incident responded to by police, fire, paramedics b) Consists of normal daily operations that City staff must carry out according to standard operating procedures, policies and/or legislation c) Monitor the City for potential or existing events or emergencies d) Monitor and receive notifications from internal and external agencies for potential incidents throughout the City
(ii) Enhanced Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e) Situation may be occurring within the City or surrounding area that is being monitored and assessed by Emergency Management f) Situational Awareness is developed and communicated to the MECG g) Heads-up notifications, situation reports, incident briefings, and incident status summary reports may be completed by the Community Emergency Management Coordinator
(iii) Partial Activation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Multiple City resources are being deployed to manage or mitigate the effects of an event b) The CAO may request that selected members of the MECG (or alternates) and scribes are to report to the EOC c) The selected MECG may notify selected members of their staff and place them on stand-by d) The City will complete IMS Reports and distribute internally and to select external partners e) Additional resources can be requested from Wellington County or the University of Guelph

Levels of Activation	Activities
(iv) Full Activation	f) Significant City resources are deployed and coordinated in order to manage or mitigate the effects of the event g) The CAO activates the EOC and IMS functions are filled as needed h) All members of the MECG will be activated i) The City will complete IMS Reports and distribute internally and to select external partners j) Additional resources can be requested from Wellington County or the University of Guelph

4. Declaration and Termination of an Emergency

4.1 Prior to a Declaration

When an emergency exists, but has not yet been declared, City employees and first responders may take such action (s) under the authority of this Plan necessary to protect lives and property.

4.2 Declaration of an Emergency

The Mayor or Acting Mayor, as HOC, is responsible for declaring that an emergency exists within the boundaries of the City. In declaring an emergency, the HOC will identify the geographical boundaries of the emergency area. The decision whether to declare an emergency and the designation of geographical boundaries of the emergency area will be made the CAO on the recommendation of the MECG.

The CEMC will ensure that all personnel and supporting agencies concerned are advised of the declaration of the emergency.

In accordance with the EMCPA, the Premier may declare that an emergency exists throughout Ontario or in any part thereof.

4.3 Termination of an Emergency

When it has been determined by the MECG that the emergency should be terminated, the HOC will make an official termination of declared emergency in writing. The Premier of Ontario may also terminate an emergency at any time. The

CEMC will ensure that all personnel and supporting agencies concerned are advised of the termination of the emergency.

5. Requests for Assistance

It is possible that assistance from external support agencies, including other levels of government, with specialized knowledge or expertise may be required by the City to help successfully respond to an emergency. Depending on the nature of the emergency and the assistance required, support agencies may be requested by the City to attend the emergency site(s) and/or EOC to provide assistance, or provide information and advice to the MECG through the Liaison Officer.

Under certain circumstances, the City may be required to request assistance from the County, University, Province, neighbouring municipalities or non-government organizations.

5.1 Mutual Agreements

Fire Mutual Aid Plan: The City and all fire departments within the County have agreed and signed onto a Mutual Aid Plan which allows each of them to request additional fire service resources to assist with response efforts. The Fire Incident Commander at the site of the incident or emergency has the authority to make this request.

Mutual Assistance Agreement: The City of Guelph and County of Wellington have agreed and signed a Mutual Assistance Agreement which allows them to request additional municipal resources from each other to assist with disaster response efforts. The CAO or acting CAO of the City has authority to request assistance or offer to provide assistance under this agreement.

5.2 University of Guelph

When additional supports are required, the CAO of the City has the authority to request assistance from the University of Guelph through the Mutual Aid Agreement.

5.3 Provincial Assistance

When the resources of the City are deemed insufficient to respond to the emergency, the CAO can direct the CEMC to request additional resources from the province. The request for provincial assistance shall not be deemed to be a request

where the Government of the Province of Ontario assumes authority and control of the emergency. These requests for assistance are made through the PEOC.

Provincial Ministries may have certain duties to perform during an emergency. They are assigned by Order in Council 1157/2009 under the authority of the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act.

5.4 Federal Assistance

Requests for personnel or resources from the federal government are requested through the PEOC which in turn liaises with the Federal Government Operations Centre.

5.5 Supporting Agencies

When additional resources are needed to respond to the emergency, the CAO can authorize to request additional support from non-government organizations.

6. Emergency Social Services

Emergency Social Services in the City are the responsibility of Wellington County who will utilize their own protocols, plans and external agencies as needed to coordinate the response. The City will provide support to both the County and supporting agencies that are working to provide services including: food, clothing, lodging, personal services, transportation, and other services.

7. Evacuation/Shelter-in-Place

Emergency evacuation is defined as the immediate and urgent movement of people away from the threat or actual occurrence of a hazard. Examples range from the small-scale evacuation of a building due to a fire to the large-scale evacuation because of a flood, explosion or approaching weather system. In situations involving hazardous materials or possible contamination, evacuees may be decontaminated prior to being transported out of the contaminated area. The types of evacuations in the city are:

7.1 Shelter-in-Place

Although this is not considered an evacuation, this occurs when there is threat to safety that exists outside and that emergency authorities are recommending that

residents, business and staff go indoors, close all windows, doors, vents, furnace, air conditioners, exhaust systems and monitor television, radio, and social media for further information.

7.2 Pre-Cautious Evacuation

Occurs when it is recommended to evacuate within a certain parameter usually a building, block or neighbourhood until the initial situation is contained. This is a short-term evacuation and will be issued by the Guelph Police Service. The Guelph Fire Department, Ontario Provincial Police, Guelph Wellington Paramedic Services or other appropriate authority can request a pre-cautionary evacuation be completed.

7.3 Mandatory Evacuation

Occurs when it is determined by the EOC Director in consultation with the MECG and emergency response personnel that there is an absolute need to evacuate an area, usually on a large-scale, possibly for an extended period of time (i.e. for more than 24 hrs). This level of evacuation which is recommended by the appropriate authorities having jurisdiction (Guelph Police Service, Guelph Fire Department, Guelph Wellington Paramedic Services, Ontario Provincial Police, Province or other appropriate authority).

7.4 Evacuation Centre

Evacuation Centres will be the responsibility of the Wellington County and Red Cross with support from the City. Wellington County will utilize their own protocols and plans to coordinate the response. In consultation with the County, MECG and emergency response personnel the CAO may request activation of an evacuation centre.

8. Review and Maintenance

The Plan will be reviewed annually and, where necessary, revised by the EMPC. The Plan will be revised only by by-law enacted by council; however, formal council approval is not required for:

- a) Changes additions or revisions to the annexes
- b) Editorial changes (i.e. editorial changes to text, section numbering, references, or changes to references to provincial statutes)
- c) Additions or deletions of contact information

It is the responsibility of each City employee or partner agency identified within the Plan to notify the CEMC forthwith of the need for any administrative changes or revisions to the Plan. The CEMC is responsible for maintaining a current confidential contact list for all EOC personnel and support agencies.

8.1 Exercising of the Plan

At least one exercise to simulate an emergency incident will be organized and conducted annually by the City CEMC for the MECG in order to test the overall effectiveness of the Plan. Recommendations arising from the annual exercise will be considered by the CEMC, the MECG, and EMPC for revisions to the Plan.

8.2 Debriefing and Implementing Lessons Learned

The City may choose to facilitate one or more debriefing sessions, depending on the nature and scale of the incident.

Following the debriefing sessions, an After-Action Report and Improvement Plan should be developed to capture the feedback that was gained from debriefs, and to have a record of everything that took place during the emergency response and the recovery phases. The City may choose to make the After-Action Report and Improvement Plan a public record.

The After-Action Report and Improvement Plan is also a way to capture the lessons learned from the event, and as a driving force to implement the recommendations for improvement that were given during the entire post-emergency review. Implementing lessons learned is an opportunity to review and update emergency plans and other supporting emergency-related documentation owned by the municipality.

The City should also take the opportunity to revisit partnerships with emergency and other community stakeholders, to ensure open and effective communication will take place for the next event.

8.3 Plan Distribution

The Plan will be distributed to the MECG and alternates, EOC staff, and partner organizations and agencies which include the Province, and other agencies that may have a role to play in responding to or providing assistance for emergencies within the City.

The Plan, excluding the appendixes and except for any part respecting continuity of operations and services or containing confidential information, is considered a public document and is available to the public for review on the City’s webpage or by request to the City Clerk’s Office.

9. Glossary of Terms:

The following terms, used in this document, are identified below:

Term	Meaning
Act	The Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, R.S.O.1990, c.E.9
EMPC	Emergency Management Program Committee
EOC	Emergency Operations Centre
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
CEMC	Community Emergency Management Coordinator
City	Corporation of the City of Guelph
County	County of Wellington
HIRA	Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment
HOC	Head of Council
IMS	Incident Management System
MECG	Municipal Emergency Control Group

Term	Meaning
OFMEM	Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management
PEOC	Provincial Emergency Operations Centre

Staff Report



To	Committee of the Whole
Service Area	Public Services
Date	Tuesday, October 3, 2023
Subject	Community Grant Policy Update

Recommendation

1. That the Community Grant Allocation Panel be dissolved and that the authority to award Community Grants be delegated to the Deputy Chief Administration Officer of Public Services, as outlined in the Community Grant Policy Update report dated October 3, 2023.
 2. That the Community Grant equity-related policy changes outlined in the Community Grant Policy Update report, dated October 3, 2023, be approved and added to the Community Grant Policy.
-

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

To update Council on the Community Grant Policy and recommend changes to delegation of authority and the Policy for consideration.

Key Findings

The Community Grant is the City’s annual grant program for not-for-profits in the community. It requests that organizations demonstrate how they align with the goals of Guelph’s Community Plan. The Community Grant Program can award organizations with up to three years of funding.

Despite the success of the program, staff were made aware of two challenges with the program. These include challenges of deliberating on grant applications in open session and barriers for Indigenous groups in applying for, and receiving, grants. To address these challenges, staff recommend two changes to the Community Grant policy.

First, providing delegation of authority of funding decisions to the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer (DCAO) of Public Services will allow the program to continue to engage residents in Community Grant decision-making; allow decisions to be made with a wide-range of expertise in the group; protect the reputation and privacy of panel members and applicant organizations; and ensure the objectivity and integrity of the process by creating an environment that allows for the free exchange of opinions.

Second, in response to equity barriers heard from Indigenous groups and community members, staff are proposing several policy and program changes as a first step to creating better access to City funding.

Strategic Plan Alignment

This work aligns closely with two different priorities of the Strategic Plan. The changes proposed help build more equity within City programs and help to advance the goals of Guelph's Community Plan.

Foundations 5.3: Remove barriers by integrating Guelph's Equity Lens into everything we do.

Support Community Wellbeing 13.1: Convene the community to advance the goals of Guelph's Community Plan

Financial Implications

No financial implications

Report

Background

The City works with and supports many local organizations in the community to improve the wellbeing of Guelph residents. These organizations deliver a wide range of services from organizing sports and recreational activities, to staging arts and culture events, to meeting basic human needs such as food and shelter.

The Council-approved [Community Investment Strategy](#) (CIS) provides the City with a strategy for providing funding and in-kind supports to local not-for-profit organizations. The [Guelph Community Grant Program](#) is one funding method of the CIS. The Grant Program is designed to direct City funding to not-for-profit, non-governmental community organizations that promote the wellbeing of Guelph residents.

The Community Grant is formerly known as the Wellbeing Grant and aligns to the goals and performance indicators of the City of Guelph Community Plan. Organizations are required to demonstrate how their work will contribute to Community Plan goals. Eligible organizations can apply through an annual application process for a small operating grant for up to three years of funding.

Authority to make grant allocation decisions on behalf of City Council is currently delegated to a panel of six community members with a wide range of appropriate skills and knowledge. The panel's decisions follow a set of guidelines outlined in the Guelph Community Grants Policy, and funding decisions are aligned to the City's community and strategic plans. Applicants must clearly show how they benefit Guelph residents and support the goals of the City.

Successful applicants are required to report on their grants annually, reporting includes activities undertaken, indicators they are measuring their work by, how the grant was spent, and the overall success of the work.

City Staff review all individual reports and report annually to Council for information. In 2023, 56 not-for-profit organizations received a total of \$336,100 from the City of Guelph Community Grant.

Over the last year, the following two issues were raised with staff by both the Community Grant Panel, and Community Grant applicants:

- Changes to delegation of authority and the grant panel to address the challenges of deliberating on grant applications in open session
- Changes to the grant policy to address barriers for Indigenous groups

Recommended Change to Delegation of Authority and Community Grant Panel

Since the creation of the Community Grant Panel, court rulings have significantly expanded what qualifies as a local board under the Municipal Act and, as such, the Community Grant Panel is now considered a local board. The Municipal Act requires that all local boards follow the same transparency and accountability regulations that apply to City Council. This includes holding open meetings and oversight from the Integrity Commissioner and Closed Meeting Investigator.

The implication for the grant panel was that they now need to deliberate on all Community Grant applications in open session. In the past, meetings were held in closed session to protect the objectivity and privacy of panel members, and the reputations of organizations which had submitted applications for evaluation.

For the 2023 grant cycle, the grant panel held their deliberations in open session, though no applicants attended meetings.

Following the 2023 grant cycle, the grant panel expressed concern with continuing this approach to grant deliberations in the future. These concerns include a:

- Risk to personal and professional reputation of panel members in the community
- Risk to applicants' reputations, or funding from other sources, if an applicant was assessed negatively in public
- Less objective decision-making process with panel members needing to balance honest assessments with the risks of doing so in front of applicants
- Challenge to the integrity of the process if having applicants being present in meetings is advantageous to the assessment of their application

The panel identified that the impact of continuing with this approach will create a decision-making process that would be less objective, carry greater risk for panel members and applicants, and would lead to recruitment challenges for these volunteer positions.

Staff have reviewed options and recommend that a working group of community members is maintained, but delegation of authority be moved from the panel to the DCAO of Public Services.

Under this recommendation, staff would recruit and select working group members, and operate under the panel's existing Terms of Reference with minor adaptations to reflect the change in delegation of authority and new structure. The group would continue to review and deliberate on applications and would make a recommendation to the DCAO of Public Services for approval. Under this proposed structure, the working group would not meet in open session and would instead discuss grant applications privately.

This recommended change in delegation of authority would allow deliberations to continue in closed session and would have the following benefits:

- Continue to engage residents in Community Grant decision-making

- Allow decisions to be made with a wide-range of expertise in the group
- Protect the reputation and privacy of panel members and applicant organizations
- Ensure the objectivity and integrity of the process by creating an environment that allows for the free exchange of opinions

To ensure continued transparency, the Terms of Reference and Grant Policy would be made public. City Staff would regularly post agendas and minutes for working group meetings to the City's website. City staff would continue to report to Council annually on Community Grant allocations. The annual report will include the selection criteria used to appoint members and include the names of working group members.

Authority would be limited to awarding the annual operating budget approved by City Council. Any disagreement of funding allocation between the working group recommendation and the DCAO of Public Services would be discussed with the working group. In accordance with the current policy, grant decisions are final and cannot be appealed.

The City Clerk's Office is currently working with the Guelph Lab on an Advisory Committees of Council Governance Review. The results of phase one of the review are scheduled to come before City Council in Q4, 2023. Given the review is underway, staff consulted with the City Clerk's Office to ensure alignment between that work and the recommendations included in this report. The current Chair of the Community Grant Panel has been consulted and is supportive of the approach above.

Recommended Changes to Community Grant Policy

During the last couple of funding cycles, staff heard from both applicants and the grant panel that local Indigenous groups encounter barriers in applying for, and receiving funds from, the Community Grant. As a result, staff have received one Community Grant application in the last five years from Indigenous-led groups.

The barriers identified can be put into the following categories:

- Format of application and reporting: online pdf forms are not accessible to everyone, and those with technological or income barriers may not be able to complete the forms electronically. In addition, staff heard that the reporting form is not something that some Indigenous groups would be comfortable with, and alternative forms of reporting could be explored.
- Language: staff heard that the language of "granting" itself creates barriers as it puts the City in a position of authority over Indigenous communities. Other language in the grant application might force applicants to misrepresent the work they are doing to fit into the City's form.
- Assessment of impact: staff heard that the way the assessment of the Community Grant is set up, would not necessarily see the value of work by and for Indigenous communities.
- Issue of incorporation: many Indigenous groups are unincorporated, and some are unincorporated by choice not to beholden to the Provincial government which regulates not-for-profits. The Community Grants eligibility requirement of only allowing incorporated not-for-profit organizations apply creates a barrier.

- Systemic issues: through the engagement, staff heard that the community grant is a competitive process which can encourage lateral violence between Indigenous groups in the community. The process also puts the Municipal government – an inherently colonial institution – in a position of authority over Indigenous groups, reinforcing those colonial structures. Engagement participants said that these relationships, reinforced through the grant program, can further degrade trust between the City and Indigenous communities.

In applying the City's Equity Lens to the Community Grant, staff engaged with the grant panel, some applicants, and members of the Indigenous community in Guelph through a community engagement process to learn more about the barriers and potential actions to take to build more equity into the program.

To honour the City's commitments to Truth and Reconciliation through the Community Plan and as a member of UNESCO Canada's Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities, staff recommend several policy and process changes for the Community Grant outlined below.

To address the issue of format, staff recommend increasing flexibility of the application to include electronic and paper submissions. For reporting, staff recommend implementing a pilot reporting process for the 2023 grant that will include an option for oral reporting in place of the report form. Oral reporting will still require organizations to share key information including success of the activities, metrics of success, number of people impacted, amounts of funds leveraged from other funders, and how the funds were spent.

To address the issue of language, staff will review language included in the policy, application, guidelines, report form, and the grant website to ensure that more accessible and inclusive language is used. The language and application itself will be simplified to ensure that only critical information for assessment is gathered.

To address the lack of equity work in the assessment of organizational impact, staff will add an equity-related assessment criteria in addition to the existing assessment criteria of the program. The criteria will include considerations for projects and initiatives that focus on equity and reconciliation, as well as those led by individuals identifying as Indigenous, Black, Racialized, or as a member of an equity-deserving group. In addition, staff will ensure that members of equity-deserving groups are represented on the working group reviewing applications.

To address issues of incorporation, staff will open up further options for groups to partner with incorporated not-for-profits, reducing barriers and limitations to partnership. These changes include allowing for not-for-profits to partner with groups and apply separately for their own work. Changes will also allow partner applications to apply for multi-year funding where they are currently limited to a single year of funding.

To address any broader systemic issues, staff are exploring pilot options through the Community Investment Reserve to support Indigenous communities with additional funds more directly, and outside of the Community Grant program. This will allow some additional funds to move to the community outside of a competitive grant process.

These recommendations represent the first step in developing a more equitable funding for Indigenous communities in Guelph. Staff will continue to engage with Indigenous and other equity-deserving groups to identify future barriers and opportunities, and to identify the impact program changes could have for the community.

Financial Implications

No financial implications

Consultations

Community Grant Panel Chair

Various Indigenous community members

Sara Sayyed, Strategy, Innovation and Intergovernmental Services

Attachments

None

Departmental Approval

Danna Evans, General Manager, Culture and Recreation

Dylan McMahon, Manager, Legislative Services/Deputy City Clerk

Report Author

Alex Goss, Manager, Community Investment

This report was approved by:

Danna Evans

General Manager, Culture and Recreation

Public Services

519-822-1260 extension 2621

danna.evans@guelph.ca

This report was recommended by:

Colleen Clack-Bush

Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

Public Services

519-822-1260 extension 2588

colleen.clack-bush@guelph.ca

Staff Report



To	Committee of the Whole
Service Area	Public Services
Date	Tuesday, October 3, 2023
Subject	Public Art Policy Update

Recommendation

1. That the Public Art Policy Update dated October 3, 2023 be approved.
 2. That Appendix A of the General Reserve and Reserve Fund Policy be amended to reflect the change to the Public Art Reserve Fund (#356) sources of funds to include Council approved transfers from the operating budget and approved surplus allocations from the operating budget at year end and amend the authority/timing to include capital budget.
 3. That costs associated with the Public Art Policy update be referred to the multi-year budget process.
-

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

This report brings forward recommendations to Council for updates to the Public Art Policy.

Key Findings

The Public Art Policy was established in 2011 and revised in 2014. The recommended policy updates align the policy with current practices, set standards for the management and documentation of the City’s public art collection, and establish a sustainable funding mechanism for public art acquisition.

Strategic Plan Alignment

The Public Art Policy supports the City Building priority to grow and care for community spaces and places; and the People and Economy priority to support community well-being.

Financial Implications

Financial impacts from this report will be referred to the 2024-2027 multi-year budget for decision.

Report

The recommended policy updates align policy with current practices, set standards for the management and documentation of the City’s public art collection, and establish a sustainable funding mechanism for public art acquisition.

The Public Art Policy was established in 2011 and revised in 2014. In addition to updating references to reporting and accountability relationships, this policy has been updated to align management of the City's Public Art Collection with Guelph Museums' collection management policy and practices.

The policy statement has been updated to recognize that public art is inclusive of creative practice as well as artistic output, and that artists and the artistic community are central to the City's ability to provide meaningful, representative, and authentic public art experiences.

In defining public art, an exemption of murals from the policy has been removed, recognizing that artworks temporary in nature are an important element of a comprehensive public art program.

The Public Art Reserve Fund exists as the primary funding mechanism for the acquisition of public art. This policy commits to regular contributions from the City's multi-year capital budget to the Public Art Reserve to sustain a progressive and responsive public art program. Contributions from Community Benefits Charges, federal and provincial grants, and private donations will also be employed to grow the Public Art Reserve.

Financial Implications

There are no financial impacts to deliver the Public Art Policy. Operating budget allocations to the Public Art Reserve Fund for new acquisitions and commissions have been referred to the multi-year budget for \$50,000 for consideration as an ongoing operating budget transfer. The funds in the Public Art Reserve Fund would be available for the acquisition of public art either through amounts included in the capital budget or other in-year Council reports.

Consultations

The Public Art Advisory Committee contributed to revisions to the Public Art Policy.

Attachments

Attachment-1 Public Art Policy

Departmental Approval

Danna Evans, General Manager, Culture and Recreation

Report Author

Tammy Adkin, Manager, Museums & Culture

This report was approved by:

Danna Evans
General Manager, Culture and Recreation
Public Services
519-822-1260 extension 2621
danna.evans@guelph.ca

This report was recommended by:

Colleen Clack-Bush

Deputy Chief Administrator Officer

Public Services

519-822-1260 extension 2588

colleen.clack-bush@guelph.ca

Corporate Policy And Procedure



Policy	Public Art Policy
Category	Corporate
Authority	Culture and Recreation
Related Policies	None
Approved By	Council
Effective Date	June 27, 2011
Revision Date	October 24, 2023

Policy Statement

The City of Guelph recognizes that Public Art enhances quality of life for citizens, fosters inclusion and belonging, strengthens community pride, improves the aesthetic of the public environment, and contributes to social well-being and economic vitality. Through the practice of artmaking and creative expressions in Public Spaces, Artists and the artistic community contribute significantly to the commemoration and celebration of our culture and heritage, reflection of our diversity, expression of shared values, and definition of our unique identity. Public Art advances Guelph’s City Building objective to grow and care for our community spaces and places.

Purpose

The purpose of this Public Art Policy is to:

- Establish, for the City, a standardized and transparent process for the selection, acquisition, maintenance, and de-accession of Public Art in keeping with professional standards, and
- Provide, for the City, a sustainable funding model for the growth and management of Public Art.

Definitions

Acquisition refers to the process of accepting an artistic work into the City’s collection of Public Art.

Artist refers to the designer/creator of an artistic work and can include, but is not limited to, a professional artist, graphic designer, collaborative team, architect, or landscape designer.

Borrowed refers to an artistic work that is borrowed by the City, through a loan agreement, for a defined period of time from a lender who owns and retains ownership of the artistic work.

Community Art refers to an artistic work created collaboratively between an artist and an identified community. Community members actively participate in the creation of the artistic work. The artistic process is of equal importance to the artistic product.

De-accession refers to the process of removing an artistic work from the City's collection of Public Art.

Owned refers to an artistic work that is owned by the City for the benefit of this and future generations.

Public Art refers to artistic works that are created by Artists and acquired by the City with the specific intention of being sited on or staged in Public Space. Such artistic works may be Owned or Borrowed, and may be characterized as aesthetic, functional, interactive, or any combination thereof, and created using any material or any combination of media, including but not limited to murals, sculptures, water features, paintings, drawings, textiles, furnishings, installations, and kinetic works.

Furnishings, such as benches, light standards, and signage, are not subject to this policy unless a design component is commissioned. Museum, library and archival collections, commemorative plaques and memorials fall under other City policies, and are therefore not subject to this Policy.

Public Art Committee refers to the committee described in Section 1.1 of this Policy.

Public Art Operational Plan refers to a plan developed and managed by staff of Culture and Recreation, in partnership with other City departments as need arises, to parallel this Policy and to recommend a practical implementation strategy for Public Art. In addition to identifying and prioritizing locations throughout the City where Public Art may be situated, the Plan will make recommendations regarding themes and materials based on an assessment of the current inventory of Public Art and will serve as the first stage in the development of a more detailed and longer-term Public Art master plan.

Public Space refers to space available for use by the public, and can include, but is not limited to, parks, boulevards, trail systems, open spaces, waterways, roads, bridges, gateways, street spaces, civic squares and exterior and interior public areas associated with buildings or structures owned, operated, occupied, or used by or for the City.

Procedure

1. Roles

The management of Public Art is a consultative process involving multiple participants, including community representatives, City staff and City Council.

1.1. Role of Public Art Advisory Committee

The Public Art Advisory Committee is a Council-appointed committee which:

- a) advises on the implementation of this Policy
- b) reviews proposed project scope and terms of reference for each new Public Art project
- c) ensures application of established procedures and guidelines for each selection process
- d) advises and promotes communication and outreach of this Policy to the community
- e) advises and recommends to City staff on proposed gifts, donations and bequests to the City in accordance with established guidelines
- f) advises on the development and implementation of selection, acquisition, maintenance and de-accession of artistic works to which this Policy applies
- g) reviews the Public Art Operational Plan

The Public Art Advisory Committee will consist of seven (7) members with professional experience related to at least one of the following disciplines: urban planning or development, placemaking and community building, architecture, landscape architecture, visual art, literary arts, performing arts, art history, art administration, art education, curation, arts consulting, civil engineering, art reviewing/writing, or heritage research and planning. All members of the Public Art Advisory Committee will be residents of Guelph and will demonstrate a significant knowledge of arts and culture.

The Public Art Advisory Committee is subject to the City's Code of Conduct policies to ensure a fair and equitable treatment of all participants in the process and to ensure that their recommendations are without bias.

1.2. Role of City Staff

City staff will:

- a) facilitate regular Public Art Advisory Committee meetings, circulating information, providing guidance, and arranging for the recording of minutes
- b) cultivate relationships with the artistic community
- c) recommend a budget through the City's multi-year budget process

- d) establish and maintain a Public Art inventory
- e) coordinate the acquisition of artistic works in accordance with this Policy
- f) coordinate conservation of the City's Public Art as required
- g) investigate Federal, Provincial, or other sources of funding to promote and support the development of Public Art in the City.

The implementation of this Policy will be supported by the City's Cultural Programs & Events Coordinator.

An inter-departmental Public Art planning team will be established to work in conjunction with the Public Art Advisory Committee for selection of artistic works and ongoing, long-term Public Art planning, including site selection, restorations, conservation, and maintenance. This planning team could include staff representatives from such Service Areas as Culture and Recreation, Planning and Building Services, Engineering and Transportation Services, Parks, Economic Development and Tourism, Finance, and Operations.

Culture and Recreation staff will receive recommendations from the Public Art Advisory Committee related to the selection, acquisition, or de-accession of Public Art. Final decisions regarding the selection, acquisition or de-accession of artistic works will be made by Culture and Recreation staff with the appropriate approval authority.

1.3. Role of City Council

Council will:

- a) act as an advocate for art in Public Spaces in the City
- b) approve the Public Art Policy
- c) approve any changes to the Public Art Policy, as needed
- d) authorize expenditures from the Public Art Reserve Fund
- e) approve the annual Public Art budget through the budget process

2. Funding

2.1. Public Art Reserve Fund

Funding to support this Policy will be provided through the City's annual capital budget to the Public Art Reserve Fund. A minimum of 75% of all funds collected must be used for the design, fabrication, installation and documentation of Public Art or Community Art projects chosen through an objective juried selection process.

Funds ranging up to 25% will be apportioned to the governance and administration of the selection process, collection, inventory, insurance, staffing, legal requirements, de-accession of artistic works and the overall policy review.

Funding may also be provided through the Public Art Reserve Fund for Community Art projects. A jury, consisting of Public Art Advisory Committee members and members

of the inter-departmental Public Art planning team, will determine whether a Community Art project should proceed and/or be funded. The goal of Community Art projects is to engage citizens, and they may or may not include the use of professional Artists.

Development contributions to the Public Art Reserve Fund will be encouraged through Section 37 of the *Planning Act*. City contributions to the Public Art Reserve Fund will also be used to leverage funding from other governmental and private sources.

2.2. Public Art Maintenance Budget

Maintenance and conservation costs for Owned Public Art will be included in the City's annual operating budget.

3. Selection

3.1. Owned Public Art

The process for soliciting proposals for providing Public Art should:

- a) attract Artists from a variety of artistic disciplines
- b) be meaningful, fair, inclusive, and equitable
- c) encourage opportunities for learning, participation, and experimentation in arts and culture
- d) incorporate and integrate Public Art into the planning, design, and execution of selected civic development projects

Proposals for providing Public Art may be solicited through:

- a) open competition
- b) invited competition
- c) direct award, where permitted by the City's Purchasing By-law

Public Art will be selected on merit through a process informed by expertise and community input through the Public Art Advisory Committee. The selection will employ a jurying process coordinated by the Public Art Advisory Committee, with guidance from the inter-departmental Public Art planning team. Final decisions regarding the selection and acquisition of artistic works will be made by the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer or designate with the appropriate approval authority.

Sites for Owned Public Art will be identified through the Public Art Operational Plan. Each artistic work that is being considered for selection as Owned Public Art will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- a) quality of work
- b) condition of work
- c) monetary and/or appraised value

- d) artistic reputation of the artist
- e) suitability of the artistic work for display in a Public Space
- f) accessibility and AODA compliance
- g) no duplication of other Owned Public Art or aspects thereof
- h) relevance to the City's natural and built environment, cultural heritage, and/or history
- i) representation of diversity within the community
- j) authenticity of the artistic work
- k) ethical and legal considerations regarding ownership

All offers of gifts, donations and bequests of artistic works will be reviewed by the Public Art Advisory Committee with guidance from the inter-departmental Public Art planning team to assess artistic merit, site suitability and context, durability and maintenance requirements, financial implications and public safety prior to any acquisition, designation, or installation as Public Art.

3.2. Borrowed Public Art

All artistic works to be considered for selection as Borrowed Public Art will be evaluated against the following criteria:

- a) quality of the artistic work
- b) artistic reputation of the Artist
- c) suitability of the artistic work for display in a Public Space (e.g., size, subject matter)
- d) condition of the artistic work
- e) the City's ability to safely display and conserve the artistic work
- f) exposure provided for Guelph artists

Proposals for Borrowed Public Art will be reviewed by an inter-departmental Public Art planning team. Sites for Borrowed Public Art will be identified through the Public Art Operational Plan.

4. Acquisition and Securing

4.1. Owned Public Art

The City may acquire Owned Public Art through purchase, commission, or donation. Each acquisition will be accompanied by a maintenance plan that is supplied by the Artist or donor.

All donations must be unencumbered and the locations for donated artistic works will be subject to the Public Art Operational Plan. The donor of the artistic work must have legal title to the artistic work and will be responsible for meeting the Canada Revenue Agency criteria if the donor wishes to receive an Official Receipt for Income Tax purposes for the donation.

Appraisals for income tax purposes are conducted by a qualified appraiser acting at arm's length from the City and the donor.

The City may decline to consider or accept any gift, bequest, or donation of art in its sole discretion.

4.2. Borrowed Public Art

The City may secure Borrowed Public Art for display on a temporary basis. Temporary installations may last from one day to one year, typically remaining on view for up to six months.

Following the approval of a proposal, an appropriate agreement between the Artist and/or sponsoring organization and the City will be executed, detailing responsibilities for funding, installation, maintenance, and removal of the artistic work, and restoration of the site.

4.3. Agreements

Following the approval of the acquisition of an artistic work, the Artist will enter into a written agreement with the City. This agreement will address the Artist's obligations, which may include, but are not limited to:

- a) scope of work
- b) materials
- c) timelines
- d) installation
- e) maintenance
- f) warranty
- g) copyright and moral rights
- h) payments to sub-contractors

This agreement will also set out the City's obligations that may include, but are not limited to:

- a) payment
- b) adherence to the approved maintenance plan
- c) insurance of the artistic work
- d) community notification
- e) Artist recognition

4.4. Installation

The City is responsible for coordinating the installation of all Owned or Borrowed Public Art. The installation process will be identified, in advance, through the purchase, commission, donation, or exhibition agreement and may involve participation of the Artist and/or a contracted professional installer. The condition of all acquired

artistic works will be reported upon receipt, and any problems found will be referred to the Artist/lender for resolution, prior to installation.

4.5. Insurance

All artistic works owned by the City through purchase, commission and/or donation, are the property of the City and are insured under the City's Insurance Policies.

For all Borrowed Public Art, the Artist will submit proof, satisfactory to the City, of insurance coverage for the artistic work, and a waiver freeing the City from liability in case of accidental loss, theft, damage, or vandalism. In addition, the Artist will submit a complete list of the displayed artistic work(s) which will include the title(s), dimensions, medium/media and appraised value(s).

5. Maintenance

The Artist is responsible for developing a maintenance plan for each Public Art artistic work. The maintenance plan must be submitted for review and consideration along with the proposal to select the artistic work for acquisition. The complexity of the maintenance plan may vary based on the size, nature, and material of the artistic work. Maintenance plans will include, but are not limited to, maintenance specifications, budget implications, manufacturer lists, and key contacts, including the Artist.

The City is responsible for the care and maintenance of the artistic work, in accordance with the approved maintenance plan. Culture and Recreation staff will monitor the maintenance plan. The appropriate City staff will undertake an inspection of the artistic work according to a pre-determined schedule. Staff may, if deemed necessary, retain a qualified art restorer to undertake the inspection.

6. Storage

When storage of Public Art, whether short-term or long-term, is required, the City will ensure that such storage meets appropriate museum standards. Whenever possible, existing City and community resources will be used for the storage and management of the City's Owned Public Art.

7. Deaccession of Public Art

The City may deaccession Public Art when necessary. All reasonable efforts will first be made to resolve problems or re-site the Public Art, in consultation with the Artist and/or donor, where appropriate. Reasons for de-accession include, but are not limited to:

- a) endangerment of public safety
- b) excessive repair or maintenance
- c) irreparable damage

- d) inaccessibility
- e) site redevelopment

In the event of theft, vandalism or accidental loss, the City may determine whether replacement or deaccession of the artistic work is appropriate.

No artistic work will be deaccessioned and disposed of without consultation with the Public Art Advisory Committee. Recommendations of the Public Art Advisory Committee regarding the need for and method of deaccession will be made to Culture and Recreation staff with final approval by the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer of Public Services. The deaccessioned artistic work may be transferred internally, gifted, or exchanged with another institution, sold, or offered back to the Artist notwithstanding any Canada Revenue Agency restrictions. Any monies received through a sale will be allocated to the Public Art Reserve Fund.

8. Private Art

Staff of Planning and Building Services, and Economic Development and Tourism, will support new and established businesses, agencies and other levels of government, architects, builders, contractors, and developers to identify opportunities for incorporating private artistic works into architecture, building and/or landscape designs of private infrastructure, or the layout of private open spaces, including private connections to adjacent public features (e.g. streets, bridges, road infrastructures, interchanges, gateways, parks and open spaces), and related requirements for urban environments and streetscapes (e.g. requirements for light standards). Private sector developers will be encouraged to integrate private artistic works into the design of private sites, buildings and/or landscaping, especially in publicly accessible and visible areas of private sites, including, but not limited to building facades, floors, ceilings, courtyards, or entrances and could include functional and decorative elements including, but not limited to benches, water features, and light standards.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation of this Policy

Culture and Recreation staff will undertake an evaluation of this Policy at least every five years. Any proposed substantive amendments will be submitted to Council for consideration and approval. The City will regularly monitor the effectiveness of the Policy.

Staff Report



To **Committee of the Whole**
Service Area Public Services
Date Tuesday, October 3, 2023
Subject **Culture Plan 2030**

Recommendation

1. That Culture Plan 2030 be approved.
2. That costs associated with the implementation of Culture Plan 2030 be referred to the 2024-2027 multi-year budget process.

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

This report presents Guelph’s Culture Plan 2030 to Council included as Attachment-1.

Key Findings

For this report, culture is defined as the experiences, engagements and expressions that foster belonging, contribute to collective identity, spark inspiration, and cultivate connection. Culture is the cornerstone of a vibrant, healthy, and safe community. It is essential in the development and growth of an innovative workforce and industry. Culture creates engaging and welcoming destinations that attract visitors and generate tourism revenue and positive impressions.

Guelph has long enjoyed a reputation as a cultural hub; a community rich in heritage, the arts, and creative industry. This celebrated local culture scene is at risk, however, as Guelph’s creative community struggles with lack of affordable studio, rehearsal, exhibition, and performance space; limited representation and opportunity for equity-deserving community members; barriers to attracting community support and audiences; and low income and inflated cost of living.

Culture Plan 2030 articulates a long-term municipal and community strategy to stabilize and advance arts, heritage, and creative industry in Guelph. The plan identifies conditions and opportunities for the local culture sector to thrive as we nurture a community ecosystem that ensures culture is present everywhere, every day, for everyone.

Strategic Plan Alignment

Culture Plan 2030 aligns with the City Building priority to grow and care for our community spaces and places; the People and Economy priorities to grow Guelph’s economy, make downtown a vibrant place for everyone, and support community well-being; and the Foundation priority to provide excellent service.

Financial Implications

The costs to implement Culture Plan 2030 have been referred to the multi-year budget process. The Plan recommends initial funding for capital strategy work to conduct an in-depth cost analysis to realize the full scope to implement the 7-year plan.

Report

Guelph has long enjoyed a reputation as a cultural hub; a community rich in arts, heritage, and creative industry; a community that has nurtured aspiring and world-class musicians, painters, writers, dancers, storytellers, filmmakers, actors, and creators in all disciplines. Indeed, arts and culture are deeply woven into Guelph's identity.

Guelph has invested significantly in cultural facilities, public art, cultural programming, and grant funding for artists and arts organizations. In turn, the City has benefited from a return on this investment through citizen satisfaction, tourism, talent attraction, creative industry development, profile, and reputation.

While there is a solid foundation for culture in Guelph, challenges that existed pre-pandemic were exacerbated during the pandemic as event cancellations, closures, isolation, and lockdowns had an oversized impact on the culture community. The cultural economy was the first to close due to emergency measures and the last to reopen after the state of emergency lifted. Members of the creative community have expressed concerns about the lack of opportunity for cultural work locally; a shortage of affordable studio, rehearsal, exhibition, and performance space; difficulty attracting community support and audiences; and low income and inflated cost of living.

In the face of these challenges, there remains hope amongst the culture community, and a resolve to work together and with the City to strengthen the sector and to support community vitality, equity and inclusion, environmental responsibility, and economic prosperity in and through culture.

Culture Plan 2030

Vision

Guelph Culture: Everywhere. Everyday. Everyone.

Mission

Working together — with a collective vision and collaborative efforts — to support community vitality, equity and inclusion, environmental responsibility, and economic prosperity in and through Culture.

Strategic Themes and Objectives

Cultivate

The community is looking to the City to cultivate capacity and a firm foundation upon which culture contributors can build, create, survive, and thrive. This requires:

- Investments in culture
- Affordable access to culture spaces and equipment throughout Guelph

- Action to uphold Truth and Reconciliation and relationship-building with Indigenous nations and community members
- Prioritization of equity-deserving artists and audiences
- Model and support for environmentally sustainable practices in culture programming
- Culture-friendly bylaws, policies, and practices
- Elimination of barriers to participation in culture activities
- Affordable housing and poverty reduction strategies to enable artists and culture workers to remain in Guelph.

Connect

There is a need to build connections between culture contributors, the City, and the community. To this end, the City can contribute by:

- Facilitating improved communication between the City and the Culture sector, amongst the culture sector, and between the culture sector and community
- Inviting and nurturing collaboration
- Engaging growing and diverse audiences
- Fostering collaboration between the culture sector and adjacent sectors

Champion

The culture sector would benefit from initiatives that champion and celebrate local artists and culture workers. The City can support and encourage culture contributors by:

- Developing a comprehensive recognition strategy
- Working with the community to identify and support opportunities to seek designations for key cultural industries.
- Identifying and supporting the attraction of culture-focused conferences, meetings, and events.
- Using Guelph's bicentennial in 2027 to commemorate local heritage and inspire collective community aspirations.

Implementation of Culture Plan 2030

Once approved by Council, staff will incorporate the Plan's objectives and initiatives into departmental work plans. Key performance indicators and evaluation strategies will be identified, and will form the basis for reporting in 2024, 2027, and 2030.

Financial Implications

The costs to implement Culture Plan 2030 have been referred to the multi-year budget process. The Plan recommends initial funding for capital strategy work of \$75,000 in the initial three years to conduct an in-depth cost analysis to realize the full scope to implement the 7-year plan. The Culture Plan 2030 will be considered with other recently completed plans and will be viewed with a corporate lens to incorporate the City's strategic goals. Additional funding and prioritization would be referred to future budgets. Recommendations in the plan for programming and advocacy will be supported within existing projected operating budgets. The timing and pace of this plan is subject to change.

Consultations

Culture Plan 2030 has been informed by multiple engagements with the culture community, as well as the broader community, including Culture Pulse Check Community Meeting (2019); Community Plan: Arts and Culture Sector Workshop (2019); Create. Play. Stay: Culture and Sport Tourism Strategy report by MGA (2023); Culture Plan 2030 Have Your Say survey, conversation cafes, and an Indigenous sharing circle; and consultation with culture leaders, the Public Art Advisory Committee, and the Guelph Museums Advisory committee.

Attachments

Attachment-1 Culture Plan 2030

Attachment-2 Culture Plan 2030 Community Engagement and Research Report

Departmental Approval

Danna Evans, General Manager, Culture and Recreation

Report Author

Tammy Adkin, Manager, Museums & Culture

Gregory Peddie, Acting Coordinator, Cultural Programs & Events

This report was approved by:

Danna Evans

General Manager, Culture and Recreation

Public Services

519-822-1260 extension 2621

danna.evans@guelph.ca

This report was recommended by:

Colleen Clack-Bush

Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

Public Services

519-822-1260 extension 2588

colleen.clack-bush@guelph.ca

Guelph Culture: Everywhere. Everyday. Everyone.

Culture Plan 2030
October 2023

Territorial Acknowledgement

This place we call Guelph has served as traditional lands and a place of refuge for many peoples over time, but more specifically the Attiwonderonk, and the Haudenosaunee. This land is held as the treaty lands and territory with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Guelph lies directly adjacent to the Haldimand Tract and is part of a long-established traditional hunting ground for the Six Nations of the Grand River. Many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples who have come from across Turtle Island call Guelph home today.

The City of Guelph commits to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. We must do more to learn, share and support truth and healing.

Culture Plan 2030

Introduction

Guelph has long enjoyed a reputation as a cultural hub; a community rich in arts, heritage, and creative industry; a community that has nurtured aspiring and world-class musicians, painters, writers, dancers, storytellers, filmmakers, actors, and creators in all disciplines. Indeed, arts and culture are deeply woven into the Guelph identity.

The City has invested significantly in cultural facilities, public art, cultural programming, and grant funding for artists and arts and heritage organizations. Guelph has benefited from a return on this investment through citizen satisfaction, tourism, talent attraction, creative industry development, profile, and reputation.

While there is a solid foundation for culture in Guelph, members of the creative community have expressed concerns about the lack of affordable studio, rehearsal, exhibition, and performance space; limited representation and opportunities for equity-deserving community members; difficulties attracting community support and audiences; and low income and inflated cost of living driving artists from the community. These challenges existed pre-pandemic and were exacerbated during the pandemic as event cancellations, closures, isolation, and lockdowns had an oversized impact on the culture community. The culture economy was the first to close due to emergency measures and the last to reopen after the state of emergency was lifted.

Culture Plan 2030 articulates a long-term municipal and community strategy to stabilize and advance arts, heritage, and creative industry in Guelph. The plan identifies conditions and opportunities for the local culture sector to survive and thrive as we nurture a community ecosystem that ensures culture is present everywhere, every day, for everyone.

Purpose

The Province of Ontario describes cultural planning as “a place-based approach to planning and development. It is a process for identifying and leveraging a community’s cultural resources, strengthening the management of those resources, and integrating those resources across all facets of local planning and decision making.”

For Guelph, this Culture Plan is intended to guide investment, collaboration, promotion, and growth aspirations of the local culture sector. During this time of post-pandemic recovery, there is an opportunity to regenerate the local creative sector, while firmly establishing culture as a sustainable driver of community

vitality, social equity, environmental responsibility, and economic prosperity in Guelph.

A Case for Culture

Vibrant, healthy, and safe communities

Culture contributes to the development of a vibrant society, providing pathways to bring community together, create a sense of belonging, define our unique shared identity, confront inequalities, collectively celebrate and mourn, commemorate our history, and envision our future together. Creative expressions define who we are, connect us to each other, and provide new perspectives. Culture increases understanding, empathy, and acceptance, and enhances quality of life.

Innovative workforce and industry

Culture nurtures innovation and creative skills key to advancing industry and enabling businesses to successfully compete in the 21st century. From design and advertising to science and technology, creative thinking, originality, and invention are essential.

In Ontario, 65% of business leaders and skilled workers surveyed indicated that a thriving arts and culture scene is something they look for when considering moving or attracting top talent to a new community (Nanos Research, 2016).

Welcoming, engaging destination

Creating an engaging and welcoming destination gives visitors opportunity to experience a city's unique features and provides a glimpse at local heritage, art, traditions, and aspirations. In 2019, tourism, culture and heritage activities directly contributed approximately \$28.1 billion to the Ontario economy. (Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, 2020)

Vision

Guelph Culture: Everywhere. Everyday. Everyone.

When we talk culture, we talk about experiences, engagements, and expressions that foster a sense of belonging, contribute to a collective identity, and spark inspiration, connection, comfort, and joy. We envision a Guelph where all citizens feel welcomed and represented, and where they are enveloped in culture wherever they live, work, and play; morning, noon, night; weekdays and weekends; year-round. Through this plan, we are committed to creating conditions for culture that is everywhere, every day, and for everyone.

Mission

Working together — with a collective vision and collaborative efforts — to support community vitality, equity and inclusion, environmental responsibility, and economic prosperity in and through culture.

Strategic themes

Cultivate capacity and a solid foundation upon which culture contributors can build, create, survive, and thrive.

Connect culture contributors, City resources, and community – locally and beyond.

Champion the people, organizations, places, and events that create a sense of Guelph.

Objectives

Cultivate

Invest in Culture.

- By 2030, be among the top two comparator municipalities in total per capita spending on culture, and be above median in per capita spending on culture grants.
- Adequately fund anchor culture sites and service organizations, including Guelph Museums, River Run Centre, Art Gallery of Guelph, Guelph Public Library, and Guelph Arts Council, with expectation that anchor sites will uplift the broader culture community.
- Invest in public art acquisitions and commissions through a regular capital budget allocation, Community Benefit Charges, provincial and federal grants, sponsorships, and donations.
- Consider modifications to the municipal community investment programs to provide distinct funding programs for arts and culture that are adjudicated by members of the culture community.

Increase access to affordable space for artists to create, rehearse, perform, and exhibit.

- Identify and build capacity for culture activities at municipal properties, including upgrading of amenities as required.
- Explore opportunities to increase community access to River Run Centre resources.
- Establish and maintain inventory and mapping of public and private culture spaces and services.
- Through programming and capital building and upgrades, create culture spaces and presence throughout the City, including the South and West neighbourhoods.
- Develop co-presenting program through Museums & Culture to provide use of municipal spaces for priority culture activities.
- Identify potential new culture spaces, including performance spaces for audiences of 100 to 600 people and rehearsal, studio, and exhibition spaces, and consider public-private partnerships for development opportunities.
- Support culture uses for the Drill Hall and Ontario Reformatory lands.
- Work with the community to develop gear-sharing/lending program (e.g. sound equipment, artist materials)

Uphold Truth and Reconciliation by supporting Indigenous community members to reclaim, exercise and share their cultural practices.

- Work with Indigenous community members to enhance June 21 event, balancing an occasion for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis community members to gather and celebrate with an opportunity for public education.
- Eliminate barriers and increase access to public spaces for Indigenous ceremony and cultural practices, including sacred fires, drumming, and smudging.
- Continue dialogue with Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River, and urban Indigenous community members to identify opportunities to strengthen relationships and representation.

Prioritize equity-deserving artists and audiences in municipal culture programming and space allocation.

- Engage programming advisors and producers from equity-deserving communities as standard operating practice.
- Work with Recreation department to ensure facility use policies and practices are inclusive and culturally responsive.
- Review and update Artist in Residence program.

Incentivize development of culture programming in winter months.

- Work with community partners to develop new indoor and outdoor programming that meets community need for cultural experiences from November to February.

Model and support environmentally sustainable practices in culture programming

- Recommend increases to available equipment to support sustainable practices at culture events of all sizes, including availability for the Water Wagon and bike racks.
- Work with the community to develop waste reduction strategies for events.
- Encourage public and active transportation to culture events.

Adopt Culture-friendly bylaws, policies, and practices.

- Review and recommend amendments to municipal bylaws identified as presenting barriers to the culture sector, including but not limited to the noise control bylaw and sign bylaw.
- Work with Economic Development and Tourism, Recreation, and local film industry representatives to assess opportunities for film-friendly policies and practices.
- Work with Planning to identify and recommend levers that support infusion of culture in City building.

Eliminate barriers to participation in Culture.

- With community partners, develop and expand subsidy programs, rush ticket arrangements, and free admission opportunities.
- Develop culture programming in neighbourhoods where there is a deficiency in culture spaces and experiences.
- Employ principles of universal design, technology aids, and accommodations such as relaxed performances, audio-described performances, open captions, and ASL interpretation to engage artists and audience members with disabilities.
- Work with Guelph Transit and Guelph Active Transportation Network to encourage and incentivize use of public transportation, biking, and walking to culture activities.

Address gentrification of Guelph and the resulting culture drain, as artists and culture contributors relocate to more affordable or more lucrative communities.

- Consider artists and culture workers when setting and advocating for affordable housing and poverty reduction strategies.
- Advocate for basic income opportunities for artists and culture workers.
- Study successful models in other communities for affordable access to housing and creative spaces.

Connect

Improve communication between the City and the culture sector, amongst the culture sector, and between the culture sector and community.

- Appoint Manager, Museums & Culture as key liaison between culture sector and the City.
- Develop and maintain a digital Guelph Culture hub, including a collective Culture Calendar supported by a marketing and promotions strategy.

Nurture collaboration within culture sector.

- In partnership with Guelph Arts Council, establish quarterly gatherings for the culture community (including artists, culture workers, and public and private Culture organizations), to serve as information exchange, networking, and professional development.
- Strengthen relationships with arts and heritage-related departments at local school boards and post-secondary institutions.
- Establish relationships with equity-deserving community groups.
- Support the development and growth of community-engaged art initiatives.
- Create and coordinate Culture Familiarization (FAM) tours for City staff, culture workers, tourism operators, and adjacent sector operators with aim to develop Culture Champions within the City and the community.

Engage growing and diverse audiences.

- Shift programming approach from presenting diverse programs for traditional audiences to presenting programs which appeal to equity-deserving audiences.

Foster collaboration between the Culture sector and adjacent sectors.

- Work with all City departments to develop and support placemaking strategies.
- Work with Economic Development and Tourism to develop culture experience packaging with hotels, restaurants, attractions, and events.
- Work with Economic Development and Tourism and equity-deserving community groups to develop tourism marketing strategy targeted at equity-deserving visitors, centered on culture experiences.
- Work with Recreation to support intersection of culture and sport.

Champion

Develop a comprehensive recognition strategy that ensures local Culture sector contributors are seen and appreciated.

- Identify opportunities for recognition by City Council.
- Develop social media strategy for broadly spotlighting Culture activities and achievements.
- With community partners develop, support, or organize recognition events.
- Be present at culture activities.

Work with community to identify and support opportunities to seek designations for key cultural industries.

- Explore potential for UNESCO Creative Cities Network application.
- Research other designation opportunities.

Work with Economic Development and Tourism and community partners to identify and support attraction of culture-focused conferences, meetings, and events.

Embrace Guelph's bicentennial in 2027 as an opportunity to commemorate heritage and inspire collective community aspirations through culture.

- With community, present celebratory and reflective culture programming.
- Pursue legacy public art initiative.



For more information:
Guelph Museums & Culture
52 Norfolk Street, Guelph, ON N1H 4H8
519-822-1260
TTY 519-826-9771
Guelph.ca/culture
culture@guelph.ca

Accessible formats available upon request.

Guelph Culture: Everywhere. Everyday. Everyone.

Culture Plan 2030

Community Engagement and Research Report

October 2023

Policy Alignment

Culture Plan 2030 takes inspiration from [A United Vision: Guelph's Community Plan](#) and is guided by [Future Guelph Strategic Plan 2024-2027](#).

In addition, the Culture Plan aligns with:

- [Official Plan](#)
- [Economic Development and Tourism Strategy](#)
- [Parks and Recreation Master Plan](#)
- [Community Investment Strategy](#)
- [Cultural Heritage Action Plan](#)

Culture Plan 2030 will inform [Guelph Museums & Culture Strategic Operating Plan](#).

Trend Alignment

Climate Change: Guelph is committed to the United Nations “Race to Zero” campaign and has set targets for the community to reduce carbon emissions. Culture has an opportunity to contribute to achieving these targets through sustainable practices and public education.

Digital shift and social creator economy: With growth in digital platforms and emerging content creation, creators in Guelph - located on the Toronto-Waterloo tech corridor – are well positioned to foster new digital offerings.

COVID recovery: Creative industries, museums, libraries, sport and recreation, and tourism were among the first hit by the pandemic. As the impacts of the pandemic ease, there is opportunity to re-set and revitalize the sector.

Affordability: Cost of living and availability of affordable housing are community challenges which are impacting the ability of artists and culture workers to live and work in Guelph. As a result, we are losing creative workers to communities like Hamilton, Kitchener-Waterloo, and Toronto.

Equity and inclusion: Largely due to immigration, the cultural composition of Guelph is becoming more diverse. It is essential that Culture Plan 2030 addresses the equity and inclusion needs of diverse culture contributors and audiences.

Population increase: Guelph continues to experience a consistent level of managed growth, with a projected population of 169,000 by 2030. This City needs to consider optimizing current culture assets while planning for development of additional assets to meet the needs of a growing population.

Community Engagement

Guelph Museums & Culture worked with the Community Engagement team to compile previously- collected local culture sector data with new information and ideas generated from a diverse range of community members.

Engagement goals

- To understand the various iterations that culture takes through an array of individuals, backgrounds, histories, organizations, and ways of expression that make up the cultural landscape in Guelph.
- To gather feedback, stories and data that can be used to finalize a plan that supports culture in all these iterations, one that reflects and honors the vision, feedback and needs expressed by identified audiences across Guelph with a vision toward 2030.

Engagement objectives

Nurture relationships

- Strengthen existing relationships through collaboration with culture leaders
- Seek out community champions
- Meet people where they are at by attending and engaging at community events and in studio spaces catering to equity-deserving groups
- Encourage networking and co-creation among workers in the culture sector

Build Capacity

- Use plain language, translation, and options for various levels of involvement to encourage participation from a broad range of audiences
- Provide and share background information with participants to encourage more informed engagement participation

Ensure meaningful opportunities to influence the Culture Plan

- Clearly identify what has already informed the Culture Plan
- Use different approaches to prompt and gather feedback to ensure a robust understanding of community sentiment
- Create space for voices that are not often heard in municipal decision-making by seeking out opportunities to connect and listen to equity-deserving groups in safe and brave spaces

Connect the Dots

- Culture Pulse Check meeting (2018)
- A United Vision: Guelph's Community Plan engagement (2018)
- Create, Play, Stay – Culture and Sport Tourism Plan engagement (2022)
- Culture Leaders meetings (2023)
- Have Your Say online portal activities and survey (2023)

- Activities at Multicultural Festival, Art on the Street, and Guelph Civic Museum (2023)
- Conversation Cafés (2023)
- Indigenous Sharing Circle (2023)

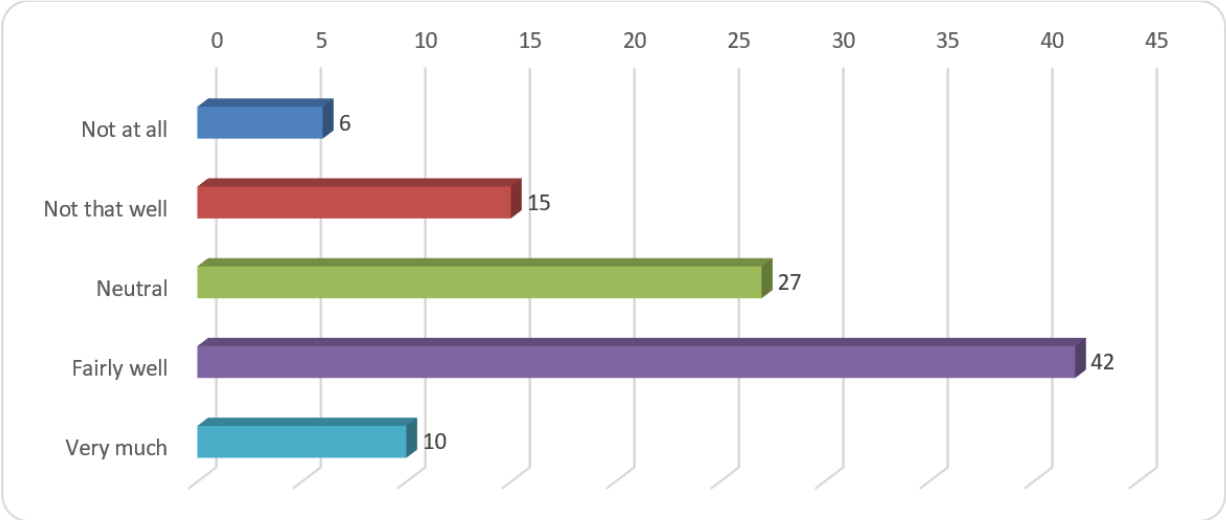
Culture Plan 2030 Survey Results

Online Survey Respondent Profile

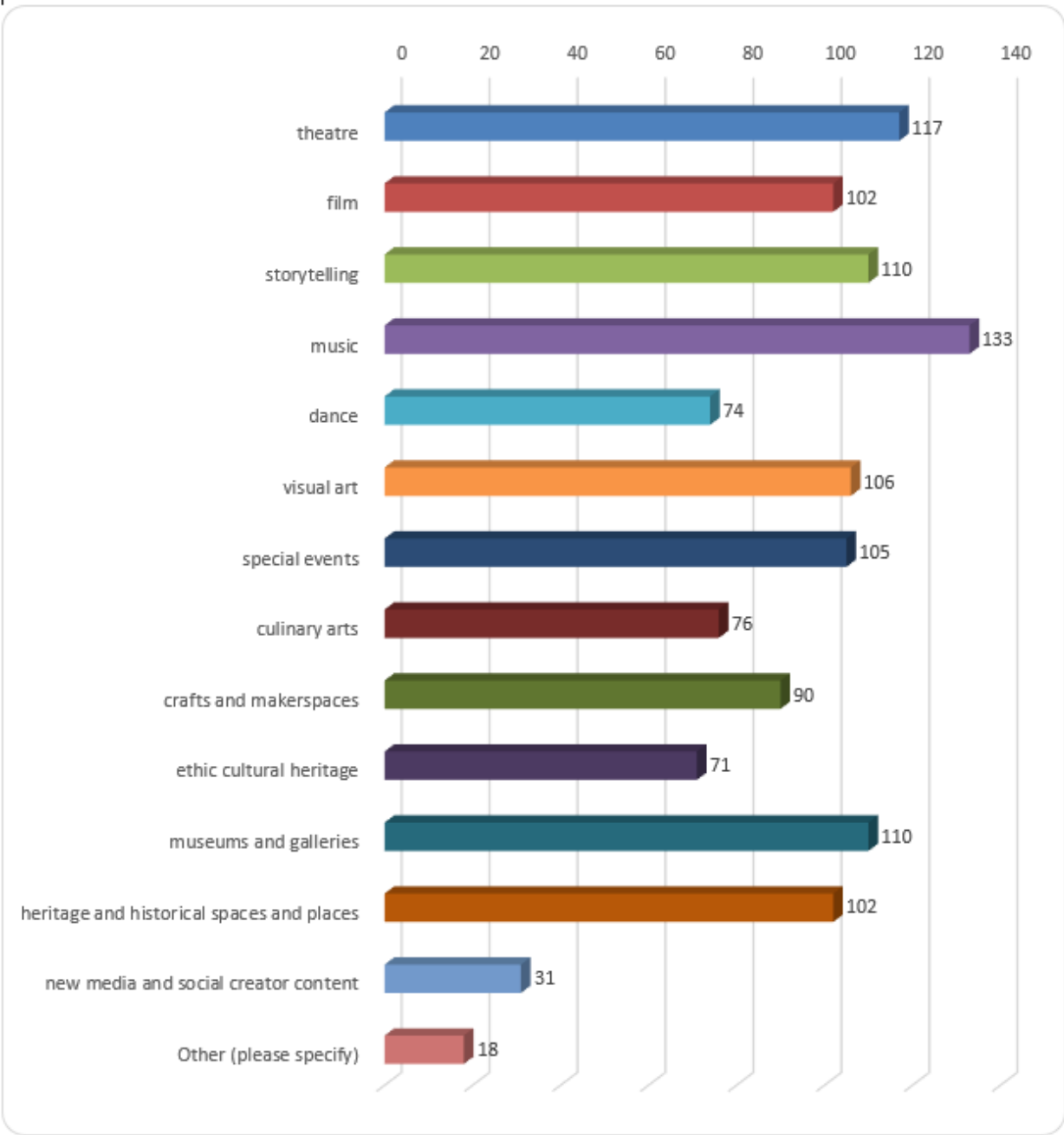
- Place of origin: 94 percent of respondents live in Guelph and 6 percent live elsewhere including Fergus, Waterloo, Sarnia, Brantford, Bayfield, and Toronto.
- Ages: 35 to 44 years (24 percent); 45 to 54 years (20 percent); 25 to 34 years (17 percent); 65 to 74 years (14 percent); 55 to 64 years (13 percent); 75+ years (9 percent); <25 years (3 percent)
- Annual household income: \$50,000 to \$100,000 (29 percent); \$150,000+ (19 percent); Prefer not to answer (18 percent); \$100,001 to \$150,000 (15 percent); \$25,001 to \$50,000 (13 percent); <\$25,000 (6 percent)
- Ethnic background of respondents in relation to the demographic profile of Guelph.

Ethnic Background	Guelph Demographic (Percent)	Respondents (Percent)
European Origins	76	73
Black	4	3
Latin American	1	1
South Asian	7	2
Southeast Asian	2	1
West Asian	2	1
East Asian	6	0
Indigenous	1	1
Intersectionality	0	3
Not provided	0	16

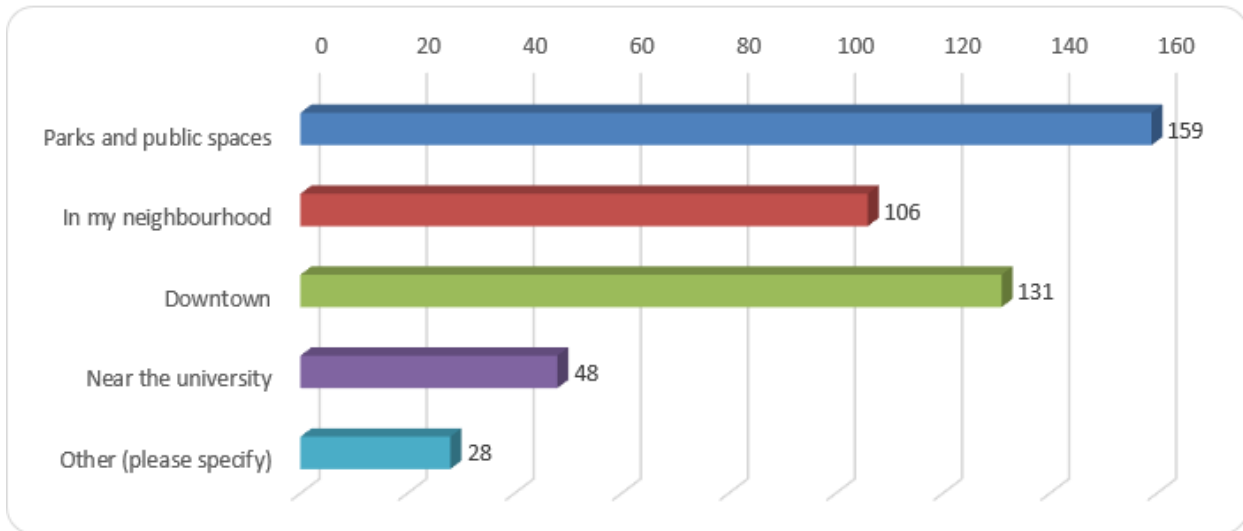
To what extent do you see yourself reflected in culture activities in Guelph?



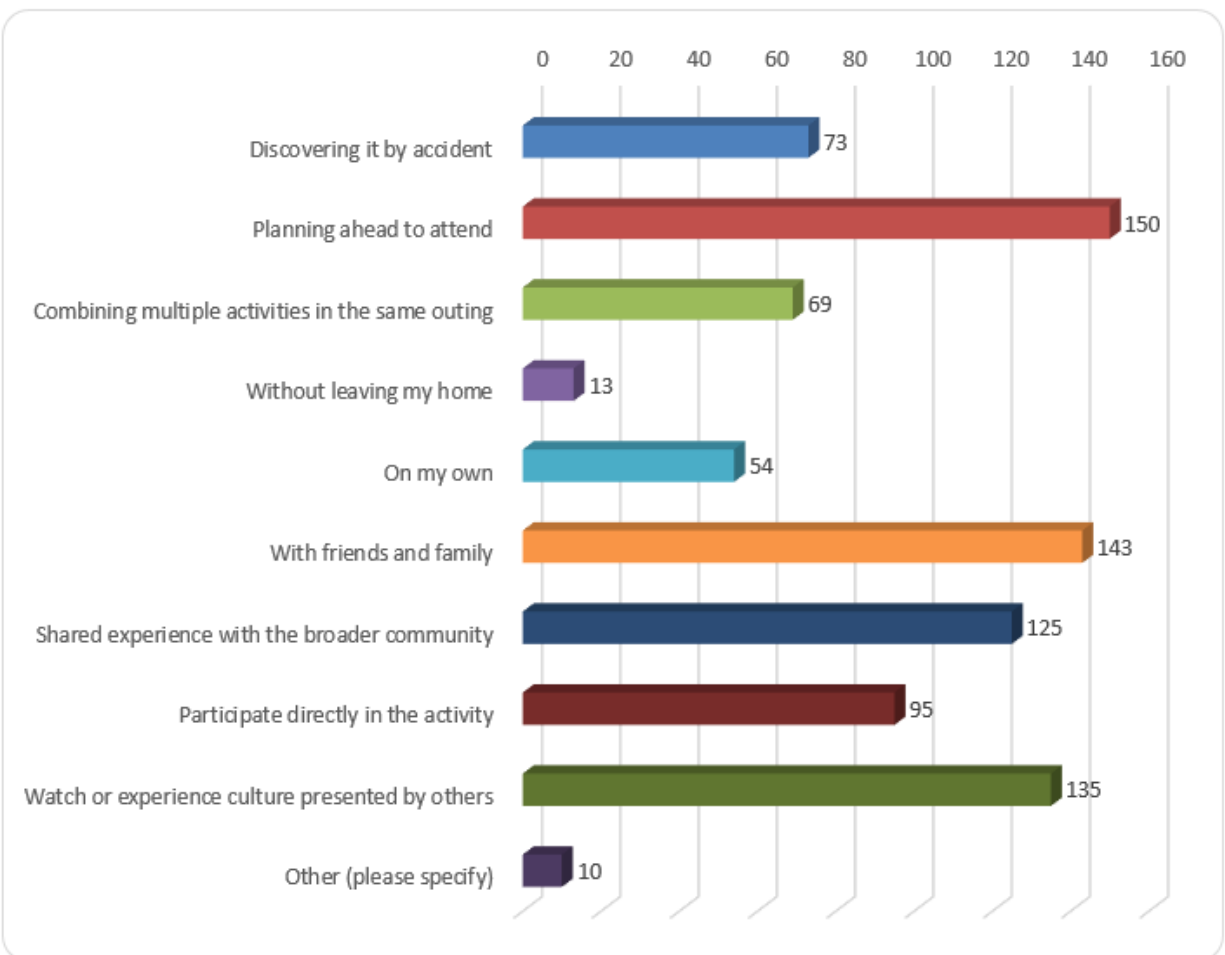
What kind of culture activities do you enjoy?



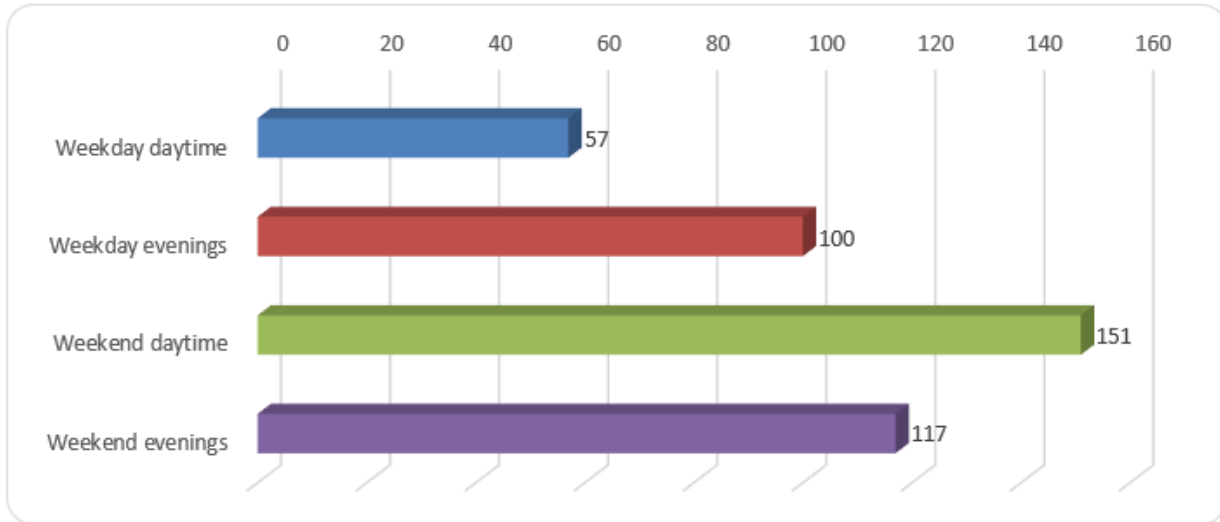
Where would you like to experience culture?



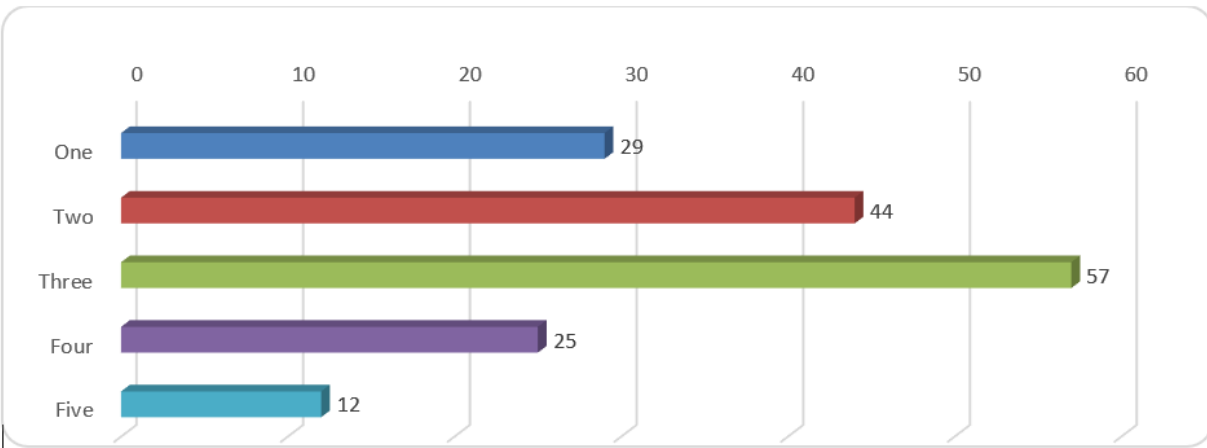
How do you want to experience culture?



When would you most likely want to experience culture activities?



When compared to spending on all City activities, where would you place spending on culture? Select one for your highest priority and five for your least.



Current state of culture in Guelph

Through community engagement, this is what we heard from the culture sector and local citizens:

Strengths

Cultural vibrancy, built from the grassroots up

Guelph has a deep-rooted reputation as a hub for cultural activity – from music, dance and theatre to literature and poetry, to sculpture, painting, and craft, to galleries and festivals, Guelph is known and respected for its creative people, welcoming and engaged audiences, and committed volunteers.

Guelph is home to many cultural events and facilities, including Hillside Festival, Guelph Jazz Festival, Guelph Dance Festival, Guelph Studio Tour, Art Gallery of Guelph, River Run Centre, Guelph Youth Music Centre, Guelph Civic Museum, and McCrae House National Historic Site.

Guelph also boasts a rich intangible cultural heritage with values, traditions and identities that have evolved over generations, and make Guelph “so Guelph.”

Located at the heart of southwestern Ontario, close to Toronto

Guelph is situated 90km from Toronto and 25km from Kitchener/Waterloo, providing local artists access to significant markets, resources, and audiences, and providing regional audiences access to Guelph talent.

Nurtured by nature

Positioned at the convergence of two rivers, on land that was valued hunting ground and gathering place for First Nations before forests were converted into fertile agriculture fields, Guelph values the nature that envelops the city, embracing parks and green spaces, exploring trails and rivers, and making environmentally conscientious choices. Influenced by local agriculture innovation and surrounded by food-generating fields, Guelph has a strong farm-to-table tradition which supports a delicious culinary scene, accompanied by breweries, distilleries, and cannabis dispensaries.

Historic downtown with modern urban conveniences

Downtown Guelph is a distinct and vital urban centre nestled against the Speed River, comprised of beautiful heritage buildings and public spaces, and surrounded by leafy neighbourhoods, where people live, work, shop, dine, play, and celebrate.

Downtown Guelph is the cultural and civic hub for the City, anchored by museum and heritage sites, performing art centres, a farmers’ market, public art installations, and public gathering spaces. It will be further strengthened with the

building of the new Central Library and the establishment of the Conestoga College downtown campus.

Attracting and keeping emerging talent through higher education

The City of Guelph is home to one of Canada's top universities, the University of Guelph (est. 1864) with approximately 30,000 students. Well known as Canada's Food University, boasting the Ontario Veterinary College, Ontario's Agricultural College, and Macdonald Institute, the University of Guelph also has a notable College of Arts, with Humanities and Fine and Performing Arts programs.

The Conestoga College campus in Guelph is a provincial leader in education and training for the motor power trades including automotive, truck and coach, heavy equipment, recreational vehicles, and motorcycles. The college campus also provides business-oriented programs, including Business Foundations, General Business and Office Administration as well as academic upgrading and career-focused programs.

Weaknesses

Perceived lack of financial investment

Guelph's municipal investment in culture is perceived to be inadequate as art and heritage organizations indicate a gap between ambition and capacity.

No space

There is lack of affordable space to create, rehearse, perform, and exhibit, and a perception that some creative spaces such as the River Run Centre and Farmer's Market are underutilized.

Inadequate event infrastructure and red tape

Availability and affordability of downtown parking is seen to be a problem, exacerbated when event schedules collide. Likewise, limited access to staging, lighting, electrical service, and washrooms in public gathering spaces has been a limiting factor for event organizers. The lack of film and music offices is perceived to limit potential, and some City policies and processes are seen to be excessively restrictive.

Long, cold, dark winters

The winter months are under-programmed.

Silos

Despite the abundance of cultural activity in Guelph, the culture ecosystem appears to be fragmented. There is inconsistent and infrequent communication and collaboration amongst the culture community. There is a disconnect between the culture community and the University of Guelph and its student body, representing a lost opportunity in terms of audience and talent development. There is inadequate

recognition and engagement of equity-deserving community members. There is not a central calendar or consistent cross-promotion practices.

Opportunities

Sing from the same song sheet: work together, strategically

This Culture Plan is viewed as an opportunity to set the stage for collaborative approaches to planning, programming, and promotion. Players in the cultural sector would like to get to know each other better through mixers, meetings, conferences, and fam tours. When we know each other better, we can support each other better, through cross-promotions, collective web presence, shared spaces, and equipment, and perhaps even a one-stop Culture Calendar.

There is strength in working collaboratively within the sector to support creative industries, such as film and music; and to seek designations such as UNESCO Creative Cities Network. There is also benefit to working with aligned sectors, such as Education, Recreation, Tourism, Economic Development, Downtown Business, and Food and Beverage, to open new doors to product and audience development.

Finally, connecting with regional, provincial, national, and international networks to explore culture trends and learn from comparator municipalities will contribute to local knowledge and success while advancing Guelph's profile and reputation.

Cultivate relationships

Representation matters. Cultivating relationships with equity-deserving communities within Guelph will expand our knowledge, experiences, and networks in new and exciting ways, and will ensure everyone is included in the local cultural milieu.

Spotlight success

The community is craving tangible acknowledgement of cultural achievements through recognition opportunities, annual awards, and provincial, national, and international designations.

Emerging spaces

New facilities on the horizon, including the new Central Library, the South End Community Centre, the Guelph Arts Council artBar, a new pottery studio and art-making space at the West End Community Centre, could help to fill some of the culture space gaps in the community.

We should also be considering the cultural potential of sites primed for development and adaptive reuse including the Drill Hall, Ontario Reformatory, and former St. Agnes School, as the community seeks affordable indoor venues, with capacity for 100 to 600 people, to enjoy performances, exhibitions, events, and hospitality.

Innovative solutions

We are called to apply Guelph innovation to parking mitigation strategies, including mindful scheduling of events, shuttle services, and bike-friendly events and sites. We are asked to consider creative solutions to fill gaps between demand for space and allocation of space. We are inspired to create way-finding and placemaking strategies and installations that reflect Guelph's vibe.

Capacity building

Consider the City's role in the cultural ecosystem as a catalyst, enabling the sector to thrive with strategic financial investment, flexibility in use of space, and removal of barriers. Consider culture grants that enable creators to take risks in launching new initiatives. Explore new sources of funding, such as Community Development Charges, that increase capacity for the sector beyond what is possible within tax-funded allocations.

New experiences

The bicentennial in 2027 is eagerly anticipated to be a seminal moment for cultural expression and celebration. As we plan for this pivotal milestone, we should also be exploring the use of technology to advance cultural experiences through apps and digital engagement. We should also be generating winter programming to address seasonal gaps in cultural experiences.

Threats

Unaffordability

Unaffordable housing, rising cost of living, and increasing operating costs are threatening the viability of the creative class to live and work in Guelph. Artists are leaving Guelph for work opportunities, and for more affordable communities.

Social challenges

It has been a difficult few year for all of us. As the community recovers from COVID-19, we continue to grapple with impacts of mental health, addiction, and homelessness, leading to concerns about individual and community safety and security.

Contraction of culture

The cultural sector seems to be shrinking, from smaller audiences at shows to loss of culture spaces to the pause/elimination of Arts and Humanities programs at the University of Guelph.

Red tape

The postering by-law, unreasonable health and safety restrictions, noise restrictions are seen as barriers to creativity and cultural engagement.

Fatigue and frustration in sector

People are tired and are looking for action rather than more talk and consultation.

Investment in Culture

Total Culture Cost per Capita

This measure represents the total cost of providing cultural services including grants and the funding of cultural venues, e.g. art galleries, historical sites, cultural centres and museums per person. Guelph data is extracted from 2021 budget actuals. Comparator municipality data is provided by Municipal Benchmarking Network Canada 2021 Culture Performance Measurement Report.

1. Hamilton	\$29.79
2. Calgary	\$29.02
3. Guelph	\$26.24
4. Sudbury	\$24.27
Median	\$22.94
5. London	\$22.94
6. Regina	\$18.35
7. Winnipeg	\$ 9.29
8. Windsor	\$ 7.41

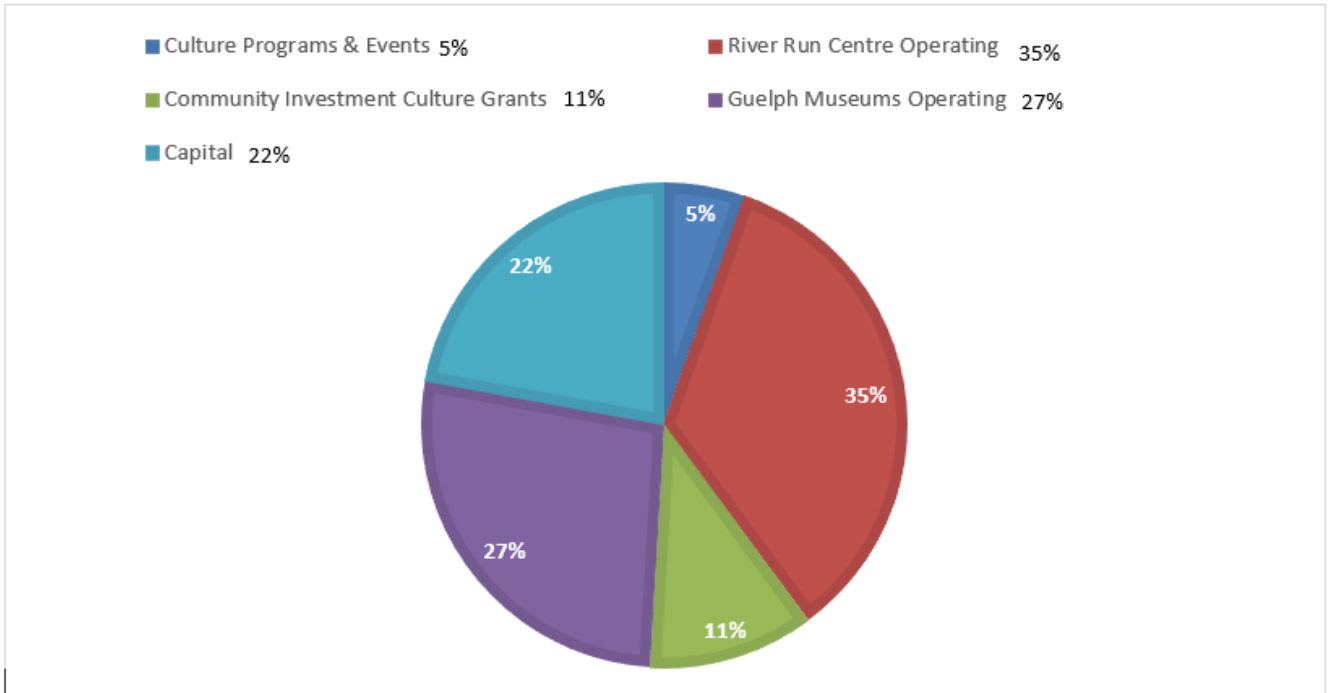
Culture Grants per Capita

The measure represents the funding dollars provided for Arts, Heritage and Festivals grants only. The direct municipal investment in arts funding is relative to a city's service delivery model, size of its arts community and its funding envelope. For example, some municipalities provide funding to their "anchor" organizations, e.g. art gallery, community auditorium, theatre and symphony through grants versus municipally owned/operated facilities.

1. Calgary	\$14.55
2. Winnipeg	\$ 8.23
3. Sudbury	\$ 7.99
Median	\$7.18
4. Regina	\$ 7.18
5. Hamilton	\$ 5.71
6. London	\$ 4.98
7. Guelph	\$ 2.91
8. Windsor	\$ 1.49

2021 Guelph Culture Investments

The City of Guelph invests in culture through municipally owned/operated facilities capital and operating, municipally presented events and programming, and community investment grants to culture organizations. In 2021, the City of Guelph spent a total of \$3,555,225 on culture.



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Acknowledgements

Culture Plan 2030 is a result of input from many community members, including culture contributors, residents, and City staff. Their ideas shaped the themes and recommendations presented in this plan.

City of Guelph Project Steering Committee

Colleen Clack-Bush	Deputy CAO, Public Services
Danna Evans	General Manager, Culture & Recreation
Glenn Marcus	Strategic Business Advisor, Public Services
Tammy Adkin	Manager, Museums & Culture
Gregory Peddie	Coordinator, Culture Programs & Events

Culture Leaders

Alisa McRonald	Art Not Shame
Cinthuja Leon	Guelph & District Multicultural Festival
Colin Harrington	Musician
Damian Weston	Guelph Arts Council
James Gordon	Musician
Jeremy Luke Hill	Vocamus Writers Community
Michelle Peek	Art Not Shame
Patti Broughton	Art Gallery of Guelph
Samantha Zimmerman	Guelph Youth Music Centre
Shauna McCabe	Art Gallery of Guelph
Steven Kraft	Guelph Public Library
Zo Ross	Exhibitionist Magazine

Public Art Advisory Committee

Julia Grady, Chair
Ahmri Vandeborne
Eleni Bakopoulos
Nasra Hussein
Peter Pascetta
Scarlett Raczycki

Museum Advisory Committee

Jayne Osborn, Chair
Jagroop Mehta
Katie Saunders
Madeleine Krucker
Marc Ricke
Robert Hohenadel
Sara Aslam
William Hamilton

We thank all who responded to surveys, engaged through community events, and participated in meetings, conversation cafés, and the Indigenous sharing circle. Your candid, impassioned input, clever ideas, and aspirations and ambitions are inspiring.

Staff Report



To	Committee of the Whole
Service Area	Public Services
Date	Tuesday, October 3, 2023
Subject	Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Recommendation

1. That the Parks and Recreation Master Plan dated August 2023, included as Attachment-1 to this report, be approved.
 2. That the funding requirements for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan be referred to future operating and capital budgets in order to implement the recommendations of the plan.
-

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

To seek approval of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP) and the implementation of the plan's recommendations. The PRMP is a strategic document that outlines the vision and objectives for Guelph's parks and recreation system for the next 10 years.

Key Findings

The PRMP replaces the 2009 Recreation, Parks and Culture Strategic Master Plan. An update is needed to set new priorities that are aligned with current community needs, the City's Strategic Plan and new approaches, legislation and guidelines in park and recreation planning. Key findings of the PRMP are:

- Guelph is growing. The population is planned to increase by over 60,000 to a total of 208,000 by 2051. As the population grows, so too must the parks and recreation amenities and services that support daily living and wellbeing in Guelph.
- Population growth is expected to be primarily driven by migration. The City's parks and recreation amenities and programs must be flexible to accommodate emerging trends.
- Guelph's population is aging. The seniors demographic is forecast to increase from 6% to 16% in 2051, while all other age groups are forecast to decline. The City's parks and recreation amenities must adapt to accommodate an aging population.
- Recreation programs and services are disproportionately distributed throughout Guelph. New strategies and approaches are needed to support the wellbeing of all Guelph residents more equitably.

- Parks and recreation land needs are greater than what can be achieved using parkland dedication alone. Future studies are needed to determine how many new sports fields are going to be required in the city, and how to acquire land to support these needs.

Strategic Plan Alignment

The vision and core values of the PRMP are founded on the current 2019 to 2023 Strategic Plan priorities of Sustaining our Future, Working Together for our Future, and Building our Future.

The PRMP aligns closely with the Building our Future pillar as park and recreation facilities and programs nurture social well-being, provide landmark beauty and offer a safe place where everyone belongs. The objectives and recommendations of the PRMP help support these Strategic Plan priorities:

- Working to enhance community well-being and safety through direct service and program delivery;
- Managing existing infrastructure; and
- Continuing working to develop new assets that respond to Guelph’s growing and changing social, economic and environmental needs.

The PRMP also aligns with the Sustaining our Future pillar as parks contribute to caring for the local environment and responding to climate change. The objectives and recommendations of the PRMP help support these Strategic Plan priorities:

- Protecting green infrastructure provided by woodlands, wetlands, watercourses and other elements of Guelph’s natural heritage system;
- Investing in “green” infrastructure to prepare Guelph for the effects of climate change; and
- Increasing Guelph’s tree canopy.

Finally, the PRMP aligns with the Working Together for our Future pillar as the plan aims to improve delivery of information to the community about parks and recreation and work with community partners. The objectives and recommendations of the PRMP help support these Strategic Plan priorities:

- Developing strategic partnerships with stakeholders to improve service delivery; and
- Exploring new funding options, service-delivery models and partnerships to ease taxes for residents and businesses.

Financial Implications

The capital investment over the life of the plan for PRMP initiatives is approximately \$17.25 million. This does not include initiatives or priorities included in other Council approved master plans, such as the Guelph Trail Master Plan, or outcomes from future plans such as the Sports Field Strategy or Parkland Acquisition Strategy.

The PRMP initiatives have been incorporated into the 2024-2027 multi-year budget (MYB) and 10-year capital and operating forecasts. Approval of specific annual capital investment and associated operating impacts will be referred to the 2024-2027 capital and operating budget requests. Projects will be prioritized based on fiscal and human constraints, and in alignment with all organizational priorities.

This investment will ensure that as the population grows, the current parks and recreation level of service will be maintained.

Report

Introduction

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP) is a strategic document that guides how the City plans, designs, funds, builds, and maintains the park and recreation network. It replaces the 2009 Recreation, Parks and Culture Strategic Master Plan. An update was initiated to set new priorities that are aligned with community need, the City's Strategic Plan, and new approaches, legislation and guidelines in park and recreation planning. At the same time, Culture Plan 2030, a 10-year strategic plan has been developed with the dedicated focus on the enjoyment and participation of arts and culture.

The PRMP sets the direction for parkland, recreation facilities and recreation programs in the city over the next 10 years and beyond. It identifies needs for current and future residents, establishes future initiatives, and guides strategic investment. It is a framework that lays the foundation for parks and recreation service delivery, while allowing for flexibility to respond to changing needs.

The PRMP was developed over four phases of work:

- The first phase of work confirmed parks and recreation assets. A detailed inventory of resources was compiled using data from many different sources.
- The second phase of work identified strengths and opportunities within the parks and recreation system. A review of emerging trends and comparison of services and infrastructure to similar communities was undertaken.
- The third phase of work included an in-depth review of parkland needs, which resulted in the development of the Council-approved Park Plan. The Park Plan examined the need for parkland in the city and was a requirement under the Ontario Planning Act to support the City's continued use of a Parkland Dedication Bylaw. The Park Plan was advanced before the completion of the PRMP to meet provincially mandated timelines.
- The fourth and final phase of work included the development of a Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment and the PRMP. The Needs Assessment used data gathered throughout the PRMP project to identify gaps and opportunities among the City's indoor and outdoor recreation facilities. The purpose of this assessment was to recommend evidence-based provisioning of park and recreation assets to be carried forward into the PRMP. The final PRMP builds on the needs established in the Park Plan and Needs Assessment.

Vision and core values

The plan is guided by an overall vision that outlines a desired future for parks and recreation in Guelph:

"Parks and recreation are essential to everyday life in Guelph. To be future-ready, Guelph needs parks, facilities and programs that are sustainable, inclusive, adaptable and have a built-in ability to respond to a growing and diverse community. The City needs to connect people to each other, healthy living and the environment."

Six core values of the plan support the vision for parks and recreation. These core values drive the outcomes for the PRMP and will be embedded in the work of the Parks and Recreation departments. The core values of the plan are:

- All people can participate in recreation.
- Parks and recreation facilities are welcoming and meaningful places for all people.
- A healthy and vibrant community is supported through parks and recreation.
- Infrastructure is maintained, sustainable and responsive to community changes.
- The natural environment is protected, restored and responsibly managed.
- The Parks and Recreation departments work together with the community.

Implementation and recommendations

The PRMP provides nearly 100 recommendations relating to park planning, park amenities, indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, aquatics service delivery, community development, recreation programming, and departmental strategy documents. Each of the objectives is intended to guide parks and recreation service delivery to achieve the vision of the plan. Key themes and examples include:

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA): the Needs Assessment and PRMP highlight numerous barriers to access for equity deserving communities, as well as an unbalanced distribution of recreation programs and resources throughout the city. The PRMP recommends an IDEA strategy and updated service delivery model to help address locally identified barriers and improve equitable access to parks and recreation for all residents.

Park and facility optimization: population growth, land scarcity, rising costs of construction, and changes to the way people recreate are driving the need to maximize use of existing amenities and infrastructure. The PRMP recommends exploring strategic ways to increase use and opportunities in existing outdoor spaces and indoor facilities. Examples include a field strategy, multipurpose facility designs, placemaking investments, programming in parks and open spaces, updating facility allocation and distribution policies and processes, and investigating the feasibility of renewing or repurposing existing facilities to meet changing recreational needs and interests.

The implementation of the plan's recommendations will require a balance of investing in new and existing infrastructure and services. To meet the needs of the community with limited land resources, careful consideration for intensifying and optimizing existing parks and recreation facilities will be required.

Meaningful community engagement for capital projects and processes will be coordinated as appropriate during implementation of recommended objectives.

The implementation timeline identified in the PRMP is meant to demonstrate prioritization of each of the recommendations and is not a finalized work plan. The proposed pace of implementation allows for flexibility and will be based on need, resource capacity, budget approval, and in some cases timing of Secondary Plan development, including the Guelph Innovation District and Clair-Maltby.

Financial Implications

Investment is required to support the vision, core values, and recommendations of the PRMP over the next ten years and beyond. The PRMP will be aligned with the existing capital and operating plans, providing consideration to fiscal constraints and the human resource capacity to deliver. Adjustments to the priorities and sequencing of projects over the lifespan of the plan is inevitable. The PRMP needs to be flexible and able to respond to new opportunities and changes as they arise.

The capital investment for PRMP initiatives over the life of the plan is approximately \$17.25 million. The Parks and Recreation capital budget costs shown in **Error! Reference source not found.** represent costs for the recommendations of the PRMP and are not representative of the entire Parks and Recreation budgets. These costs do not include initiatives or priorities included in other Council approved master plans, such as the Guelph Trail Master Plan, or outcomes from future plans, such as the Sports Field Strategy or Parkland Acquisition Strategy. The costs include policy creation, planning, design and construction.

Table 1: Parks and recreation capital budget costs for PRMP initiatives

	Total budget cost over life of the plan
Growth	\$1,300,000
Service Enhancement	\$11,150,000
Infrastructure Renewal	\$4,800,000
Total	\$17,250,000

The funding requirements to implement the recommendations of the plan will be referred to future operating and capital budgets. Based on the outcomes of recommended strategies within the PRMP, further initiatives and capital investment may be required. Any updates will be included in the PRMP mid-term review and referred to the multi-year budget (MYB) for consideration.

Staffing resources have been identified to activate recommendations within the PRMP. These positions are critical to the implementation of PRMP recommendations and have been referred to MYB for consideration.

Consultations

Internal Engagement

The PRMP was developed in collaboration with key staff across many departments. Key involvement from staff in Parks, Recreation, Policy Planning, Engineering, Accessibility and Finance ensured a collaborative approach to future park and recreation planning and development.

External engagement

A robust community engagement process was delivered to ensure that the PRMP reflects community opinions and priorities for future parks and recreation needs. Through four phases of the project and various platforms efforts were made to consult with a broad range of Guelph residents and organizations across various

geographic areas and demographic groups. In total, over 40 different opportunities to share feedback took place with community and stakeholders.

Public consultation took the form of community surveys, open houses, public workshops, focus groups, community pop-ups, meetings with local school boards, meetings with representatives from Indigenous nations, and presentations to advisory committees of Council. Emphasis was placed on engaging with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) to understand the barriers that people with disabilities face when accessing parks and recreation facilities and services. Staff engaged with the AAC four times throughout the project and feedback from the AAC has been incorporated into the plan.

Community engagement built on the previous work of the Community Plan and Strategic Plans, and where possible, feedback from related City projects and initiatives was captured. Specifically, feedback collected as part of the 2022 Park Plan and the 2019 Parkland Dedication Bylaw update was used to help inform the PRMP.

Common themes identified throughout engagement included:

Accessibility and inclusion

Accessible and inclusive parks and recreation facilities and programs are a priority for Guelph residents. This includes removing physical and financial barriers to participation as well as ensuring equitable access to facilities and information.

Green spaces

Overwhelmingly, Guelph residents value green spaces, including parkland and trails. People want more trees and naturalized areas in parks.

Land supply

Guelph residents have an interest in parkland inventory and ensuring the supply of land for parks and recreation is sufficient for future generations. People want to protect existing parks and continue to grow the park system.

Amenity and program variety

Residents value a highly developed parks and recreation system that offers a wide range of amenities and programming geared towards all ages, abilities, backgrounds and interests.

Investment in aging infrastructure

People want existing parks and recreation facilities to be in good condition and replaced as quality declines. There is particular interest in ensuring each area of the city has the same quality of parks and recreation amenities.

Attachments

Attachment-1 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, dated August 2023

Attachment-2 Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment, dated August 2023

Attachment-3 Council Presentation

Departmental Approval

None

Report Author

Mallory Lemon, Manager, Park and Trail Development

Eric Pool, Project Manager, Recreation Services

This report was approved by:

Gene Matthews

General Manager, Parks

Public Services

519-822-1260 extension 3337

gene.matthews@guelph.ca

Danna Evans

General Manager, Culture and Recreation

Public Services

519-822-1260 extension 2621

danna.evans@guelph.ca

This report was recommended by:

Colleen Clack-Bush

Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

Public Services

519-822-1260 extension 2588

colleen.clack-bush@guelph.ca

City of Guelph

Parks and Recreation Master Plan

August 2023



Acknowledgement

We are grateful to our local community, community groups, Indigenous peoples and agency partners for their participation in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP). The PRMP was built collaboratively in a way that is consistent with our values. We acknowledge the work of our staff and community.

City of Guelph Territorial acknowledgement

Guelph is situated on traditional territories of the Attiwonderonk and the Haudenosaunee. We recognize the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation as a treaty partner, through Between the Lakes Treaty No. 3, on whose traditional territory we live and work.

The place we now call Guelph is steeped in rich Indigenous history and is home to many First Nations, Inuit, Métis and Mixed Ancestry people today.

Beyond land acknowledgement

Land acknowledgments are crucial in sustaining awareness and remembrance; however, they require action and participation to fulfill a purpose. We each hold responsibility for participating in this process. By taking time to learn about the truths and histories, through self-reflection and building relationships with Indigenous communities, we can begin the process of reconciliation.

We recognize that strong, mutually beneficial municipal-Indigenous relations is a necessary component of reconciliation, and we are committed to supporting this process in the most effective way possible. We will continue to seek out and foster partnerships with Indigenous governments and community members of First Nation, Inuit, Métis and mixed Indigenous ancestry as we work through the objectives of the PRMP. Our desire to strengthen relationships, engage in meaningful conversations and willingness to learn will inform the implementation of the PRMP and future work plans.



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■ Executive summary

Parks and recreation are vital public services that contribute to the rich culture and vibrancy of Guelph's community. The benefits of parks and recreation are numerous. Not only do they support opportunities for individuals to play, relax or learn new skills, they also contribute greatly to the climate resilience and economic vitality of the city. The City's range of indoor and outdoor recreation spaces and programs contribute to the community's well-being by offering residents opportunities to connect with themselves, with each other, and with nature. As Guelph grows, parks and recreation offerings must also grow and adapt to continue to support community well-being.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP) sets direction for parkland, recreation facilities and programs in the city over the next 10 years and beyond. It identifies needs for current and future residents, establishes future initiatives, and guides strategic investment. It is a framework that lays the foundation for parks and recreation service delivery, while allowing for flexibility to respond to changing needs.

The PRMP was developed over four phases of work that included an inventory of parks and recreation assets, analysis of strengths and opportunities in the parks and recreation system, development of the Council-approved Park Plan, and development of the final Parks and Recreation Master Plan. An iterative process was followed that included research and benchmarking, validated by extensive community engagement, to understand future needs and gaps in service delivery.

The plan is guided by an overall vision that outlines a desired future for parks and recreation in Guelph:

Parks and recreation are essential to everyday life in Guelph. To be future-ready, Guelph needs parks, facilities and programs that are sustainable, inclusive, adaptable and have a built-in ability to respond to a growing and diverse community. The City needs to connect people to each other, healthy living and the environment.

Six core values of the plan support the vision for parks and recreation. These core values drive the outcomes for this plan and will be embedded in the work of the Parks and Recreation departments. The core values of the plan are:

All people can participate in recreation



Parks and recreation facilities are welcoming and meaningful places for all people



A healthy and vibrant community is supported through parks and recreation



Infrastructure is maintained, sustainable and responsive to community changes



The natural environment is protected, restored and responsibly managed.



The Parks and Recreation departments work together with the community.





The plan provides nearly 100 recommendations relating to park planning, park amenities, indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, aquatics service delivery, community development, recreation programming, and departmental strategy documents. Each of the objectives identified in the Recommendation summary and prioritization section of this plan is intended to guide parks and recreation service delivery over the next 10 years and beyond to achieve the vision of the plan.

The implementation of the plan's recommendations will require a balance of investing in new and existing infrastructure. To meet the needs of the community with limited land resources, careful consideration for intensifying and optimizing existing parks and recreation facilities will be required. Meaningful community engagement for capital projects and processes will be coordinated as appropriate during implementation of recommended objectives. The proposed pace of implementation allows for flexibility and will be based on need, resource capacity, budget approval, and timing of Secondary Plan development, including the Guelph Innovation District and Clair-Maltby.



■ Introduction

Guelph is a city of rivers and green spaces. A city of lush natural areas, abundant tree canopy, a robust trail system, and well over 100 parks. A place where residents value the city's natural resources for its beauty and biodiversity. A place where spontaneous and organized recreation is fostered through thoughtful placemaking and programming. And a place where every year, thousands of residents and visitors enjoy its recreation centres, cultural heritage sites, festivals, sporting events and outdoor activities. Guelph is a place where everyone is welcome and residents are proud to call this city home.

Guelph is also a city that is growing. The population is planned to increase by over 60,000 to a total of 208,000 by 2051. About half of the city's projected population growth is planned in the existing built-up areas of the city, and the other half in greenfield areas.

As the population grows, so too must the community services that support daily living in Guelph. Parks and recreation are vital public services that contribute to the rich culture and vibrancy of Guelph's community. This plan will explore how the City's Parks and Recreation departments' service delivery will respond to the pressures of a growing and changing community over the next 10 years and beyond.

Purpose of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Parks and recreation - a phrase so common that its true significance is often overlooked and reduced to its literal components: open green spaces and the activities people do in their spare time. But parks and recreation are so much more than that. They are the vehicle for well-being among residents, offering opportunities to connect with oneself, with each other, and with nature.

In Guelph, parks and recreation can mean taking a child for their first ride on the carousel in Riverside Park; a newcomer experiencing a taste of Canadian culture by learning to skate at the West End Community Centre; youth learning teamwork through sports participation; or an older adult taking a Tai Chi class in the park. These experiences are more than just a green space or a recreation facility. They are fundamental to quality of life.

Together parks and recreation are something bigger: at their core, they build community. Ultimately that is the driver for this plan. As Guelph continues to grow and change, parks and recreation must adapt to continue to support community well-being.

The PRMP sets direction for parkland, recreation facilities and programs in the city over the next 10 years and beyond. It identifies needs for current and future residents, establishes future initiatives, and guides strategic investment. It is a framework that lays the foundation for parks and recreation service delivery, while allowing for flexibility to respond to changing needs.

Parks and recreation are essential public services

Parks and recreation are vitally important public services—like roads, sewers, stormwater management and waste collection. They are fundamental to quality of life for residents and make Guelph more livable, environmentally resilient, and attractive to businesses and future residents.

Some benefits of parks and recreation are easily quantifiable. In 2017, Guelph's Tourism Economic Impact Visitor Survey found that the 312,700 people who visited Guelph in the previous year for leisure and recreation contributed \$63M to the local economy by spending on accommodation, entertainment, transportation, food and beverage, and shopping.¹ Other benefits of parks and recreation are less quantifiable, yet their impact on environmental and public health is substantial, as shown below.

Benefits of parks and recreation

Community benefits

- Physical and mental well-being of community members
- Positive outlet for youth at risk
- Contribution to independent living among older adults
- Access to nature
- Opportunities for social interaction
- Opportunities to learn skill through structured and unstructured activities
- Opportunities to play
- Establishment of a sense of place and civic pride
- Aesthetic appeal and relief from urban form
- Opportunities for food production
- Opportunities to highlight and observe cultural heritage
- Opportunities for ancestral connection to nature

Environmental benefits

- Wildlife habitat for plants and animals
- Support of biodiversity
- Reduction of urban heat island effect
- Improved air quality
- Contribution to overall tree canopy cover
- Resilience to climate change
- Opportunities for environmental stewardship

Economic benefits

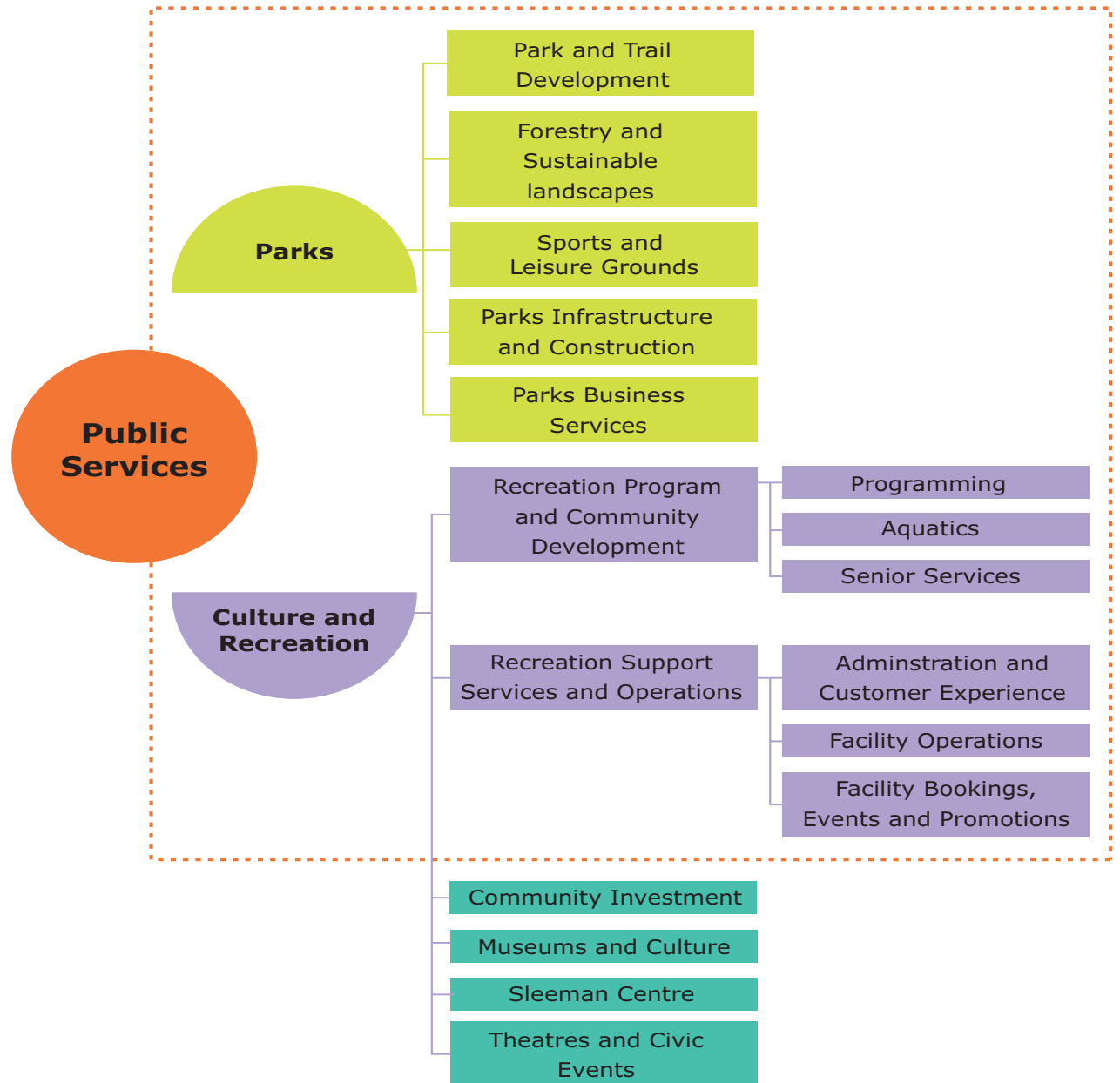
- Reduced healthcare costs associated with improved physical and mental well-being
- Increased property values
- Revenue generation from program and service delivery
- Contribution to local economy through sport tourism
- Contribution to local economy through hosting of festivals and events



■ Department structure

The Parks and Recreation departments work closely together under the City's Public Services unit. Although they are distinct departments, each with their own objectives, they work in partnership to deliver parks and recreation programs, facilities, and services to enhance quality of life in Guelph.

Figure 1: Scope of services included in the PRMP





■ Alignment with other plans and strategies

Through the Community Plan, Guelph residents identified what matters most to them. The PRMP not only champions and further explores the community value of 'We play and explore,' but many other values of the Community Plan, including 'We are home,' 'We protect our environment,' 'We are community,' and 'We feel well.'

The PRMP is not designed to exist in isolation. The vision and core values of this plan are founded on Guelph's Strategic Plan priorities of 'Sustaining our future,' 'Working together for our future,' and 'Building our future.' To be future ready, the PRMP assesses Guelph's current infrastructure, programming and services to understand and determine what will be needed as the city grows. The plan ultimately recommends policies and actions to support the community's recreational needs.

In 2022, Council approved the City's Park Plan. The Park Plan examined the need for parkland in the city and was a requirement under the Ontario Planning Act to support the City's continued use of a Parkland Dedication Bylaw. The Park Plan was advanced before the completion of the PRMP to meet provincially mandated timelines. The PRMP builds on the land needs and themes identified in the Park Plan.

Beyond the Parks and Recreation departments, the City has made tremendous progress on being future ready through the completion of many departmental master plans. The PRMP is aligned with many other internal and external guidance documents that support an overall vision for the City. These include but are not limited to:

External plans and legislation

- Provincial Policy Statement
- Ontario Planning Act
- Parks for all (Canadian Parks and Recreation Association and Canadian Parks Council)
- Framework for Recreation in Canada (Canadian Parks and Recreation Association and Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council)
- Healthy Community Design Baseline Project (Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health)

City strategies and plans

- Guelph Trail Master Plan
- Natural Heritage Action Plan
- Urban Forest Management Plan
- Active Transportation Network Study
- Older Adult Strategy
- Think Youth: Youth Strategy
- Facility Accessibility Design Manual
- Transportation Master Plan
- Stormwater Management Master Plan
- Water and Wastewater Servicing Master Plan
- Guelph's Race To Zero Plan
- Guelph's Good Service Standards
- One City. One Voice. Shared Purpose.



■ Master planning process

The PRMP process was led by a City staff working group with assistance from external resources. Evidence-based research, demographics, benchmarking, community feedback, policy analysis and trends in parks and recreation planning were used to understand future community needs and gaps in service delivery. A thorough process was followed that validated research with input from the community and interested parties. In addition to feedback received specific to the PRMP, feedback and data collected as part of the 2019 Parkland Dedication Bylaw update and the 2022 Park Plan was used to arrive at outcomes.

The plan was created over four phases of work.

The first phase of work confirmed parks and recreation assets. A detailed inventory of resources was compiled using data from many different sources.

The second phase of work identified strengths and opportunities within the parks and recreation system. A review of emerging trends, and comparison of services and infrastructure to similar communities was undertaken.

The third phase of work included an in-depth review of parkland needs, which resulted in the development of the Council-approved Park Plan.

The fourth and final phase of work is the development of the PRMP, which identifies future parks and recreation needs and establishes initiatives and priorities to meet those needs.

Figure 2: Master planning process



■ Guelph now and future

To deliver parks and recreation services that are appropriate for the community, it is important to understand who is living in the city and how that might change in the future. New people can bring new life to the parks and recreation system and change the way public spaces are used. Some areas of the city are growing denser, while other areas are being developed for the first time.



Guelph now, as a village of 100 people

Through the Community Plan, the City developed an easy-to-understand profile of the community called Guelph as a Village of 100 People. The community profile shows what the city would look like if Guelph was only 100 people. In this village of 100 people, each person represents 1,318 Guelphites based on the 2016 Census data.

Key considerations

- Guelph's median age is 38.3;
- Guelph has more young adults aged 20-24 than many similar, southern Ontario communities;
- 77 out of 100 people speak English as their mother tongue—the next top five languages spoken at home are Mandarin, Vietnamese, Punjabi, Italian and French;
- People in Guelph have many different ethnic origins. Out of 100 people, three people are First Nations, Inuit and or Métis Peoples, 27 are North American (non-First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples), 72 are European, 16 are Asian, one is Caribbean, two are Latin American, two are African, and one is Oceanian;



- Guelph has a very diverse economy and has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country;
- The median household income is \$67,829, yet 11 out of 100 people live in poverty;
- 69 per cent of people live and work in Guelph (10 per cent work downtown) and 31 per cent live in Guelph but work outside Guelph;
- Guelph is a tourist destination with about 1.7 million visitors yearly; specifically tracked were 163,205 sporting event visitors and 49,757 festival visitors.



Guelph in the future

Guelph is a city that is growing. The population is forecasted to increase by over 60,000 people to a total of 208,000 by 2051. About half of this growth is planned in the existing built-up area through infill development, redevelopment and intensification. More residents will mean increased demand on parks and recreation services. The city will need to use its land and facilities more efficiently, expand the park system, and create new spaces to accommodate sports and recreation.

As part of the Shaping Guelph: Growth Management Strategy, the City prepared a long-term population and housing growth analysis. Population and demographic forecasts suggest that welcoming newcomers and accommodating older adults will be important considerations as the City plans for park and recreation amenities, facilities, and services in the future. The impact of these demographic shifts on the delivery of services presents both opportunities and challenges. For example, recreation activities popularized by immigrant populations may require calibration of City facilities and programming to react to emerging trends. Meanwhile, the increase of older adults who may have more income, time, and health to participate in leisure activities may put pressures on existing facilities.



As the city grows and changes, more people are living in medium or high-density housing types like townhouses and apartments compared to single detached homes. This shift in housing type is an important consideration for the type of park and recreation services offered and where they are located. People living in denser areas may face different barriers and/or seek out parks and recreation in different ways than people living in detached homes with private outdoor spaces.

Key considerations for the future

- The percentage of youth (0-19) is forecast to decline from 23 per cent in 2016 to 20 per cent in 2051;



- The percentage of older seniors (age 75+) is forecast to increase from six per cent in 2016 to 16 per cent in 2051;



- The percentage of young adults (20-34) is forecast to decline from 23 per cent in 2016 to 20 per cent in 2051;



- 69 per cent of population growth is anticipated to be driven by migration;



- The percentage of adults (35-54) is forecast to decline from 28 per cent in 2016 to 25 per cent in 2051;



- The city is forecast to accommodate just over 1,400 new migrants per year, representing an increase of 31 per cent compared to average historical migration.



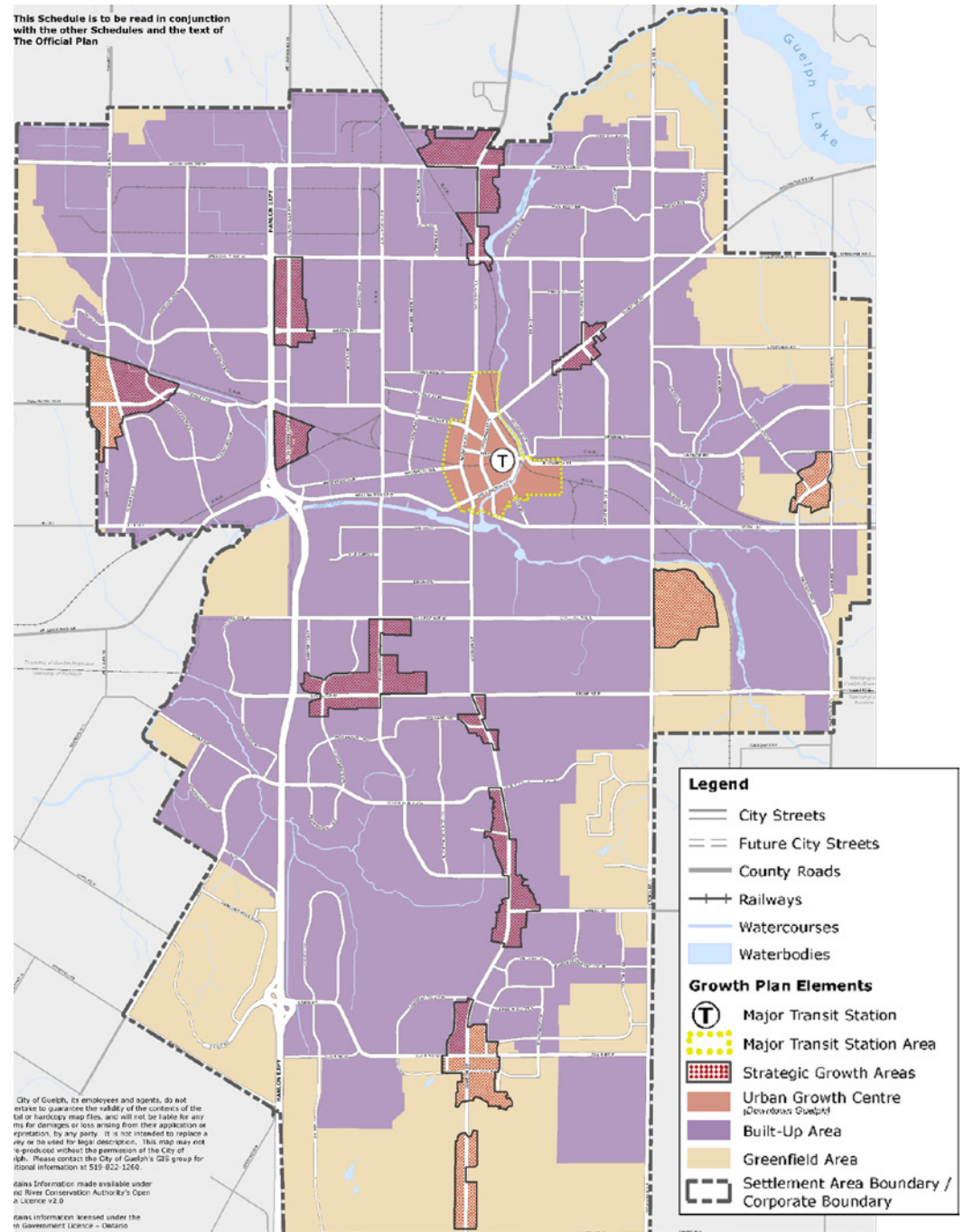
- The percentage of empty-nesters/younger seniors (55-74) is forecast to decline from 20 per cent in 2016 to 19 per cent in 2051;



Guelph's urban structure

Guelph's urban structure prioritizes areas of growth—through an Urban Growth Centre (Downtown) and Strategic Growth Areas (shown in red and peach in the map). These areas are intended to be focal points in neighbourhoods and include a mix of uses, intermodal hubs and medium to high density housing. Managing growth and supporting residents' park and recreation needs requires innovative solutions and strong policy directions. Figure 3 maps the urban structure to understand where we might need to acquire parks in areas of growth.² This growth data will help staff determine how to plan for future parks and recreation opportunities.

Figure 3: Guelph's urban structure



² City of Guelph, 2022, Shaping Guelph: Growth Management Strategy



■ Community engagement

A robust community engagement process was delivered to ensure that the PRMP reflects community opinions and priorities for future parks and recreation needs. Community engagement built on the previous work of the Community Plan and Strategic Plan, and where possible, community feedback from related City projects and initiatives was captured. Specifically, feedback collected as part of the 2022 Park Plan and the 2019 Parkland Dedication Bylaw update was used to help inform the PRMP.

Efforts were taken to consult with a broad range of Guelph residents and organizations across various geographic areas and demographic groups. It is important to note that survey and community feedback data is a source of information that helps paint a picture, but this data is checked against other statistically valid sources like the City's [Citizen Satisfaction Survey](#), public health data and demographic information.

Listening opportunities

A variety of engagement activities were offered over the course of the master plan development, including:



4 Community surveys



2 Public open houses



3 Community workshops



2 Community focus groups



1 Developer focus group



1 Sport user group meeting



15 Parks and recreation facility pop-ups



5 Community pop-ups

5 Presentations to Advisory Committees of Council, including the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Natural Heritage Advisory Committee



1 Brainstorming session with over 300 children in grades 2-5 during the City's Local Government Week visits



10 Internal participant workshops with key municipal departments



10 Individual community group meetings with Youth Council, Youth Providers Committee, Local Immigration Partnership, Upper Grand District School Board, Guelph Neighbourhood Support Coalition and Indigenous Nations



1 Virtual Sharing Circle as part of an ongoing relationship building initiative with community members of First Nation, Inuit, Métis and mixed Indigenous ancestry. The conversation was themed around parks and outdoor spaces.





Community feedback

Community engagement periods were aligned to the four phases of the master planning process. Below is a compilation of the key highlights from all four phases of community engagement. Engagement summaries for each phase of the project can be found in Appendix A: Community engagement summary.

Accessibility and inclusion

Accessible and inclusive parks and recreation facilities and programs are a priority for Guelph residents. This includes removing physical and financial barriers to participation as well as ensuring equitable access to facilities and information.

Green spaces

Overwhelmingly, Guelph residents value green spaces, including parkland and trails. People want more trees and naturalized areas in parks.

Land supply

Guelph residents have an interest in parkland inventory and ensuring the supply of land for parks and recreation is sufficient for future generations. People want to protect existing parks and continue to grow the park system.

Amenity and program variety

Residents value a highly developed parks and recreation system that offers a wide range of amenities and programming geared towards all ages, abilities, backgrounds and interests.

Investment in aging infrastructure

People want existing parks and recreation facilities to be in good condition and replaced as quality declines. There is particular interest in ensuring each area of the city has the same quality of parks and recreation amenities.



■ Vision for the future

Guelph's vision for the future of parks and recreation services comes from the values and priorities identified by the community through community engagement. The PRMP builds on the strategic directions and goals of the Official Plan, Community Plan and Strategic Plan. The new vision outlines a desired future for parks and recreation in Guelph:

Parks and recreation are essential to everyday life in Guelph. To be future-ready, Guelph needs parks, facilities and programs that are sustainable, inclusive, adaptable and have a built-in ability to respond to a growing and diverse community. The City needs to connect people to each other, healthy living and the environment.

Core values

This plan includes six core values that support the vision for parks and recreation. They provide direction for future action plans and decision-making. These core values drive the outcomes for this plan and will be embedded in the work of the parks and recreation departments. The PRMP core values align with the Strategic Plan priorities of Building our Future, Sustaining our Future, and Working Together for our Future.



A healthy and vibrant community is supported through parks and recreation

Parks and recreation help promote health, both physically and mentally. Parks and recreation programs offer opportunities to participate in physical activity, which can reduce and even prevent health problems. Parks can help people get outside and moving for low or no cost at all.

Guelph residents feel a sense of stewardship for their parks and feel empowered to contribute to positive change. For many community members, leisure, culture and good mental health are tied to green spaces.

All people can participate in recreation

Guelph residents should feel welcome in parks and recreation facilities through opportunities for all ages, abilities, backgrounds and genders.

As a corporation, Guelph values inclusion which makes us “stronger for our differences.” There is new awareness about systemic inequity and an increased desire to create equity of opportunity, safety and inclusion for all in the community. Guelph is committed to improving the safety and inclusiveness of spaces through programming, education, activities, events, and enhanced facility design.



Parks and recreation facilities are welcoming and meaningful places for all people

Parks and recreation facilities are an important part of Guelph’s public realm. Recreational spaces create opportunities for social connection—either through intentional or casual gatherings. It is important that everyone feels welcome and that the City’s spaces help facilitate this.

Activated and interesting spaces provide opportunities for social interaction and help differentiate Guelph from other cities. The City’s parks and facilities need to be designed or reshaped to nurture social well-being, provide landmark beauty and offer a safe place where everyone belongs.



Infrastructure is maintained, sustainable and responsive to community changes

A functioning park and recreation system is made up of different spaces, places, and recreational opportunities. This diversity is versatile and empowering, but also makes it challenging to provide sustainable operations practices in the future. Strong asset management and operational plans, backed by long-term financial and resource strategies, are needed to ensure the stability and sustainability of Guelph’s parks and recreation system.

As the population grows, Guelph will need to reshape its parks and facilities to meet new and emerging needs and service level expectations. Guelph is committed to providing an optimal level of service that meets community needs, is sustainable, affordable and realistic. Meeting current service demands, while updating and expanding the parks and recreation system presents opportunities for the future.



The natural environment is protected, restored and responsibly managed

A healthy community is one where there are intact ecosystems and places for people to enjoy nature. Guelph will develop a park system that helps protect the Natural Heritage System from degradation by offering places for people to connect with nature in parks. The City will also expand the urban forest and look for spaces outside of the Natural Heritage System to plant more trees to help achieve the goal of 40 per cent canopy cover.

The park system also presents an opportunity to build a climate resilient city. Parks can help protect against the effects of climate change including extreme weather events, flooding, intense heat and poor air quality by using green infrastructure and expanding the urban forest.

The Parks and Recreation departments work together with the community

Guelph will work with the community to listen, learn and to help improve service delivery and communication. Developing partnerships with local organizations, private partners, schools and residents is important to the work the City does. Guelph can develop new spaces or programs through new service-delivery models that would otherwise be unavailable due to financial or resource limitations.

The City has an opportunity and responsibility to listen to the community as the parks and recreation system grows. There is also an important opportunity to be more intentional with addressing systemic inequities in parks and recreation.



■ Parks

What makes Guelph, Guelph? The City asked residents through the Community Plan and the answer for many is the city's rivers, parks, natural areas and tree canopy. Guelphites are deeply passionate about the city's green spaces and are stewards of the environment. The Parks department is responsible for planning, developing, operating and maintaining over 400 hectares of parkland. In addition to parks, the department stewards over 850 hectares of Natural Heritage System (NHS) and 130 kilometres of trails.

In 2022, Council approved the City's Park Plan. The plan examined the need for parkland in the city. It is a foundational document to the PRMP and the two documents work together to guide the work of the parks and recreation departments. Land needs are not the focus of the PRMP because the Park Plan established key issues and needs relating to parkland in the city. The PRMP builds on the land needs identified in the Park Plan and presents new challenges that have emerged since the adoption of the Park Plan. The PRMP focuses on trends in park planning and outdoor recreation, departmental opportunities and specific park amenity needs.

To begin the Parks section, it helps to have some context about what a park is, what a good park system has, and how Guelph's park system is structured. These topics were covered in great detail in the Park Plan, so the intent is to provide a brief background on the park system basics.

What is a park?

A park is meant for recreation. For the purpose of this plan, parks are areas of land set aside primarily for human enjoyment, recreation and connection to nature. The terms 'park' and 'parkland' are used interchangeably in this document to refer to these areas of land. NHS lands are excluded from policies and strategies relating to parkland as they typically have limited accessibility or opportunities for recreation. It is important to recognize however, that within Guelph's existing land inventory, there are some areas where NHS features overlap existing parks.

What makes a good park system?

An ideal park system provides the optimal level of service—this is the amount and type of service that meets community needs/desires and is sustainable, affordable and realistic. Guelph's optimal level of service for the park system is based on these key principles:

- Everyone can access a park within a reasonable walk from their home;
- There are a variety of park types with different functions in all areas of the city;
- Parks accommodate a variety of recreation amenities and programming; and
- A similar level of service is provided throughout the city, recognizing that urban form or neighbourhood demographics may require a different approach to parkland (e.g., areas of high-density development may have different park needs than areas of single detached homes).



How Guelph's park system is structured

Guelph's parkland is organized in a classification system that guides park function, programming and size. Official Plan policies outline four types of parks in Guelph: urban squares, neighbourhood parks, community parks and regional parks. Urban squares and neighbourhood parks are intended to meet the local needs of residents by providing walkable amenities. Community Parks and Regional parks are intended to meet both the local needs of residents and the larger community by offering a broader service level that includes cultural and outdoor recreational needs. This often includes parking, intermediate level sports fields, and specialized attractions. The classification system is a forward-looking standard, which means that sometimes an existing park doesn't fit neatly into the park type description. Existing parks are a product of the urban form, principles of planning and standards at the time of development.

Urban squares

Urban squares serve people in intensification areas to help address increased demands for recreation. They are meant to serve both the immediate residents as well as other people visiting the area for shopping dining or appointments. Like neighbourhood parks, they are meant to be walkable and are well-suited to mixed-use areas with high pedestrian traffic. Urban squares are smaller in scale than neighbourhood parks and provide opportunities for social interaction and passive recreation.

Neighbourhood parks

Neighbourhood parks are the building blocks of the park system. Neighbourhood parks are typically smaller, local parks that serve the needs of one neighbourhood. They include play areas, recreation amenities and green spaces that are close to people's homes. They are meant to be easily walked to (500-800 metres) so people can enjoy unorganized, unstructured and spontaneous activities. They typically provide passive areas, low to intermediate sports facilities, informal and formal play areas and may contain natural areas.

Community parks

Community parks provide specialized amenities that draw people from an area that exceeds a typical walking distance. This often includes a broader community of several neighbourhoods within a geographic area. They are meant to serve residents within a long walk (more than 1 kilometre) or a short bike, car or bus ride. Some residents may travel further to participate in organized sports or recreation programming. Since community parks are meant to serve more people, they are often located on arterial or collector roads with access to transit or parking areas. They have amenities to support community celebrations or athletic events that may not be found in smaller neighbourhood parks (e.g., lit sport fields, splash pads or bookable amenities).

Regional parks

Regional parks are some of Guelph's most recognizable parks and are designed to attract residents city-wide and visitors from out of town. These parks are used by residents and visitors for day use, celebration, sports or to commemorate culturally significant places. They are typically large parks but may be smaller if they have a culturally significant feature or a specialized recreation facility. They are intended to be accessed by long walks, public transit or by bike or car ride. They are typically located on arterial roads and have parking areas.

The following sections of this plan are structured to present information on trends and best practises, followed by key issues and opportunities, and finally objectives and recommendations for each of the key topics.

Parkland planning

Parkland planning is complex. It involves using many tools to acquire land and requires thoughtful collaboration with many internal and external interested parties including residents, developers, land-use planners, urban designers, ecologists and engineers. This section focuses on high-level land planning of parks: where they should go, how many are needed, and how big they should be.

Community voice

"We need more parkland and open space."

"Parks are infrastructure. They have a maximum carrying capacity. If they do not grow with the population, they are impacted by too many demands."

"With increasing housing density, it is important to ensure that more parkland is located near to dense areas."

"Connect our parklands so that people can walk/cycle to different green spaces in the city"

Trends and best practices in parkland planning

Connectivity

More than ever, people want to move around freely. Whether by public transit, car, cycling or walking, people value being able to easily get to their destinations. To encourage healthy lifestyles, many municipalities are weaving together the public realm to connect people to their homes, places of work, shopping, community centres, parks, trails, rivers and natural areas.

Guelph has made tremendous strides connecting parks with multi-modal streets and the trail network through the work of the [Guelph Trail Master Plan](#), the [Active Transportation Network Study](#) and the [Transportation Master Plan](#). But digging a little deeper, how can stationary parks contribute to overall connectivity in cities? Many municipalities are now thinking about how parks can be more than just destinations along transportation routes but also network enhancers by contributing to a safe, attractive and animated network. This can be done by including elements in parks like bike repair stations, washrooms, water refill stations, wayfinding, lighting and rest areas.

Co-location of parks with other green spaces

While not a new trend, co-location of parks with other green spaces is becoming more critical as the amount of parkland that municipalities can acquire through development has been significantly reduced by the Province of Ontario. Ultimately through provincial [Bill 23, 'More Homes Built Faster Act,'](#) the City is going to receive less parkland through development applications, which could result in park parcels being smaller. Many cities are now focusing more on locating parks next to other green spaces like stormwater management facilities, the natural heritage system, trails, and school lands to make the park system feel larger, create connectivity and ecological linkages. Although these other green spaces in the open space system are not meant for recreation, they have complementary functions and can help to avoid fragmented green spaces. Strategically locating parks next to other green spaces continues to be a strong trend in parkland planning and is becoming a critical tool in the current development climate.

Multi-functional land

Growing population is putting pressure on land resources. In built-up areas,

land is scarce and yet population growth requires more park and recreation resources. In greenfield areas developers are tasked with providing housing to meet growth targets, multi-modal roads to promote sustainability, parkland to support increased recreation demands, and stormwater management facilities to control runoff from new subdivisions. More than ever, developments need to achieve multiple objectives and functions, while making efficient use of land.

As cities become denser, creative solutions are needed to accommodate all the facilities and infrastructure needed to support healthy communities. One way of achieving this is through multi-functional land. Many cities have started to layer varying land uses over one another. For example, stormwater management ponds can have a certain degree of recreational function layered over the primary stormwater management use, and urban parks can be layered over parking garages.

While a multi-functional land use planning approach can be a good tool to maximize land efficiency, there are disadvantages, including limits on the optimal functioning of each type of use. For example, it would be impossible to layer much needed sports infrastructure over a surface stormwater management

pond, and costly to implement green space and trees over a parking garage. The benefits and challenges of this trend need to be carefully assessed.

As large landholders, Parks departments are often faced with requests to implement important municipal and regional infrastructure into parks. There is a fine balance to ensure recreation function and potential is preserved to accommodate the vast recreational needs in parks, while also recognizing that parkland may be able to accommodate some infrastructure without compromising the primary purpose of parkland.

Facility-fit park sizing and configuration

How do municipalities right-size parks? There is no scientific method, but historically many municipalities have implemented minimum park size and configuration policies to ensure that parkland acquired through development is functional for many recreational options. However, these policies are becoming more difficult to conform to due to parkland dedication rates being significantly reduced by the Province of Ontario and the size of development sites. Park size is highly dependent on the density being proposed in each development, as the province sets

parkland dedication rates based on the number of dwelling units being proposed.

Many municipalities are looking for ways to ensure parkland meets the recreational needs of the community, while being limited by provincial legislation on the amount of land that can be required through development. To address this, many municipalities are moving toward a facility-fit model for sizing and configuring parks. This method requires municipal staff to identify to developers during the development application process what programming is required based on a recreational needs assessment.

The developer is then required to demonstrate how the proposed parkland can accommodate those uses. This helps municipalities get right-sized parks and appropriately configured (square or rectangle) parks so that parkland parcels are conducive to building recreational facilities.

Equity of park distribution as a metric for success

City-wide parkland targets, typically measured in hectares per 1,000 people, has been a key metric in municipal parkland planning for many years. This is an easy metric to track: set a target, and measure parkland inventory against

the target. However, many municipalities are now recognizing that, while it may be easy to track, this may not be the best metric for evaluating the success of a park system. Parkland dedication legislation is subject to frequent change, often making parkland targets further disconnected from what can be achieved through dedication alone. Many municipalities rely on tax-funded land purchases to maintain parkland service levels as parkland dedication is often not enough to meet parkland targets.

There is also new awareness about systemic inequity and an increased desire to create equity for all. Rather than overall parkland quantity, many municipalities are taking a more human approach to parkland planning and measuring success by considering how well the park system serves the community. Numerous cities, including Guelph, have written into their policies that access to parks should be within reasonable walking distance from residential areas. A typical distance metric is 500-800 metres, or a 5-to-10-minute walk. Ultimately, there is a trend of moving beyond simple static targets for the amount of parkland municipalities “should” have, toward a well-connected park system that focuses more on equity of park access and distribution.



Key issues and opportunities for parkland planning

Provincial legislation changes

Since the adoption of the City's 2022 Park Plan, the Province of Ontario enacted Bill 23, 'More Homes Built Faster Act.' Through this legislation, the City of Guelph has been assigned a housing target of 18,000 new dwelling units by 2032 as part of the provincial goal to build 1.5 million homes in 10 years. To meet this target, the legislation includes changes to the Planning Act and Development Charges Act that reduces both land and budgets available to support parks, specifically by:

- Cutting potential land conveyance rates by 50 per cent—the requirement of developers to convey one hectare of land for every 300 units they build is reduced to one hectare for every 600 units;
- Cutting potential cash-in-lieu rates by 50 per cent—the requirement of developers to pay the market value of land at a rate of one hectare of land for every 500 units they build is reduced to one hectare for every 1,000 units;
- Allowing developers to choose which portions of development are suitable for park purposes. Under Bill 23, municipalities no longer get the final say on whether land is suitable for park purposes;
- Reducing and further capping cash-in-lieu rates to 10 per cent for sites smaller than 5 hectares and 15 per cent for sites larger than 5 hectares;
- Allowing land not currently considered parkland, like encumbered land or privately owned public spaces (POPS), to be counted toward parkland dedication requirements; and
- Requiring municipalities to allocate or spend 60 per cent of cash-in-lieu revenue every year, adding complexity to the ability to save up to secure expensive land for large destination parks or strategic acquisitions.

This new legislation significantly impacts City of Guelph Official Plan parkland policies in two ways:

- The city-wide parkland target of 3.3 hectares per 1,000 people identified in the Official Plan will be impossible to meet using parkland dedication alone.
- The minimum park sizes for neighbourhood, community and regional parks prescribed in the Official Plan will be impossible to meet using parkland dedication alone.

The impacts to these policies are further described below.



Official Plan parkland targets

The current Official Plan parkland target is 3.3 hectares of parkland per 1,000 people. This target was identified in the 2009 Recreation, Parks, & Culture Strategic Master Plan and set in the Official Plan through OPA 48. The basis for the target was adoption of the rate of parkland per 1,000 people that the City was meeting at the time.

To understand if and how the City can meet the Official Plan parkland target, it is important to understand how the City grows the park system. The Planning Act establishes the authority for municipalities to require development to contribute to the park system, either through:

- Transfer of land for parks or other public recreation purposes; or
- Payment in lieu of parkland (cash-in-lieu).

Collectively these policies are called 'parkland dedication.' The amount of land or cash required by parkland dedication policies is a percentage of the development area; or calculated by the number of residential units proposed. The province sets the maximum rates of parkland dedication that municipalities can require of developers.

The Park Plan identified that the City's Official Plan target of 3.3 hectares of parkland per 1,000 people set in 2009 is not sustainable using parkland dedication alone. The report identified that the City could expect to acquire on average 1.2 hectares of parkland per 1,000 people using parkland dedication. The gap between the Official Plan targets and the

tools available to municipalities to acquire parkland is now further exacerbated by Bill 23. Using new parkland dedication rates enacted through Bill 23, the City can now expect to acquire on average 0.6 hectares of parkland per 1,000 people using parkland dedication. This would leave the City short of the city-wide target by 2.7 hectares per 1,000 people.

There are a number of options to address the gap between the target and the tools available to acquire parkland. Options include:

- Purchase additional land to meet the Official Plan target;
- Adjust the parkland target to align with what the City can acquire through parkland dedication alone;
- Utilize partnerships and land-use agreements with other public agencies to meet targets;
- Consideration of new metrics, like walkability to parks and quality, rather than overall quantity of land as a target; or
- A combination of the above.

The Official Plan identifies that the above strategies are appropriate to consider, however the City needs to establish how the combination of these tools supports service levels moving forward.



Official Plan minimum park sizes

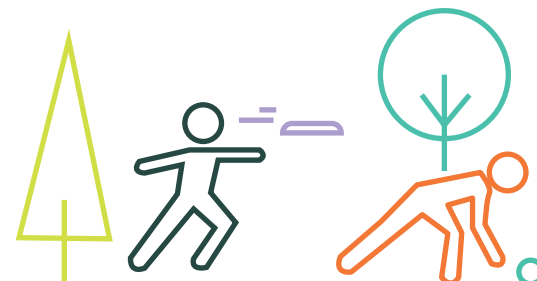
Park size guidelines identified in the Official Plan are used to communicate expectations and vision for parks to residents, businesses and developers. Historically, the size of park has determined the number and type of amenities that can be implemented in each park in the future. However, since the last update to the Official Plan minimum park sizes, Bill 23 has reduced the amount of parkland municipalities can acquire through development.

The 2022 Council-approved Park Plan reported that the City is not meeting the minimum size targets prescribed in the Official Plan. The plan reported that two of the City's 13 regional parks meet minimum size; three of the City's 37 community parks meet minimum size; and 26 of the City's 63 neighbourhood parks meet minimum size. Since the approval of the Park Plan in 2022, the Province of Ontario has further reduced the amount of land municipalities can acquire through development, making the Official Plan minimum size targets even more difficult to achieve.

The current rate that municipalities can acquire parkland from developers is set by the province at one hectare per 600 dwelling units. The Official Plan minimum park size for neighbourhood parks is one hectare. Therefore, in order to achieve the minimum one-hectare park, a subdivision development of 600 dwelling units must be proposed. Although subdivisions range in size and density, a typical subdivision development application Guelph contains 250-350 dwelling units, making it difficult to achieve the minimum size target on most development applications.

Having a minimum park size policy has the effect of discouraging acquisition of smaller infill parks. As described in the Park Plan, a range of parks of all sizes are needed to fill distribution and service level gaps in the city. This is becoming critical to meet recreational needs as the population increases. City staff have heard from Council and the community that acquiring small parks is better than none at all. Results from a community survey in August 2022 also indicate that residents value highly programmed, quality parkland over quantity. In 2021, City staff demonstrated that recreational needs can be met in smaller spaces through the successful implementation of a neighbourhood park that included play equipment, pathways, green space and seating on a 0.08-hectare parcel known as San Giorgio Morgeto Park.

For neighbourhood parks in greenfield areas, the City should continue to seek the maximum parkland dedication allowed by the Planning Act. However, to keep up with pace of growth, type of growth, and legislative constraints on parkland dedication, the City should consider moving toward purpose-driven park sizing and configuration to satisfy community need. This is referred to as a facility-fit model.



Multi-functional land

As described earlier in this plan, multi-functional land is a growing trend, but it is also very challenging to balance priorities and needs. As a large landholder in Guelph, the Parks department is frequently asked to accommodate other municipal and regional infrastructure in parks. This ranges from stormwater management facilities and regional transit infrastructure to buried pipes and cables, and environmental monitoring wells.

Conversely, the Parks department benefits greatly from layering recreational use over other municipal infrastructure. This includes many of the City's parks along the Speed River that have been permitted to develop over buried service trunks, and sports courts that have been developed within water station lands. With land at a premium, population growth driving additional recreational needs, and parkland dedication rates being cut, the City has an opportunity to take a closer look at how and when parks and recreational amenities can be layered or located within lands that are not primarily intended for parks but could support park use.

With the number of requests for use of parkland for other infrastructure, it has become clear that a framework is needed to assess when it is appropriate for parkland to accommodate other uses, and when it is not. A framework would guide decision-making, ensuring that recreational value is not compromised, recognize the intrinsic value of parks to Guelph residents, and provide transparency between the City and the community for when and why some requests are supported by the Parks department and why some are not.





Partnerships

The City also has an opportunity to look beyond its own departments and land holdings to support recreational need in the community. Organizations like the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) and school boards are agencies that greatly contribute to the publicly available recreation land in the city. Having common objectives like facilitating physical and mental well-being, environmental stewardship, and community improvement, partnerships with these agencies make sense. These organizations complement the City's offerings, and often, the City partners with these agencies to build, maintain, or book recreational facilities on their land.

Partnerships between the City and other community organizations have been extremely beneficial for Guelph residents. To further maximize resources, the Parks department has an opportunity to investigate partnerships with the private sector for project funding and sponsorships. These types of partnerships will allow business to give back to the community, while furthering the City's ability to provide parks and recreation services.

Objectives and recommendations for parkland planning

1. Position parks as recreation and trail network enhancers by implementing bike parking, bike repair stations, washrooms, water refill stations, wayfinding, lighting, and rest areas in parks where possible and appropriate.
2. As City infrastructure projects are contemplated, consider opportunities for multi-functional land that may allow a recreational function combined with the primary land-use.
3. Develop a framework for assessing when it is/is not appropriate to accommodate infrastructure or uses other than recreation in parks.
4. Update the City's Parkland Dedication Bylaw to align with recent changes to the Ontario Planning Act.
5. Continue to secure new parks or expand existing parks as part of the development review process.
6. Develop a Parkland Acquisition Strategy and pending outcomes, update the park provision and minimum park size policies in the Official Plan.
 - The Parkland Acquisition Strategy will:
 - Consider how Bill 23 will impact land acquisition in current development applications, secondary plan areas, and development to 2051;
 - Consider the impacts of using encumbered land, POPs or private land in future parkland provision and recommend policies to ensure it meets city-wide needs;
 - Identify potential areas where parkland may not be adequate to support proposed population;
 - Determine if any opportunities exist for strategic parkland acquisition
 - Determine if other tools like partnerships or joint-use agreements can reduce the need to acquire more parkland and count toward park inventory;
 - Assess how Guelph is providing parkland to other comparable communities;
 - Determine how much the City might need to invest in land purchases to meet the parkland targets and minimum park size criteria in the Official Plan;
 - Determine how much the City could invest in purchasing parkland while being fiscally responsible and meeting community development objectives;
 - Estimate how much the City could invest in park renewal or intensification to help meet long-term recreation needs;
 - Determine how to best allocate or spend cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication;
 - Use what was heard from the community through the PRMP and engage the community in evaluating alternatives for parkland acquisition;
 - Determine the need for other key performance indicators for a successful park system;
 - Identify existing underutilized spaces and develop a strategy for how to encourage broader use; and
 - Update and further develop policies for accepting quality parkland.

7. Maintain an up-to-date and comprehensive inventory of all parks and park assets (including parkland, open space, and sites under municipal influence) to improve ability to assess current and future supplies.
8. Explore partnership opportunities with school boards, the GRCA, and other public agencies to allow and/or continue to allow community use of recreational facilities owned by other organizations.
9. Explore partnership opportunities with the private sector for project funding and sponsorships. As part of this work, ensure equitable prioritization of departmental work is maintained.
10. At the 10-year update to the PRMP, include land needs and content covered in the Park Plan in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan as one overall strategic document.



Park amenities

Park amenities are the recreational components of parks. They range from sports fields to playgrounds, and infrastructure that enhances user experience, like washrooms, seating and shade.

A comprehensive Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment was prepared as a component study of the PRMP to identify gaps and future needs among the City's indoor and outdoor recreation facilities. While the needs assessment focused on the individual needs for each asset type, this section of the PRMP focuses on trends, challenges and opportunities for park amenities. It also incorporates all of the recommended actions from the needs assessment, though some have been combined together in the PRMP recommendations for efficiency and logical work planning.

Community Voice

"Accessibility is key. Universally accessible spaces open things up for everyone."

"Provide more shaded areas for children to play under and for caregivers to sit under."

"I would love to see another skate park as the one we have is pretty fantastic."

"I would love if there were dedicated space for the adults to work out while the kids played."

"More washrooms!"

"More options for teenagers, such as hockey sites, or another sporting areas."



Trends and best practices for park amenities

Climate change and climate resilience

Climate change continues to be a growing concern for people. Concerns about water efficiency, urban heat island effect, species decline, flooding, and drought are at the forefront of peoples' minds. People expect government agencies to be leaders in climate resilience throughout the delivery of public services. Like many cities, Guelph has committed to the United Nation's Race To Zero campaign and has set targets for the whole community to reduce carbon emissions to become a net-zero carbon community by 2050.

Parks contribute significantly to climate resilience by mitigating extreme temperatures, providing opportunities for naturalization, supporting active transportation, and increasing the urban forest canopy. Recent trends in climate resiliency in parks include introduction of solar panels to generate renewable energy, providing end-of-trip amenities like bike parking in parks, and implementation of Low Impact Development (LID) techniques like rain gardens and bioswales.

Wellness in parks

Active and passive recreation and connection with nature have notable impacts on health and well-being. All facets of wellness are becoming more commonly acknowledged and prioritized in people's lives. This growing trend of wellness is being woven into park designs as people seek out parks for their physical, mental, emotional and social well-being.

One of the biggest trends for incorporating wellness into park programming is installation of fitness equipment. There are many ways that municipalities are incorporating fitness equipment into parks but the most effective installations for engaging users are destination style fitness parks, like the popular Muscle Beach in Venice, California, or parkour/ninja courses. Many cities are moving away from individual pieces of fitness equipment with moveable parts in local neighbourhood parks, as they tend to be under-utilized in this setting.

Another growing trend that promotes wellness in parks is the integration of community gardens. As cities grow denser and housing types shift to more compact dwellings like condominiums and apartments, people are seeking out public land for gardening and growing their own food. The expansion of Guelph's own community garden network demonstrates that people are increasingly interested in knowing where their food comes from, as well as the therapeutic benefits of gardening.

Shade

With temperatures rising due to climate change, increased urban heat island effect, and growing awareness of the health effects of UV exposure, shade is becoming a priority for park users. Community feedback through the PRMP revealed that shade is in fact one of the most important elements in the park system to the community. Not only does shade help to mitigate UV exposure but it also enhances user comfort and reduces glare. Trees are almost synonymous with parks, however in their infancy, they provide very little shade. Long-term, trees are the best option for shade coverage, however when immediate shade is desired, many municipalities introduce shade structures. These are often located in larger destination style parks where people tend to visit a little longer. Effective shade should be considered during the initial design stages for parks.

Park stewardship

One of the best ways to increase shade and other environmental benefits in parks is by involving the community. In 2017, the City created a part-time Community Stewardship Coordinator position to promote and facilitate stewardship opportunities between the City and residents. The program has grown significantly and has encouraged members of the community to take ownership of public spaces through participation in tree planting initiatives, garbage clean-up events, invasive species removal, and pollinator garden implementation and maintenance. Supported by the recommendations of the [Natural Heritage Action Plan](#) and the [Urban Forest Management Plan](#), the City should continue to pursue coordination of stewardship activities and build new partnerships with volunteers. By setting an example on its own lands and supporting local stewardship, the City will sustain its urban forest, natural spaces and parks for the long-term.

Spontaneous recreation

People are looking to play differently in parks than they used to. Passive recreation and individual recreation activities are becoming more important to residents as lifestyles become busier. With awareness that physical activity and connection with nature can have notable improvements on health and well-being, more people are participating in informal activities like horseshoes, bocce, slack-lining and picnicking. However, they are also looking for park infrastructure to support this type of recreation. Features like food trucks, natural playgrounds, outdoor kitchens, fire pits, table tennis, dog parks, bocce courts and adventure courses are becoming increasingly popular. Some cities are looking to partner with community organizations to provide these amenities or provide rental opportunities through libraries.



Park use in all seasons and times of day

As lives become busier, people are favouring activities that can be done spontaneously at any time of day. People are participating in organized activities and sports less than before, however, local demand for organized activities is increasing due to population growth. People are looking for activities in all seasons and even extending into the evening. Because of this trend, lighting has become an important consideration for parks as people are choosing to be active in the evening, and during winter and fall when the days are shorter. Many municipalities are striving to implement more opportunities for winter activities and programming parks.

Sports participation

Canadians are very enthusiastic about sports, and demand for sports facilities is a continual trend. However, many studies show that participation in sports is declining as people are choosing informal and spontaneous activities. Although participation in sports overall is trending downward, population increase

is causing local participation numbers to increase. Overall, youth registration rates are decreasing but adult registration rates are increasing. Growing demand for sports infrastructure continues to be a trend in municipal parks and recreation planning.

Memorialization

Culturally in Canada there is a high importance for memorializing loved ones. Connection with nature and opportunities for personal reflection in parks offers people an opportunity to remember their loved ones and the experiences they had with them. Because of this, parks are becoming increasingly recognized as special places to memorialize loved ones. Many cities have implemented bench and tree memorial programs where people can donate toward the purchase of furnishings and trees that are then placed in parks for the public to enjoy.

Key issues and opportunities for park amenities

Park amenity targets

Park amenity targets evaluate the quantity and ratio of amenities to population, and set aspirational service levels for the future. A Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment was completed as a component study of the PRMP to identify gaps and opportunities among the City's outdoor recreation facilities. The following outdoor asset types were included in the needs assessment:

- Baseball and softball diamonds;
- Rectangular fields;
- Cricket grounds;
- Basketball courts;
- Tennis and pickleball courts;
- Sand volleyball courts;
- Running tracks;
- Skateboard parks and bike parks;
- Disc golf courses;
- Outdoor rinks;
- Lawn bowling greens;
- Fitness stations;
- Playgrounds;
- Splash pads and wading pools;
- Community gardens;
- Dog parks and leash-free areas;
- Picnic shelters and shade;
- Permanent restrooms; and
- Water bottle refill stations.

Specific targets and recommendations for new amenities in parks were determined through a comprehensive methodology that included spatial analysis, equity analysis, growth analysis, benchmarking against comparator municipalities, community engagement analysis, and booking data analysis. Quality assessments of individual assets were not a part of the scope of the needs assessment. The full analysis for each amenity type can be found in the needs assessment.

The recommendations of the needs assessment have been embedded in the recommendations of this plan. Meeting some of these targets could be challenging due to land resource availability and timing of secondary plan development.



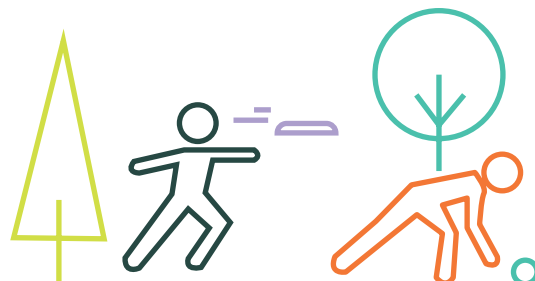
Park optimization

As the population grows, parks will be under more pressure than ever to accommodate more users and uses in smaller spaces. The City will need to make every bit of parkland count by maximizing efficiency. There is a strong need for more sports fields, but there is also an opportunity to go beyond just adding more. The City will need to focus on optimizing existing sports fields to ensure needs are being met. This means considering improving existing sports fields with better turf, adding additional amenities like irrigation and lighting, converting fields to uses that are more in need, like cricket, and finally constructing new fields.

With optimization and a focus on multi-functional and flexible parkland, there will be impacts on maintenance needs. Increased use may lead to different operating practices to keep facilities in good condition. Planning these changes won't be immediate, but it is important to define a strategy and implementation plan for optimization.

Infrastructure equity

While Guelph strives for equitable distribution of quality park amenities, it is important to recognize that the current state of parks facilities across the city is not entirely equitable. For example, new growth areas receive funding and attention through the development process and benefit from development charges as a funding source. It is a common narrative that parks in older parts of the city receive less attention and investment. Renewal of existing parks is not eligible for funding by development charges so there is a fine balance to be struck between investing in existing infrastructure without putting too much pressure on the tax base. Through the development of a sustainable parks asset management plan, it is important to keep having conversations and taking action to fill infrastructure equity gaps.



Pairing growth projects with renewal projects

One strategy to ease the tax burden when investing in existing infrastructure is to strategically pair growth projects with renewal projects when possible. For example, if the City is implementing a new tennis court in an existing park that is needed to support population growth, timing of nearby renewal projects, such as a playground or pathway replacement, should be considered to understand if the projects can move forward together. While only the growth portion of paired projects is development charge eligible, there may be cost efficiencies and reduced burden on tax funding by avoiding duplication of mobilization and construction costs. Pairing of growth and renewal projects will require careful capital budget planning and ongoing discussion between the City's Parks and Finance departments.



Accessibility and Inclusion

Guelph is 'stronger for our differences.' Guelph residents should be able to access and use parks comfortably anywhere in the city, with opportunities for recreation, health and mobility for everyone. Geographically, some parks in older built-up neighbourhoods are less accessible or do not have features for all people in our community. The City must focus on prioritizing inclusion and accessibility from the very start of each park project for greatest success. Starting too late will make inclusion and accessibility much harder to implement.

The City adopted the Facility Accessibility Design Manual (FADM) in 2015 with specific information for outdoor recreational spaces. The FADM not only meets the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), but in many ways exceeds it to offer more universal design. The design manual adheres to the principles of universal design and recognizes the need to accommodate the broad diversity of people who use facilities. The FADM is a guiding document that is used in the design of all park and recreation facilities in the city.

The Parks department regularly works with the Accessibility Advisory Committee

(AAC) to identify and address barriers faced by people with disabilities. The AAC has provided input into the PRMP, and it is important that City staff continue to engage with the AAC throughout the life of the PRMP on site specific park designs to ensure parks are universally accessible. It is a recommendation of this plan that City staff continue to consult the AAC on park development projects.

Accommodating all ages in parks

There is a growing demand for parks to have something for everyone, rather than being designed for singular uses or user groups. Parks that provide opportunities for a range of ages tend to be more well-used and appreciated. Historically parks have been very good at accommodating young children with a variety of playgrounds, and youth/young adults with sports fields and specialized amenities like skateboard parks. However, with an aging population, cities are tasked with ensuring older adults are meaningfully engaged and represented in parks too. This means facilitating and providing infrastructure for activities that attract older adults, like pickleball and walking paths. It also means that parks must be accessible and provide seating, shade and washrooms wherever possible.

Park design and construction standardization

The Parks department undertakes numerous capital projects each year ranging from building playgrounds and splash pads to sports fields and courts. Occasionally, developers build parks for the City as part of their developments. The variety of internal staff, external consultants, developers and contractors involved in park design and construction projects drives a need for standardization for all aspects of park development. The City has an opportunity to develop a park manual as a resource for internal staff, consultants and the development community that provides clear direction on the park design and construction process, standardized materials, specifications, construction details and the expectations for developer-built parks, should this option be chosen by developers. By standardizing park development, the Parks department will align itself with other internal departments, and improve efficiency with project costs, timing, and maintenance practises.

Objectives and recommendations for park amenities

11. Continue to improve climate change resiliency through the incorporation of sustainable and Low Impact Development (LID) features into the design of new or renewed parks.
12. Continue to consult the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) on park development projects.
13. If fitness equipment is requested during community engagement for neighbourhood parks, consider utilizing signage to encourage fitness rather than dedicated outdoor equipment.
14. Explore creative solutions to providing a dynamic youth/ adult fitness park as a specialized destination facility within the park system. Engage the community on what type of facility is preferred.
15. Continue to promote awareness of the fitness classes the City offers in park settings.
16. During the design process for individual parks, assess demand and available space for community gardens.
17. Seek to align new community garden locations with other park facilities that use water, for water and capital cost efficiency.
18. During the construction of new parks or renovation of existing parks, every effort should be made to include new trees for shade. Proactively seek opportunities to increase tree canopy in parks.
19. Install shade structures in the following circumstances when possible: at water play facilities; at playgrounds with rubber surfacing; and at specialized facilities like skateboard parks, bike parks, amusement rides, and dog parks.
20. Continue to pursue coordination of park stewardship activities and build new partnerships with volunteers.
21. Develop a memorial program that provides opportunities for residents to donate furnishings or trees in memorial to enhance public parks.
22. Develop a Sports Field Strategy that will optimize sports field service levels.
 - The strategy will:
 - Define service-level targets for ball diamonds, rectangular fields, and cricket grounds based on the number of registered participants in sports organizations that use City fields and diamonds;
 - Identify gaps in sports facilities inventory;
 - Consider how to increase use of recreation facilities during non-prime time hours;
 - Undertake a size and quality assessment of all diamonds and rectangular fields to identify opportunities for optimization of facilities, which may include adding lighting or irrigation, converting groups of smaller facilities or re-purposing existing facilities to other park uses that are more in demand;
 - Explore partnerships and strategies to incorporate sports facilities owned by other public agencies into its overall community service level; and
 - Consult with sports groups to gather feedback regarding actual participation rates, field quality, maintenance issues and projected usage.

23. Monitor use and demand of the new cricket ground at Riverside Park, disc golf facilities, and lawn bowling facilities.
24. Rebuild the driveway entrance to the Guelph Lake Sports Fields to address ongoing stormwater management and flooding issues.
25. Renovate Drew Park basketball court.
26. Construct 11 new outdoor tennis and pickleball courts. Consider constructing dedicated tennis and pickleball facilities.
27. Evaluate the impacts of climate change on the Outdoor Ice Rink Program and identify strategies to fulfill community ice rink needs in other ways, including but not limited to synthetic ice and refrigerated rinks in key locations. Consideration should be given to capital cost, as well as maintenance and operational requirements.
28. Investigate the implementation of a multi-use outdoor sport facility with boards to accommodate ice hockey, ball hockey and lacrosse.
29. Construct one major skateboard park in an area south of the Speed River.
30. Construct four skateboard nodes. The skateboard nodes may be implemented in smaller parks to fill distribution gaps or areas of need.
31. Evaluate the ability to add lighting at Silvercreek Skateboard Park.
32. When the lawn bowling green is nearing the end of its service life, the City should undertake a master plan exercise for the portion of Royal City Park east of Gordon Street. In consultation with the Lawn Bowling Club consider whether the facility should be re-located. Consideration should be given to the settling period required for new bowling greens to ensure minimal disruption to the Club's operations and opportunities for play.
33. Construct two new rubber surfaced playgrounds: one at University Village Park and one in the northwest portion of the city.
34. Continue to monitor capital investment against operational and maintenance costs to ensure optimal life cycle of playground assets.
35. Convert wading pools at Exhibition Park and Sunny Acres Park to splash pads. Engage the community about replacement of these assets when they are nearing the end of their service life.
36. Implement two new permanent restrooms in the southeast portion of the city. Water bottle refill stations should be included in the building designs. As park restrooms are built or renovated, consideration for all-season access should be evaluated.
37. Identify locations throughout the park system to add more public benches and seating. Consult with the AAC on location of seating and rest areas along pathways in parks. Consider creative ways of financing these benches including naming rights, sponsorships, and donations.

38. Ensure that adequate signage with park names and addresses exists at all City parks. These signs should be restored or replaced when they deteriorate.
39. Develop a parks asset management plan that identifies inventory, condition, anticipated service life and replacement costs of park amenities that can be forecasted in the corporate budget. The asset management plan should continually monitor community need and identify opportunities for re-locating and re-purposing facilities to serve changing demands.
40. Develop a framework and resources to secure adequate and ongoing funding for the repair, renewal and replacement of aging parks, amenities and infrastructure.

Parks prioritized for improvement should be:

 - In areas of high need or areas of intensification;
 - Underused or in poor quality;
 - Highly-used spaces that make a large impact on a wide range of users;
 - In need of accessibility improvements or do not have walking paths;
 - Identified as opportunities through Urban Forest Master Plan and Natural Heritage Action Plan;
 - Declining in service level; and/or
 - Responding to changing standards and new community needs.
41. Continue to look for opportunities to strategically pair growth projects with maintenance and replacement projects for cost savings. Identify opportunities to integrate service level improvements and expansion into maintenance and renewal projects.
42. Develop a Park Manual as a resource for City of Guelph staff, consultants, and the development community.

The Park Manual will:

 - Provide standards for design and construction of parks and park amenities;
 - Define the development approval process for facility-fit park parcel sizing, location, configuration, and road frontage to support community and recreational need; and
 - Outline an option and process for developer-built parks.
43. Develop a new standard condition for Development Agreements that outlines developer responsibilities should they build parks for the City.

Data and technology in parks service delivery

It is easy to assume where investment and attention is needed within the parks system, however it is important to recognize biases and that the loudest voices don't necessarily align with greatest need. Data collection through the use of technology can help identify problem areas and determine where investment is needed the most.

Community Voice

"Provide more accessible maps and easier to read maps for access to parks."

"Being able to book online a tennis court would be nice. Even if it was only one court that's pre-booked and others are drop in."

"Consider multiple ways of booking amenities. Online, through an app, by telephone, in person."

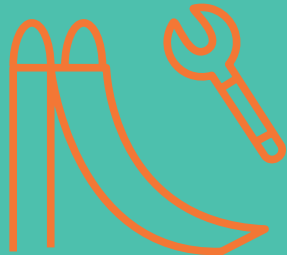
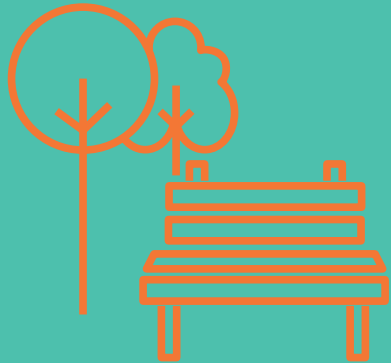


Trends and best practices for data and technology in parks service delivery

Use of technology for customer service requests

People want simplicity when reporting issues or concerns. This is especially true when people are engaged in activities in parks, and do not want to spend time making a phone call or reaching the right City department. Making this process easy is critical to encourage reporting of problems and to improve parks service delivery.

Guelph has recently centralized customer service requests and concerns through an easy-to-use platform called the '[Report a Problem Map](#).' Park users can easily log concerns with the City in moments using mobile phones, tablets or web browsers. Residents are encouraged to report problems such as graffiti, playground and washroom maintenance issues. The technology directs requests and the specific location on a map to the appropriate department to manage issues efficiently.



Key issues and opportunities for data and technology in parks service delivery

Information equity

Throughout all the City's services, there is a push to ensure all of the corporation's public information is available to people of all abilities. People require information to help them assess if a park's amenities and characteristics match their abilities or desired experience. This information should be available at parks, as well as on a platform that is accessible before people commit to visiting parks. In parks, QR codes on signage are a simple accommodation to ensure people who cannot read physical signs can get access to the same information through their mobile devices. Improving communication about parks will help residents use the park network better or in new ways. There is an opportunity to better provide people with the right information, at the right time, using the right media. The City should regularly update its website with detailed information on amenities, type of experience, pathway surface material, and playground surface material in each park. By providing up-front information about parks, people will be able to make informed choices about using specific parks.

GIS and technical support for park planning

Park planning requires a significant amount of background research, particularly during development review, such as Zoning Bylaw Amendments, Official Plan Amendments, Plans of Subdivision, Site Plan applications, and Building Permit applications. In order to collect parkland dedication (either land conveyance or cash-in-lieu), park planning staff must check historical records on each property where development is being proposed to confirm if previous conveyances or payments have been made. Currently there are several databases that staff must check to confirm this information. Provincial Bill 109, 'More Homes for Everyone Act' has shortened the timelines that municipalities have to complete development reviews. Therefore, the City must find efficiencies in the development review process. The Parks department would benefit greatly from a centralized database that tracks previous parkland conveyances and cash-in-lieu payments in one location.

In addition to parkland conveyances, park planning staff often need to reference previously approved Draft Plans of Subdivision to determine the rate at which parkland dedication was applied

in the past. These approvals often go back decades and the plans that contain the necessary information are large-scale hard copy files that are not easy to sift through. To improve efficiency of development review, the City should digitize all previously approved Draft Plans of Subdivision so that staff have this information at their fingertips. Further, the boundaries of the Draft Plans should be mapped in GIS as an internal resource for park planning staff.

The City also has an opportunity to improve park amenity planning through a GIS exercise to locate and map all underground services in parks. When considering appropriate locations for park amenities that require water or wastewater service, like washrooms, splash pads and community gardens, parks staff would benefit from being able to quickly check which services are readily available at each park site. While digital information for services in newer parks is typically available, in older parks that were developed and re-developed several times over before the digital age, this information is not available. To improve efficiency, the City should develop a GIS database for existing services in parks.





Outdoor sports court booking system

Through community engagement the City received several requests to make outdoor sports courts available for booking, and to make the booking system available online. Residents noted frustration with showing up to sports courts only to find they are in use. An online booking option for courts could potentially identify for users when courts are and are not available, and ensure that everyone gets a turn to play their sport. There are also challenges with developing an online booking system including:

- Displacing and/or discouraging spontaneous pick-up play;
- Equity imbalance for park users that do not have access or ability to use an online booking system;
- Users potentially booking too much time and not sharing courts;
- Users potentially booking time and not showing up or cancelling their bookings;
- Communicating to users which courts are booked and which are not; and
- Enforcement of booking timeframes.

There are potential benefits and challenges to implementing an outdoor court booking system. The City should investigate this in more detail and consider the practicality.

Objectives and recommendations for data and technology in parks service delivery

44. Regularly update the City's website with detailed information on amenities, type of experience, pathway surface material, and playground surface material in each park.
45. Improve services through more effective use of technology and available data. Continue to improve data collection through the use of digital benchmarking tools, data management and reporting standards.
46. Develop digital tools and strategies that help people find and explore Guelph's parks and open spaces.
47. Establish Service Guelph as the first point of contact for parks inquiries.
48. Develop a centralized database that tracks previous parkland conveyances and cash-in-lieu payments in one location as an internal resource for park planning staff. Continue to update the database as parkland conveyances and cash-in-lieu payments are made.
49. Digitize all previously approved Draft Plans of Subdivision. Map the boundaries of all previously approved Draft Plans as an internal resource for park planning staff. Continue to update the database as Draft Plans are approved.
50. Develop a GIS database of existing underground services in parks as an internal resource for parks staff. Continue to update the database as new services are installed in parks.
51. Investigate the need and practicality of a booking system for drop-in rentals of court sports. Consider an online option for booking and viewing court availability and tools to communicate this at the facilities.





■ And: How parks and recreation work together

And. Such an important word here. Not as a transition between sections, but rather as a link that binds community services together. Parks and recreation interconnect in so many ways that are vitally important to the delivery of services and the well-being the Guelph community. Parks and recreation are dependent on one another to make sure that play is a part of everyday life at every age and every ability.

Community voice

"Rec classes can be a powerful tool in building relationships with neighbours."

"We live in a condo, with the rising cost of housing we will most likely for a while and we depend on the parks and recreation programs to provide our children with physical activity and stimulation."

"Please add more activities to our parks, having greenery only doesn't cut it anymore. Many other cities and towns have festivals, interactive games, and permanent park games/amenities."

"It would be fun to see more teens, adult and senior interests considered in park design."

Trends and best practices in parks and recreation

Park animation

Park and Recreation trends are forever changing. They're constantly shifting to meet the world around them. As local demographics change, so do recreational interests and needs. Cricket and pickleball are quickly establishing themselves as popular activities in need of attention in recreational planning. Sporting success also changes the way people choose to recreate. Skateboarding is adopted as an Olympic sport and pressures on Silvercreek skatepark have never been greater. The Raptors win the NBA championship and courts overflow.

With a growing population, limited park land available, and growing costs associated with construction and development, the City needs to look at creative approaches beyond just adding more. Community expectations and municipal planning, especially in fast growing cities like Guelph, are moving away from single use approaches and towards multi-purpose facility and field design. This versatile approach is more flexible to changes and trends, serves a broader portion of the population, and exposes people to new activities.

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, opportunities for recreation were pushed exclusively outdoors, leaving lasting changes on the community's recreation preferences^{3 4} and asking our local parks system to do even more. Community engagement feedback for this plan identified amenity focused parks – parks that contain highly programmed spaces with lots of features – as a top priority.

Participants in the City's Park Activation program echo this thought, with 98 per cent of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that the in-park recreational programming improved their overall park experience.

Providing opportunities for spontaneous, unstructured recreation and outdoor programming in future park planning provides a cost-effective way to enhance the quality and capacity of existing parks. This could include facilitated programs, like Learn to Skate on community rinks, to equipment lending in parks to unique landscape features and built forms, like stages and amphitheatres, that encourage animation. Providing opportunities for animation in parks also allows the City to distribute programs and resources more equitably throughout the community, improving geographical reach and reducing barriers to access. Without the need for large infrastructure investments, a park animation approach can help make parks more accessible and enjoyable for all ages and abilities, and better serve the whole community.

³ Approximately 57 per cent of phase 3 community engagement respondents stated a preference for outdoor recreation programming following the pandemic; 64.7 per cent of people believe the City should develop more outdoor, satellite location programs for all ages

⁴ "Shift toward more unstructured physical activities could be pandemic legacy, researchers find." CBC, April 19, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/shift-toward-more-unstructured-physical-activities-could-be-pandemic-legacy-researchers-find-1.642015>

City of Pembroke lending hub

In partnership with the County of Renfrew and the Renfrew County District Health Unit, the City of Pembroke provides an equipment lending hub at Riverside Park, making sports equipment and outdoor adventure materials available to park-goers free of charge. The program provides everything from adventure packs (bird and tree identification booklets, magnifying glasses, binoculars, first aid kits, etc.) to baseball bats and gloves to walking poles, bicycles and kayaks.

Figure 4: Lending Hub



Active Town of Ajax program

The Town of Ajax promotes the benefits of safe outdoor activities to support the physical and mental health of its community through their popular Active TOA program. Through free outdoor recreation opportunities, like snowshoe lending, the Town of Ajax helps residents stay active, especially in winter months.

Figure 5: Snowshoe lending



Seniors' outdoor activation toolkit

A partnership between Wood Green Community Services, 880 Cities and over 100 seniors delivered fun and interactive programs in several parks and public spaces in Toronto's east side. This included repurposing covered ice rinks, dormant in the summer, into shaded oases for seniors' Zumba® classes, and transforming an old shuffleboard slab into an accessible space for a drum circle. These adaptive reuses of space helped show that programming for seniors can and should take place outdoors to maximize health benefits and underlined the need for investment in parks and public spaces to meet their needs.

Figure 6: Seniors activation



Special events

Guelph has long been home to many unique and diverse special events. From charity walks to food festivals and cultural celebrations, these events bring countless benefits to the community. They provide opportunities to gather, connect and celebrate; they encourage inclusion and cultural exchange; they help forge community identity and a sense of civic pride; and they contribute to Guelph's economic prosperity. In 2022, the City of Guelph hosted 1,051 indoor and outdoor permitted events, bringing vibrancy to the city and driving economic growth through the tourism sector.

Sport tourism

Sport tourism can positively impact both the local community and the wider economy. It brings in visitors who spend money on accommodations, food, and services, supporting local businesses and driving economic growth; it brings people from different regions together to share meaningful experiences; and it creates a sense of local pride and unity, with organizers and residents alike getting an opportunity to promote their city. Perhaps most importantly in the context of the PRMP, sport tourism promotes physical activity, inspiring people to be active and adopt healthy lifestyles. Building on these benefits and Guelph's collaborative spirit, the City's [2022-2026 Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan](#) aims to leverage Guelph's recreation assets to make Guelph a must-see visitor destination in Ontario and establish a sport, group, and conference plan to support organizers in their work. Providing the resources to support these activities while balancing other

important community recreation needs, would help strengthen community well-being, grow Guelph's reputation on a provincial level, and contribute to the success of Guelph's local economy.

Technology and data collection

Municipal parks and recreation departments are quickly moving toward greater use of technology and data collection to learn more about how, how often, and when facilities and outdoor spaces are used. With this data in hand, municipalities can start to understand which facilities are most heavily used and why. They can compare data with similar communities for benchmarking exercises, evaluate cost-benefit ratios of certain facility-types, test demand during pilot projects, and more. Data collection can help parks and recreation departments make evidenced-based decisions. As the customer service hub for formal indoor and outdoor facility users, City Recreation fosters relationships with users and providers – from individuals and small groups to local and provincial sports organizations – and is uniquely positioned to collect timely, local data based on bookings, inquiries and requested patterns of use.



Key issues and opportunities for parks and recreation

Special events

Special events play an important role in shaping local recreation and community identity and providing residents and visitors with fun and meaningful experiences. These events however also place additional demands on amenities that are already highly used and often displace community use of public spaces. The City receives a wide range of special event requests each year, both from returning users and new applicants. To effectively balance community needs and manage special events, many municipalities are developing special event frameworks or policies that consider the following.

Event classification

Classifying special events is difficult because they are all unique, come with varying levels of risk-management, and require different layers of attention, regardless of size or anticipated attendance. A framework to improve processes and provide greater clarity and transparency to event organizers would be beneficial to the City. These frameworks often establish pre-approved versus untested event locations, identify appropriate resting periods and usage limits, and categorize risk management factors and resource requirements.

Balancing community benefits

Recreation facilities and public spaces are already in high demand. Hosting a special event often means displacing other community users. A minor sports game might give way to a tournament, the field where residents normally play with their dogs might become a midway, a residential street suddenly becomes overflow parking, or the road taken to and from work might be closed and re-routed. Prioritization criteria should be established to measure, manage and balance these unique challenges.

Data management and analytics

Data collection can be hugely beneficial to Parks and Recreation departments, improving services, planning and asset management. But only if the right data is collected and resources are in place to effectively analyze the information. Currently, several gaps exist in the data and information the City collects from community users that would provide a better understanding of facility use, distribution and demand:

Non-bookable spaces

With minor exceptions for City-delivered programs, several City recreation amenities are non-bookable spaces (e.g., tennis and pickleball courts, disc golf courses, skateboard parks, etc.), meaning that they are designated for spontaneous use and not available for scheduled or league play. As such, it is hard to quantify patterns of use and establish evidence-based levels of service.

City recreation currently lacks a clear and well-resourced evaluation plan and dedicated staff to collect and analyze data, identify gaps in available data, and determine whether services and initiatives are meeting intended goals or community expectations. As noted in the City's 2021 Service Rationalization Review, building Recreation's departmental capacity in these areas would improve service delivery, operational efficiency and targeted investments in underserved areas, and support future parks and recreation planning.

Only formal booking inquiries and application are captured

Community feedback and local research⁵ highlights that many residents find recreation booking and registration policies and processes complicated and costly – especially newcomers and grassroots organizers who do not have the time, historical knowledge or resources to navigate the system. As such, many individuals and groups do not access City recreation services or formally book City facilities, leaving a gap in available data.

Facility usership

Outside of City recreation programs, facility usership data is currently only captured at the organization level. Collecting registration or usership data from facility users, as well as tracking unaccommodated requests, would provide a better understanding of local use, demand and trends in participation.



⁵ Shrestha, Niva. Understanding Barriers of Recent Immigrants to Access Recreational Activities in Guelph. 2022. www.guelphwellingtonlip.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Best-Practices-for-Inclusion-in-Parks-and-Recreation-A-Review-of-Existing-Literature-FINAL.pdf

Elite level sport

The trend towards multi-purposing indoor and outdoor facilities helps ensure wide and diverse access to recreational activities. This approach to facility design and operation however impacts elite level sports due to governing body requirements (e.g., specialized playing surface sizes, lining requirements, etc.) and infrastructure needs (e.g., seating, storage, and event space), potentially limiting levels of play and sport tournament opportunities. The core values of this plan emphasize inclusive introductory and intermediate level activities and amenities to support community access and life-long participation in recreation. Establishing clear priorities in facility allocation policies will help to improve transparency and communication in how recreation facilities are distributed, planned and developed.

Facility allocation

Guelph is a proud and vibrant sport and recreation city. Pick a recreational pursuit and there is likely a local organization, community champion or grassroots organizer driving its growth and participation. This passion is founded in fun and a huge part of what makes Guelph such a great place to live and play. As the city continues to grow, and these passions along with it, the City needs to examine not only what new facilities and outdoor spaces should be developed, but also, how they are distributed, scheduled, and operationalized to provide balanced, easy, and equitable access for all residents. The City's current allocation policy and processes prioritize historical allocations, providing existing users with continued use of the previous year's allocated time and space. While this helps establish historical patterns of use, it also limits opportunities for new and emerging users and uses, especially during high-demand prime time, making balanced and equitable distribution challenging.

Community requests

The City receives numerous requests for additional parks and recreation amenities, facilities and programs daily. These requests often come through informal emails or phone calls, or through community engagement activities that are unrelated to parks and recreation. When requests go unacknowledged or do not get implemented, residents can feel frustrated that they are not being heard. In reality, City staff do not have a framework for assessing and addressing unsolicited requests for parks and recreation amenities and programs. It can be difficult to accommodate budget requests and prioritize new initiatives in already established capital and operating budget forecasts, without de-prioritizing other important work. However, many ideas received from the community have a lot of merit and potential benefit for the community. A sustainably resourced framework or program outlining how unsolicited requests are received and evaluated would provide a transparent mechanism to properly investigate the value and feasibility of these community-led ideas.



Objectives and recommendations for how parks and recreation work together

52. Develop a special event framework to establish criteria to equitably balance community needs and priorities.
53. Evaluate the City's Facility Allocation Policy and distribution processes to optimize use and ensure balanced and equitable distribution of recreation facilities.
54. Using priority initiative zone mapping, install four Activation Stations in identified priority parks to increase community participation and year-round park animation for all ages and abilities.
55. Increase City provision of park-based recreation programming, including equipment lending, to support community participation and year-round animation for all ages and abilities.
56. Develop a data collection and evaluation plan for City indoor and outdoor facility bookings to improve performance management and facility optimization, balance distribution of use, identify areas for priority initiatives and investment, and inform future facility development and provisioning.
57. Develop a decision-making framework that outlines the process for evaluating and responding to special requests received from the community.





■ Recreation

City of Guelph Recreation operates over 322,000 square feet of indoor recreation facilities that provided almost 69,000 hours of recreation for the community from April 2022 to March 2023. Recreation Services also coordinated over 23,000 hours of community use on outdoor fields and spaces during the 2022 season. Registration and booking numbers consistently show that residents want to be in City facilities and playing on City fields, they want to participate in City programs and that demand for these services continues to grow. The City's 2021 Service Rationalization Review also shows that Guelph's operating expenses for recreation programs and facilities per household are significantly below municipal comparators, suggesting that greater investment is needed in City recreation to meet growing community needs and improve cost recovery potential.

As a trusted provider of quality, community-focused recreation, the City wants its buildings and spaces to be so much more than just places people go for a program and then leave. We want our centres to be destinations that invite people to visit, stay and play. We want our services to be diverse and dynamic, creating experiences that encourage people to explore and try something new. We want to showcase what a happy, healthy, and inclusive community looks and feels like. And we want to make it possible for every resident to participate and have their say in what we deliver to the community.

We know that if we want to make these values and vision a reality, we have a responsibility to role model healthy and inclusive behaviours and nurture community-wide access and participation. While we are proud of the registrations and booking numbers shared above, our waitlists and the bookings we cannot accommodate also show us that we still have a lot of work to do. We invite you to read this section, and the ideas, actions and recommendations throughout this whole plan, in the spirit of Recreation's aim to be a role model – to build on our successes, to work together to create opportunities for underserved people and emerging activities, to find efficiencies and provide more with what we already have, and to develop new spaces and opportunities for residents to play and thrive and grow.

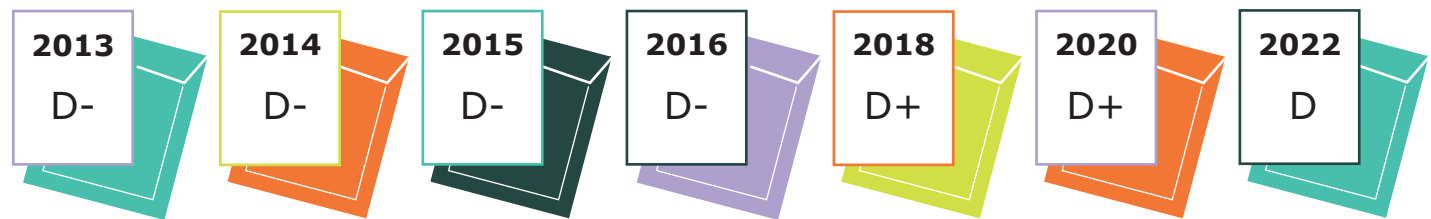
Recreation as a role model

Community voice

"Online websites are impossible and the paper guides are not providing intros to the program and drop-in descriptions necessary to draw customers. You need many of the open houses that you provided the seniors to in May to the regular public in order to introduce them to all of the activities offered or provide a power week in which you provide cards to the public that allows them to try out whatever - say five activities without charge."

"Re-brand recreation and outdoor trails and parks as health facilities. It's how they're seen in Asia and many countries in Europe. The connection between mental and physical health and recreation, especially outdoor recreation, has been proven in the research. Now it's time to connect the dots for people."

Figure 7: ParticipACTION physical activity report card grades (2013-2022)



Trends and best practices

Physical activity rates

ParticipAction’s 2022 Report Card on Physical Activity gave Canadian children and youth a D grade for overall physical activity, with only 28 per cent of children and youth meeting 24-hour movement recommendations.⁶ This declining grade (D+ in 2020) was largely tied to the pandemic, when in-person activities, both at school and extra-curricular, were cancelled or severely limited due to Public Health-related closures and restrictions. The impacts of these closures and restrictions were even more pronounced for at-risk communities – including BIPOC, LGBTQ2S+, women and girls, individuals living with disabilities, and individuals living in low-income circumstances – who already face barriers to recreation and experienced disproportionate declines in participation. The pandemic also brought about a sharp rise in screen time and sedentary behaviours. Going from a grade of D+ to an F over the course of the pandemic, only 18 per cent of children and youth met screen time recommendations in 2022.

While pandemic-driven declines are concerning and need to be addressed, overall physical activity and sedentary behaviour targets have received a failing grade for the past 10 years. Screens and technology are also becoming more and more a part of everyday life, contributing to greater daily use for children, youth and adults. As a role model for the community, City Recreation needs to develop new approaches and evidence-based strategies that encourage balanced lifestyles and improve participation in recreation, especially for equity deserving groups, to help reverse these community health trends.

and evidence-based strategies that encourage balanced lifestyles and improve participation in recreation, especially for equity deserving groups, to help reverse these community health trends.

⁶ ParticipACTION. Lost & Found: Pandemic-related challenges and opportunities for physical activity. The 2022 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth. Toronto: 2022.

Water does wonders

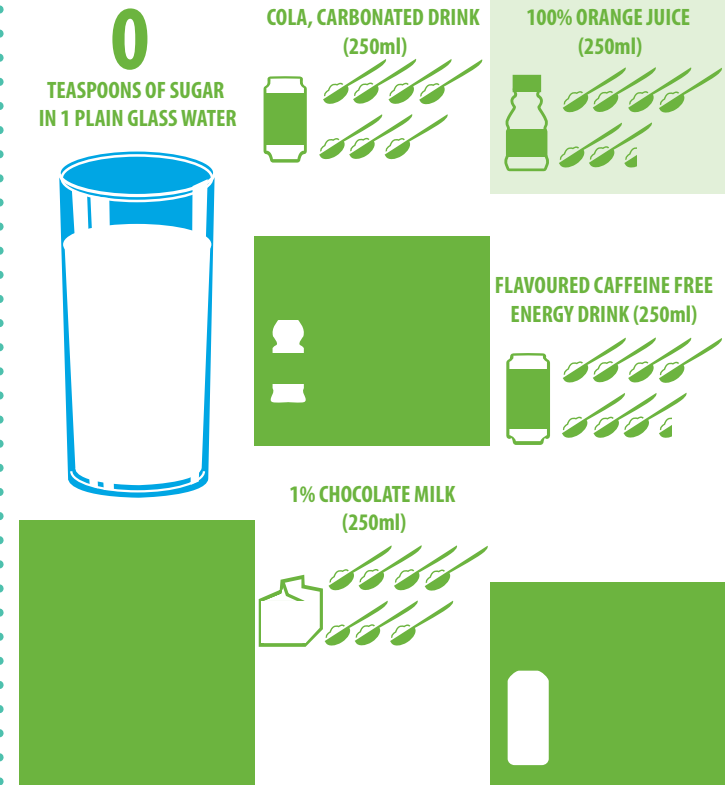
From 2015-2018, the City of Guelph participated in the Healthy Kids Community Challenge, known locally as Energize Guelph, a Provincially funded initiative aimed at promoting healthy behaviours for children in communities across Ontario. Under the Energize Guelph banner, City Recreation continues to operate several of these health initiatives, including low-cost “Give it a Try” programs, Park Activation, and reusable water bottle vending machines in three City recreation facilities.

Encouraging people to drink water instead of sugary drinks, the reusable bottle vending machines have sold over 4,100 bottles since 2017, and received local, provincial and national media attention for their role in reducing waste and promoting healthy, sustainable behaviours. Since inception, bottle supply has been entirely funded through grants and sponsorships, leaving sustainability of the initiative in question. Making these machines a permanent fixture in the City’s recreation facilities and continuing to subsidize the costs of bottles so that residents can make healthy decisions without financial pressures would underline the City’s commitment to healthy environments and behaviours. Building on this success story and commitment, the City could also follow municipal trends, exploring healthy food options and policies to further role model healthy choices and lifestyles for residents.

Figure 8: Reusable bottle vending machine



Figure 9: Amount of sugar in beverages



Energize Guelph floor decal

What started as a fun and creative way to get people to drink more water transformed into one of the City's most used and enjoyed recreational assets. The twisting "EG" skipping rope on the floor of West End Community Centre is now a staple of spontaneous recreation, with everyone from toddlers to seniors walking the tight rope forwards, backwards, sideways, as they travel the hallway.

Figure 10: Energize Guelph decal

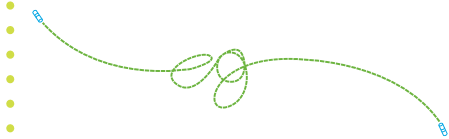


Figure 11: User feedback on reusable water bottles



Redefining recreation

Recreation and physical activity are often seen as one in the same, which is fair, since recreation plays a huge role in getting people moving and living more active lives. But Recreation is so much more than just physical activity. It is gardening, it is art, it is meditation, it is learning. It can be almost anything. Learning new skills, having fun, and building self-confidence can do as much for personal health as going for a run.⁷ So it is crucial that the definition of recreation not get reduced to physical activities alone. As new activities and ideas enter the recreational sphere, municipal recreation needs to be flexible and dynamic, so that programs are responsive and designed in line with diverse community interests.

⁷ CivicRec. Seven Ways Your Parks and Recreation Efforts are Strengthening Your Community. 2022.

Key issues and opportunities

Leadership development and continuous learning

Building leadership capacity at all levels is essential to delivering high-quality service and creating a vibrant, connected community. Through consistent, identified trainings and team building, all City Recreation staff, from front-line to management, should be seen and empowered as recreation leaders and experts. Extending beyond municipal recreation, trainings could be offered jointly with community partners to improve resource and information sharing and strengthen the capacity of the local recreation sector.

Marketing and promotion

In 2020, the City transitioned from a printed Community Guide (a listing of all City recreation programs) to an exclusively online catalogue. This process centralized information, improving the consistency and accuracy of information, and provided valuable flexibility – especially during ever changing pandemic cancellations and schedule adjustments. It also reduced printing costs and production needs, resulting in financial and environmental efficiencies. This online-only approach however also created gaps in community access to information. With many residents lacking access to consistent technology and internet and/or digital literacy, the move online created a digital divide, reducing equitable access to information. Many people also intake and process information differently, relying on different mediums depending on personal preferences or learning styles. Recreation staff are regularly asked to print online materials for customers who struggle with the online format or miss the ability to casually flip through printed material and discover new programs.

Objectives and recommendations for recreation as a role model

58. Incorporate reusable bottle vending machines into Recreation budget to ensure sustainability of the initiative and continued role modeling of healthy behaviours in recreation facilities.
59. Investigate healthy food and beverage options and policies for City recreation facilities.
60. Continue to monitor and respond to trends and the ever-changing definition of recreation to ensure programming for diverse audiences in Guelph.
61. Develop a Recreation Promotions strategy, incorporating multiple formats, translation of materials, and community outreach, to complement the department's current online catalogue.
62. Adopt the proposed Service Delivery Model ([page 97](#)) to increase access to and supportive opportunities for community recreation and health-focused programming.



Community voice

"I know there is a cost to building indoor court space but there is a lack of this kind of space generally available in the city, we presently rent space from the school boards but they have limited space for the demand which is why we have had to limit our membership for the past 15 years or so."

Indoor recreation facilities

Understanding emerging trends and the current context of Guelph's recreation assets and infrastructure helps establish a foundation for future planning and ensures that recreation facilities and services are future ready and responsive to change. Trends in recreation facility design are driven by changing interests and activities, existing and emerging sports, financial responsibility and sustainability, inclusion and accessibility, and holistic health and well-being. This integrative approach transforms recreation facilities into much more than just spaces for sports, it creates social hubs for community life and connection.

"Invest more in city-building/built-environment changes that encourage daily exercise/recreation, such as on and off-road cycling infrastructure, trails, safer streets, and in general higher quality public space that is senior and kid friendly. Reduce investments in expensive indoor facilities such as ice pads, especially if they only serve a small but higher income population."

"Build facilities for the future and that are the proper size for competitions and assuming we will have them for 20 plus years. Full size gyms, wooden floors, full size pools with the number of lanes and length that host competitions. Full size change rooms, upkeep the facilities throughout the years. Build quality new facilities."

Trends and best practices for indoor recreation facilities

Welcoming and inclusive spaces

Recreation centres are not just homes for sports and programs. They are hubs for gathering, personal growth, and pro-social activity. For many, they are an extension of home and provide access to critical resources like heat, air conditioning and Wi-Fi. For others, they are places to gather, share stories and build relationships. Recreation facilities need to be intentionally designed to ensure spaces are welcoming, accessible and inclusive. Above and beyond legislated accessibility requirements, they should include spaces for passive cultural and recreational opportunities like study, rest, conversation and games, and provide signage and wayfinding that greets guests in a wide variety of languages. They should also honour and acknowledge the land on which they are built and on which the community recreates. Identified through engagement with Indigenous nations, communities and Councils, collaborating with Urban Indigenous peoples to install art, signage, and medicinal plantings in and around recreation facilities would provide greater education and understanding of Guelph's pre-settler history and help create a welcoming space for the many First Peoples, Métis and Indigenous people of mixed ancestry who live here today.



Creating space through art

The City of Surrey commissioned a number of Indigenous artworks, with installations in Community Centres, Parks and Public Spaces. The works invite connection with the land, examine local histories, amplify the voices of Indigenous artists, aim to help Indigenous peoples see themselves reflected in the space, and prompt personal reflection towards understanding Indigenous presence at the centre of community. The art also offers a holistic understanding of health, focusing on spirituality, relationality, and the environment – aspects of wellness often overlooked in Western cultures.

Figure 12: Creating space through art. City of Surrey Indigenous art in community centres (Anthony Gabriel, Clayton Community Centre)



Figure 13: Rain Pierre's design on the North Surrey Ice & Sport Complex windows symbolize reconciliation



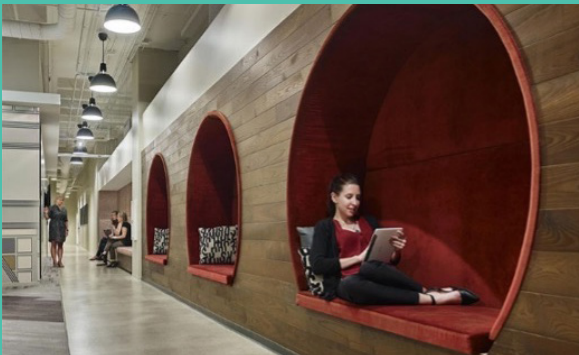
Placemaking

Placemaking inspires residents to think of and use public spaces creatively, bringing people together around shared experiences and building playful spaces that can be used in many different ways. Given the available space in and around City recreation facilities, there is opportunity to promote organic and unstructured recreational activities through placemaking enhancements. Placemaking features both inside and outside of recreation centres encourage residents to come and spend time in recreation centres and engage in self-directed activities, rather than just visit for a program and leave. It invites them into the space and welcomes them to stay. This creative use also brings character to public spaces and supports their ongoing evolution.

Rolling Meadows, Illinois

Circular seating nooks were embedded into the walls of this office design, creating cozy and comfortable spaces for people to work, rest, read or relax.⁸

Figure 14: Seating nooks



Off the ground: Danish Architecture Centre, Copenhagen^{9 10}

The Off the Ground Installation offers a new take on seating and play in public spaces. Made from recycled firehoses, the elements can be easily moved into a low seat, hammock or swing, providing different experiences based on each users needs and interests.

Figure 15: Interactive seating



Figure 16: Interactive seating



Paint the ice: Westerner Park, Red Deer, Alberta

Following a Family Day hockey game, Westerner Park invited Red Deer residents to “unleash their inner artists” and turn the rink into a “vibrant canvas of colours.” Imagining ice use in a new way, the event brought hundreds of community members together to express themselves creatively and gather around shared experience.

Figure 17: Paint the ice activity



⁸ “This office design has built in nooks for relaxing.” *Contemporist*, May 3, 2017. www.contemporist.com/office-built-in-nooks-for-relaxing/

⁹ Straschnow, Jair & Nygaard, Gitte. “Off the Ground: adults at play.” *Installation Mag*, Aug 16, 2013. <https://installationmag.com/adults-at-play/>

¹⁰ “Off the Ground.” *Archilovers.com*, 2013. www.archilovers.com/projects/96673/off-ground.html

Barcelona, Spain

The unique shapes of these outdoor benches not only provide places for people to sit and relax, but also act as ramps and ledges for skateboarding and scootering, as well as architectural art in public spaces.

Figure 18: Multi-purpose seating



Multi-purpose facility design

As recreational interests and activities grow and become more diverse, there are growing expectations that recreation facilities will accommodate numerous activities and support participation through all ages, stages and abilities. In other words, facilities need to be more versatile and provide something for everyone. Facilities also need to be flexible in their design and operation so that programs and services can quickly adapt and respond to emerging trends. Reconfiguring playing surfaces using moveable barriers, shifting playing surface orientations, and using multi- or modifiable lines provides opportunities to accommodate many types of activities and maximizes the use of existing assets. This multi-purposing approach also creates operational efficiencies, serves a larger portion of the population, accommodates new uses and revenue sources, and improves inclusive experiences.

Figure 19: Rendering of Guelph's South End Community Centre



Gym smart floor

Developed in Germany, the glass flooring system uses programmable LED lighting to create lines directly underneath the surface. The lighting can display a variety of boundary lines, including basketball, tennis, badminton and other activities played in a typical gymnasium. The level of elasticity and friction are similar to a typical wooden floor and a basketball will bounce at the same height. Pairing technology with infrastructure, this flooring offers a dedicated sport experience in a multi-purpose facility.

Figure 20: LED line painting on gymnasium floor



Facility provision and utilization

Table 1 summarizes the City's existing and planned indoor recreation facilities. Pools, gyms, and ice continue to experience the highest levels of use and demand among City recreation facilities, especially as multi-purposing efforts and approaches increase options and opportunities in these spaces, leading to consistent prime time pressures. Construction of the South End Community Centre (SECC) will add to the City's supply of these amenities, bringing Guelph in-line with or above facility supply targets identified in Appendix B, Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment. With most of Guelph's recent growth happening in the south-end of Guelph, and most of the City's program registrations coming from this area of the city, the SECC will also help address geographic distribution of recreation facilities and activities.

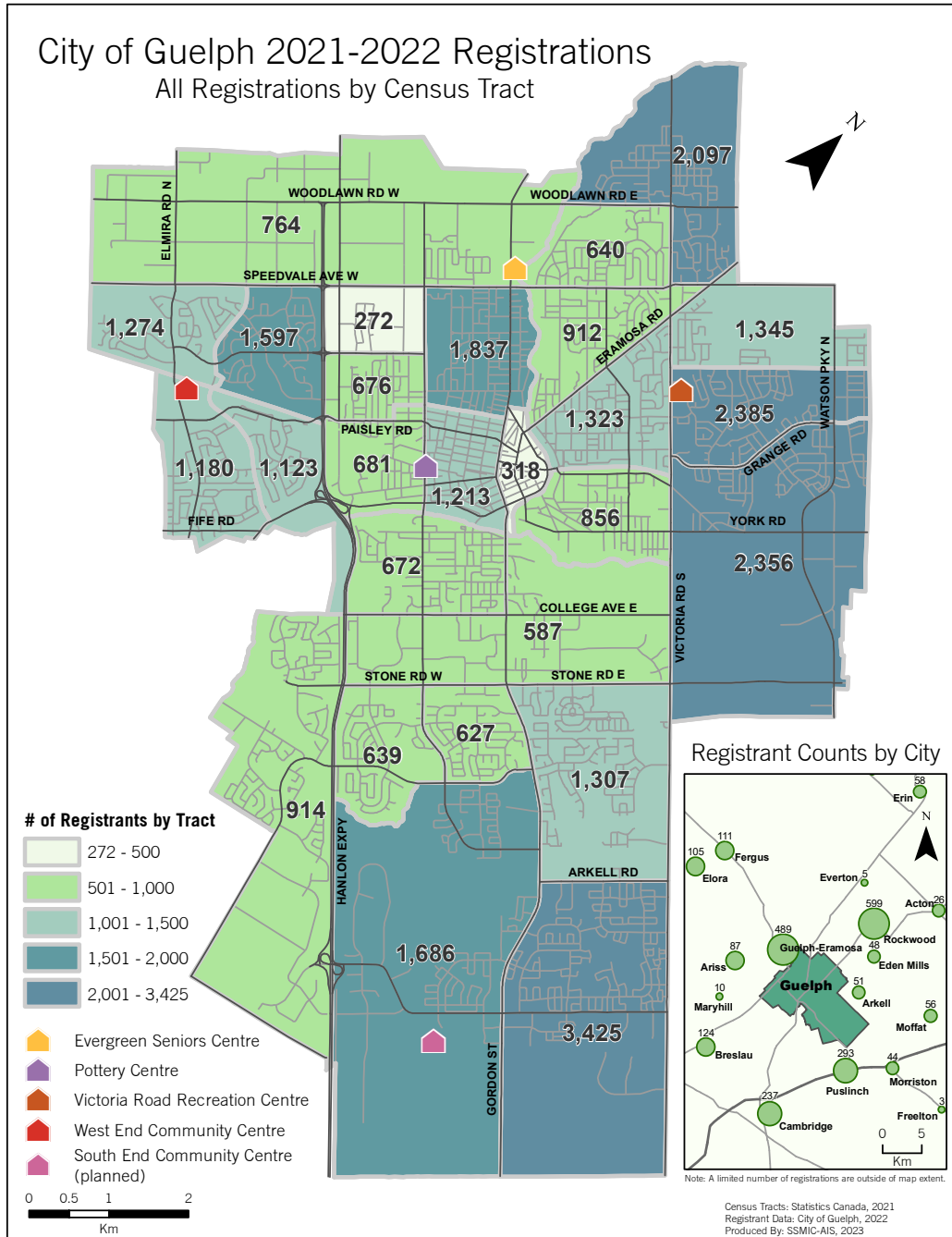
Table 1: Existing and planned City of Guelph recreation facilities¹¹¹²

Facility Type	Supply	Incl SECC	City Wide Provision (1 per XXX residents)	City Wide Provision with SECC	Location
Indoor Aquatics	2	3	1:71,870	1:47,913	WECC, VRRRC, SECC
Outdoor Aquatics	1	1	1:143,740	1:143,740	Lyon Pool
Ice Pads	5	7	1:28,748	1:20,534	VRRRC, WECC, SECC, Exhibition Arena, Centennial Arena
Gymnasiums & Auditorium	1.5	3.5	1:95,827	1:41,069	WECC, SECC, Evergreen
Fitness Facility	1	2	1:143,740	1:71,870	WECC, SECC
Artificial Turf Facility	1	1	1:143,740	1:143,740	Sportsdome
Indoor Walking Track	0	1	0:143,740	1:143,740	SECC
Multi-Purpose Rooms	18	21	1:7,986	1:6,885	VRRRC, WECC, SECC, ESCC, Sportsdome
Seniors Active Living Centres	2	3	1:71,870	1:47,913	Evergreen, WECC, SECC

11 The Sleeman Centre also houses a municipal ice pad that provides some recreational use for the community. It is not included in this assessment, as the facility's primary function is entertainment. Still, it provides opportunity to increase municipal programming, and as a modern, well-equipped 5,000 seat venue, plays a significant role in Guelph's sport tourism market.

12 Pending Provincial approval of SALC designation

Figure 21: Distribution of existing and planned City recreation facilities and program registrations



Key issues and opportunities for indoor recreation facilities

Aging facilities

The Canadian Infrastructure Report Card highlights that about 30-35 per cent of recreation facilities in Canada are in fair condition or worse, with many more than 50 years old.¹³ According to recent facility condition assessments, most of the City's recreation facilities are in good condition, but several align with Canadian trends, now at or nearing the end of their service life and requiring infrastructure improvements, renewal or repurposing to maintain appropriate service levels and accommodate future growth. Accessibility updates are also required in some older facilities to ensure equitable and consistent service delivery for all residents of the community. Outdated facility designs – especially in relation to changing demographics and recreation trends – also limit the potential and types of use some facilities can accommodate. The City will need to investigate replacement and/or repurposing of aging recreation infrastructure in the coming years, especially with regards to the two single pad arenas (Exhibition Arena and Centennial Arena) and Lyon Pool.

Transforming aging and underperforming assets

A key challenge for Guelph is ensuring that recreation assets keep up with population growth, changing demographics, and shifting recreational needs and activities. As mentioned above, multi-purpose designs and features will help the City do more with what it already has, maintaining existing programming while responding to new needs. As recreation evolves and patterns of participation shift, the City should also consider how existing infrastructure – especially aging infrastructure already in need of investment and renewal – can be renovated and repurposed to better serve Guelph's future recreation landscape. For example, with many ice sports on the decline, and court and turf sports on the rise, the feasibility of converting aging sole-purpose arenas to court- or field-houses could be examined as a way to meet future provision needs and renew aging assets into hubs for broader community recreation.

¹³ Canada Infrastructure. 2019. Canadian Infrastructure Report Card 2019: monitoring the state of Canada's core public infrastructure. <http://canadianinfrastructure.ca/downloads/canadian-infrastructure-report-card-2019.pdf>



Facility optimization

Land scarcity, rising costs of construction, and changes to the way people recreate are driving recreation providers away from reliance on new infrastructure. Instead, municipalities need to explore creative solutions beyond just adding more. Facility utilization data shows that City recreation facilities are highly used, however, the balance of use is uneven. Amenities like ice, gym, turf and pools face significant pressures during prime time,¹⁴ but are notably underused during shoulder seasons and non-prime time. Construction of the SECC will increase provision levels and address prime time pressures on existing amenities, however, it will also increase patterns of availability during non-prime hours.

A Recreation Facility Optimization Strategy targeting increases to available times and spaces would:

- Offer a more diverse recreation portfolio;
- Bring new users and services into City facilities;
- Optimize use of existing resources and reduce burnt time;
- Generate new revenue streams without the need for significant capital investments; and
- Increase access to City spaces and services.

The strategy should consider partnership opportunities, community engagement, evaluation of the City's allocation and distribution processes, assessment of City program schedules and fill rates, opportunities for placemaking and/or intentional space designs (e.g., preschool-specific space), and a user fee assessment to determine feasible and effective ways to maximize use of existing recreation spaces. The data and analysis generated through this strategy would also support greater alignment with municipal trends that are moving away from facility provision targets based on total population and instead leaning on user registrations, demand and patterns of use to more accurately determine future facility needs and planning.

14 Mon-Fri, 6-8am & 4-11pm and Weekends (all day)

Kitchener free space bookings

The City of Kitchener *Book a Gym Program* allows residents to book a gym or community room for free at one of ten local community centres to use for physical activity or to host a hobby group or neighbourhood meeting. The program provides 45 minutes of gym space or up to two hours of multi-purpose room use for groups up to 10 people. Spaces are available on a first-come, first-served basis, and each group can book once every seven days. The program increases community access, reduces barriers to participation, and improves utilization of non-prime facility space.

Sensory Rooms: Loafer's Lake, City of Brampton

Sensory rooms combine a range of stimuli to help individuals with cognitive or behavioural conditions develop and engage their senses, providing a safe, positive space to self-regulate and take breaks. Sensory rooms reduce the risk of serious incidents, improve program experiences and staff rapport with participants, and create new program opportunities and potential revenue streams for Recreation.

Figure 22: Sensory room



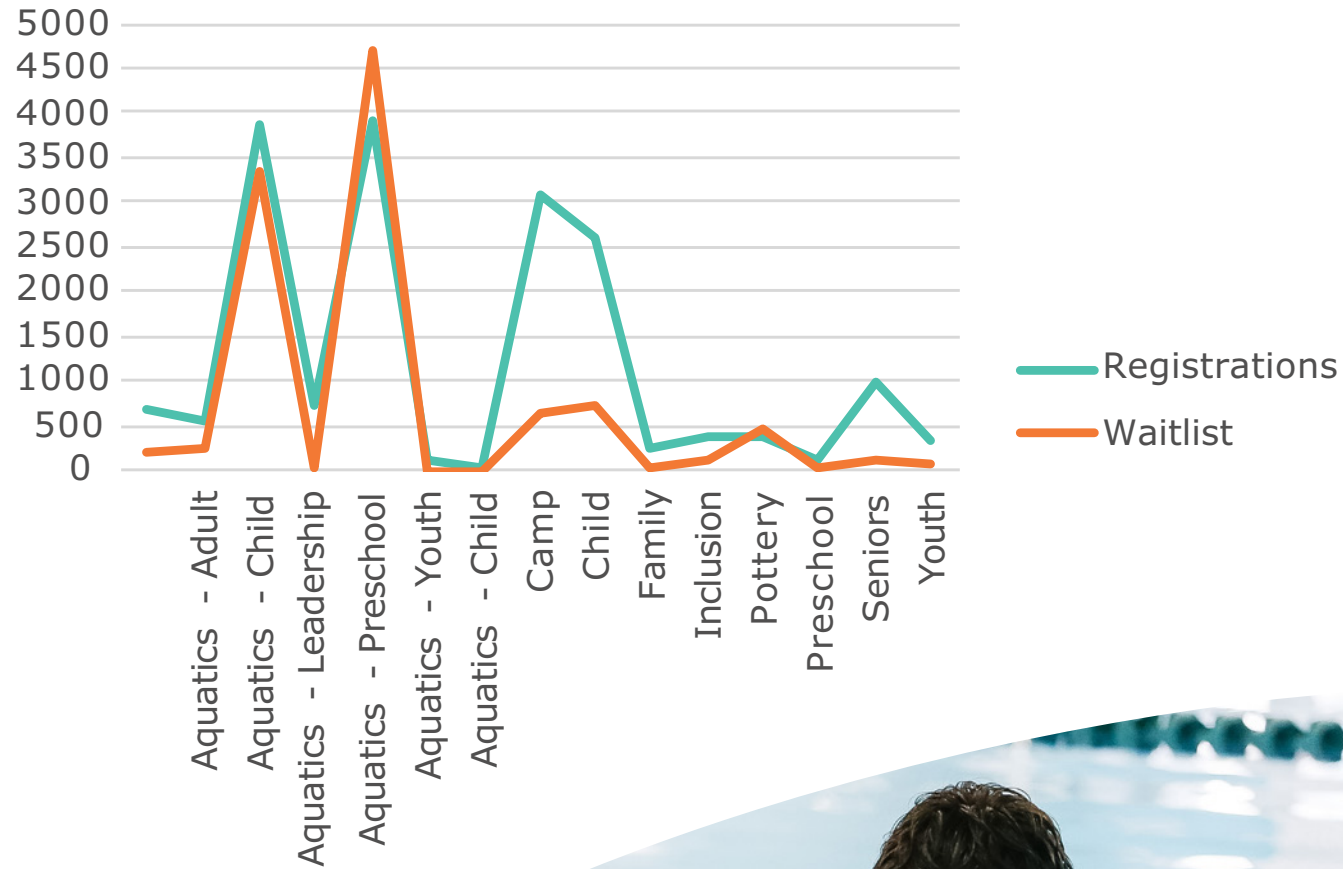
Objectives and recommendations for indoor recreation facilities

63. Install Indigenous and cultural art, signage and plantings in recreation facilities.
64. Collaborate with the City's Culture Department and local Indigenous and BIPOC artists to establish inclusive art installations in Recreation facilities.
65. Through strategic investment or renovation, add new amenities or features inside and outside recreation facilities that promote unstructured play and placemaking in order to create welcoming, safe, playful spaces that can be used in many different ways.
66. Permanently install Sensory Rooms in Victoria Road Recreation Centre and West End Community Centre to improve inclusive services and participation in Recreation facilities.
67. Conduct feasibility study of aging Recreation facilities to evaluate improved service level potential with renovations, renewals or repurposing.
68. Investigate options to increase municipal indoor pool inventory based on projected service level deficits beyond 2033.
69. Conduct a site feasibility study to investigate expansion and/or repurposing of Lyon Pool to improve service level potential through renovations, renewal or repurposing.
70. Develop and implement a Recreation Facility Optimization Strategy to maximize use and potential of existing City Recreation facilities.
71. Collect registration data from user groups to better understand community use and demand for indoor recreation facilities.
72. Adopt provision targets for indoor recreation facilities that are based on the number of registered participants in City and community organization programs rather than total population to plan in line with community demand and facility utilization.

Aquatics

Swimming and aquatic related activities remain some of the most popular recreational pursuits in Canada. The City of Guelph is no exception and continues to experience high demand for both drop-in and registered aquatics programming. From Spring 2022 through Winter 2023, the City of Guelph provided over 23,000 hours of aquatics programming for the community. Learn to Swim programs continue to be the most sought-after activity, with 7,194 people registered in Learn to Swim programming and another 7,330 people on the waitlist – numbers that clearly highlight that people want to be in City pools and participating in City programs.

Figure 23: City of Guelph aquatics registrations and waitlist



Community voice

"Add more pools like Lyons park - its wondering to have an outdoor public pool."

"Guelph needs more pool availability."

"I enjoy the pool programs that I participate in regularly ... generally aquafit and therapy sessions ... and think that the city has done a great job navigating the pandemic period and the social distancing protocols. The staff that I've come into contact with have all been great and they work hard to create a fun, safe and educational space, as well as developing a sense of community."



Trends and best practices in aquatics

Swimming as a critical life skill

The stats at the beginning of this section highlight just how important pools are to the Guelph community. They are a source of fun for residents and visitors, and perhaps more importantly, provide valuable life skills that contribute to the safety and resiliency of the community. Every year about 160 people drown in Ontario. Drowning is the second leading cause of accidental death for children under five, and statistics show that children under 12, young men and seniors 65+ are at the greatest risk.¹⁵ All of these risks and drowning deaths are preventable through water safety knowledge and learn to swim programs. As such, it is vitally important that cities increase access to these programs – especially for at-risk and underserved communities¹⁶ – as they quite literally save lives.

¹⁵ Lifesaving Society. Water Safety, Lifesaving Society: The Lifeguarding Experts. <https://www.lifesavingsociety.com/water-safety.aspx>

¹⁶ LifeSaving Society 2023 Outreach Program Infographic. Retrieved from [lifesavingsociety.com](https://www.lifesavingsociety.com)

Partnerships

Community partnerships play an important role in growing aquatics services and addressing staffing shortages in the recreation sector. In Fall 2022, the City of Guelph and the Upper Grand District School Board re-launched the Leadership Aquatic Program (LAP), a partnership program that provides 40 students per semester with high school credits for completing Instructor-Lifeguard trainings and certifications. Once complete, these leadership certifications can lead to employment with the City of Guelph and other aquatics serving organizations.

Innovative programming

Looking beyond Learn to Swim, the City has developed many unique activities to bring people together in new and exciting ways, improve equity in services, and introduce the joys of water to more people in the community.

Paddleboarding in pools

Guelph was one of the first communities in Ontario to introduce Stand-Up Paddleboarding (SUP) as an in-pool program. Since that time, the City's SUP programming has expanded to include yoga and fitness options for youth and adults.

Women's only swims

Staffed by and open to individuals who identify as women, these swims offer a space of belonging to focus on recreational enjoyment and personal well-being.

Sensory friendly swims

Sensory swims provide an adapted swimming environment for children, youth and adults of all abilities. No music, a smaller group of swimmers, no whistles (unless necessary) and quiet changing rooms create a safe, positive space for participants to self-regulate and better manage stimuli while enjoying the pool.

The "doggie dip"

This program allows pet owners to take their dogs for a swim and a day of play in Lyon Pool.



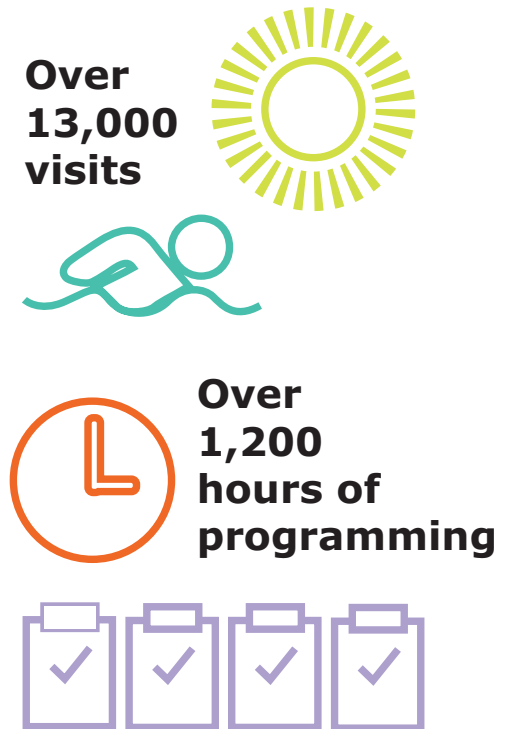
Key issues and opportunities for aquatics

Indoor facilities

With the addition of the SECC, Guelph will have three indoor aquatics facilities in its municipal supply, including the 50m pool at Victoria Road Recreation Centre, which can be divided into two 25m sections to serve larger tournaments and teaching-recreational opportunities. With the SECC, this inventory provides a strong supply and distribution of aquatics facilities throughout Guelph and meets the needs of the community. Based on projected population growth though, the City will start to fall back into undersupply of aquatics facilities by the end of this plan's lifecycle (2033) and will require an additional facility before 2051 to maintain service levels for the community.

Outdoor facilities

Guelph has one outdoor pool (Lyon Pool) that operates during the summer months. In 2022, the pool saw over 13,000 visits and provided over 1,200 hours of programming. Community feedback for the PRMP consistently highlighted demand for outdoor pools and water features. Outdoor pools are also becoming key components of urban climate and heat relief responses,¹⁷ further fueling the value of these amenities to the community. Built in the 1950s, Lyon Pool was designed to serve a population of around 33,000. As Guelph's only outdoor pool, it currently operates at a service level more than four times original intention – a pressure that will reach over five times by 2033. Given the age and condition of the current facility, it is also nearing the end of its service life, and as such, expansion or repurposing should be considered to continue meet service level needs and targets.



17 City of Toronto. City of Toronto Heat Relief Strategy, April 2022, www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/8f66-Heat-Relief-Strategy-2022.pdf

18 Raza, Ali. "Toronto is designed for a climate that doesn't exist anymore and it needs to 'face reality' experts say." CBC, August 13, 2021, www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/climate-change-toronto-adaptation-1.6138067

Youth participation and leadership development

Like most communities across North America,¹⁹ Guelph sees a notable drop-off in recreation participation around the age of 10-12. Currently, youth (ages 12-17) only make up about 6 per cent of aquatic program participation – a downward trend that generally continues until about the age of 30 – leaving a significant gap in service provision and the well-being of local youth. The gap in youth participation also impacts leadership development and staffing levels. The City’s aquatic staffing cohort is made up almost entirely of youth and young adults, meaning the decline in participation has a ripple effect into the potential talent pool. Over the past five plus years, the North American aquatics industry experienced a dramatic decline in Lifeguard and Swim Instructor Training participation – a decline further exacerbated by pandemic restrictions and course cancellations. Given that only about one out of every four aquatics Leadership Course participants use their skills and qualifications to work as a lifeguard and/or swim instructor, new and creative approaches to (re)engage young people in aquatics programming are needed to meet growing aquatics service levels.

¹⁹ ParticipACTION. Lost & Found: Pandemic-related challenges and opportunities for physical activity. The 2022 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth. Toronto: 2022





Ninjacross

Appealing to youth and young adult audiences, Ninjacross is a pool-based gymnastics and obstacle course that provides both fitness and unstructured programming. The system retracts up to the ceiling, allowing facilities to expand their audiences and activities without impeding or impacting existing users or uses.

Figure 24: Ninjacross activity



Movies at the Dive In

Movie theatre meets pool, this unique placemaking activity invites people to enjoy community pools in a completely unconventional way. It also helps showcase that recreation centres are so much more than places to be active, they are places for the community to gather and enjoy a show.

Figure 25: Movie viewing at pool

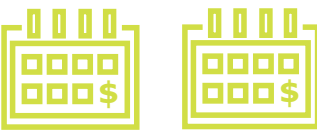




\$1,500 in course fees



Over 170 hours of training



Updated every 2 years for about \$250 and 13 hours of training

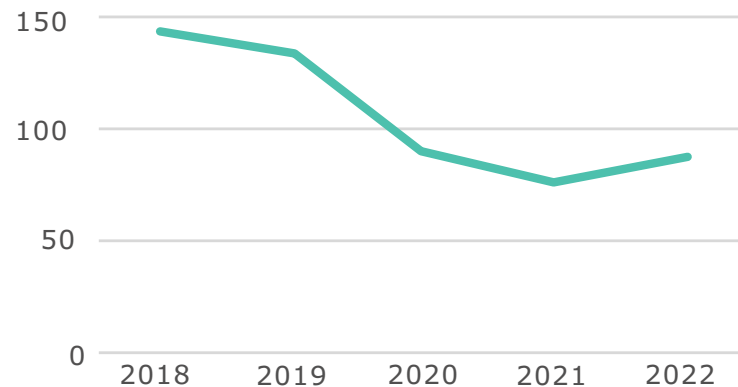
Staffing

Since 2018, the North American aquatics sector has experienced a significant decline in qualified staff, with financial investments and time required to become a certified lifeguard or swim instructor pushing people away from the field.^{20 21} Becoming a certified instructor-lifeguard costs over \$1,500 in course fees and requires over 170 hours of training. These certifications also need to be updated every two years at an additional cost of about \$250 and 13 hours of training. This investment versus reward dilemma has resulted in staffing shortages that led to temporary or intermittent closures and program reductions at City pools.

Pandemic-related closures and training cancellations made this shortage even worse. Many existing recreation staff left the industry for more stable sectors, while the next generation of young swimmers lost the opportunity to develop their skills or be trained and certified, leaving a two-year gap in the already scarce staffing cycle. By Fall 2022, municipalities across the country were canceling programs and adjusting schedules

due to staffing shortages. While the development of the SECC will address the aquatic infrastructure needed to meet service level targets over the next ten years, staffing levels also play a critical role in the City’s ability to maximize the potential of its aquatics assets and meet community demand. Following the lead of other municipalities, the City should consider a staffing model assessment and employee training and incentive programs to address current deficiencies and incentivize long-term staff development and retention.

Figure 26: Aquatics staffing levels



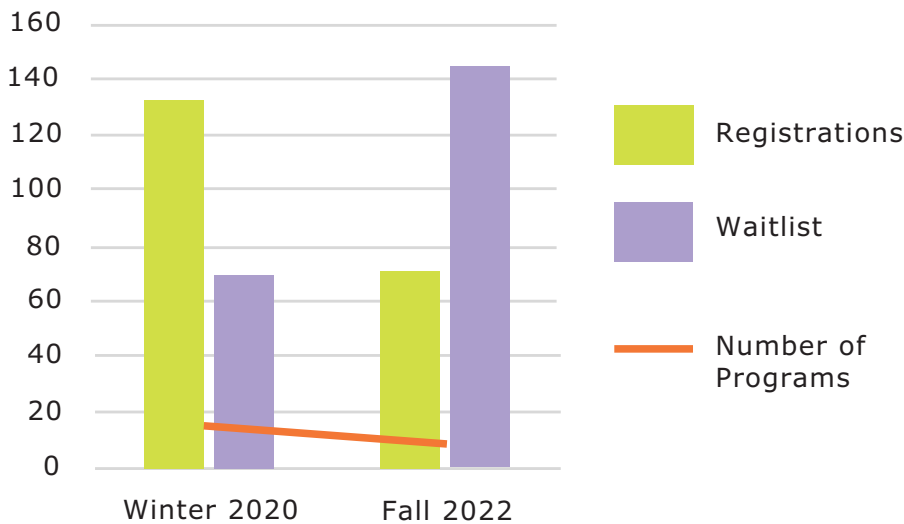
²⁰ Farooqui, Salmaan. "Cities across Canada dealing with lifeguard shortages, struggling to keep pools, beaches open." Globe and Mail, June 25, 2022, www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-lifeguard-shortages-canada/

²¹ Shingler, Benjamin. "Across Canada, a shortage of lifeguards raises concern about next generation of swimmer." CBC, July 18, 2022, www.cbc.ca/news/canada/lifeguards-swimming-lessons-shortage-1.6519453

The aquatics dilemma comes ashore

The recreation staffing dilemma that began in aquatics is now working its way into other areas of recreation. In 2022, City pottery programs had to be scaled back due to staff shortages, providing less than half the number of available spots and more than doubling program waitlists compared to 2019. City fitness programs also had to change or adapt program plans, as staff with specific certifications, like Spin© or Zumba©, could not be secured. City summer camps managed to maintain overall camp spots, but seasonal recruitment ran until June, where historically staff were confirmed in February. These growing staffing challenges suggest that staffing model assessments and employee training and incentives should look beyond aquatics and consider gaps in recreation as a whole.

Figure 27: City of Guelph aquatics registrations and waitlists (2020-2022)



Inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility

The growing demand for aquatics programs and the current decline in certified staff means that many in the community are missing out on opportunities to enjoy City pools and build essential life saving skills. These missed opportunities impact future staffing potential and have lasting consequences for residents – particularly newcomers and people in low-income households.²² The Lifesaving Society of Ontario reports that newcomers are four times less likely to be able to swim than people born in Canada, and that almost 80 per cent of newcomers will be on or around water in the summer-time,²³ placing them at a much higher risk for drowning. Financial costs and registration process barriers also make access to swim lessons unattainable for many low-income individuals and households,²⁴ positioning aquatics as a privileged activity. Strategies are needed to address inequities in aquatics participation, increase representation of underserved communities in aquatics leadership and programming, and improve access to critical lifesaving skills.

22 Musset, Ben. "If we cared, we could do better": Why the scramble for City swim lessons is worse than ever." The Star, October 14, 2022, www.thestar.com/news/gta/2022/10/14/if-we-cared-we-could-do-better-why-the-scramble-for-city-swimming-lessons-is-worse-than-ever.html

23 LifeSaving Society 2023 Outreach Program Infographic. Retrieved from lifesavingsociety.com

24 Pagliaro, Jennifer. "It's like the Hunger Games": Wait-lists for city toddler swim programs double after pandemic pauses." The Star, March 26, 2022, www.thestar.com/news/gta/2022/03/26/its-like-the-hunger-games-wait-lists-for-city-toddler-swim-programs-double-after-pandemic-pauses.html

Objectives and recommendations for aquatics

73. Continue to explore and evaluate emerging trends in aquatic infrastructure and programming – especially those targeting youth and young adults – to address identified demographic gaps in service.
74. Through strategic investment, add new aquatics amenities or features that encourage participation – especially for youth and young adults.
75. Initiate a Recreation staffing model assessment and employee training and incentive programs to identify efficiencies and strategic opportunities to address program and service level vulnerabilities.
76. Continue to explore creative partnerships to increase qualified staffing levels and support the professional and/or academic development of Recreation staff
77. Develop an IDEA strategy ([page 107](#)) in collaboration with local service providers and equity deserving communities to better understand and address barriers to aquatic participation and increase aquatics opportunities for equity deserving individuals and communities.





Community programming

We're all sat in the attic of the recreation centre watching a pot of chilli simmer. An odd mix of social workers, varsity athletes, rec centre staff and folks living in shelters. "Smells good" someone says, hoping to break the awkward silence. A chorus of "yeps" before the room goes quiet again and we all turn our eyes back to the table or the wall. A window here would be helpful, give us all something to stare out of.

Come game time we wander into the gym, leave our stuff against the wall, and snag a ball from the pile dumped in the middle of the floor. A few people start to jog around the gym, a few fire shots at the net, the rest just kind of poke at a ball with their toe. Slowly though, we start to catch each others' eyes, balls get passed back and forth, and eventually a game takes shape.

Afterwards, the chilli room is rowdy, filled with laughter and banter, voices piling on top of voices, claiming rights to the biggest highlights and blunders of the game. A group of awkward strangers only an hour ago, strangers from all different kinds of places, paths and experiences, now bonding over a ball.

This story is not unique. It has been told a thousand different times in a thousand different ways and speaks to recreation's special ability to reach across differences and bring people together around shared experiences. It builds relationships and it builds community.

That is really what this plan aims to do: build community. To do that though, we need to acknowledge that recreation looks different to different people. It is experienced and accessed in different ways. And for many, it is not accessible at all. They are not invited to play, so they are not invited to be part of the community. The actions in this plan need to address that.

From Spring 2022 to Spring 2023, the City delivered over 106,000 drop-in opportunities and provided 3,195 children with camp experiences. Over 17,600 unique residents registered in City programs and almost 24,000 engaged with Recreation Services in some capacity. More than 50 City programs were offered in community spaces to improve geographic reach and over 100 were offered as shared caregiver-child or tandem-timing activities to make it

easier for everyone in the household to participate. While these numbers and efforts highlight the City's commitment to remove barriers and provide quality recreation experiences, registration mapping for this plan highlights that certain areas of Guelph are better served than others and that only about 12 per cent of the local population participates in City programs. Understanding local barriers to participation and aligning with trends in recreation will build engagement with equity-deserving communities and increase opportunities for all Guelph residents.

Over 106,000 drop-in opportunities



Provided 3,195 children with camp experiences



Over 17,600 registered in City programs



Almost 24,000 engaged with Recreation Services



100+ were shared caregiver-child or tandem-timing activities



Community voice

"I think that regardless, a high priority and degree of consideration in use should be given to children as well as newcomers and those for whom English is not a first language... There are many things in Guelph that are hard to access if you don't have a car or know where to go."

"Something in the core... There are only small private gyms downtown."

"Cost of living and taxes are skyrocketing and those of us on fixed incomes are being hit hard. Something to bear in mind."

"More recreation programs in the community. Love those free programs in the parks."

"I loved the offerings a while back where you could pay a small fee and select several types of classes to try in one day. it was fun to meet new people, the instructors, tour the facility, and TRY new activities. You know, "Try it! You might like it."

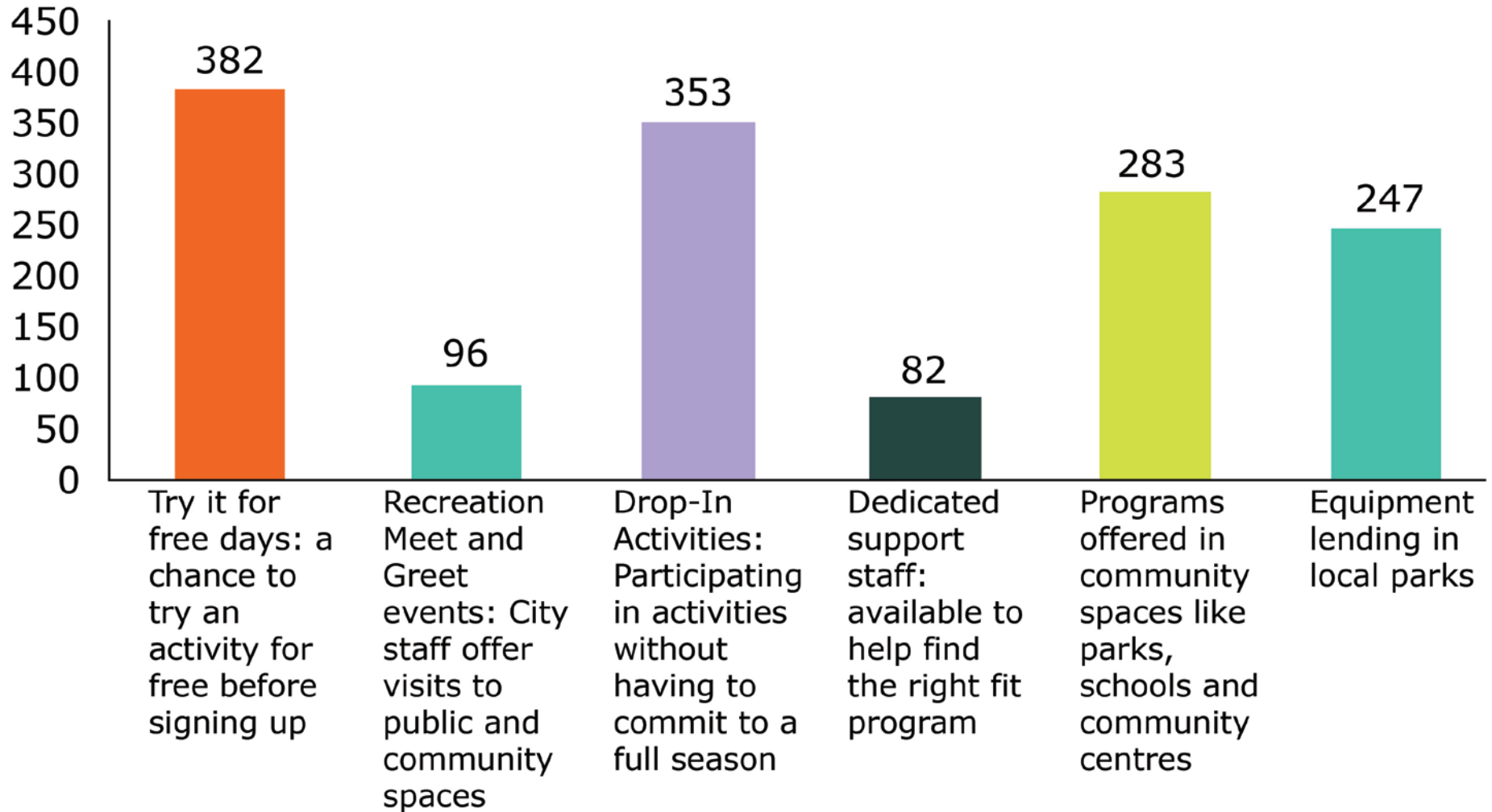
Trends and best practices in community programming

Recreation sampling

Recreation Sampling or "try it" programming is an evidenced and effective strategy to engage new audiences in recreation and physical activity. Offered as single sessions, at no or low cost and no long-term commitment, try-it programs give people the opportunity to experience new activities, discover new interests, and build a wider range of skills. Patterns in recreation suggest that people are moving away from specialized or single sport participation. In response, recreation sampling ignites peoples' interest through a variety of options and fosters lifelong participation in physical activity.²⁵ This approach also allows recreation providers to trial new activities and use ongoing community feedback to shape program offerings. If strategically delivered during shoulder seasons – the time period before or following a scheduled season – a series of try-it activities can also improve facility optimization by making use of space and time that normally goes unused.

²⁵ BG, Mulcahey MK. The concept of sport sampling versus sport specialization: Preventing youth athlete injury: A systematic review and meta-analysis. The American Journal of Sports Medicine. 2020;48(11):2850-7.

Figure 28: What kinds of initiatives might make it easier or more welcoming for you to enjoy new activities?²⁶



Spontaneous recreation

Pandemic-related closures and restrictions forced people to think differently about how they recreate. Without access to facilities and organized activities, people engaged in more unstructured activities that took place on their own schedules. Although the recreation sector experienced a surge in program registrations when pandemic restrictions lifted, participation in spontaneous recreation remains a lasting trend. Time is now proving one of the biggest barriers to participation, with people unable or unwilling to commit consistent and dedicated time to an activity.^{27 28} As a result, recreation providers need think differently about how they design and deliver programs, offering more flexibility in activities, scheduling, location, and approach to meet the growing demand for less structured activities.



Outdoor recreation

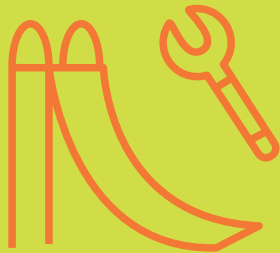
There are so many benefits to being outdoors. Simply going for a walk in green space reduces anxiety, depression, asthma and high-blood pressure. The benefits of being outdoors are so great in fact that doctors are now prescribing nature as a treatment for physical and mental health conditions.²⁹ Add in elements of play, which improve cognitive, physical, social and emotional well-being for people of all ages – especially young children – and the outcome is a happier and healthier community.

Demand for outdoor programs and activities ballooned during the pandemic and remains on the rise. This shifting trend requires recreation providers to think outside facility walls and reduce reliance on built features and amenities. Instead, providers need to consider creative ways of animating open spaces and incorporate natural environments into program design. Growing connections with the natural environment also helps foster stewardship and creates opportunities to embed nature education and participatory practices into recreational programs. This provides an opportunity to support synergies with other City strategies, like the [Guelph Trail Master Plan](#) and [Natural Heritage Action Plan](#), that will improve local environmental outcomes and enhance residents' quality of life.

27 "Shift toward more unstructured physical activities could be pandemic legacy, researchers find." CBC, April 19, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/shift-toward-more-unstructured-physical-activities-could-be-pandemic-legacy-researchers-find-1.6420153>

28 Goodwein, Tiffany. "City Recreation trend looks towards more spontaneous activities." Chat News Today, October 6, 2021, <https://chatnewstoday.ca/2021/10/06/city-recreation-trend-looks-towards-more-spontaneous-activities/>

29 Turunen AW, Halonen J, Korpela K, et al. "Cross-sectional associations of different types of nature exposure with psychotropic, antihypertensive and asthma medication." Occupational and Environmental Medicine 2023;80:111-118.



Park Activation program

Launched as a grant-funded pilot program in 2017, the Park Activation program has become one of the City’s most popular programs, engaging over 1000 children and caregivers each year. Using the principles of outdoor, unstructured play, the low-barrier program introduces children and caregivers to new activities and ways to use park spaces, improving physical and mental well-being, and strengthening social connections. The program also increases engagement with local parks and green spaces, with 77 per cent of participants stating that they now visit parks more often as a result of participating in Park Activation.

Figure 29: Activation Station



Partnerships and collaboration

The strategic actions and service delivery model outlined in this plan will go a long way to increasing the City’s reach in the community and creating valuable recreation opportunities for the growing population. That said, the City cannot be all things to all people and cannot hope to meet the needs of all residents alone. Guelph is incredibly fortunate to have many passionate residents, service providers and recreation organizations capable of contributing to community health and well-being. The City currently has many formal and informal partnerships with community stakeholders, leaning on the expertise of others to build rapport and strengthen relationships with underrepresented groups and enable recreational opportunities beyond the capacity of the municipality.

The Guelph Neighbourhood Support Coalition (GNSC)

The GNSC is a network of neighbourhood groups, sponsoring agencies and program partners. Each neighbourhood group operates in an autonomous way at the grass roots level to meet the needs of children, youth and families in the neighbourhood. As a neighbourhood-level service provider, the GNSC supports all kinds of different recreation activities, from cooking programs to after school activities to cultural gatherings and conversation circles in many mother tongues. They also provide a voice for residents, sharing the unique strengths, challenges and opportunities of each neighbourhood, and developing and advocating for responsive, community-led programs and initiatives.

With a shared focus on improving inclusive recreation experiences, the partnership between the GNSC and the City enables direct engagement and learning opportunities with equity-deserving groups and individuals, shared trainings to improve staff and community development, collaborative programming, and most recently, a pilot project aimed at removing barriers and increasing participation in recreation for local newcomers.

Key issues and opportunities for community programming

Barriers to participation

Despite the foundational understanding that City recreation facilities, programs and services are open to everyone, there are many different barriers that keep people from participating in City recreation. Some are tangible, like financial ability or geographic location, while others are systemic, but all contribute to the disparities in participation, health and well-being, and sense of social belonging for at-risk communities.^{30 31} To support the City's [Community Plan](#) commitments to inclusive prosperity, equitable access, and enabling play everywhere, City recreation has a responsibility to move beyond an "open to everyone" mentality, and develop strategic actions aimed at building trust and relationships in the community, understanding and removing local barriers to participation, and developing specific programs and initiatives to increase recreational opportunities for underserved people and groups.

30 ParticipACTION. Lost & Found: Pandemic-related challenges and opportunities for physical activity. The 2022 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth. Toronto: ParticipACTION; 2022

31 Canadian Parks and Recreation Association/Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council (February 2015). A Framework for Recreation in Canada - 2015 - Pathways to Wellbeing. Ottawa: Canadian Recreation and Parks Association. 40 pages.

Inclusion services

City of Guelph Recreation provides a range of supports to ensure individuals living with disabilities can meaningfully participate in recreation activities. Over the past 10 years, Inclusion Services has experienced a significant increase in participants with sensory, communication, medical, mental health and behavioural needs, placing pressures on available resources and current service levels. The complexity of many individuals accessing Inclusion Services has also increased in recent years, requiring additional staff trainings and specialized third-party services to accommodate participation, maintain staff and participant safety, and provide positive recreation experiences.

Aligning Inclusion staffing and service levels with broader community demographics helps establish a baseline for service and mitigates risks associated with behavioural challenges and the City's duty to accommodate under the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#). As demand is most keenly felt during summer months, when camps take on the daytime caregiver role of schools, local school board data provides a valuable benchmark

for service needs. During the 2020-2021 enrollment year, almost 14 per cent of Guelph students (Junior Kindergarten-Grade 8) received special education services,³² while only about 4 per cent of total camp spots were allocated to Inclusion, suggesting that the City's seasonal provision levels need to more than triple to meet community needs. Incorporating specialized behavioural and/or therapeutic recreation staff into Inclusion Services would also help address growing complexities in service and create long-term pathways for participants (e.g., transitional-aged programming and employment opportunities in recreation). As noted in the Strategy Section ([page 101](#)) of this plan, alternative Inclusion service delivery models should also be investigated to ensure appropriate long-term supports and service levels for Inclusion participants.

32 Data Source: <https://www.app.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/sift/elementary.asp>

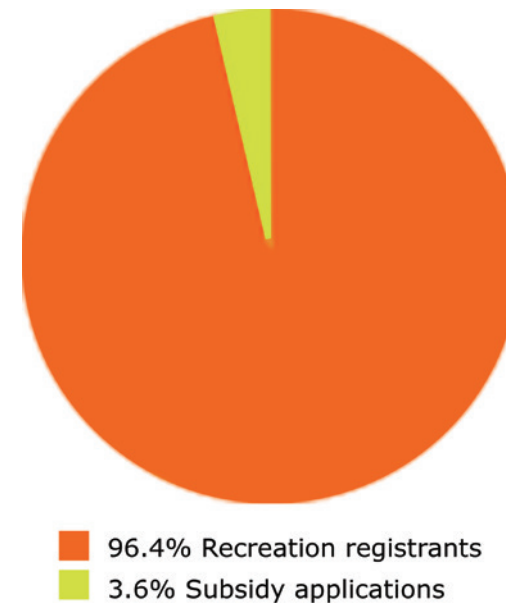


Program navigation

As Guelph's population grows and becomes more diverse, it is important to consider the role City Recreation can play in supporting and accommodating the varying needs of equity deserving individuals and communities. For example, many local newcomers reported that finding and accessing information about recreation programs can be difficult and time-consuming – especially if materials are only available in English. The process of registering for programs, much of which needs to be done in advance of registration dates to ensure timely access to high demand activities, can be a new concept and vary depending on service provider, preventing people from participating.^{33 34} For many, not fully understanding the requirements of specific programs – for example choosing the appropriate swim level based on ability not age or the need for sharpened skates and a CSA approved helmet for learn to skate programs – can impact positive recreation experiences and contribute to stigma and confidence barriers that have lasting negative consequences. More than half of the people participating in the Phase 4 community survey for the PRMP were also unaware that subsidy programs were available for recreation programs. Improving registration process and subsidy application awareness, and including orientation sessions for City activities, would increase registrations and subsidy uptake and provide more supportive entry into City recreation.

Subsidy applicants make up 3.6 per cent of Recreation's current customer base. Currently, only 20 per cent of approved subsidies are actually used to register in recreation programs, dropping the customer base to 1 per cent, while about 11 per cent of Guelph residents live below the Low-Income Cut-Off (LICO).

Figure 30: Amount of City recreation participants using subsidy programs



33 Shrestha, Niva. Understanding Barriers of Recent Immigrants to Access Recreational Activities in Guelph (2022). guelphwellingtonlip.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Understanding-Barriers-of-Recent-Immigrants-to-Access-Recreational-Activities-in-Guelph-FINAL.pdf

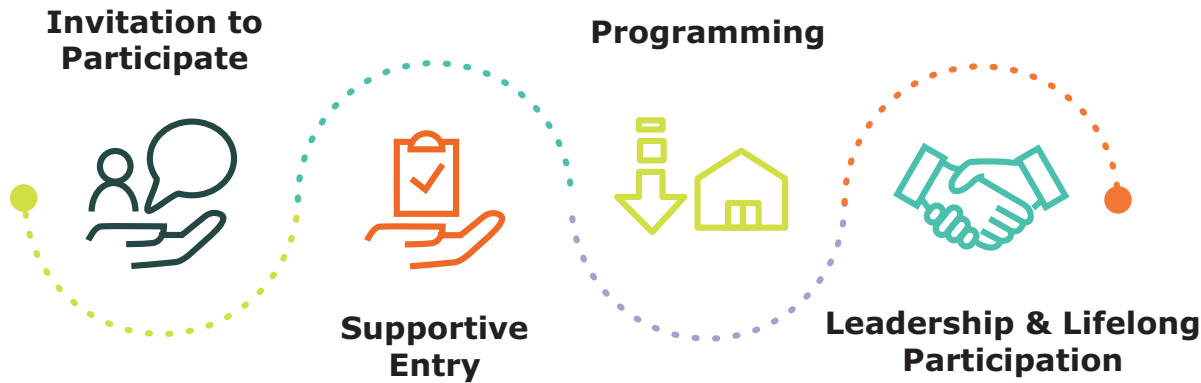
34 Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership. "Best Practices for Inclusion in Parks and Recreation" (2022). www.guelphwellingtonlip.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Best-Practices-for-Inclusion-in-Parks-and-Recreation-A-Review-of-Existing-Literature-FINAL.pdf

Program delivery model

Combining all the trends and opportunities above into a multi-phased Program Delivery Model would allow City Recreation to better distribute resources throughout the community, serve more residents, build relationships with equity-deserving communities, and strengthen partnerships with local organizations. It would also create multiple entry points into City Recreation, meet residents where they are at, provide a more supportive experience, and improve quality of services and programs.



Figure 31: Proposed City recreation program continuum



Invitation to Participate

Deliver community-based programs and activities to:

- Introduce residents to City Recreation through “try-it” activities
- Reduce barriers to participation through no and low cost, community-based activities
- In-person information sharing and feedback opportunities
- Connections to subsidy and inclusion support programs
- Connections to community recreation providers depending on activities of interest



Supportive Entry

Modify current program delivery approach to include pre-program orientation sessions to better support entry into formal or registered recreation.

- Build “program readiness”: teaching participants what they need to know to be successful and have a meaningful experience in recreation programs

Registered and Drop-In Programming

Enhancing current state.

- Indoor and Outdoor program options in City facilities and community spaces
- Traditional programs and diversified activities based on feedback from Invitation to Participate
- Tiered programming, from “come as you are” to advanced skill options

Leadership and Lifelong Participation

Build a lifelong pathway for recreation.

- Support transitions through phases of City Recreation
 - Pre-school > child > youth/ leadership > adult > seniors
 - Sustain participation through vulnerable timepoints
 - Introduce volunteer opportunities beginning in youth lasting through lifetime
- Support graduated transitions to community organizations
 - e.g., Learn to Skate > Minor Hockey
- Support transitions from recreation participant to recreation leader
 - Develop future leaders and staff cohorts through early engagement in recreation and skill development, early introduction to qualification pathways, identifying areas of interest and supporting recreational goal planning

Objectives and recommendations for community programming

78. Incorporate recreation sampling into Recreation service delivery and develop a series of low-cost, low-commitment “try-it” activities to introduce community members to City recreation programs.
79. Investigate including free “try-it” activities as part of Welcome to Guelph Program.
80. Increase provision of drop-in recreation programs to accommodate growing demand for spontaneous recreation options and activities.
81. Continue to provide recreation programming in schools and other community spaces to increase the reach and geographic distribution of City recreation services.
82. Collaborate with Parks, Planning and Environmental Planning to align actions and improve outcomes in the Guelph Trails Master Plan and Natural Heritage Action Plan.
83. Continue to explore partnerships and collaborations focused on expanding and enhancing recreation opportunities for the community.
84. Explore collaborations with the City Culture Department to leverage existing facilities to increase community recreation opportunities and address service deficits.
85. Increase Inclusion service levels to reflect broader community demographics.
86. Undertake a comprehensive equity mapping process to establish priority initiative areas for recreation investment and engagement, including the development of low-barrier recreation programming.
87. Adopt and implement the proposed four-phase Program Delivery Model to improve Recreation’s service continuum, more equitably distribute recreation resources across the city, and increase access to supported recreation for community members.
88. Develop a comprehensive program evaluation plan to establish meaningful performance measures and ensure the updated Program Delivery Model meets service expectations and community needs.



Recreation Strategies

Youth Strategy

Creating a youth friendly city benefits everyone. Youth are our future leaders and the builders of tomorrow. When youth are engaged and involved in their community – and the decisions that shape it – cities are more connected, creative and culturally vibrant. A successful city must welcome its youth and invest in actions that allow them to thrive now and into the future.

In 2012, the City made a commitment to local young people through the 2013-2018 [Think Youth Strategy](#). The strategy included 40 recommendations, designed and driven by youth, to shape Guelph in a youth-friendly way and ensure that local youth are celebrated and supported by a caring network of elected officials, community members, local organizations, and municipal staff.

Community voice

“You have great programs for wee ones, kids and seniors. We have tweens / teens in our home and this seems like a bit of a missing group - in terms of programming for those kids that may not be on sports teams (for various reasons) – but families may value opportunities to expose them to different types of activities that they could build confidence in.”

Trends and best practices in youth recreation

Youth-friendly city designation

In 2015, the City was awarded a Gold Designation as a Youth Friendly City for its “outstanding commitment to providing youth with opportunities to play, and to participate in and contribute to their community.”³⁵ This award and the actions behind it were driven by the commitments and recommendations outlined in the Think Youth Strategy.

Guelph Youth Council

A City-led initiative, Guelph Youth Council is a group of passionate young people, ages 13-18, that strive to preserve and enhance youth culture in Guelph. The Council works to ensure that all meetings are safe, inclusive spaces where young people can gather to have a say in the solutions that shape their community. As local experts and advocates, Guelph Youth Council played an advisory role on several high-profile municipal and community-led projects, including the Transportation Master Plan, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and local Youth Wellness Hubs.

Think Youth Strategy

As of December 2018, 36 of 40 goals outlined in the Think Youth Strategy were successfully implemented. Ranging from active transportation initiatives to inclusive recreation opportunities to youth engagement trainings and policies for City staff, the strategy made numerous and notable impacts on the Guelph Community.

Key issues and opportunities for youth recreation

Youth participation rates

As noted throughout this plan, youth participation in organized recreation declines significantly around ages 10-12 and continues until early adulthood. Youth (ages 12-17) account for less than 1 per cent of City recreation registrations. The COVID-19 pandemic further impacted youth engagement in City programs, with Guelph Youth Council dropping from an average of 30 members in 2019 to just three in Fall 2022. Resources and youth-driven strategies are needed to effectively re-engage local youth in recreation, civic participation and community development.

The loneliest generation

The current generation of youth have never known a time without the internet or immediate access to information on a phone that can travel with them everywhere they go. This instant access to information and the online world makes youth incredibly self-driven and socially conscious. It also means they spend a lot of time independently consuming online content and without direct human connection. In a world more connected than ever, youth feel more isolated, lonely, and alone than any other generation. City Recreation needs to create affordable, accessible, and authentic opportunities for youth to build meaningful human connections and participate in civic development. Recreation also needs to engage youth in completely different ways than it did in 2012 or 2018. New insights and youth-driven strategies are needed to help Guelph maintain its “outstanding commitment to providing youth with opportunities to play, and to participate in and contribute to their community.”

³⁵ City of Guelph. Ontario Youth Friendly Communities Recognized at Blue Mountain Resort, City of Guelph, Is Play in Your Community, 2015, <https://guelph.ca/wp-content/uploads/YFC-Media-Release-2015.pdf>

Older Adult Strategy

Older adults aged 55 and up currently make up about 28 per cent of Guelph's population – a figure that is projected to rise locally and nationally over the next 10 years. By 2036, the number of Older Adults in Canada is estimated to reach between 9.9-10.9 million people.³⁶

In 2012, City of Guelph Council approved the City's Older Adult Strategy. The Strategy was developed based on extensive consultations, using a framework consistent with the World Health Organization's (WHO) Dimensions of Age-Friendliness. Through six foundational and 58 WHO domain related recommendations, Guelph was designated as an Age Friendly City in 2014.

Community voice

"Many of the programs for people 55 and up are during the weekday assuming that these folks are retired but some of us still work fulltime."

"The parks need to provide spaces for seniors: gathering areas with suitable seating, chess tables, coffee bars and seating areas with shade, gentle walking areas, enabling gardens, story telling areas."

"I would like see programming that is available for aging adults that are still active and community focused in the south end of Guelph. This seems to be a bit of a wasteland for seniors if not involved in the arboretum community. The Evergreen Senior's Centre is very far away when taking public transportation from the south end of Guelph."



³⁶ ParticipACTION. April 3, 2019, 60 is the new 30: Six ways being active keeps you young. www.participaction.com/blog/60-is-the-new-30-six-ways-being-active-keeps-you-young/

Trends and best practices in older adult recreation

Physical health and wellness

As people move into older adulthood, the risk for many chronic health conditions increases, as does the risk of falling, which is the leading cause of injury-related hospitalizations among older adults in Canada.³⁷ Engagement in recreation is a key way to stop or slow health conditions, injury and disease that disproportionately affect older adults. Regular physical activity can lower rates of heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, Type 2 diabetes and reduce the rates of certain cancers. It also improves strength, balance and mobility, all of which lower the risk of falling.

Cognitive and mental health

By 2030, nearly 1 million Canadians are expected to be living with dementia – a figure forecasted to almost double by 2050.³⁸ Regular participation in recreation and physical activity improves cognitive function, protects against the onset of dementia, and slow its progression, making people more mentally fit and reducing burdens on caregivers and the health care system.³⁹ Regular engagement in recreation and physical activity also improves self-esteem, mood, and the ability to handle stress, building happiness and resiliency.

Social connection and participation

Older adults are more at-risk of social isolation due to declining health, risk of fall-related injuries – especially during inclement weather – and shrinking social networks. This isolation was even more pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic, when Public Health measures, such as lockdowns and stay at home orders, had harmful social consequences for older populations.⁴⁰ City Recreation played an important role during this time, re-designing programs and services to keep older adults food secure, socially connected, and physically active. More generally, recreation is a great way to meet new people and connect with friends, both through activities and volunteer opportunities. Developing and delivering intergenerational programming also creates social benefits for older adults and young people and is an effective tool in reducing ageism.

Partnerships: Guelph Wellington Seniors Association

With approximately 2,100 members, The Guelph-Wellington Seniors Association (GWSA) is one of the largest seniors' organizations of its kind in Canada, providing diverse programs, activities and services to Guelph and Wellington County. Through a Community Benefit Agreement, the GWSA and the City of Guelph share a strategic partnership that improves access to recreation and social opportunities for older adults. This partnership expands the reach of both the City and GWSA, enabling greater engagement with local seniors to improve service delivery, information sharing and policy development.

37 ParticipACTION. April 3, 2019, 60 is the new 30: Six ways being active keeps you young. www.participaction.com/blog/60-is-the-new-30-six-ways-being-active-keeps-you-young/

38 Alzheimer Society of Canada. "The Landmark Study: Navigating the path forward for dementia in Canada." 2022. https://alzheimer.ca/sites/default/files/documents/Landmark-Study-Report-1-Path_Alzheimer-Society-Canada.pdf

39 Alzheimer Society of Canada. "The Landmark Study: Navigating the path forward for dementia in Canada." 2022. https://alzheimer.ca/sites/default/files/documents/Landmark-Study-Report-1-Path_Alzheimer-Society-Canada.pdf

40 Government of Canada. "Social Isolation Among Older Adults During the Pandemic." 2021. Prepared by: Andrew V. Wister, Ph. D. and Laura Kadowaki, Ph. D. Gerontology Research Centre Simon Fraser University for the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Forum of Ministers Responsible for Seniors. <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/canada/employment-social-development/corporate/seniors/forum/covid-19-social-isolation/covid-19-social-isolation-en.pdf>

Key issues and opportunities for older adult recreation

Digital divide

For a variety of reasons, including affordability, digital literacy and attitudes towards technology, many older adults do not prioritize and/or have access to digital tools and communication, often leaving them disconnected from their families and their community. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this digital divide became even more problematic as community gatherings and social connections moved almost exclusively online, isolating those without access to technology or the skills to use it. That said, as baby boomers and generation X move into older adulthood, a second seniors' cohort, one that is digitally literate, is emerging, requiring balance in recreation and civic planning to ensure services and cities are designed with these diverse needs and abilities in mind.

Changing demographics

As noted above, a large number of younger, digitally literate people who are still in the workforce are moving into older adulthood. Guelph's new Canadian population is also growing at a faster rate than provincial and national averages,⁴¹ with many newcomer seniors providing childcare roles within multigenerational households.⁴² Activities of interest are also changing rapidly both in Guelph and across North America. Spreading to younger demographics, but founded on a base of older adults, Pickleball is growing at a rapid pace. Culturally meaningful programs, like Qi Gong and Tai Chi, are also core programs for City of Guelph Recreation. As the Guelph community continues to grow and become more diverse, the design and delivery of programs, services and supports needs to be reflective of the community's changing needs, interests and demographics.

Barriers to participation

Rising costs and affordability were highlighted as barriers to recreation throughout all phases of community feedback for the PRMP. This feedback was most pronounced in comments from older adults, many of whom live on limited or fixed incomes. Annual recreation fee increases have remained at or below 2 per cent for the past 5 years,⁴³ but given consistent community feedback and evidenced financial barriers to participation, further assessment and strategic approaches specifically supporting older adult participation in recreation are needed. Registration mapping of City of Guelph Seniors programming also show geographic areas of under- and over-representation throughout the city, suggesting imbalances in access to recreation. These imbalances need to be assessed further to fully understand neighbourhood-level barriers and opportunities and improve the distribution of recreation resources throughout the city.

41 Statistics Canada. Focus on Geography Series, 2021 Census of Population, Guelph.

42 Government of Canada. Social isolation of seniors: A Focus on New Immigrant and Refugee Seniors in Canada. Employment and Social Development Canada, 2022. www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/seniors/forum/social-isolation-immigrant-refugee.html

43 Barring a few program-specific increases based on inflationary costs of consumable supplies

Lessons Learned: Think Youth and Older Adult Strategy

The Think Youth Guelph Strategy and the Older Adult Strategy were both ambitious documents aimed at improving life and culture for underserved Guelph residents. Both strategies included large numbers of recommendations, spanning across many areas of municipal service, and further, into autonomous realms of the community. Despite the evidence-informed and well-intentioned nature of these strategies, both were approved for implementation without any dedicated or sustainable funding and stretched into service areas and community domains where City Recreation had no influence or direct means to promote change. For example, while 90 per cent of the recommendations outlined in the Youth Strategy were achieved, this was accomplished largely through extensive staff time and the good will of many local businesses and organizations. The remaining 10 per cent were also complex, high-profile objectives that could not be realistically achieved or sustained without dedicated funding. They were also the objectives perceived to have the greatest direct impact on civic engagement, inclusion, and wellbeing for Guelph Youth (e.g., a recreation portfolio specifically for youth experiencing homelessness, addiction and/or mental health challenges; Youth Advisor to City Council). This lack of resourcing and issue of scope made prioritizing and actioning strategy recommendations challenging, if not, unrealistic in many cases.

Both strategies also did not include timelines for review or key performance indicators against which to measure impact and success. As such, it was challenging to assess whether community needs and strategy goals remained relevant

throughout the respective strategy timeframes or whether the work and resources invested had any measurable impact on their intended audiences.

The population and built form of Guelph has grown and changed over the past 10 years, with even larger growth and change forecasted for the next 10. Future strategies, like those recommended in this section, should be structured as living documents, allowing for continuous input from the community and the flexibility to consistently reflect the community they aim to improve. Future strategies should also include dedicated project management to steward the implementation of objectives, as well as pursue funding and partnerships to support identified goals. Both the Youth Strategy and the Older Adult Strategy contained recommendations beyond the purview of Recreation's service area. Dedicated project management would have helped facilitate the development of shared objectives across City departments and community organizations, leading to more impactful and sustainable strategy outcomes.

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Strategy

Driven by global social, political and economic events, the City's Community Plan was updated in 2022, making a formal commitment to identify Guelph's most vulnerable populations, to listen closely to their stories, struggles, and pain, and to work toward equity and the permanent elimination of exclusion and systemic racism in all forms.

Parks and Recreation have a role to play in this work and commitment. A recent local study showed that about 9 out of 10 Indigenous Peoples and 7 out of 10 Immigrants and Visible Minorities experienced discrimination in Guelph in the last three years, with 50.5 per cent and 24.1 per cent of these incidents, respectively, taking place in a library, community/recreation centre or arena.⁴⁴ 2021 Census data also shows that almost 23 per cent of the local population have an identified disability, yet City Inclusion services and programs only account for about 1 per cent of Recreation registrations. Improving these experiences and opportunities means acknowledging and addressing the fact that underserved communities – like women, Indigenous peoples, people living with disabilities, members of visible minorities, newcomers to Canada, and residents living in low-income – face numerous barriers and have less access to municipally funded recreation.^{45 46}

To move forward as a united community, as envisioned in the City's Community Plan, a Recreation specific Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Strategy is needed to improve practices and processes, ensure trusting relationships are built with vulnerable communities, and sustained efforts are made to eliminate the exclusion in Recreation environments and systems.

Community voice

"The City is a trusted provider of Inclusion Services."

"Offer more diverse and cultural programs."

"Reduce costs to programs by making it available to all social economic Families."

"Ensure access to facilities for all children and people with disabilities, despite income."

44 Lapshina, Natalia and Esses, Victoria. Discrimination Experienced by Immigrants, Visible Minorities, and Indigenous Peoples in Guelph: an empirical study by the Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership. March 2022. guelphwellingtonlip.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/GWLIP-Discrimination-Report-Guelph-final-web.pdf

45 Shrestha, Niva. Understanding Barriers of Recent Immigrants to Access Recreational Activities in Guelph (2022). www.guelphwellingtonlip.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Best-Practices-for-Inclusion-in-Parks-and-Recreation-A-Review-of-Existing-Literature-FINAL.pdf

46 Ariba, Mark, Sam Laban, Chris Schuck, and Lindsey Thompson. Equity and Recreation Policy. Community Engaged Scholarship Institute, University of Guelph (2022; currently in review).

Trends and best practices for inclusive, diverse, equitable and accessible recreation

Recreation subsidies and Community Investment Strategy

The City's Community Investment Strategy focuses on building partnerships and providing funding and in-kind support to local not-for-profit organizations to achieve community and social goals and improve the well-being of Guelph residents. The strategy supports the delivery of sport and recreation activities for the community and provides subsidies for participation in recreation activities. The City of Guelph currently manages and distributes Adult (18+) recreation subsidies through the Fee Assistance in Recreation (FAIR) Program and maintains a Community Benefit Agreement with the Children's Foundation of Guelph and Wellington to distribute recreation subsidies for children and youth through the Free to Grow Program. In 2023, the City's Community Investment department also launched a micro-granting program to support community building through creative ideas that activate neighbourhoods and arts-based initiatives.

Inclusion Services

City Inclusion Services provides one-to-one support, adapted programming and

specialized summer camps to ensure individuals living with disabilities can meaningfully participate in recreation activities. In 2019, Inclusion Services received the Parks and Recreation Ontario Access and Equity Award for the Limitless Guelph initiative, a provincially funded pilot program that provided education and barrier-free adaptive sport programming to over 1,800 local children and youth.

Inclusion staffing models

Given recent growth in and demand for inclusive recreation, many municipalities are updating staffing models to ensure qualified and appropriate supports for people with disabilities participating in recreation. These models vary across municipalities, but generally involve three core approaches: recruitment of specialized staff, contracted services, and partnerships with health and developmental services. For example, many municipalities have incorporated behaviour specialists and recreation therapists into their recreation teams to act as resources to both staff and participants requiring enhanced supports. Other municipalities are contracting or partnering with professional, specialized services with experience in lifts and transfers, mobility

supports, communication barriers (e.g., sign language or picture exchange communication systems), behaviour management, and medically intensive participants (medication administration, feeding tubes, high-choking risks, etc.) to appropriately support inclusive participation. Moving towards equitable access for all community members requires municipalities investigate and invest in alternative staffing model to address local needs and support inclusive opportunities for residents facing barriers to participation.

Ottawa spirit program

A joint venture between the City of Ottawa and the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, the Spirit program provides respite day services and summer programs for children and youth with complex medical, behavioural, emotional and/or other mental health needs. Funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and facilitated in City recreation facilities, the program offers access to municipal recreation staff, as well as on-site Registered Nurses, Recreation Therapists, and one to one attendant care to support participation in a full range of individual and group recreation experiences.

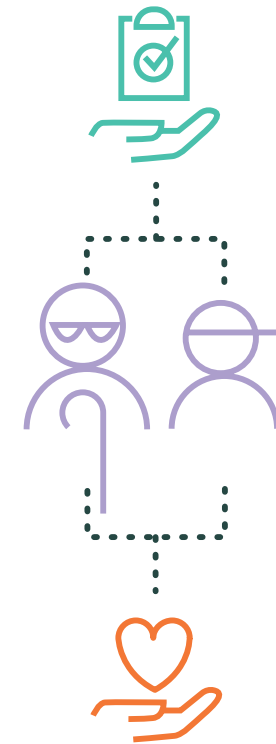
Key issues and opportunities for inclusive, diverse, equitable and accessible recreation

Health and well-being outcomes

Participating in recreation benefits individual and community health and well-being.⁴⁷ It improves physical and mental health, increases social well-being and feelings of belonging, creates community connections and cohesion, builds stronger families, reduces the impacts of Adverse Childhood Experiences, and promotes community safety and vitality. Engaging equity deserving individuals and communities in the development of programs and processes that reduce barriers to participation and increase equitable access to community and municipal recreation would help reduce disparities in health and well-being outcomes in Guelph.

Distribution of recreation resources

Just over 17,600 residents or about 12 per cent of the local population accessed City of Guelph recreation programs in 2022. While a significant number, this means that most residents do not directly benefit from municipal recreation programming. Registration mapping shows that participation in City programs is geographically disproportionate, with those living close a City recreation centre boasting higher participation in City programming. There are also areas of Guelph that are significantly under-represented in program registrations and over-represented in recreation subsidy applications, underlining the inequitable distribution of recreation resources throughout the city. Developing programs and initiatives in collaboration with residents from under-represented areas of the city would reduce barriers to participation and provide more equitable distribution of municipal recreation resources.



⁴⁷ Canadian Parks and Recreation Association/Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council (February 2015). A Framework for Recreation in Canada - 2015 - Pathways to Wellbeing. Ottawa: Canadian Recreation and Parks Association.



542 of 766 approved subsidies went unused over the past year; this means that only 29% of approved applicants participated in recreation programming

Barriers to participation in recreation

As noted throughout this plan, there are numerous barriers that limit or inhibit access to recreation. The City of Toronto’s Recreation registration process – a process similar to Guelph’s – was recently described as “class warfare” and “like the Hunger Games,” with demand for programming far outweighing supply and the process favouring those with flexible schedules, consistent internet access and available credit.⁴⁸ City of Guelph subsidy data further highlights that there are barriers beyond financial that need to be addressed to improve equity and participation. About 11 per cent of Guelph’s population live below the low-income cut-off (LICO), but only 677⁴⁹ residents or 0.04 per cent of the population applied for recreation subsidies in 2022. Of these approved applications, only 135 were used, meaning the majority did not participate despite available financial support.

Many individuals and households living above LICO still report struggling to make ends meet, do not qualify for available subsidies, and often have to prioritize other needs above recreation.⁵⁰ Thus, while Guelph has several mechanisms in place to reduce barriers to participation (subsidies, community investment programs, Inclusion services, etc.), and the service delivery model proposed in the previous section will help improve distribution and access, a more comprehensive, data-driven and resident-informed strategy is needed to fully understand local experiences, identify policy and process gaps, and address inequities in recreation.

48 Pagliaro, Jennifer. “It’s like the Hunger Games’: Wait-lists for city toddler swim programs double after pandemic pauses.” The Star, March 26, 2022, www.thestar.com/news/gta/2022/03/26/its-like-the-hunger-games-wait-lists-for-city-toddler-swim-programs-double-after-pandemic-pauses.html

49 766 approved applications from 677 unique residents

50 Shrestha, Niva. Understanding Barriers of Recent Immigrants to Access Recreational Activities in Guelph (2022). www.guelphwellingtonip.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Best-Practices-for-Inclusion-in-Parks-and-Recreation-A-Review-of-Existing-Literature-FINAL.pdf



Duty to accommodate and service delivery model

The Ontario Human Rights Code states that service providers have a legal duty to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities in a way that promotes dignity, integration and full participation to ensure they have equal opportunities, access and benefits, if doing so does not cause “undue hardship.”⁵¹ As a municipality, undue hardship is based on the entire corporation, not just the department or service area, meaning there are very few limitations to accommodations. If a participant’s needs are beyond the abilities and expertise of Recreation staff, the municipality is required to provide additional training for staff and/or contract professional support (PSW, Behavioural Therapy, Nursing care, etc.) to ensure dignity, integration and full participation.

In 2019, One2One Inclusion supports for City of Guelph Camps were oversubscribed, with a fill rate of 126 per cent, which declined over the course of the pandemic, but returned beyond budgeted service levels in 2022. From 2021 to 2022, City Recreation also spent over \$13,000 on additional trainings and third-party specialized services to support inclusive participation in recreation programs. Given this growing trend and service level requirement, staffing and service models should be investigated and evaluated to determine the most effective and appropriate way to accommodate the safe, meaningful, and dignified participation of all program participants going forward.

⁵¹ Ontario Human Rights Commission. Policy on Ableism and Discrimination based on Disability, June 27, 2016. www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-ableism-and-discrimination-based-disability/8-duty-accommodate

Objectives and recommendations for recreation strategies

89. Continue work outlined in the Think Youth Strategy and implement youth-driven initiatives to maintain Guelph's designation as a youth-friendly city.
90. Re-initiate the Support Through Engagement in Programs and Sport (STEPS) program, as directed in the 2013-2018 Think Youth Strategy, to deliver recreation programs for at-risk youth and youth experiencing homelessness.
91. Update the City's Youth Strategy to understand and support the evolving needs and interests of local youth, and developing initiatives to improve sustained engagement in recreation, healthy behaviours and civic participation.
92. Continue work outlined in the Older Adult Strategy and implement seniors-driven initiatives to maintain Guelph's designation as an Age Friendly City.
93. Improve geographic distribution of older adult programs to ensure programs are offered throughout the whole city.
94. Investigate designating the South End Community Centre as a Seniors Active Living Centre.
95. Update the City's Older Adult Strategy – reframing as an Age Friendly Strategy to better align with current industry language and terminology – to understand and support the evolving needs of older adults and ensure the City remains a great place to live and age well.
96. Promote and support the City's Micro-granting program, to increase grassroots and community-led arts and recreation opportunities.
97. Initiate the Development of a Recreation-focused Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility Strategy.





■ Plan implementation

Recommendation summary and prioritization

The following is a consolidated list of all the recommendations of the PRMP. All recommendations of the Needs Assessment have been embedded into the PRMP recommendations, though some have been combined for efficiency and logical work planning.

The implementation timeline is meant to demonstrate prioritization of each of the recommendations of the PRMP and is not a finalized work plan. The proposed pace of implementation allows for flexibility and will be based on need, resource capacity, budget approval, and in some cases, timing of Secondary Plan development, including the Guelph Innovation District and Clair-Maltby. Meaningful community engagement for capital projects and processes will be coordinated as appropriate to successfully implement the recommended objectives.

Table 2: Implementation timeline

	Recommendation	Short (1-4 years)	Medium (5-9 years)	Long (10+ years)
	Parks			
1	Position parks as recreation and trail network enhancers by implementing bike parking, bike repair stations, washrooms, water refill stations, wayfinding, lighting, and rest areas in parks where possible and appropriate.	✓	✓	✓
2	As City infrastructure projects are contemplated, consider opportunities for multi-functional land that may allow a recreational function combined with the primary land-use.	✓	✓	✓
3	Develop a framework for assessing when it is/is not appropriate to accommodate infrastructure or uses other than recreation in parks.	✓		
4	Update the City’s Parkland Dedication Bylaw to align with recent changes to the Ontario Planning Act.	✓		
5	Continue to secure new parks or expand existing parks as part of the development review process.	✓	✓	✓
6	Develop a Parkland Acquisition Strategy and pending outcomes, update the park provision and minimum park size policies in the Official Plan.	✓		
7	Maintain an up-to-date and comprehensive inventory of all parks and park assets (including parkland, open space, and sites under municipal influence) to improve ability to assess current and future supplies.	✓	✓	✓
8	Explore partnership opportunities with school boards, the GRCA, and other public agencies to allow and/or continue to allow community use of recreational facilities owned by other organizations.	✓	✓	✓
9	Explore partnership opportunities with the private sector for project funding and sponsorships. As part of this work, ensure equitable prioritization of departmental work is maintained.		✓	
10	At the 10-year update to the PRMP, include land needs and content covered in the Park Plan in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan as one overall strategic document.			✓
11	Continue to improve climate change resiliency through the incorporation of sustainable and Low Impact Development (LID) features into the design of new or renewed parks.	✓	✓	✓

	Recommendation	Short (1-4 years)	Medium (5-9 years)	Long (10+ years)
12	Continue to consult the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) on park development projects.	✓	✓	✓
13	If fitness equipment is requested during community engagement for neighbourhood parks, consider utilizing signage to encourage fitness rather than dedicated outdoor equipment.	✓	✓	✓
14	Explore creative solutions to providing a dynamic youth/adult fitness park as a specialized destination facility within the park system. Engage the community on what type of facility is preferred.		✓	
15	Continue to promote awareness of the fitness classes the City offers in park settings.	✓	✓	✓
16	During the design process for individual parks, assess demand and available space for community gardens.	✓	✓	✓
17	Seek to align new community garden locations with other park facilities that use water, for water and capital cost efficiency.	✓	✓	✓
18	During the construction of new parks or renovation of existing parks, every effort should be made to include new trees for shade. Proactively seek opportunities to increase tree canopy in parks.	✓	✓	✓
19	Install shade structures in the following circumstances when possible: at water play facilities; at playgrounds with rubber surfacing; and at specialized facilities like skateboard parks, bike parks, amusement rides, and dog parks.	✓	✓	✓
20	Continue to pursue coordination of park stewardship activities and build new partnerships with volunteers.	✓	✓	✓
21	Develop a memorial program that provides opportunities for residents to donate furnishings or trees in memorial to enhance public parks.	✓		
22	Develop a Sports Field Strategy that will optimize sports field service levels.	✓		
23	Monitor use and demand of the new cricket ground at Riverside Park, disc golf facilities, and lawn bowling facilities.	✓	✓	✓

	Recommendation	Short (1-4 years)	Medium (5-9 years)	Long (10+ years)
24	Rebuild the driveway entrance to the Guelph Lake Sports Fields to address ongoing stormwater management and flooding issues.			✓
25	Renovate Drew Park basketball court.	✓		
26	Construct 11 new outdoor tennis and pickleball courts. Consider constructing dedicated tennis and pickleball facilities.	✓	✓	✓
27	Evaluate the impacts of climate change on the Outdoor Ice Rink Program and identify strategies to fulfill community ice rink needs in other ways, including but not limited to synthetic ice and refrigerated rinks in key locations. Consideration should be given to capital cost, as well as maintenance and operational requirements.	✓		
28	Investigate the implementation of a multi-use outdoor sport facility with boards to accommodate ice hockey, ball hockey and lacrosse.		✓	
29	Construct one major skateboard park in an area south of the Speed River.		✓	
30	Construct four skateboard nodes. The skateboard nodes may be implemented in smaller parks to fill distribution gaps or areas of need.	✓	✓	✓
31	Evaluate the ability to add lighting at Silvercreek Skateboard Park.	✓		
32	When the lawn bowling green is nearing the end of its service life, the City should undertake a master plan exercise for the portion of Royal City Park east of Gordon Street. In consultation with the Lawn Bowling Club consider whether facility should be re-located. Consideration should be given to the settling period required for new bowling greens to ensure minimal disruption to the Club's operations and opportunities for play.			✓
33	Construct two new rubber surfaced playgrounds: one at University Village Park and one in the northwest portion of the city.	✓	✓	
34	Continue to monitor capital investment against operational and maintenance costs to ensure optimal life cycle of playground assets.	✓	✓	✓

	Recommendation	Short (1-4 years)	Medium (5-9 years)	Long (10+ years)
35	Convert wading pools at Exhibition Park and Sunny Acres Park to splash pads. Engage the community about replacement of these assets when they are nearing the end of their service life.	✓	✓	
36	Implement two new permanent restrooms in the southeast portion of the city. Water bottle refill stations should be included in the building designs. As park restrooms are built or renovated, consideration for all-season access should be evaluated.			✓
37	Identify locations throughout the park system to add more public benches and seating. Consult with the AAC on location of seating and rest areas along pathways in parks. Consider creative ways of financing these benches including naming rights, sponsorships, and donations.	✓	✓	✓
38	Ensure that adequate signage with park names and addresses exists at all City parks. These signs should be restored or replaced when they deteriorate.	✓	✓	✓
39	Develop a parks asset management plan that identifies inventory, condition, anticipated service life and replacement costs of park amenities that can be forecasted in the corporate budget. The asset management plan should continually monitor community need and identify opportunities for re-locating and re-purposing facilities to serve changing demands.	✓		
40	Develop a framework and resources to secure adequate and ongoing funding for the repair, renewal and replacement of aging parks, amenities and infrastructure.	✓		
41	Continue to look for opportunities to strategically pair growth projects with maintenance and replacement projects for cost savings. Identify opportunities to integrate service level improvements and expansion into maintenance and renewal projects.	✓	✓	✓
42	Develop a Park Manual as a resource for City of Guelph staff, consultants, and the development community.	✓		
43	Develop a new standard condition for Development Agreements that outlines developer responsibilities should they build parks for the City.	✓		
44	Regularly update the City's website with detailed information on amenities, type of experience, pathway surface material, and playground surface material in each park.	✓	✓	✓

	Recommendation	Short (1-4 years)	Medium (5-9 years)	Long (10+ years)
45	Improve services through more effective use of technology and available data. Continue to improve data collection through the use of digital benchmarking tools, data management and reporting standards.	✓	✓	✓
46	Develop digital tools and strategies that help people find and explore Guelph's parks and open spaces.	✓		
47	Establish Service Guelph as the first point of contact for parks inquiries.	✓	✓	✓
48	Develop a centralized database that tracks previous parkland conveyances and cash-in-lieu payments in one location as an internal resource for park planning staff. Continue to update the database as parkland conveyances and cash-in-lieu payments are made.	✓		
49	Digitize all previously approved Draft Plans of Subdivision. Map the boundaries of all previously approved Draft Plans as an internal resource for park planning staff. Continue to update the database as Draft Plans are approved.	✓		
50	Develop a GIS database of existing underground services in parks as an internal resource for parks staff. Continue to update the database as new services are installed in parks.		✓	
51	Investigate the need and practicality of a booking system for drop-in rentals of court sports. Consider an online option for booking and viewing court availability and tools to communicate this at the facilities.		✓	
Parks and Recreation				
52	Develop a special event framework to establish criteria to equitably balance community needs and priorities.		✓	
53	Evaluate the City's Facility Allocation Policy and distribution processes to optimize use and ensure balanced and equitable distribution of recreation facilities.	✓		
54	Using priority initiative zone mapping, install four Activation Stations in identified priority parks to increase community participation and year-round park animation for all ages and abilities.	✓	✓	✓
55	Increase City provision of park-based recreation programming, including equipment lending, to support community participation and year-round animation for all ages and abilities.	✓	✓	✓

	Recommendation	Short (1-4 years)	Medium (5-9 years)	Long (10+ years)
56	Develop a data collection and evaluation plan for City indoor and outdoor facility bookings to improve performance management and facility optimization, balance distribution of use, identify areas for priority initiatives and investment, and inform future facility development and provisioning.		✓	
57	Develop a decision-making framework that outlines the process for evaluating and responding to special requests received from the community.		✓	
Recreation				
58	Incorporate reusable bottle vending machines into Recreation budget to ensure sustainability of the initiative and continued role modeling of healthy behaviours in recreation facilities.	✓		
59	Investigate healthy food and beverage options and policies for City recreation facilities.	✓		
60	Continue to monitor and respond to trends and the ever-changing definition of recreation to ensure programming for diverse audiences in Guelph.	✓	✓	✓
61	Develop a Recreation Promotions strategy, incorporating multiple formats, translation of materials, and community outreach, to complement the department's current online catalogue.	✓		
62	Adopt the proposed Service Delivery Model to increase access to and supportive opportunities for community recreation and health-focused programming.	✓		
63	Install Indigenous and cultural art, signage and plantings in recreation facilities.	✓	✓	
64	Collaborate with the City's Culture Department and local Indigenous and BIPOC artists to establish inclusive art installations in Recreation facilities.	✓	✓	
65	Through strategic investment or renovation, add new amenities or features inside and outside recreation facilities that promote unstructured play and placemaking in order to create welcoming, safe, playful spaces that can be used in many different ways.	✓	✓	✓
66	Permanently install Sensory Rooms in Victoria Road Recreation Centre and West End Community Centre to improve inclusive services and participation in Recreation facilities.	✓		

	Recommendation	Short (1-4 years)	Medium (5-9 years)	Long (10+ years)
67	Conduct feasibility study of aging Recreation facilities to evaluate improved service level potential with renovations, renewals or repurposing.		✓	
68	Investigate options to increase municipal indoor pool inventory based on projected service level deficits beyond 2033.		✓	
69	Conduct a site feasibility study to investigate expansion and/or repurposing of Lyon Pool to improve service level potential through renovations, renewal or repurposing.	✓		
70	Develop and implement a Recreation Facility Optimization Strategy to maximize use and potential of existing City Recreation facilities.		✓	
71	Collect registration data from user groups to better understand community use and demand for indoor recreation facilities.	✓		
72	Adopt provision targets for indoor recreation facilities that are based on the number of registered participants in City and community organization programs rather than total population to plan in line with community demand and facility utilization.		✓	
73	Continue to explore and evaluate emerging trends in aquatic infrastructure and programming – especially those targeting youth and young adults – to address identified demographic gaps in service.	✓	✓	✓
74	Through strategic investment, add new aquatics amenities or features that encourage participation – especially for youth and young adults.	✓	✓	✓
75	Initiate a Recreation staffing model assessment and employee training and incentive programs to identify efficiencies and strategic opportunities to address program and service level vulnerabilities.	✓		
76	Continue to explore creative partnerships to increase qualified staffing levels and support the professional and/or academic development of Recreation staff.	✓	✓	✓
77	Develop an IDEA strategy in collaboration with local service providers and equity deserving communities to better understand and address barriers to aquatic participation and increase aquatics opportunities for equity deserving individuals and communities.	✓		
78	Incorporate recreation sampling into Recreation service delivery and develop a series of low-cost, low-commitment “try-it” activities to introduce community members to City recreation programs.	✓		

	Recommendation	Short (1-4 years)	Medium (5-9 years)	Long (10+ years)
79	Investigate including free “try-it” activities as part of Welcome to Guelph Program.	✓		
80	Increase provision of drop-in recreation programs to accommodate growing demand for spontaneous recreation options and activities.	✓	✓	
81	Continue to provide recreation programming in schools and other community spaces to increase the reach and geographic distribution of City recreation services.	✓	✓	✓
82	Collaborate with Parks, Planning and Environmental Planning to align actions and improve outcomes in the Guelph Trails Master Plan and Natural Heritage Action Plan.	✓	✓	✓
83	Continue to explore partnerships and collaborations focused on expanding and enhancing recreation opportunities for the community.	✓	✓	✓
84	Explore collaborations with the City Culture Department to leverage existing facilities to increase community recreation opportunities and address service deficits.	✓	✓	
85	Increase Inclusion service levels to reflect broader community demographics.	✓		
86	Undertake a comprehensive equity mapping process to establish priority initiative areas for recreation investment and engagement, including the development of low-barrier recreation programming.	✓		
87	Adopt and implement the proposed four-phase Program Delivery Model to improve Recreation’s service continuum, more equitably distribute recreation resources across the city, and increase access to supported recreation for community members.	✓	✓	
88	Develop a comprehensive program evaluation plan to establish meaningful performance measures and ensure the updated Program Delivery Model meets service expectations and community needs.		✓	
89	Continue work outlined in the Think Youth Strategy and implement youth-driven initiatives to maintain Guelph’s designation as a youth-friendly city.	✓		
90	Re-initiate the Support Through Engagement in Programs and Sport (STEPS) program, as directed in the 2013-2018 Think Youth Strategy, to deliver recreation programs for at-risk youth and youth experiencing homelessness.	✓		

	Recommendation	Short (1-4 years)	Medium (5-9 years)	Long (10+ years)
91	Update the City's Youth Strategy to understand and support the evolving needs and interests of local youth, and developing initiatives to improve sustained engagement in recreation, healthy behaviours and civic participation.	✓		
92	Continue work outlined in the Older Adult Strategy and implement seniors-driven initiatives to maintain Guelph's designation as an Age Friendly City.	✓		
93	Improve geographic distribution of older adult programs to ensure programs are offered throughout the whole city.	✓		
94	Investigate designating the South End Community Centre as a Seniors Active Living Centre.	✓		
95	Update the City's Older Adult Strategy – reframing as an Age Friendly Strategy to better align with current industry language and terminology – to understand and support the evolving needs of older adults and ensure the City remains a great place to live and age well.	✓		
96	Promote and support the City's Micro-granting program, to increase grassroots and community-led arts and recreation opportunities.	✓		
97	Initiate the Development of a Recreation-focused Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility Strategy.	✓		



■ Monitoring success

An important part of the PRMP is understanding what success looks like and what specific measures can be used to determine success. Some key performance indicators will be measured in larger corporate initiatives identified in the Strategic Plan's Action Plan and Performance Measure Framework, including, percent of current assets that provide satisfactory levels of service, percent of residents who perceive themselves to be safe in the city and percent citizens expressing a sense of belonging to Guelph.

It is also important to measure how objectives of the PRMP are being met. Collecting and managing data about parks and recreation will help monitor and evaluate the plan's success. The PRMP recommends improving data collection and evaluation for indoor and outdoor facilities to inform facility performance, opportunities for optimization, and benchmarking. The Parks and Recreation departments will continue to assess, maintain and use collected data to support capital and operating practices. Measuring and regularly monitoring how the city is providing services to the community will be an important part of this plan moving forward. As part of a data management program, performance measures should be developed and tracked regularly. Potential performance measures can include:



Per cent of people within a ten-minute walk of a park (500-800 metres);



Per cent of parks with walking paths;



Amount of parkland or cash-in-lieu of parkland acquired per year;



Per cent of facilities in fair or good condition;



Per cent of residents accessing recreation programs and services; and



Total hours parks and recreation facilities are booked and used

The success of the PRMP will be reported as the plan is monitored and evaluated. A review and update of the master plan is planned for 2028 at the five-year mark. A five-year review may include revisiting goals, priorities and aligning work plans with a future Strategic Plan or new opportunities. A full master plan update is recommended in 2033.





■ Financial implications

Investment will be required to support the vision, core values and recommendations of the PRMP over the next ten years and beyond. Some of the recommendations of the PRMP will have little financial impact as they can easily be incorporated into existing workplans or processes, however, other recommendations will need investment from the City's capital and operating budgets or other funding strategies.

The capital and operating budgets are the tools for Council to set and manage the pace and extent to which the plan is implemented. The PRMP will be aligned with the existing capital and operating plans, providing consideration to current fiscal constraints and the City's capacity to deliver. The financial information included in this section is intended to be a high-level estimate that will be refined as it is incorporated into the overall corporate plan and multi-year budget process. For capital investments, costs have been identified over the next 10 years instead of showing 'peaks' and 'valleys' that might be expected. The annual capital and operating budgets will be approved through the City's multi-year budget program.

Adjustments to the priorities and sequencing of projects over the lifespan of the plan is inevitable. The PRMP needs to be flexible and able to respond to new opportunities and changes as they arise.

Capital budget

Park and Recreation capital projects are paid for through a combination of municipal tax revenues, development charges (DCs) and third-party sources. The funding strategies in the City’s capital budget are Growth, Service Enhancement, and Infrastructure Renewal. Many times, a project is a combination of many funding strategies including portions funded from Growth, Infrastructure Renewal and Service Enhancement funds.

To simplify, many new parks and recreation amenities in growing areas are made possible through the Growth Funding Strategy. Parks and recreation amenities in existing areas are typically funded through Service Enhancement if it expands existing service delivery. Replacement of existing facilities is funded through Infrastructure Renewal.

Impact of provincial legislative changes

To increase housing supply in Ontario, the Province enacted Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act in November 2022. Bill 23 has reduced municipal revenues from development charges, parkland dedication fees and community benefit charges which are important revenue sources to support growth related infrastructure. This increases the portion of growth-related costs funded through taxes and significantly impacts existing property taxpayers. It also significantly reduces the amount of land municipalities can acquire through development for parks and recreation. Understanding the ongoing changes and impacts of Bill 23 will be an important part of future budget planning.

As future capital budgets are prepared it is important that Growth Funding Strategies are maximized. For park and recreation capital projects outside growth areas, it will be important to use a variety of tools and strategies and to

optimize facilities through renovation and renewal. Funding decisions should be responsible by exploring new funding options, service delivery models and partnerships to ease the tax burden for residents and businesses.

Land acquisition

There may be times that the City needs to strategically purchase land for parks or recreation facilities—for example the future park identified in the Downtown Secondary Plan. Strategic land acquisitions can be financed from funds collected through Parkland Dedication or using other funding strategies. As part of a future Parkland Acquisition Strategy, funding strategic land purchases, land acquisition tools and policies will be examined.

Parks and Recreation capital costs

The Parks and recreation capital costs shown in Table 3 will support the addition of new parks and recreation amenities and intensification of parks to maintain service levels as the population grows. Table 3 represents costs for the recommendations of the PRMP and is not representative of the entire Parks and Recreation budgets. It does not include initiatives or priorities included in other Council approved master plans, such as the Guelph Trail Master Plan, or outcomes from future plans such as the Sports Field Strategy or Parkland Acquisition Strategy. The costs include policy creation, planning, design and construction.

Table 3: Capital costs for PRMP initiatives

	Capital cost over life of the plan
Growth	\$1,300,000
Service Enhancement	\$11,150,000
Infrastructure Renewal	\$4,800,000
Total	\$17,250,000

Operating budget

As new parks and recreation facilities are constructed, there are additional costs needed to operate and maintain facilities. Operating costs are based on many factors including the facility type, level of use, access, equipment needs and staffing. For these reasons, projections of future operating costs are necessarily imprecise and general. Investment is focused on maintaining service delivery as the community grows.

Operations resources

As park and recreation facilities, services and programs expand, so will the resources needed to maintain service levels. The City expects that over the next 10 years the current complement of part-time staff, full-time staff and resources will need to increase proportionally with expansion of the park and recreation system. Along with this expansion, the community development and equity-focused initiatives and recreation service level deficits identified in the PRMP will need operational investments to be successfully implemented. An informed review of these projections will be performed annually based on specific operational needs as part of the budget review process.

Investment in the community

One of the goals of the PRMP is 'working together with the community.' This is also reflected in the City's Strategic Plan. There may be times that funding is needed to help develop partnerships or to explore new service-delivery models with local organizations, private partners, schools or resident groups. Exploring new funding options, service-delivery models and partnerships can help ease the burden on taxpayers and provide community ownership of the plan. Partnership can also provide needed services that would otherwise be unavailable due to financial or resource limitations. No funding has been identified for this in the plan, but funding may be needed in the future.

Appendix A: Community engagement summary

A robust community engagement process was delivered to ensure that the Parks and Recreation Master Plan reflects community opinions and priorities for future parks and recreation needs. Community engagement built on the previous work of the Community Plan and Strategic Plans, and where possible, community feedback from related City projects and initiatives was captured. Specifically, feedback collected as part of the 2022 Park Plan and the 2019 Parkland Dedication Bylaw update was used to help inform the PRMP.

Efforts were taken to consult with a broad range of Guelph residents and organizations across various geographic areas and demographic groups. It is important to note that survey and community feedback data is one source of information that helps paint one picture, but this data is checked against other statistically valid sources like the City's Citizen Satisfaction Survey, public health data and demographic information.

Listening opportunities

A variety of engagement activities were offered over the course of the master plan development, including:

- 4 Community surveys;
- 2 Public open houses;
- 3 Community workshops;
- 2 Community focus groups;
- 1 Developer focus group;
- 1 Sport user group meeting;
- 15 Parks and recreation facility pop-ups;
- 5 Community pop-ups;

- 5 Presentations to Advisory Committees of Council, including the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Natural Heritage Advisory Committee;
- 1 Brainstorming session with over 300 children in grades 2-5 during the City's Local Government Week visits;
- 10 Internal participant workshops with key municipal departments;
- 10 Individual community group meetings with Youth Council, Youth Providers Committee, Local Immigration Partnership, Upper Grand District School Board, Guelph Neighbourhood Support Coalition, and Indigenous nations; and
- 1 Virtual Sharing Circle as part of an ongoing relationship building initiative with community members of First Nations, Inuit, Métis and mixed Indigenous ancestry. The conversation was themed around parks and outdoor spaces.

Community feedback

Community engagement periods were aligned to the four phases of the master planning process. The following are key highlights from each of the four phases of community engagement.

Phase 1: Project kick-off (summer 2019)

The purpose for the first phase of engagement was to learn how the community uses parks and recreation facilities and to understand the community perception of the system's strengths and weaknesses. The City hosted several events including open houses and meetings with internal and external interested parties. Community members were also invited to participate in an online survey and complete a poll with City staff in key locations throughout the city. Sport user groups were invited to participate in a sports-specific user group survey.

In total during this phase, feedback from 677 individuals or groups was received. Below are a few key themes that were brought up during this phase of engagement.

- Overwhelmingly, Guelph residents value green spaces including parkland and trails;
- Ensure accessibility of spaces and facilities (specifically people with mobility issues and autism);
- Provide transit access to parks and recreation facilities;
- Provide a variety of outdoor recreation amenities including basketball courts, disc golf, tennis courts, pickleball courts, outdoor fitness equipment, outdoor rinks, dog parks and splash pads;
- Provide washrooms and water fountains in parks;
- Provide games in parks (table tennis, chess, horseshoe pits, bocce);
- Interest in parkland inventory and achieving parkland targets;
- Invest in aging infrastructure;
- Interest in different models for recreation programming

(drop-in versus scheduled classes, parent and child classes);

- Provide naturalized areas and shade in parks;
- Build the South End Community Centre; and
- Provide easy access to relevant information including mapping and advertising of programs and facilities.

Key findings from the survey included:

- 83 per cent of respondents stated that they used parks for walking or exercise, with the next highest use of parks being: to meet with friends (47.2 per cent); to use the playground facilities (46.5 per cent); to cycle (45.7 per cent); and to walk their dog (44.2 per cent).
- 32.7 per cent of respondents use indoor recreation facilities once or twice a week. 23.6 per cent of respondents use these facilities seasonally.
- 59 per cent of respondents use outdoor recreation facilities either daily or once/twice a week, with the remaining respondents only using the facilities monthly, seasonally, or for special events.
- 70 per cent of respondents stated that they used indoor recreation facilities for aquatics, with the next highest use being: camps (18 per cent); children/youth programs (18 per cent); and adult programs (17 per cent). 35 per cent of respondents also stated that they use these facilities as part of other, non-City run programs like basketball.
- Program scheduling (37 per cent), lack of interest in services offered (22.5 per cent) and high program fees (22.5 per cent) are some of the most common barriers that prevent respondents from using the City's indoor recreation facilities.

Phase 2: Identifying priorities (fall 2019-winter 2020)

The intent for the second phase of engagement was to dig a little deeper on key themes that emerged in Phase 1 to understand community priorities. For this phase, PRMP engagement was merged with Guelph Trail Master Plan engagement to make it easier for residents to provide feedback on trails, parks and recreation together. The City hosted several events including internal workshops, presentations to the Accessibility Advisory Committee, a sport user group meeting, and a brainstorming session with children in grades 2-5. Community members were also invited to participate in an online survey and complete a poll with City staff in key locations throughout the city.

In total during this phase, feedback from 1,051 individuals or groups was received. Below are a few key themes that were brought up during this phase of engagement.

- Focus efforts on creating a healthy community that serves all ages, backgrounds, income levels and abilities;
- Invest in City infrastructure to encourage daily exercise;
- Make recreation affordable to for all to provide better access to all income levels;
- Install more low-cost/free park amenities for informal play like disc golf, cross country ski trails, bocce ball, pick-up sports or other similar features;
- Make facilities multi-purpose and provide half-ice rinks/ice dividers to increase ice time;
- Build the South End Community Centre;
- Encourage all-season use of parks and provide relevant amenities year-round;

- Provide more washrooms and water fountains in key locations and parks; and
- Plant more trees in parks to provide shade for users and contribute to other environmental benefits

Key findings from the survey included:

- 86 per cent of respondents find it easy to get information about City programs, services and facilities. People prefer to use online sources to get information like the City's website, the Guelph Community Guide online and/or the City's Facebook or Twitter. 35 per cent of respondents prefer a print form of the Guelph Community Guide, and 21 per cent of respondents people prefer learning about programs in-person at recreation centres.
- 45 per cent of respondents prefer a drop-in (pay-as-you-go) style of programming and 16.9 per cent prefer membership based programming to fit a more flexible lifestyle or to make participating in recreation programs more affordable.
- About 67 per cent of respondents believe that the price they pay for recreation is a good value for their money. 75 per cent of respondents either agree or strongly agree that registered aquatic programs are a good value, and 61 per cent believe that ice programs, fitness programs and general interest programs are good value. Less than 1 per cent of people don't believe that Guelph's programs and services provide good value for money.
- 59 per cent of respondents believe that free satellite-based programming like Activation Stations is important and 64.7 per cent of respondents believe the City should develop more of these programs for all ages. Only 22.5 per cent of respondents would be interested in paying a small fee for this service.

- 88.2 per cent of respondents feel that they live close enough to a park and 72.9 per cent of respondents use the park that is closest to them most often. For 27.1 per cent of respondents that don't use the park closest to them, the popular reasons include: preference for destination parks; preference for larger parks; preference for parks with specific amenities/features; preference for a specific type of park (natural or sports fields); and preference for parks with more shade.
- According to respondents the top three priorities for the future of our park and open spaces are: 1) connecting parks with trails, sidewalk or greenways, 2) obtaining more land for parks in the form of small pocket parks in existing areas, and 3) adding more trails in existing parks and natural areas.
- 92.4 per cent of respondents believe naturalization in parks and open spaces is important. Many people believe we should be improving our existing natural areas (NHS) and including unmown areas or more tree canopy in our parks.
- Similar to the results in phase one, almost half of people believe that adding or improving trails is the best way to provide recreation in our community for adults, youth and seniors. The other top popular amenities include: dog parks, an all season rink with boards and a ninja obstacle course or outdoor fitness equipment.

Phase 3: Park Plan development (fall 2021-winter 2022)

The third phase of engagement focused specifically on land needs and parkland planning. The City hosted several events including two community focus groups, one developer focus group, meetings with school boards and the GRCA, internal meetings, meetings with Indigenous Nations, and a virtual sharing circle for Urban Indigenous residents in Guelph. Community members were also invited to participate in an online survey.

In total during this phase, feedback from 426 individuals or groups were received. Below are a few key themes that were brought up during this phase of engagement.

- Protecting parks and creating new parks were the top ranked park development goals by survey and focus group participants;
- Upgrading parks was the third highest ranking goal from survey respondents; focus group participants chose adding new park features in existing parks;
- "Plan activities in parks" was the lowest ranking goal by survey and focus group participants;
- Areas with high population density, areas of high socioeconomic need and areas with few parks were the top three ranked priorities for locating new parks by participants at both focus group sessions;
- Parkland dedication (land or cash-in-lieu to buy parks) from developers and home builders was the preferred way for the City to acquire more parks, with an emphasis on acquiring land. Repurposing existing City land was the second preferred option. Leasing land and purchasing land with tax dollars were the two lowest ranking methods;

- People want parks to be accessible for all members of the community. This includes having parks accessible via bus routes, as well as appropriate surfaces and equipment, particularly for those using mobility devices or strollers;
- Attract people and visitors to parks by hosting events — markets, craft fairs, concerts, movies etc.;
- People want to see trails and parks linked throughout the city; and
- Creative financing tools and legacy contributions were identified as possible ways to acquire more parkland.

Developers also had a range of creative suggestions for Guelph parks:

- Urban squares are a unique way to provide recreational opportunities;
- Parks could be built on top of stormwater management tanks, allowing the land to be used for dual purposes;
- Incorporate trails and vistas around stormwater ponds;
- Use utility corridors for trail connections and recreation opportunities;
- Incorporate heritage of the site to tell the history of the city (buildings, signage and trail markers, sculptures); and
- Use technology to enhance the experience (e.g., guided tours, connecting trails).

Phase 4: Parks and Recreation Master Plan development (summer 2022)

The intent of the fourth and final phase of engagement was to verify feedback received from engagement that was done prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, recognizing that community opinions might have changed. This phase of engagement further explored community priorities for parks and recreation facilities, layering in land constraints identified through the Park Plan. The City hosted several events including open houses and meetings with internal and external interested parties. Community members were also invited to participate in an online survey and complete a poll with City staff in key locations throughout the city.

In total during this phase, feedback from 538 individuals or groups was received. Below are a few key themes that were brought up during this phase of engagement.

- Upgrades to existing fields so they can be used by more groups or later in the day/season was the preferred option to address demand for sports fields and facilities. Adding sports fields to smaller neighbourhood parks was the least preferred option.
- Recognizing that some bookable park amenities like sports fields and shade structures draw people from beyond local neighbourhoods, the community preferred to make use of street parking near parks, rather than building parking lots in parks.
- Recognizing land constraints, 68 per cent of survey respondents stated that it is appropriate to introduce bookable sports fields or courts into smaller neighbourhood parks, where they are not typically located, to increase the provision of amenities city-wide.
- Reducing fees during quieter times was ranked as the

best (36 per cent) policy consideration to encourage use of bookable parks and recreation facilities during non-primetime hours; followed by fee adjustments and/or subsidies to support low-cost; grassroots and community-driven recreation activities (30 per cent); designating time and space for new, emerging and underserved groups (19 per cent); and increasing prime time fees (12 per cent).

- Residents prefer a highly developed park system with lots of amenities over a vast park system that includes unmaintained and natural parks, and a system of well-distributed parks.
- Inconvenient schedules, lack of programs of interest, access to facilities, and affordability were identified as the biggest barriers to participation in recreation activities.
- 'Try-it' for free days was the highest ranking (26 per cent) initiative to encourage people to participate in recreation activities; followed by drop-in activities (24 per cent); programs offered in community spaces (20 per cent); equipment lending (17 per cent); meet-and-greet events with recreation staff (7 per cent); and dedicated support staff to provide orientation before programs begin (6 per cent).

Indigenous engagement

As part of Phase 3 engagement and the development of the Park Plan, correspondence was sent to Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River, Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Grand River Métis Council. Following this correspondence engagement meetings with representatives of the Six Nations of the Grand River and the Grand River Métis Council were held virtually in January and February 2022. City staff also participated in a virtual Sharing Circle as part of an ongoing relationship building initiative with community members of First Nation, Inuit, Métis and mixed Indigenous ancestry. The conversation was themed around parks and outdoor spaces.

Themes that were shared by representatives of Indigenous Nations and people of Indigenous ancestry were:

- Importance of preservation, enhancement and conservation of ecosystems and rivers;
- Importance of Indigenous plantings in the landscape;
- Creating indoor and outdoor spaces for Indigenous celebration and gathering; and
- Recognizing or reinterpreting cultural landmarks and inclusion of art by Indigenous artists in public spaces.

Accessibility Advisory Committee engagement

City staff met with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) on four occasions through the development of the PRMP. Below is a summary of feedback received from the AAC:

What is working well in City of Guelph Parks and Recreation?

- Riverside Park enabling gardens
- Water therapy programming
- Royal Recreation and Trans-Canada Trails are in good condition
- Riverside Park playground

What is not working well in City of Guelph Parks and Recreation?

- Need an indoor walking track
- Wood chips on playgrounds can be difficult to navigate
- Need more adult recreation programming and swimming opportunities
- Need more accessible activities at the Evergreen Seniors Community Centre
- Some parks do not have accessible paths to amenities
- Some park pathways are deteriorating and becoming difficult to navigate
- Better signage is needed about accessibility of trail segments before starting the trail
- More rest areas along pathways are needed

City staff received three motions from the AAC for the PRMP

project, including:

- That Parks Planning meet with the AAC Site Plan Sub-Committee regarding recommendations for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. These recommendations shall be made back to the AAC in June 2020.
- That the AAC supports the adoption of a geographic distribution of playgrounds with rubber surface within 2.5 km of residential areas. Further, the AAC supports the implementation of two new rubber surface playgrounds to fill distribution gaps in the central and north-west areas of the City.
- That the AAC receive the draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan when it is posted for public review and provide feedback during the public review period. That the liaison follow-up with the AAC via email on the public review period. And that Parks Planning return to the AAC as the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is implemented.

Natural Heritage Advisory Committee engagement

City staff met virtually with the Natural Heritage Advisory Committee on May 13, 2021, during the development of the Park Plan. The following discussion questions were asked of participants:

- Do you agree that the Natural Heritage System has recreational value?
- How should the city connect people to nature?

The following formal comments were provided as part of the meeting minutes:

- Consider including 'biodiversity' in the operational definition of the Guelph Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- We want to ensure that increased impacts to natural areas do not result from natural areas being considered 'parks' and/or part of a 'park continuum'.
- We want to have more naturalized spaces and pollinator gardens in the Open Space System to provide 'transition zones' between parks and natural areas.
- We want to build the appreciation and protection of natural areas through education, including the use of signage, technology, community programs, trail ambassadors, Park Rangers and knowledgeable Staff at parks.



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City of Guelph Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment



August 2023



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Introduction

The Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment was completed as part of Guelph's Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP) to identify gaps and opportunities among the City's indoor and outdoor recreation facilities. The purpose of this assessment is to recommend evidence-based provisioning of park and recreation assets so the City can allocate appropriate resources toward these facilities through the budget process.

This assessment projects recreation needs up to 2051, with actionable recommendations being made within a 10-year window to 2033, when the City's population is estimated to be 180,500¹. In addition to growth, changing trends, demographics and community input are considered in this analysis to ensure that the City provides service levels that are reflective of the community's needs.

The scope of this project includes assessment of recreation facilities that are owned by the City of Guelph and facilities where the City has agreements with third party owners, such as school boards and the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA). The following asset types are included in the project scope:

- Baseball and softball diamonds;
- Rectangular fields;
- Cricket grounds;
- Basketball courts;
- Tennis and pickleball courts;
- Sand volleyball courts;
- Running tracks;
- Skate parks and bike parks;
- Disc golf courses;
- Outdoor rinks;
- Lawn bowling greens;
- Fitness stations;
- Playgrounds;
- Splash pads and wading pools;
- Community gardens;
- Dog parks and leash-free areas;
- Picnic shelters and shade;
- Permanent restrooms;
- Water refill stations;
- Indoor aquatics facilities;
- Outdoor aquatics facilities;
- Ice pads;
- Gymnasiums and auditoriums; and
- Indoor turf facilities.

Facilities owned by private recreation providers, such as the University of Guelph and the YMCA, are not part of the scope of this assessment.

¹ 2033 population estimate is based on a straight-line interpolation using Statistics Canada 2021 census and *Shaping Guelph: Growth Management Strategy* growth projections

Guelph Context

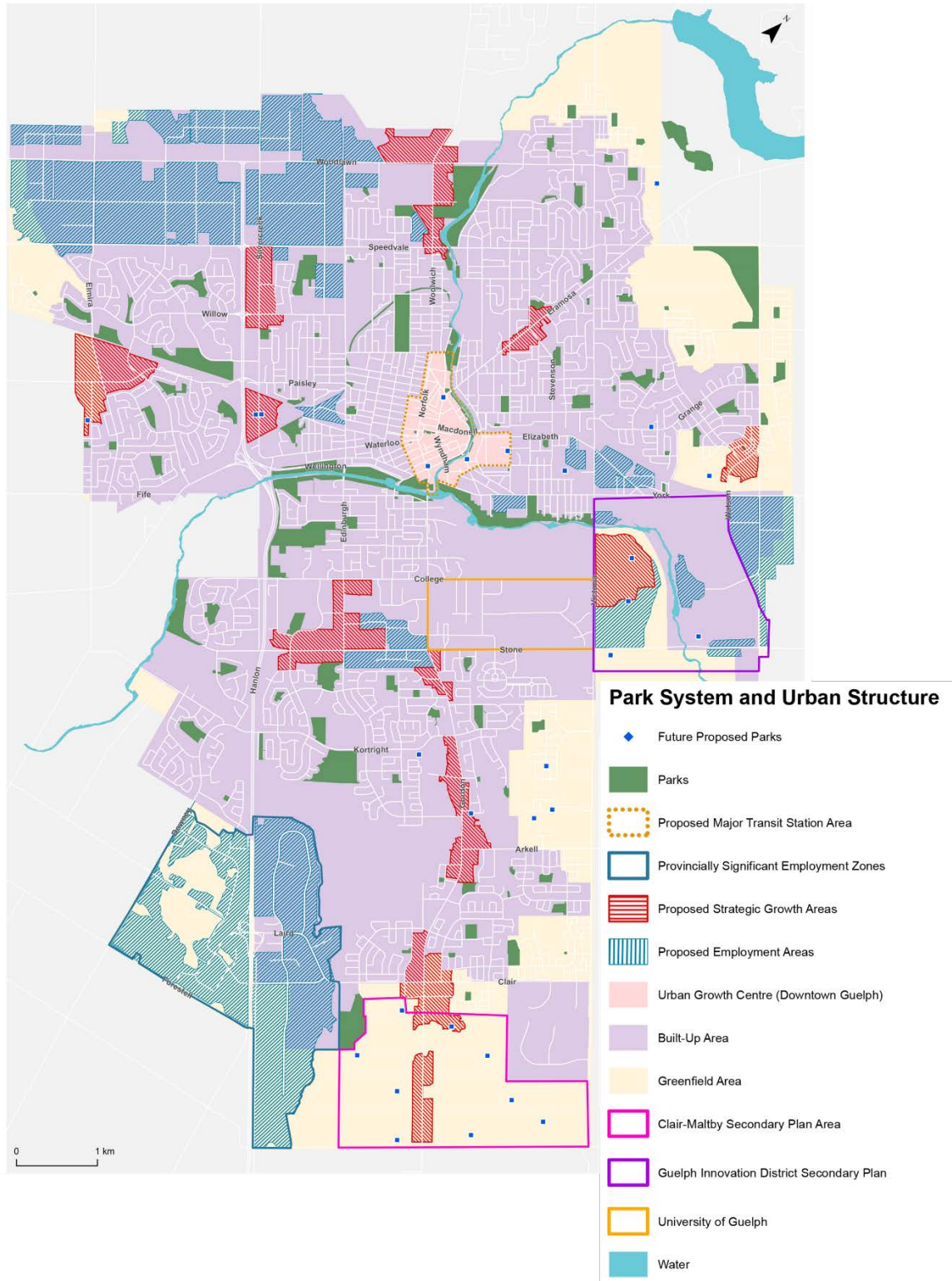
Guelph is growing rapidly. The population is forecasted to increase by over 60,000 people by 2051.² Guelph is also changing. It is becoming more diverse by welcoming a growing share of young adults and new families through immigration, and the proportion of older adults is forecasted to increase.³ Guelph will continue to grow through both greenfield development in the secondary plan areas of the Guelph Innovation District, Clair-Maltby and the future Dolime Quarry area, as well as through intensification of Strategic Growth Areas, as shown in Figure 1. These changes will result in more demand on parks and recreation facilities.

The City's role as a recreation service provider is to fill the local demand for introductory and intermediate level facilities to support life-long participation in sports and recreation for a wide range of people. In the past, the City has developed a few elite level outdoor sport facilities including Hastings Stadium, however going forward, Guelph is committed to providing equity and inclusiveness in our parks and recreation system and directing investment to where it is needed most. For this reason, the development of elite and high-performance sports fields and recreation facilities is not part of the City's mandate.

² City of Guelph, 2022, Shaping Guelph: Growth Management Strategy

³ City of Guelph, 2022, Shaping Guelph: Growth Management Strategy

Figure 1: Guelph's proposed urban structure and park system⁴



⁴ City of Guelph, 2022, *Guelph Park Plan: Guiding our Future Parkland System*

Challenges

Like most Ontario municipalities, Guelph is facing the challenge of accommodating park and recreation needs of more people as the population grows, with less land available for recreation purposes. Provincial changes to the Planning Act through Bill 23, the 'More Homes Built Faster Act' have exacerbated this challenge by reducing the amount of land municipalities can acquire through development. Additionally, half of Guelph's growth will occur as intensification in existing built-up areas, where there is limited supply of vacant land for new parks. These two factors mean the City is going to have less land to accommodate the service levels that residents have come to expect. Land securement is a major challenge that Guelph will need to resolve to implement the recreation facilities needed over the next 30 years.

Other challenges relating to recreation facilities include:

- Adjusting services to accommodate an aging and more diverse population;
- Accommodating a larger variety of unprogrammed activities and passive recreation with new infrastructure;
- Managing the community's expectations for costly infrastructure;
- Declining quality of natural turf as the sport season progresses due to highly booked fields and diamonds;
- Growing need for more sports fields, indoor facilities, and more prime-time availability;
- Accommodating user preferences for highly desired sports fields and recreation facilities;
- Accommodating emerging sport trends such as pickleball and cricket;
- Effects of climate change on outdoor facilities, including drought and flooding;
- Updating aging assets to current accessibility standards; and
- Increasing demand for supporting infrastructure such as washrooms, shade structures, and water bottle refill stations in parks.

In order to keep up with demand and increased pressure on recreation facilities, Guelph will need to develop long-term parks and recreation planning solutions that may include:

- Repurposing under-utilized facilities to address activities with greater need;
- Optimizing existing facilities to include lighting and/or irrigation where appropriate to increase usage potential;

- Optimizing existing facility use through programming, strategic partnerships and allocation processes to increase the potential of existing assets;
- Intensifying existing parks by adding new amenities as appropriate for the site and city-wide service levels;
- Developing multi-purpose and multi-sport facilities;
- Developing new partnerships with schools and other agencies to utilize their facilities; and
- Purchasing additional land for large sports fields.

Further evaluation of the need and cost-benefit of each of the above strategies will be undertaken in the future.

Method

To support evidence-based decision-making, this Needs Assessment used a variety of methods to analyze Guelph's recreation facility inventory and service level data. Each facility type was analyzed using the methods described below, and the results are summarized in the Recommendation Summary.

This Needs Assessment was prepared using a variety of data sources including:

- GIS inventory of park and recreation assets;
- GIS spatial analysis of park and recreation assets and registrations;
- Census data;
- Population growth projections;
- Park and recreation asset data from comparator municipalities;
- Community engagement data;
- City facility booking and program registration data; and
- Recreation facility condition assessments

Quality assessments of individual outdoor fields and assets were not a part of the scope of this Needs Assessment. A future sports field strategy is recommended to assess the quality, playability, safety and operating cost to maintain Guelph's sports facilities. The future study will make recommendations on how to optimize existing facilities to accommodate more playing time without compromising turf quality and maintenance.

Spatial analysis

A GIS spatial analysis was used to examine the distribution of outdoor recreation facilities across the city. This analysis highlighted geographic gaps where there may be needs for park and recreation assets. It should be noted that not all distribution gaps in amenities should be presumed to mean there is a need, as there are areas in the city that are mainly industrial and do not require the same level of service as residential areas. The Hanlon Creek Business Park and the northwest industrial portion of the city are areas where reduced park service levels may be acceptable in comparison to highly populated residential areas. Further, where there are distribution of gaps of certain facilities, but healthy supply of that facility type city-wide, a need may be identified, however it may not be a top priority. GIS analysis of City registered and drop-in programs was also used to understand geographic distribution of current participants in City recreation programming, identify areas of over and under-representation, and assess areas for future initiatives and investment.

Equity analysis

Building on the spatial analysis, park facility distribution was overlaid on the Park Equity Analysis map from the Council-approved Park Plan. This mapping exercise highlighted geographic gaps in park assets in relation to high populations of marginalized individuals. This analysis helped identify where the City may want to focus and prioritize efforts.

An examination of City recreation programs and services and locally identified barriers to access and participation was also undertaken to understand where the City's strengths lie and where there are challenges and/or opportunities to improve services for equity-deserving communities.

Growth analysis

Guelph's population is forecasted to increase by over 60,000 people by 2051. Increased population will put more pressure on the parks and recreation system and change provision levels. A growth analysis compared the City's current recreation service levels to the estimated population of 180,500 in 2033 and 208,000 in 2051 to demonstrate how many assets will be required to be added to the City's inventory in the future to accommodate growth if service level provisions are maintained.

Comparator municipality benchmarking

While there is no scientific data that recommends a precise service level for each type of park facility, comparing service levels to those of other municipalities can help determine appropriate provisioning. While benchmarking provides a level of understanding about where the City's service levels are deficient and where they

excel, it does not take into account each municipality's unique demographics, population, culture and trends. Accordingly, it is only appropriate that this data set be examined along with other analysis methods for a holistic understanding of park amenity provisioning.

Inventory data from Barrie, Burlington, Halton Hills, Kitchener, Markham, London, Ottawa, Richmond Hill, Waterloo, and Kingston was used for this exercise and compared against population data from the Statistics Canada 2021 Census to establish service levels. The above municipalities are part of the City of Guelph's Council-approved list of comparator municipalities and the City's Service Rationalization Review.

It is important to note that each municipality tracks their data differently. For example, some municipalities inventory basketball facilities by the total number of hoops, while others break down their inventories into full courts, half courts and shooting practise hoops. Recognizing variations in municipal databases, all attempts were made to standardize provision levels based on the information available. For this Needs Assessment, where a municipality identified zero or did not provide data for a particular asset type, that comparator was removed from the provision comparison so as not to skew the median result.

Community engagement analysis

A robust community engagement plan was developed for the PRMP to ensure that the final plan reflects community opinions and priorities. Community engagement built on the previous work of the Community Plan and Strategic Plans, and where possible, community feedback from related City projects and initiatives was captured. Specifically, feedback collected as part of the Park Plan and the Parkland Dedication Bylaw update was used to help inform the PRMP.

Feedback from community engagement activities has been incorporated into the relevant sections of this needs assessment.

Booking data analysis

The City's facility booking data from previous years was used to analyze growth and decline of certain activities and to identify which facilities are in highest demand. Analysis of this data helps determine patterns of use and what qualities the highly booked fields and facilities have that appeal to users and how the City may apply those standards to lesser used facilities in the future.

While booking data can help interpret sports field and facility usage, a simple comparison of hours booked versus hours available does not paint an accurate picture of community need. This is because:

- There is a prime-time window when sport and recreation facilities are in high demand. This is typically evenings and weekends when users are not at

school and work. Although sports facilities are technically available and bookable for a significant portion of the day, demand is very low on weekday mornings and afternoons for many amenities.

- Natural turf fields need periods of rest and recovery to maintain quality playing surfaces. Sport Turf Canada (STC) has guidelines on the amount of play time fields should support based on drainage, irrigation and the sand content beneath the turf. In many cases Guelph books its fields more than the recommended guidelines due to popularity of certain facilities. Similarly, required maintenance and infrastructure upgrades for indoor facilities can impact the amount of time specific amenities (e.g. ice, gyms, pools) are available.
- Booking data only tracks requests through the formal rentals and City booking process. It doesn't include pick-up games, off leash dogs, or informal events.
- The City's Facility Allocation policy provides existing users with continued use of the previous year's allocated time and space. While this helps establish historical patterns of use, it also limits opportunities for new and emerging users and uses, especially in high-demand prime hours, providing an incomplete picture of community need and demand.
- Not all facilities are bookable, and usage of non-bookable facilities is not tracked;
- Booking data does not consider when and how long sports facilities are offline due to poor weather and construction; and
- The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted participation in organized sports and municipal recreation in 2020 and 2021. Consideration was given to indoor facility utilization calculations to reflect pandemic-related closures and impacts. However, booking data from these years does not provide a wholly accurate reflection of typical usage rates.

It should be noted that the City's booking data tracks facility rentals to external organizations, and it is not registration data that identifies each participant or even the number of participants in those external organizations. For example, the City's booking data can identify when, where, length of time, and how many bookings Guelph Soccer secured on City of Guelph fields within a given time period, but it does not track how many users played during those periods of time. For the purpose of this report, booking data refers to the City's facility rental records, while registration data refers to external user groups' tracking of registered participants in their organizations.

Needs Assessment

This section identifies indoor and outdoor recreation facility needs over the next 10 years. The City's current and targeted inventory for each asset type is summarized in this section along with recommendations that can be carried forward into the PRMP to ensure the City's service levels meet the needs and expectations of the community.

It should be noted that the parks and recreation budget forecast is based on both needs and desires. While identified needs inform and defend priorities, amenities are also implemented opportunistically in some cases, as informed by community engagement, or as directed by Council. Although some facilities may not be "needed," there may be strong community desire that influences decision-making.

Table 1 provides a summary of Guelph's current inventory of outdoor recreation facilities. This table also summarizes the effective supply of each asset type. An equivalency factor is applied to several of the asset types to account for lit fields, which increase available play time. In accordance with industry standard in Ontario, 1 lit field or diamond provides the equivalent capacity of 1.5 unlit fields or diamonds. This is sometimes referred to as the Unlit Equivalent or ULE.

Table 1: Summary of Guelph's outdoor recreation facilities

Facility type	Inventory	Effective supply (ULE)
Outdoor athletic facilities		
Baseball and softball diamonds	49	54.5
Sr. hardball diamonds – lit	5	7.5
Sr. hardball diamonds – unlit	0	0
Jr. hardball diamonds – lit	1	1.5
Jr. hardball diamond – unlit	9	9
Sr. softball diamonds – lit	4	6
Sr. softball diamonds – unlit	20	20
Jr. softball diamonds – lit	1	1.5
Jr. softball diamonds – unlit	9	9
Rectangular fields	66	70
Football fields – lit	2	3
Football fields – unlit	1	1
Soccer fields – 5v5 – lit	0	0
Soccer fields - 5v5 – unlit	19	19
Soccer fields – 7v7 – lit	0	0
Soccer fields – 7v7 – unlit	8	8
Soccer fields – 9v9 – lit	0	0
Soccer fields – 9v9 - unlit	13	13
Soccer fields – 11v11 – lit	3	4.5
Soccer fields – 11v11 – unlit	14	14
Combination fields – lit	3	4.5

Combination fields – unlit	3	3
Cricket grounds	2	2
Basketball courts	33	38
Full court (2 hoops)	5	10
Half court and free throw pads (1 hoop)	28	28
Tennis courts	25	25
Dedicated courts	4	4
Multi-use courts	21*	21
Pickleball courts	21	21
Dedicated courts	0	0
Multi-use courts	21*	21
Running tracks	1	1
Youth parks	3	2.25
Skateboard parks	2	1.25
Bike parks (planned)	1	1
Disc golf courses	2	2
Lawn bowling greens	1	1
Outdoor rinks	36**	36
Fitness stations	2	2
Outdoor leisure facilities		
Playgrounds	93	93
Splash pads and wading pools	11	11
Splash pads	6	6
Splash pad (planned in 2023/2024)	2	2
Wading pools	2	2
Market square water feature	1	1
Community gardens	36	36
Dog parks	53	53
Fenced dog parks	2	2
Permitted leash-free areas	10	10
Unoccupied sports fields permitted as leash-free areas	41	41
Picnic shelters and shade structures	24	24
Permanent restrooms	16	16
Water bottle refill stations	6	6

* 2 dedicated tennis courts at South End Community Park planned to be lined for pickleball in 2023 counted as multi-use court.

** Number of outdoor rinks that operate each year subject to volunteer participation.

Table 2 provides a summary of Guelph's current inventory of indoor recreation facilities. This table also summarizes the supply of each asset type, with consideration provided to the development of the South End Community Centre (SECC). An equivalency factor of 0.5 is applied to the Evergreen Seniors Community Centre Auditorium due to its limited size and functionality.

Table 2: Summary of Guelph's indoor recreation facilities

Facility type	Inventory	Inventory including SECC
Indoor Aquatics Facility	2	3
Ice Pads	5	7
Gymnasiums	1.5	3.5
Fitness Facility	1	2
Artificial Turf Field	1	1
Indoor Walking Track	0	1
Multi-purpose rooms	18	21
Seniors Active Living Centre	2	3⁵

In addition to the City's inventory, there are several private sector providers of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities in Guelph that help to fill market demand. Analysis of privately-owned facilities is not part of the scope of this assessment, however where there is notable supply of private facilities that impact the City's provisioning, it is discussed at a cursory level in the assessment of the relevant asset types in the following sections.

⁵ Pending Provincial approval of SALC designation application

Outdoor Athletic facilities

Sports are important for quality of life of Guelph residents and to encourage life-long physical activity. Many studies have shown that the benefit of sports for communities extends far beyond physical health. Sports support healthy communities by promoting belonging, economic development, child and youth development through positive role modeling, inclusion and crime prevention.⁶

In 2016 over 8 million Canadians over the age of 15 participated in sporting activities.⁷ In Ontario, 69% of parents view their children's participation in sports as essential or very important.⁸ Locally, thousands of Guelphites play sports in public parks each year; some participate casually, while others as part of a team or organization.

In a 2019 study, researchers found that participation in sports is declining among all age groups across Canada.⁹ Although participation in sports overall is trending downward, Guelph's population increase is causing local participation numbers to increase. We expect to see a growing demand for sports in Guelph in the future.

Sports facilities are essential public infrastructure that support healthy communities. This is recognized in Guelph's Community Plan, which sets a goal of having sport and recreational infrastructure that supports the needs of the community across the city. As a government agency and primary service provider for sports infrastructure in Guelph, the City has a significant role to play in responsible and sustainable investment in outdoor athletic facilities.

⁶ Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, 2022, *Power of Sport: The True Sport Report 2022*

⁷ Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, 2022, *Power of Sport: The True Sport Report 2022*

⁸ Ontario Sport Network, 2021, *The State of Sport in Ontario: IMI International Benchmark Study Report*

⁹ Community Foundations of Canada & True Sport Foundation, 2019, *Vital Signs: Sport and Belonging*

Figure 2: Margaret Greene Park sports field



To optimize sports field service levels, the City should develop a Sports Field Strategy that:

- Defines service-level targets for ball diamonds, rectangular fields, and cricket grounds based on the number of registered participants in sports organizations that use City fields and diamonds;
- Considers how to increase use of facilities during non-prime-time hours;
- Undertakes size and quality assessments of all diamonds and rectangular fields to identify opportunities for optimization of facilities, which may include adding lighting or irrigation, converting groups of smaller facilities or re-purposing existing facilities to other park uses that are more in demand; and
- Explores partnerships and strategies to incorporate sports facilities owned by other public agencies into its overall community service level.

Recommendations for outdoor athletic facilities

1. Develop a Sports Field Strategy that will optimize sports field service levels.

Baseball and softball diamonds

Guelph has a current inventory of 49 ball diamonds, made up of five senior hardball diamonds; 10 junior hardball diamonds; 24 senior softball diamonds; and 10 junior softball diamonds. All of Guelph's ball diamonds are natural turf, 11 of which are lit and seven are irrigated. When an equivalency factor of 1.5 is applied to lit diamonds, the City's effective supply of diamonds is 54.5. This results in a provision ratio of 1 diamond per 2,637 residents, which is higher than the median provision of 1 diamond per 3,634 residents among benchmarked communities. This means that Guelph has a healthy supply of ball diamonds in comparison to other municipalities.

The 2009 Recreation, Parks and Culture Strategic Master Plan identified a targeted service level of 1 diamond per 2,500 residents. The City is almost meeting this target; however many Ontario municipalities are moving toward a service level target based on registered participants rather than population in order to better understand local market demand for ball diamonds. A common service level target for Ontario municipalities is 1 diamond per 100 registered participants. The City does not currently have registration data from sports organizations that book Guelph's ball diamonds. As part of a future Sports Field Strategy, the City should collect registration data from organizations that rent diamonds to establish an appropriate service level for the community.

Ball diamonds are well distributed throughout the city. See Appendix A, Map 1 for more detail on distribution

Table 3: Ball diamond provision

Current inventory	49
Effective supply (ULE)	54.5
Current service level	1:2,637
Median service level among comparator municipalities	1:3,634
Service level target	To be determined through future Sports Field Strategy
Additional facilities needed by 2033 to meet service level target	To be determined through future Sports Field Strategy
Additional facilities needed by 2051 to meet service level target	To be determined through future Sports Field Strategy

Booking analysis

A review of 2019 and 2022 booking data was undertaken to understand which ball diamond locations were booked most and least often.

The diamonds at South End Community Park were the most frequently booked senior hardball diamonds with 1,912.5 hours of play time booked in 2022, representing 69% of all senior hardball diamond bookings. Availability of bookings

for the South End Community Park diamonds was limited by nearby construction in 2022. A more accurate picture of typical use of these diamonds is from the 2019 season, when these diamonds were booked for more than 3,000 hours. The Centennial Park diamond was the least booked senior hardball diamond in 2022, with 366 hours of play time booked.

The Howitt Park diamond was the most frequently booked junior hardball diamond with 534 hours of play time booked in 2022, representing 24% of all junior hardball diamond bookings. The Brant Avenue Park junior hardball diamond was booked least, with 34 hours of playtime booked in 2022, representing 2% of all junior hardball diamond bookings.

The four diamonds at Guelph Lake Sports Fields were the most frequently booked senior softball diamonds with a combined total of 2,451.75 hours of play time booked in 2022, representing 38% of all senior softball diamond bookings. The Colonial Drive Park senior softball diamond was booked least, with 39 hours of play time booked in 2022, representing less than 1% of all senior softball diamond bookings.

The Rickson Park diamond was the most frequently booked junior softball diamond with 156 hours of play time booked in 2022, representing 28% of all junior softball diamond bookings. The York Road Park 'Softball 3' junior diamond was booked least, with 7 hours of play time booked in 2022, representing 1% of all junior softball diamond bookings.

Differences in the usage of facilities is likely attributable to the size and quality of diamonds and nearby infrastructure like washrooms and parking. The hardball diamonds at South End Community Park are lit and irrigated and the softball diamonds at Guelph Lake Sports Fields are lit. The least booked diamonds are neither lit nor irrigated. A future Sports Field Strategy should undertake quality assessments of all the City's diamonds and consider facility upgrades and optimization of existing diamonds to fulfill demand.

Community engagement highlights

The following key themes emerged from an analysis of all community engagement activities for the PRMP.

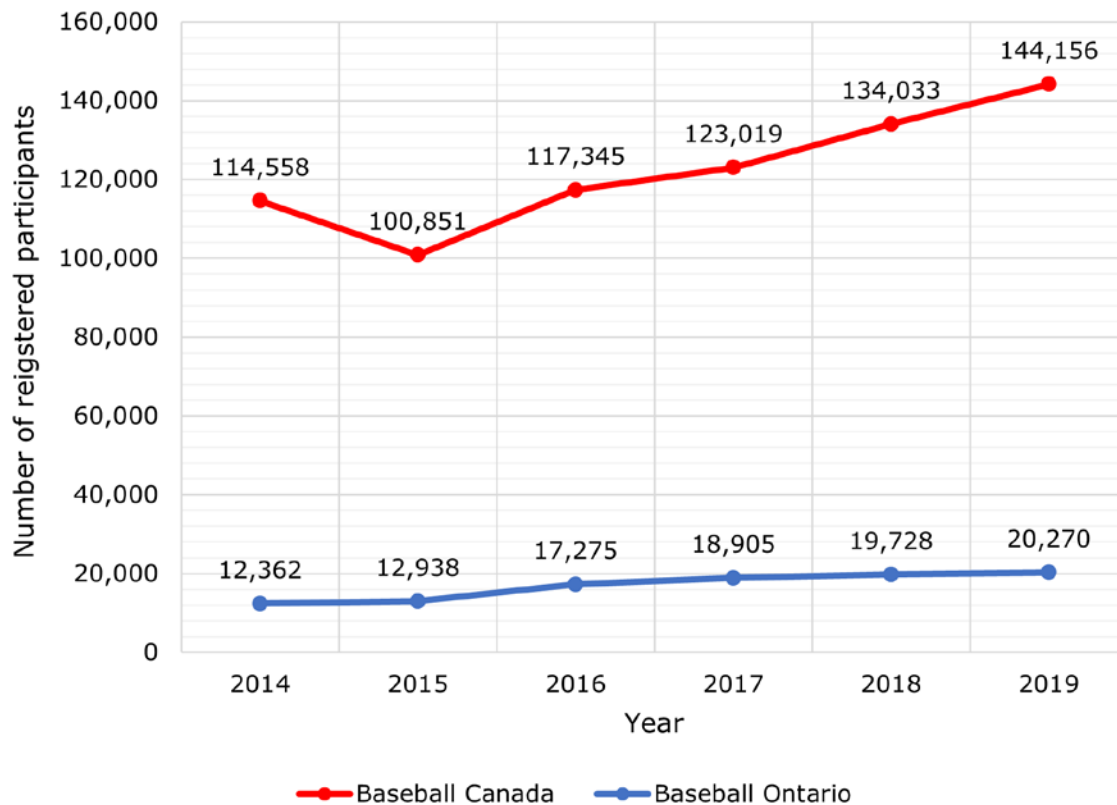
- Baseball organizations report that quality of diamonds in Guelph should be improved.
- Baseball organizations report that existing diamonds should be more consistent with technical guidelines (e.g. field dimensions).

Baseball trends

The 2009 Recreation, Parks and Culture Strategic Master Plan noted declining baseball participation rates. This trend has changed in recent years, with Baseball

Canada, Baseball Ontario and Guelph Minor Baseball Association reporting increasing registrations from 2015.^{10 11} There are many grassroots organizations and adult ball leagues in Guelph that are not part of the national and provincial baseball governing bodies. The City does not have registration data from all baseball organizations, but it is expected that their registrations reflect the similar national, provincial and local upward trends. Like most sports, baseball is recovering after registrations were significantly reduced during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021.

Figure 3: National and provincial baseball participation¹²



Needs assessment

If Guelph maintains its current service level of 1 diamond per 2,637 residents, the City will need 14 new diamonds by 2033 and 24 new diamonds by 2051 just to support population growth. While baseball participation is steadily increasing, booking data reveals that many diamonds are under-utilized. There are many factors that may be contributing to low usage of facilities. Community engagement

¹⁰ Baseball Canada, 2016, *Baseball participation on the rise across Canada*, Retrieved from www.baseball.ca

¹¹ Guelph Minor Baseball Association, 2015-2021, Annual General Meeting Minutes, Retrieved from <http://gmba.ca>

¹² Registration data provided by Baseball Canada

feedback suggests that contributing factors may be quality and size of existing diamonds.

To get a true picture of market demand the City should aim to move toward a participant-based provision target, rather than a population-based provision target for ball diamonds. In doing so, Guelph will align itself with comparator municipalities and industry standard. Comparison of the City's provision to other benchmarked communities suggests that Guelph may be over-serviced for quantity of diamonds, however, registration data will confirm if there is a higher demand locally for baseball.

Anecdotally, some baseball users have suggested that Guelph's supply of diamonds is low. By all metrics of this assessment, this is not the case, however it is possible that the type and quality of diamonds users want to play on is under-supplied. While a range of smaller 'scrub' fields to full-size senior diamonds with lighting, irrigation, washrooms and parking are desirable to meet demands for both organized sport and neighbourhood-level pick-up games, Guelph should consider a strategy to optimize and improve its current inventory in addition to adding new diamonds.

Recommendations for baseball and softball diamonds

2. Undertake further consultation with baseball and softball groups to gather feedback regarding actual participation rates, field quality, maintenance issues and projected usage.
3. Adopt a provision target for baseball diamonds that is based on the number of registered participants in baseball programs rather than total population to better understand local demand for ball facilities.
4. Undertake a quality assessment of all diamonds to identify opportunities for optimization of ball fields, which may include adding lighting or irrigation, converting groups of smaller fields to larger diamonds or re-purposing existing diamonds to other park uses that are more in demand.

Rectangular fields

Guelph's rectangular fields accommodate a variety of sports including soccer, football, lacrosse, field hockey and ultimate frisbee. All of Guelph's outdoor fields are natural turf, 18 of which are irrigated.

The City has a current inventory of 66 rectangular fields, made up of three football fields; 19 5v5 soccer fields; eight 7v7 soccer fields; 13 9v9 soccer fields; 17 11v11 soccer fields; and six non-soccer combination fields. All of Guelph's rectangular fields are natural turf, eight of which are lit and 18 are irrigated. For this assessment, facilities were inventoried by the way they operate. For example, at Castlebury Park, four 9v9 fields fit in a space that could also accommodate two 11v11 fields, but because these fields are offered for booking as 9v9 fields they are inventoried in this report as four 9v9 fields and zero 11v11 fields to avoid double-counting.

When an equivalency factor of 1.5 is applied to lit fields, the City's effective supply of rectangular fields is 70. This results in a provision ratio of 1 field per 2,053 residents, which is higher than the median provision of 1 field per 2,392 residents among benchmarked communities. This means that Guelph has a healthy supply of rectangular fields in comparison to other municipalities.

The 2009 Recreation, Parks and Culture Strategic Master Plan identified a targeted service level of 1 rectangular field per 70 registered participants. The City does not currently have registration data from sports organizations that book our rectangular fields, so it is unknown whether we are meeting this target. A common service level target for Ontario municipalities is 1 rectangular field per 80 registered participants. As part of a future Sports Field Strategy, the City should collect registration data from organizations that rent fields to better understand local market demand and establish an appropriate service level for the community.

Rectangular fields are well distributed throughout the city. See Appendix A, Map 2 for more detail on distribution.

Table 4: Rectangular field provision

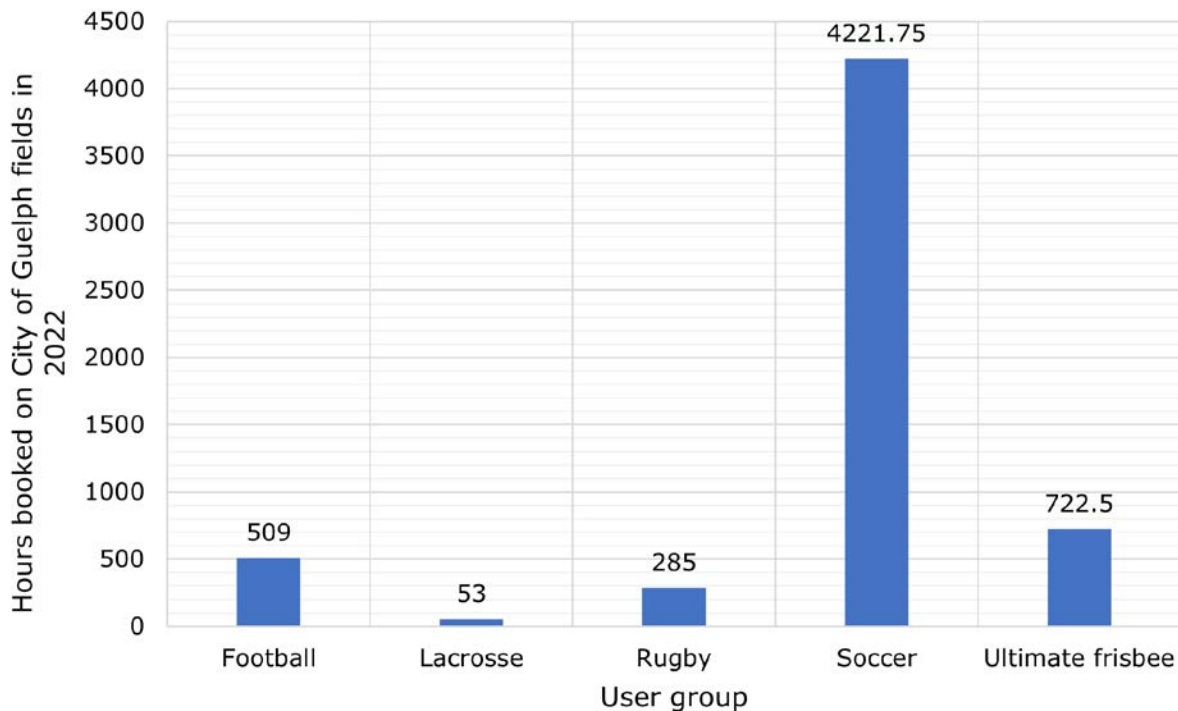
Current inventory	66
Effective supply (ULE)	70
Current service level	1:2,053
Median service level among comparator municipalities	1:2,392
Service level target	To be determined through future Sports Field Strategy
Additional facilities needed by 2033 to meet service level target	To be determined through future Sports Field Strategy
Additional facilities needed by 2051 to meet service level target	To be determined through future Sports Field Strategy

Booking analysis

A review of 2022 booking data was undertaken to understand who the main users of rectangular fields are in Guelph and which fields are booked most and least often.

Soccer is by far the largest user group of rectangular fields in Guelph, having booked over 4,200 hours of City-owned field time in 2022. Ultimate frisbee is the second largest user group, followed by football, rugby and lacrosse, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 4: Field bookings by user groups



The Guelph Lake Sports Fields "Multi-use 1" field was the most frequently booked full-size rectangular field with 356.25 hours of play time booked in 2022, representing 13% of all full-size field bookings. The Rickson Park 'Soccer 1' field was booked least, with 22 hours of playtime booked in 2022, representing less than 1% of all full-size rectangular field bookings.

The Centennial Park 'Soccer 7' field was the most frequently booked 9v9 field with 278 hours of play time booked in 2022, representing 23% of all 9v9 field bookings. The O'Connor Lane Park 'Soccer 2' field was booked least, with 6 hours of play time booked in 2022, representing less than 1% of all 9v9 field bookings.

The Hanlon Creek Park 'Soccer 1' field was the most frequently booked 7v7 field with 170.5 hours of play time booked in 2022, representing 39% of all 7v7 field

bookings. The Grange Road Park field was booked least, with 18 hours of play time booked in 2022, representing 11% of all 7v7 field bookings.

The Howden Crescent Park 5v5 fields and the Orin Reid Park 5v5 fields are the most frequently booked 5v5 fields with 140 hours each of play time booked in 2022, representing 19% each of all 5v5 field bookings. The Centennial Park 'Mini-soccer 1' and 'Mini-soccer 2' fields were booked least, with 5 hours of play time each booked in 2022, less than 1% each of all 5v5 field bookings.

Differences in the usage for full-size fields is likely attributable to the quality of turf and lighting, which extends the playability of fields later in the evenings and later in the season. The Guelph Lake Sports Fields 'Multi-use 1' field has both lighting and irrigation, likely making it a favourite field for users.

Differences in the usage of junior fields is likely attributable to nearby infrastructure like permanent washrooms and parking. Centennial Park and Hanlon Creek Park have permanent restrooms and ample parking, and Howden Crescent Park and Orin Reid Park have ample parking as well, while less used junior fields like O'Connor Lane Park and Grange Road Park do not have permanent restrooms and have little or no parking.

Field sport trends

Soccer

Although soccer organizations are the largest users of Guelph's fields, overall provincial participation in soccer is trending downward. Between 2015 and 2019 Ontario Soccer outdoor participation was down year over year, with a total decline of 20% of registered participants during that time.¹³ The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted 2020 and 2021 sports participation and Ontario Soccer has not yet reported 2022 registrations.

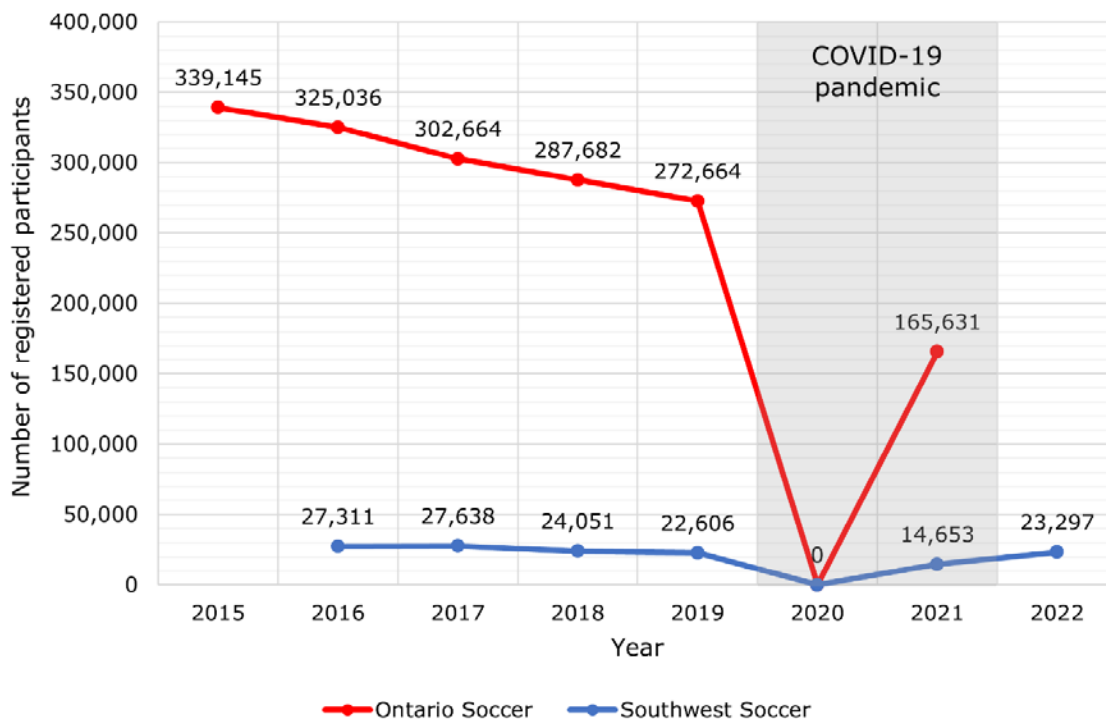
Locally, soccer participation rates declined year over year between 2016 and 2019, though not as significantly as province-wide figures. Southwest Soccer, a district member of Ontario Soccer that includes Guelph Soccer, saw a total decline of approximately 17% of registered participants during that time.¹⁴ Interestingly, in 2022, Southwest Soccer's registrations climbed above registrations from 2019 – the last pre-pandemic full soccer season.¹⁵ This may indicate that the popularity of soccer is increasing again. The City of Guelph should continue to monitor soccer trends to understand market demand for fields. It is expected that soccer organizations will continue to be primary users of Guelph's fields with substantial bookings year to year.

¹³ Ontario Soccer, 2016-2022, Annual Reports, Retrieved from www.ontariosoccer.net

¹⁴ Ontario Soccer, 2016-2022, Annual Reports, Retrieved from www.ontariosoccer.net

¹⁵ Southwest Soccer, 2022, Annual General Meeting booklet, Retrieved from www.swrsa.ca

Figure 5: Provincial and regional soccer participation^{16 17}



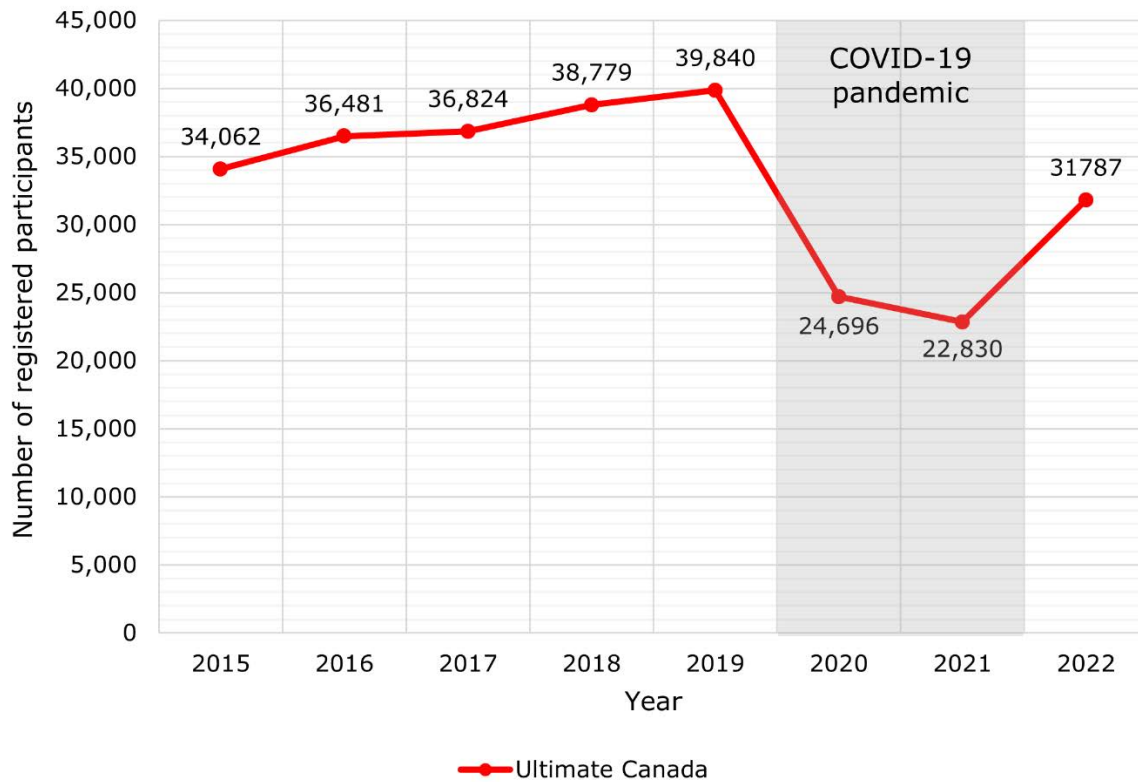
Ultimate frisbee

As the second largest booking type for rectangular fields in Guelph, ultimate frisbee has gained a significant following since the development of the 2009 Recreation, Parks and Culture Strategic Master Plan, in which the sport was mentioned just once. The Provincial governing body for the sport, Ontario Ultimate, was established in 2015. As the sport is just gaining traction in recent years, there is little public data on provincial trends. Data provided by Ultimate Canada shows year over year growth of registrations prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The City should continue to monitor user and booking data to understand the local demand for ultimate frisbee.

¹⁶ Ontario Soccer, 2016-2022, Annual Reports, Retrieved from www.ontariosoccer.net

¹⁷ Southwest Soccer, 2022, Annual General Meeting booklet, Retrieved from www.swrsa.ca

Figure 6: National ultimate frisbee participation¹⁸



Football

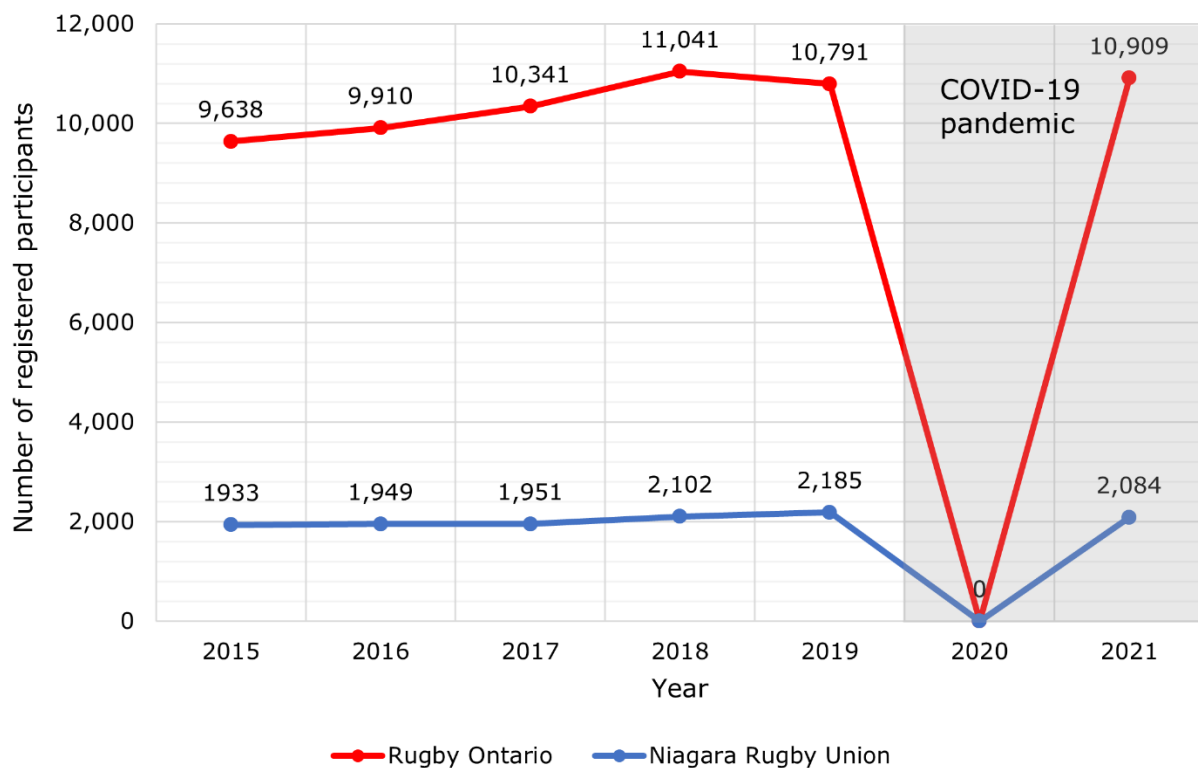
There is little public registration data available for football at the national and provincial levels. Anecdotally, City staff have observed steady use of rectangular fields by football users year over year. The City should collect registration data from local football organizations to better understand how the sport is trending.

¹⁸ Registration data provided by Ultimate Canada

Rugby

Provincial and regional participation in rugby has remained steady between 2015 and 2021. The Niagara Rugby Union, a district member of Rugby Ontario that includes Guelph clubs, has seen very little fluctuation of registered participants during this time period, except for 2020, where no data is available due to the COVID-19 pandemic disruption of the 2020 season. Anecdotally, City staff have heard from Guelph rugby organizations that they are seeing growing registration rates. Provincial figures reflect the same steady trend. The sport appears to have recovered locally to pre-pandemic participation rates. It is expected that participation in rugby will remain steady in the coming years.

Figure 7: Provincial and regional rugby participation¹⁹



Lacrosse

There is little public registration data available for lacrosse at the national and provincial levels. Anecdotally, City staff have observed steady use of rectangular fields by lacrosse users year over year. The City should collect registration data from local lacrosse organizations to better understand how the sport is trending.

¹⁹ Rugby Ontario, 2016-2022, Annual General Meeting Reports, retrieved from www.rugbyontario.com

Community engagement highlights

The following key themes emerged from an analysis of all community engagement activities for the PRMP.

- Sports organizations and residents that use rectangular fields report that there is not enough field availability to support registrations.
- Sports organizations and residents that use rectangular fields report that the quality of turf and safety of fields quickly deteriorate each season due to drought and overuse of fields.
- Sports organizations report a need for more lighting, irrigation and artificial turf to extend playing time.

Needs assessment

If Guelph maintains its current provision of 1 rectangular field per 2,053 residents, the City will need 18 new fields by 2033 and 31 new fields by 2051 just to support population growth. However, to get a true picture of market demand the City should aim to move toward a participant-based provision target, rather than a population-based provision target for rectangular fields. In doing so, Guelph will align itself with comparator municipalities and industry standard. Comparison of the City's provision to other benchmarked communities suggests that Guelph has a healthy quantity of fields, however, registration data from user groups will confirm if there is a higher demand locally.

There are many different sport trends influencing rectangular field needs and booking data shows that some fields are under-utilized, despite frequent comments from the community that Guelph's supply is low. This is likely an indication that users expect more high-quality fields that have lighting, irrigation, nearby washroom facilities and ample parking. While a full range of smaller 'scrub' fields to full-size fields with enhanced amenities is desirable to meet demands for both organized sport and neighbourhood-level pick-up games, Guelph should consider how to optimize its current inventory of rectangular fields before adding new ones.

Recommendations for rectangular fields

5. Undertake further consultation with rectangular field groups to gather feedback regarding actual participation rates, field quality, maintenance issues and projected usage.
6. Adopt a provision target for rectangular fields that is based on the number of registered participants in sports programs rather than total population to better understand local demand for fields.
7. Undertake a quality assessment of all outdoor fields to identify opportunities for optimization, which may include adding lighting, irrigation or converting groups of smaller fields to larger fields that are more in demand.

Cricket grounds

Guelph has a current inventory of 2 cricket grounds made up of 2 full-size unlit facilities that are shared with ball diamonds at Margaret Greene Park and Riverside Park. There is also one junior ground at Orin Reid park, however due to the temporary nature of this facility it is not being inventoried as part of this exercise. This results in a provision ratio of 1 cricket ground per 71,870 residents, which is higher than the median provision of 1 cricket ground per 167,389 residents among benchmarked communities.

No service level targets were set for cricket facilities in the 2009 Recreation, Parks and Culture Strategic Master Plan. Many culturally diverse GTA municipalities have established service level targets of 1 cricket ground per 100,000 residents.

See Appendix A, Map 3 for more detail on distribution of cricket grounds.

Table 5: Cricket ground provision

Current inventory	2
Effective supply	2
Current service level	1:71,870
Median service level among comparator municipalities	1:167,389
Provision target	1:100,000
Additional facilities needed by 2033 to meet service level target	0
Additional facilities needed by 2051 to meet service level target	0

Booking analysis

A review of 2022 booking data was undertaken to understand how frequently the cricket ground at Margaret Greene Park is booked. The facility was booked for a total of 450.5 hours. It should be noted that this cricket ground is shared with ball diamonds, so availability for cricket is dependent on softball bookings. The Riverside Park cricket ground was just implemented in the fall of 2022 so it has not been operating for a playing season yet. It too is shared with softball diamonds.

The temporary cricket ground at Orin Reid Park is not counted as part of the City's inventory. Due to the temporary nature of the facility, it is not bookable, however it can accommodate informal or pick-up play.

Community engagement highlights

The following key themes emerged from an analysis of all community engagement activities for the PRMP.

- Cricket organizations and residents report that grounds are often unavailable due to other sports group bookings. Users report playing in parking lots due to lack of availability at shared park facilities.
- Cricket organizations report that existing facilities should be more consistent with technical guidelines, specifically the size of the Orin Reid Park facility and the granular material used for the pitch.
- Cricket organizations report a need for lighting of cricket grounds to extend playing time.
- Residents have noted confusion about the boundary of cricket grounds at Margaret Greene Park, leaving other park users uncertain of whether their activities are interfering with cricket play.

Cricket trends

There is little public registration data available for cricket at the national and provincial levels. However, City staff receive frequent requests from the community for more cricket facilities and dedicated facilities. Given that these requests are on the rise, it is assumed that participation and demand for cricket is also increasing. Since cricket is a sport played by many immigrant populations it can also be assumed that with immigration on the rise, demand for the sport will increase as well. The City should collect registration data from local cricket organizations to better understand how the sport is trending.

Figure 8: Cricket practice



Needs assessment

In recent years the City has received numerous requests for additional cricket grounds in Guelph. As a result, the City recently implemented a cricket facility in Riverside Park, to alleviate pressure on the highly utilized Margaret Greene Park facility. A temporary junior cricket facility was also implemented in Orin Reid Park to allow for casual pick-up play and to fulfill some of the demand, however, the master plan for the park identifies a future softball diamond in this location. The facility at Orin Reid Park is also under-sized compared to a regulation sized cricket ground. Further consultation should take place to understand if community opinion on the sports facilities in this park have changed since the development of the master plan.

If Guelph adopts the recommended provision target of 1 cricket ground per 100,000 residents, the City will not need any new facilities by 2033 or by 2051. However, this numerical approach to planning cricket facilities is overly simplistic for the reality of playing cricket in Guelph. Booking data and user feedback suggests that due to the shared nature of both of Guelph's cricket grounds, cricket groups have difficulty obtaining bookings. There are two potential ways to address this: 1) by building a new cricket facility, or 2) by modifying the City's Allocation Policy to ensure emerging sports groups are able to obtain booking time. Both solutions have their challenges, including cost and equity implications.

The size of a standard cricket ground requires roughly 2 hectares of land.²⁰ This can be difficult to accommodate. Like Guelph, many municipalities have incorporated cricket by overlaying cricket use on top of multiple baseball diamonds or soccer fields, however this can lead to limited availability and confusion about boundaries of the various sports fields. To meet the demand for cricket in Guelph, the City should undertake further consultation with local cricket user groups to gather feedback regarding actual participation rates, and consider how to serve the demand through a future Sports Field Strategy.

Recommendations for cricket grounds

8. Undertake further consultation with local cricket user groups to gather feedback regarding actual participation rates, field quality, maintenance issues and projected usage.
9. Monitor use and demand of the new cricket ground at Riverside Park.
10. As part of a future sports field strategy, identify opportunities to increase quantity of cricket grounds or availability of playing time on existing cricket grounds. Look for opportunities for include lighting to extend playing times.

²⁰ Cricket Canada. Retrieved from www.canadacricket.com

Outdoor basketball courts

Guelph has a current inventory of 33 outdoor basketball courts, made up of 5 full courts and 28 half courts and free throw pads. The total supply of hoops is 38. This results in a provision ratio of 1 hoop per 3,783 residents, which is higher than the median provision of 1 hoop per 5,470 residents among benchmarked communities. This means that Guelph has a healthy supply of basketball courts in comparison to other municipalities.

The 2009 Recreation, Parks and Culture Strategic Master Plan identified a targeted service level of 1 half court per 800 youth. The City's current provision is almost double the target, with service level of 1 hoop per 432 youth. The 1 half court per 800 youth is still a common service level target among Ontario municipalities. By applying this target to future youth population projections, no additional basketball facilities are needed in the next 10 years.²¹

There are distribution gaps of basketball courts in the central area of the city and downtown. See Appendix A, Map 4 for more detail on distribution.

Table 6: Outdoor basketball court provision

Current inventory	33
Effective supply	38
Current service level	1:3,783 (1:432 youth)
Median service level among comparator municipalities	1:6,792
Service level target	1:800 youth
Additional facilities needed by 2033 to meet service level target	0
Additional facilities needed by 2051 to meet service level target	0

Booking analysis

While Guelph has many basketball courts, most are intentionally unavailable for booking to allow for pick-up games and community use. There is one full court available for booking at Norm Jary Park. In 2022 it was booked for a total of 187 hours to two user groups: one for summer basketball camps, and another for tournament play. It should be noted that the court was not open for a full season due to construction, however, on a typical year there is a good mixture of weekday, weekend, daytime, and evening rentals, leaving lots of capacity for community use on top of bookings.

Community engagement highlights

The following key themes emerged from an analysis of all community engagement activities for the PRMP.

²¹ 2033 youth population estimate is based on a straight-line interpolation using Statistics Canada 2021 census and *Shaping Guelph: Growth Management Strategy* growth projections

- Many requests were received for court improvements at Drew Park where there is currently turf under the hoops.

Basketball trends

Basketball is very popular locally, particularly among youth. It is low-contact, inexpensive and easy to learn, making it a top sporting activity for many people. It can be played with very little equipment, and by groups or solo players. It is expected that the demand for basketball in Guelph will remain steady.

Figure 9: Norm Jary Park basketball courts



Needs assessment

The generous supply of outdoor basketball facilities and very few comments on basketball supply received during community engagement suggests that the community is satisfied with the overall quantity of facilities available to them. It should also be recognized that schools provide a healthy supply of hoops in Guelph as well. There are distribution gaps of courts in the central area of the city and downtown, however given the plentiful supply of basketball courts city-wide, filling these gaps may not be a top priority. Since provision targets are being met, the City should focus efforts on quality of facilities rather than quantity. Specifically, Drew Park basketball court should be renovated.

Recommendations for outdoor basketball courts

11. Renovate Drew Park basketball court.

Tennis and pickleball courts

Guelph has a current inventory of 25 tennis courts at 10 locations, four of which are under a joint-use agreement with the UGDSB. By mid-2023, all City-owned tennis courts will be shared facilities with pickleball. The four courts at Priory Park Public School, owned by UGDSB, are dedicated tennis-only courts. Therefore, Guelph has a current inventory of 21 pickleball courts at 9 locations.

The current tennis court provision ratio in Guelph is 1 tennis court per 5,750 residents, which is lower than the median provision of 1 tennis court per 5,246 residents among benchmarked communities. This means that Guelph has a lower supply of tennis courts in comparison to other municipalities.

The current pickleball court provision ratio in Guelph is 1 pickleball court per 6,845 residents, which is about double the number of courts per person than the median provision among benchmarked communities, of 1 pickleball court per 12,710 residents. This means that Guelph has a healthy supply of pickleball courts in comparison to other municipalities.

The 2009 Recreation, Parks and Culture Strategic Master Plan identified a targeted service level of 1 tennis court per 5,000 residents. The City is not currently meeting this target. The 1 court per 5,000 residents is still a common service level target among Ontario municipalities. By applying this service level target to projected population, Guelph will need 11 additional tennis courts by 2033 and 16 by 2051.

All of Guelph's pickleball facilities have been added to the City's park system over the last 10 years, since the sport has only recently gained significant popularity. No service level targets were set for pickleball facilities in the 2009 Recreation, Parks and Culture Strategic Master Plan. Many Ontario municipalities have not yet established service level targets for the provision of pickleball facilities as the demand is still in its infancy and being understood.

There are distribution gaps of courts in the north end, east end, and the area south of Stone Road and East of Gordon Street. See Appendix A, Map 5 for more detail on distribution.

Table 7: Tennis and pickleball court provision

Current tennis court inventory	25
Current tennis court service level	1:5,750
Median tennis court service level among comparator municipalities	1:5,246
Service level target for tennis courts	1:5000
Additional tennis facilities needed by 2033 to meet service level target	11
Additional tennis facilities needed by 2051 to meet service level target	16
Current pickleball court inventory	21
Current pickleball court service level	1:6,845
Median pickleball court service level among comparator municipalities	1:12,710
Service level target for pickleball courts	Undefined, continue to monitor demand

Booking analysis

Guelph's tennis and pickleball courts are only bookable by the City's Recreation department, so usage of each court is not tracked. This presents an opportunity to explore the need for community booking of tennis and pickleball courts.

Community engagement highlights

The following key themes emerged from an analysis of all community engagement activities for the PRMP.

- Behind parkland acquisition, increased pickleball service level was the 2nd most frequently identified theme relating to parks in community engagement activities. It should be noted that pickleball service levels were increased significantly by painting all existing outdoor tennis courts with pickleball lines during the PRMP engagement timeframe.
- In addition to more pickleball space, pickleball users identified a desire for dedicated courts that are not shared with tennis.
- A general need for more and dedicated tennis courts was identified by residents.
- An option for online booking of tennis courts was a common theme identified by residents.

Tennis and pickleball trends

In 2018 Tennis Canada released the results of a nation-wide study on the health of the sport in Canada. The results revealed that participation in tennis nation-wide was growing steadily, with almost 6.6 million Canadians having played tennis in 2018. Of those people, 4.5 million played tennis at least four times throughout

2018, representing a 15% increase compared to 2016.²² Although national and provincial post-COVID-19 pandemic tennis participation figures are not publicly available, it is expected that the sport is re-building and will continue to experience growth in the coming years.

In 2022 Pickleball Canada released the results of a nation-wide study on participation in various sports, including pickleball, soccer, hockey, tennis and golf. Through a household survey, 8% of respondents reported that one or more household members played pickleball at least once per month, and of those participants, 45% of them played pickleball four or more times per month. Comparison to data from a similar survey completed two years prior (pre-pandemic), suggests that participation of pickleball players in Canada has almost tripled.²³ Like tennis, it is expected that pickleball will continue to experience growth in the coming years.

Needs assessment

It is recommended that Guelph maintains its current provision target of 1 outdoor tennis court per 5,000 residents to continue to align itself with industry standard and comparator municipalities. In doing so, the City will need 11 new tennis courts by 2033 to support population growth.

There is no universally accepted provision target for outdoor pickleball courts among Ontario municipalities since the market demand for this sport has only been at the forefront in recent years. However, community engagement feedback and national trends for the sport indicate a strong need to support pickleball in public parks. To keep up with growing demand, and to maximize land and cost efficiency, it is recommended that the majority of new tennis courts implemented in Guelph in the next 10 years be lined with pickleball to create multi-use courts. However, there is a strong community desire for both dedicated pickleball and dedicated tennis courts, therefore the City should consider constructing dedicated facilities for each use.

Finally, to improve operational efficiency of booking, the City should consider implementing an online booking system for courts.

Recommendations for tennis and pickleball courts

12. Construct 11 new outdoor multi-use tennis and pickleball courts.
13. Consider constructing dedicated outdoor pickleball and tennis courts.
14. Investigate the need and practicality of a booking system for drop-in rentals of court sports. Consider an online option for booking and viewing court availability.

²² Tennis Canada, 2018, Annual Report, Retrieved from <https://annualreport2018.tenniscanada.com/>

²³ Pickleball Canada, 2022, January 2022 Survey – National Release, Retrieved from <https://pickleballcanada.org>

Sand volleyball courts

Guelph has a current inventory of 12 sand volleyball courts in five locations. This results in a provision ratio of 1 court per 11,978 residents, which is higher than the median provision of 1 court per 14,783 residents among benchmarked communities. This means that Guelph has a healthy supply of sand volleyball courts in comparison to other municipalities.

The 2009 Recreation, Parks and Culture Strategic Master Plan did not identify a service level target for sand volleyball courts, and there is no currently accepted service level target among Ontario municipalities.

See Appendix A, Map 6 for more detail on distribution of sand volleyball courts.

Table 8: Sand volleyball provision

Current inventory	12
Current service level	1:11,978
Median service level among comparator municipalities	1:14,783

Figure 10: Sand volleyball courts



Booking analysis

A review of 2022 booking data was undertaken to understand which sand volleyball courts were booked most and least often.

The Eastview Park courts were booked the most throughout 2022 with each of the six courts in this location having been booked between 152 to 170 hours. The two courts at Eramosa River park were booked for 111.5 hours each, and the two courts at Severn drive park were booked for 108 hours each. The least booked courts were the one at W.E. Hamilton Park, with 68 hours booked in 2022, and the one at Herb Markle Park, with 62 hours booked in 2022. This booking data shows a positive correlation between the number of courts in each location and the number of hours booked. Most courts were not booked for more than an hour or two per day, suggesting that there is adequate availability of courts for the local demand. However, it should be noted that 2022 booking data may still be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The City should continue to monitor annual bookings to ensure there is sufficient court availability for local demand.

Community engagement highlights

The following key themes emerged from an analysis of all community engagement activities for the PRMP.

- In a 2019 survey, 10% of respondents reported that at least one member of their household uses the City's sand volleyball courts.
- One sports organization noted a need for more sand volleyball courts and that recreational teams are being turned away from registration due to lack of court availability.

Needs assessment

While it appears that the demand for sand volleyball in Guelph is steady, 2022 booking data shows that there was adequate booking availability to accommodate the local demand. The City ranked 2nd only to the City of Ottawa in its provision of sand volleyball courts in the municipal benchmarking exercise. However, user feedback received during the 2023 season suggests growing demand for outdoor volleyball facilities. Through the future Sports Field Strategy, the City should review 2023 booking data and registration data from sports organizations that book these facilities to better understand the local demand and determine if additional courts are warranted.

Outdoor rinks

Guelph has a current inventory of 35 outdoor rinks and 1 outdoor skating path in Riverside Park. Outdoor rinks are volunteer-run, except for the rink at Market Square and the skating path in Riverside Park which are maintained by City staff. Actual operation of volunteer-run rinks varies by year based on community demand and volunteer base.

This supply results in a provision ratio of 1 outdoor rink per 3,993 residents, which is higher than the median provision of 1 outdoor rink per 8,563 residents among benchmarked communities. This means that Guelph has a healthy supply of outdoor rinks in comparison to other municipalities.

Outdoor rinks in Guelph are very well distributed across the city. See Appendix A, Map 7 for more detail on distribution.

Table 9: Outdoor rink provision

Current outdoor rink inventory	36
Current outdoor rink service level	1:3,993
Median outdoor rink service level among comparator municipalities	1:8,563

Community engagement highlights

The following key themes emerged from an analysis of all community engagement activities for the PRMP.

- In a 2019 survey when residents were asked which of Guelph's outdoor sports facilities they use, 42% of respondents reported using outdoor rinks for skating and 17% of respondents reported using outdoor rinks for hockey. Together, these make outdoor rinks the most used of all of Guelph's outdoor sports facilities according to residents.
- Several requests for an outdoor space with boards were received throughout community engagement.

Needs assessment

Winter sports are very popular in Guelph and the community is generally satisfied with the supply of outdoor rinks available to them. Outdoor rinks in the city are used casually as drop-in facilities and booking is not available, however anecdotally, City staff observe high usage of rinks when they are operational. Guelph's volunteer base for operation of outdoor rinks is high and most locations operate each year, though there is variability each season.

Historically outdoor rinks have helped to alleviate pressure on indoor ice pad demand. However, climate change is significantly impacting the effectiveness of outdoor ice rinks. Canadian winters are becoming warmer, and maintaining

skateable ice is difficult when temperatures hover around freezing, or when there are several periods of freeze-thaw. Not only does this impact the ability to play ice sports, but it also requires a lot of volunteer time to keep ice smooth and in good condition.

Many Ontario municipalities are now offering synthetic ice facilities and refrigerated outdoor rinks. This is costly infrastructure, however ice sports are culturally important in the city and providing space for winter activities promotes social connection and community building. The City should evaluate its Outdoor Ice Rink Program before adding more outdoor rink locations. Consideration should be given to capital cost, as well as maintenance and operational requirements.

Throughout community engagement the City received numerous requests for an outdoor ball hockey facility. This presents an opportunity to develop a multi-purpose boarded facility that could accommodate ice hockey, ball hockey and lacrosse. It is recommended that the City investigate the implementation of a boarded facility to test demand and operation.

Recommendations for outdoor rinks

15. Evaluate the impacts of climate change on the Outdoor Ice Rink Program and identify strategies to fulfill community ice rink needs in other ways, including but not limited to synthetic ice and refrigerated rinks in key locations. Consideration should be given to capital cost, as well as maintenance and operational requirements.
16. Investigate the implementation of an outdoor sport facility with boards to accommodate ice hockey, ball hockey and lacrosse.

Figure 11: Riverside Park skating path



Outdoor tracks

The City has one outdoor running track in its inventory, though it is owned by the Wellington Catholic District School Board (WCDSB). The track, located at St. James Catholic High School, is under a joint-use agreement between the school board and the City. The provision of track facilities by municipalities is quite unique, with only two other benchmarked communities providing this service. Given that this is a unique offering, there is no accepted provision target for tracks on Ontario municipalities, and insufficient comparators to assume a new service level target.

Booking analysis

The track was booked for just 79.5 hours in 2022. While usage is low in comparison to other City sports facilities, it is important to note that the track is only bookable outside of school hours. Even so, there is much rental availability, indicating that the facility is not used to its full capacity. It should also be noted that casual community use of the track is difficult to track, as single users and small groups may not seek formal bookings and simply use the track when it is empty.

Community engagement highlights

The following key themes emerged from an analysis of all community engagement activities for the PRMP.

- Feedback relating to outdoor track facilities throughout community engagement was very infrequent. There were a few requests for a track in the south end of the city.

Needs assessment

Community engagement and booking data show that the demand for track facilities in Guelph is low. Given that most comparator municipalities do not have outdoor tracks as part of their inventories suggests that low demand is consistent across Ontario. While there is no demonstrated need for new tracks, the City should continue its partnership with WCDSB to offer this facility to community users that benefit from it. If new tracks are brought online by public agencies in the future, Guelph should continue to support these community partners in offering community use of the facilities.

Recommendations for outdoor tracks

17. Continue to partner with the Wellington Catholic District School Board to offer community use of the running track at St. James Catholic High School.
18. When new outdoor tracks are brought online by new schools in Guelph, the City should consider partnering with those school boards to allow community use of facilities.

Skateboard and bike parks

When considering service level, skateboard parks and bike parks are often combined, as their user demographic is similar. Guelph has a current inventory of one skateboard park and one smaller skateboard node. City Council has approved the construction of a bike park through the capital budget process, so although it is not yet built, its construction is imminent, and it is being inventoried in this assessment as one facility so that future need can be projected. This brings the total inventory of skateboard and bike parks to three.

An equivalency factor of 0.25 is applied to the skateboard node to reflect capacity of the smaller facility and functionality. The bike park is excluded from the skateboard provisioning to accurately determine skateboard specific needs for the future. This results in a provision ratio of 1 facility per 114,992 residents, which is lower than the median provision of 1:48,358 among benchmarked communities. It should be noted however that it is unclear whether benchmarked municipalities apply equivalency factors for small facilities and exclude bike parks from their provisioning. Using a straight inventory quantity comparison aligns Guelph to other comparator municipalities for skateboard and bike park facilities.

The 2009 Recreation, Parks and Culture Strategic Master Plan identified a targeted service level of 1 skateboard park per 5,000 youth. The City is not meeting this target, with a current service level of 1 facility per 13,140 youth. The 1 facility per 5,000 youth is still a common service level target among Ontario municipalities. By applying this target to future youth population projections, the equivalent of two additional skateboard parks are needed in the next 10 years, and three will be needed by 2051.²⁴

Both skateboard facilities and the future bike park are located north of the Speed River. There are service gaps south of the Speed River. See Appendix A, Map 8 for more detail on distribution.

²⁴ 2033 youth population estimate is based on a straight-line interpolation using Statistics Canada 2021 census and *Shaping Guelph: Growth Management Strategy* growth projections

Table 10: Skateboard and bike park provision

Current inventory total	3
Major skateboard park	1
Skateboard node	1
Approved (not yet built) bike park	1
Current skateboard park service level	1:114,992 (1:13,140 youth)
Median service level among comparator municipalities	1:48,358*
Service level target	1:5,000 youth
Additional facilities needed by 2033 to meet service level target	2
Additional facilities needed by 2051 to meet service level target	3

Community engagement highlights

The following key themes emerged from an analysis of all community engagement activities for the PRMP.

- One of the most frequently identified needs during community engagement was amenities for youth.
- A high volume of requests for lighting at Silvercreek skateboard park were received.
- A community working group involved in the development of the Eastview Park bike park identified a preference for a second bike park location that is centrally located within the city.

Skateboard and bike park trends

Skateboarding and biking among youth are increasing in Guelph. The 2009 Recreation, Parks and Culture Strategic Master Plan found that 7% of survey respondents reported a member of their household skateboarding in the previous year. In a 2019 community survey, 13% of survey respondents reported that member(s) of their household use Guelph's skateboard parks. This suggests that interest in skateboarding has almost doubled in the last decade. While it is difficult to track skateboard participation due to the casual pick-up nature of this type of recreation that does not require booking, one can often observe dozens of people at a time using Guelph's skateboard parks in the warmer months.

*It is unclear from available data whether benchmarked municipalities apply equivalency factors for small facilities and exclude bike parks from their provisioning for skateboard parks.

Needs assessment

Skateboard parks have become a staple in municipal recreation provisions. They are viewed as positive outlets for youth, who can often be under-served by park facilities. Bike parks are also emerging with many Ontario municipalities starting to implement them. The City heard through community engagement that residents want more activities like this for youth.

Major skateboard and bike parks can be expensive infrastructure, requiring significant amounts of concrete and fill, and specialized contractors to form the features of the parks. To mitigate this while also fulfilling community need, many municipalities are moving toward a hierarchical system of major skateboard parks and small skateboard nodes. This strategy provides range of facilities from large, multi-feature amenities to facilities with fewer features that have a much smaller footprint. Guelph's existing skateboard parks already fit neatly into this type of system: the Silvercreek Park skateboard facility is large and draws residents from the broader community, while the skateboard node at Norm Jary Park has a few smaller features that draw residents from the local neighbourhood. Guelph should continue to offer and expand on its skateboard facilities.

To meet the demand in Guelph, it is recommended that one major skateboard park and four smaller scale skateboard nodes be constructed in Guelph. The major facility should be located south of the Speed River to offer better distribution of youth facilities across the city. Additionally, the City should implement four skateboard nodes to its inventory. Skateboard nodes can be implemented in smaller parks to fill distribution gaps or areas of need.

No additional bike parks are recommended at this time, however the City should continue to monitor demand.

Recommendations for skateboard and bike parks

19. Construct one major skateboard park in an area south of the Speed River.
20. Construct four skateboard nodes. The skateboard nodes may be implemented in smaller parks and contain a limited number of introductory elements to fill distribution gaps or areas of need. The location of skateboard nodes should be prioritized in highly marginalized areas.
21. Evaluate the ability to add lights at Silvercreek Skateboard Park.

Disc golf courses

Guelph has a current inventory of two disc golf courses: one at Riverside Park and one at Eastview Park. This results in a provision ratio of 1 course per 71,870 residents, which is higher than the median provision of 1 course per 96,653 residents among benchmarked communities. This means that Guelph has a healthy supply of disc golf courses in comparison to other municipalities. Being a relatively new trend, there no industry standard provision target for disc golf courses.

See Appendix A, Map 8 for disc golf locations.

Table 11: Disc golf provision

Current inventory	2
Current service level	1: 71,870
Median service level among comparator municipalities	1: 96,653

Figure 12: Disc golf



Community engagement highlights

The following key themes emerged from an analysis of all community engagement activities for the PRMP.

- 15% of respondents to a 2019 survey reported that at least one member of their household uses Guelph's disc golf courses.
- A number of requests for a disc rental or lending program were received.
- Generally many positive comments about Guelph's disc golf courses were received.

Disc golf trends

Disc golf is a growing sport that is typically played as pick-up rounds or tournaments. Because much of the use is informal, registration trends to gauge participation are not available or reliable as a complete database. However research on the growth of the sport has shown that 71% of the world's disc golf course have been built in the last 10 years. The same study found that in 2021 alone, 157 new disc golf course were built in Canada.²⁵ The popularity of disc golf can be attributed to many factors: it is safe, inexpensive to play, requires very little equipment, and it is easy to learn. Given the increasing popularity of the sport, demand for disc golf in Guelph is expected to grow.

Needs assessment

There is a clear demand for disc golf in the city. At any given time, many people can be observed playing Guelph's courses. However, in comparison to other municipalities, Guelph is serving the demand quite well with two courses. No additional disc golf courses are recommended at this time, however the City should continue to monitor demand given the immense growth of the sport in recent years.

Community engagement feedback revealed that residents would like to be able to rent or borrow disc golf equipment from the City. The Guelph Public Library has a rental program, however on a larger scale, Guelph should develop a sports equipment rental or borrowing program. This would help to fulfill community need, while also allowing people who do not have the means to purchase equipment to participate in sports.

Recommendations for disc golf

22. Continue to monitor demand for disc golf.
23. Develop a sports equipment borrowing or rental program.

²⁵ UDisc, 2022, The Disc Golf Growth Report, Retrieved from www.UDisc.com

Lawn bowling greens

The City has taken over maintenance of the only public lawn bowling facility in Guelph. The facility is on City park property but was previously maintained and operated by the Guelph Lawn Bowling Club. There are two greens at the facility, however only one is maintained and operational. This results in a provision ratio of one lawn bowling green per 143,740 residents, which is higher than the median provision of one lawn bowling green per 172,881 residents among benchmarked communities. This means that Guelph has a healthy supply of lawn bowling greens in comparison to other municipalities.

Table 12: Lawn bowling green provision

Current inventory	1
Current service level	1:143,740
Median service level among comparator municipalities	1:172,881

Figure 13: Lawn Bowling



Community engagement highlights

The following key themes emerged from an analysis of all community engagement activities for the PRMP.

- 4% of respondents to a 2019 survey reported that at least one member of their household uses Guelph's lawn bowling green.
- Generally lawn bowling was mentioned very infrequently during community engagement.

Needs assessment

Lawn bowling has long been a popular activity among Guelph's older adults. In alignment with Guelph's Older Adult Strategy goal of offering facilities and programs that allow older adults to participate in recreational and social activities as they age, the City should continue to operate this facility and facilitate bookings.

Anecdotally, the Guelph Lawn Bowling Club has communicated to City staff that their membership has grown significantly over the last few years, and younger participants are joining. This is in line with trends in other Ontario municipalities that are seeing a resurgence of popularity of the sport among younger people. This may be due to the unprogrammed, casual nature that the sport offers. The City should continue to monitor demand for lawn bowling.

When the lawn bowling green reaches the end of its service life, the City should undertake a master plan exercise for the portion of Royal City Park east of Gordon Street. Consideration should be given to whether the lawn bowling facility should be re-located, making more efficient use of the space.

Recommendations for lawn bowling

24. Continue to monitor demand for lawn bowling in Guelph.
25. When the lawn bowling green is nearing the end of its service life, the City should undertake a master plan exercise for the portion of Royal City Park east of Gordon Street. In consultation with the Lawn Bowling Club consider whether the facility should be re-located. Consideration should be given to the settling period required for new bowling greens to ensure minimal disruption to the Club's operations and opportunities for play.

Outdoor fitness equipment

Guelph has a current inventory of two fitness station locations, consisting of several pieces of equipment each. This results in a provision ratio of 1 fitness station per 71,870 residents, which is lower than the median provision of 1 fitness station per 30,273 residents among benchmarked communities. This means that Guelph has a low supply of fitness stations in comparison to other municipalities.

Community engagement highlights

The following key themes emerged from an analysis of all community engagement activities for the PRMP.

- In a 2020 survey, 25% of respondents indicated that they would use outdoor fitness equipment in parks if it was available to them, while 42% of respondents indicated that they would never use it.
- A few requests were received for a destination style outdoor fitness park. Suggestions included a parkour course, ninja course and calisthenics park.

Needs assessment

Guelph has piloted the implementation of outdoor fitness equipment in several parks. Outdoor fitness equipment at Centennial Park and the West End Community Centre was removed due to lack of use. There are currently several pieces of outdoor fitness equipment in Cedarvale Park and Courtney, Goines and Mallott Park, which are both local, neighbourhood parks.

While Guelph residents value fitness, City staff observe very little use of this equipment. These observations are consistent with several studies that have concluded that while outdoor fitness equipment in parks is perceived as being highly beneficial by the public, only 1.9-5.5% of park users have been observed utilizing the equipment.²⁶ Under-utilization of outdoor fitness equipment observed in Guelph parks and other Canadian municipalities suggests that investment in outdoor fitness may be better allocated in different ways. The findings of one study suggest that placing fitness equipment in consolidated “fitness zones” may be more effective for increasing physical activity than several pieces of equipment dispersed along a trail or pathway.²⁷

A better strategy to encourage fitness in smaller neighbourhood parks without implementing costly, under-utilized equipment is to install signage that illustrates

²⁶ University of Lethbridge Department of Kinesiology & Physical Education and University of Lethbridge Faculty of Health Sciences, 2016, Outdoor Fitness Equipment in Urban Parks: Public Use, Perceived Benefit and Suggested Enhancements.

²⁷ International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 2020, Placement of Outdoor Exercise Equipment and Physical Activity: A Quasi-Experimental Study in Two Parks in Southern California.

some exercises that park users could do using the infrastructure already present in the park. For example, signage could suggest push-ups on park benches, or lunges along park pathways. To serve the community desire for an outdoor fitness park, the City should explore creative solutions to providing a dynamic youth/adult fitness park as a specialized destination facility within the park system. Part of this exercise should include engagement with the community on what type facility is preferred. Options could include a parkour course, ninja course or gymnastic style apparatuses. Finally, the City should continue to promote awareness of the numerous fitness classes offered by the recreation department in park settings.

Figure 14: Outdoor fitness park



Recommendations for outdoor fitness equipment

26. If fitness equipment is requested during community engagement for neighbourhood parks, consider utilizing signage to encourage fitness rather than dedicated outdoor equipment.
27. Explore creative solutions to providing a dynamic youth/adult fitness park as a specialized destination facility within the park system. Engage the community on what type of facility is preferred.
28. Continue to promote awareness of the fitness classes the City offers in park settings.

Outdoor leisure facilities

Just as important to Guelph's park system as its sports infrastructure are the non-athletic amenities that allow children to play, dogs to run, and communities to gather. These amenities include playgrounds, splash pads, wading pools, dog parks and community gardens. In addition, the City provides amenities that enhance the user experience while at parks. These include washrooms, shade and water bottle refill stations. Together with sports facilities, these amenities form the core of Guelph's park system.

Playgrounds

Guelph has a current inventory of 93 playgrounds. This results in a provision ratio of 1 playground per 1,546 residents, which is lower than the median provision of 1 course per 1,310 residents among benchmarked communities. This means that Guelph has a lower supply of playgrounds in comparison to other municipalities.

The 2009 Recreation, Parks and Culture Strategic Master Plan identified a service level target based on geographic distribution of one playground within a five-to-ten-minute walk of residential areas. This is typically represented by a 500-800 metre radius. The 2022 Council-approved Park Plan mapped walking distances to parks using only safe pedestrian road crossings to travel across any major barriers. The results found that 92% of people live within a five-to-ten-minute walk of a park. A review of the mapping suggests similar results for walkability to playgrounds.

Playgrounds are well distributed throughout the city. See Appendix A, Map 9 for more detail on distribution.

Table 13: Playground provision

Current inventory	93
Current service level	1:1,546
Median service level among comparator municipalities	1:1,310
Service level target	Walking distance (500-800 metres) from residential areas

Community engagement highlights

The following key themes emerged from an analysis of all community engagement activities for the PRMP.

- In a 2019 community survey, 51% of respondents reported that they visit Guelph parks to use playgrounds.
- A few requests for upgrades to specific park playgrounds were received.
- A few requests for more playgrounds with rubber safety surface were received.

- During community engagement for the annual playground replacement program, the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) commented that they would like to see more rubber surfaced playgrounds in Guelph.
- During subsequent engagement with the AAC in April 2023, the AAC unanimously voted in favour of the following motion:

“That the AAC supports the adoption of a geographic distribution of playgrounds with rubber surface within 2.5 km of residential areas. Further, the AAC supports the implementation of two new rubber surface playgrounds to fill distribution gaps in the central and northwest areas of the city.”

Needs assessment

The overall supply of playgrounds in Guelph is adequate and the City should maintain its service level target of one playground within walking distance, or 500-800 metres, of residential areas. This is aligned with other Ontario municipal targets. As the city grows over the next 10 years and neighbourhood parks are implemented in new subdivisions, the City should continue to construct new playgrounds using this service level target.

In general, the community is satisfied with Guelph’s playgrounds, however throughout community engagement the City received a few requests for updates to specific playgrounds in the city that are aging, and a few requests for more rubber surfaced playgrounds. The condition and safety of all playgrounds in the city is continually monitored and the equipment is prioritized for replacement based on those assessments. Although there is not a strict service life for playground equipment, typically it is forecast for replacement every 20 years and final timing is based on condition assessment. The City has implemented an annual playground replacement program that includes upgrading equipment in several parks each year to maintain acceptable quality. Community engagement for this program occurs annually to ensure playgrounds reflect the community’s preferences.

At minimum Guelph’s playgrounds include:

- Components for ages 2-5 years and 5-12 years;
- Components that promote challenge and offer progression of play challenge;
- Components that encourage creative play, physical play, quiet retreat play, and social play;
- Components that offer opportunities for rocking, swinging, climbing, spinning, and sliding;
- 25% of total play components at ground-level & one accessible swing on swing sets;

- Different types of ground-level play components that are integrated into the play space;
- 50% of elevated play components on an accessible route (connected by ramps or transfer stations);
- An accessible pathway and ramp into the play space;
- Engineered wood fibre safety surface under play equipment;
- At least one accessible feature (e.g., one accessible slide, swing, etc.).

Some playgrounds in Guelph offer enhanced service level with rubber safety surface under play equipment. Guelph currently has five rubber surfaced playgrounds, with two more being implemented in 2023, for a total of seven. The City has heard from the Accessibility Advisory Committee, accessibility advocates and community members that engineered wood fibre can be difficult to navigate for individuals that use wheeled devices and that they request more rubber surfaced playground options in the city. There are challenges with expanding rubber safety surfacing through the playground replacement program. Challenges include accelerated material deterioration that results in replacement of the safety surface two times during the service life of play equipment; working within existing playground footprints; fall heights and limits on the type of equipment that can be installed; and increased project scope to include amenities to support the enhanced service level, including potentially parking, additional pedestrian connections, furnishings, and shade structures. For these reasons, most municipalities offer a combination of engineered wood fibre and rubber in select playground locations.

Using a 2.5-kilometre service radius as the metric for a five-minute drive, Guelph's rubber surface playgrounds were mapped to understand if there are distribution gaps in service. As shown in Appendix A, Map 9, there are geographic gaps in the northwest and central areas of the city. To resolve these distribution gaps, the City should implement one rubber surface playground at University Village Park and one in the northwest area of the city. Locations that have parking, are on bus routes, and are integrated into the city-wide trail network should be considered as potential locations. This rubber surface distribution strategy was presented to the AAC in April 2023 and was unanimously supported by the committee.

Recommendations for playgrounds

29. Construct two new rubber surfaced playgrounds: one at University Village Park and one in the northwest portion of the city.
30. Continue to monitor capital investment against operational and maintenance costs to ensure optimal life cycle of playground assets.

Splash pads and wading pools

Guelph currently has six splash pads and three wading pools. A new splash pad at Eastview Park is currently under construction, and Council has approved another splash pad at Margaret Greene Park through the capital budget process. This results in a total of 11 splash pads and wading pools and a provision of one facility per 13,067 residents. This is higher than the median provision of 1 facility per 17,928 residents among benchmarked communities. This means that Guelph has a higher supply of water play facilities in comparison to other municipalities.

The 2009 Recreation, Parks and Culture Strategic Master Plan recommended a service level target of 1 splash pad or wading pool per 3,000 children under 14. Guelph is currently surpassing that target by providing 1 splash pad or wading pool per 2,137 children. By applying this target to future child population projections, the City will still be surpassing the 2009 target in 2033 without adding new water play facilities.

Since splash pads and wading pools are drive-to destination facilities, the City should move toward a geographic distribution service level target, similar to playground provisioning. Using a 2.5 kilometre service radius as the metric for a five minute drive, Guelph still has adequate supply of water play facilities, as shown in Appendix A, Map 10.

Figure 15: Splash pad



Table 14: Splash pad and wading pool provision

Current inventory total	11
Splash pads	6
Splash pads (planned in 2023/2024)	2
Wading pools	2
Market square water feature	1
Current service level	1:13,067
Median service level among comparator municipalities	1:17,928
Service level target	2.5 kilometres from residential areas

Community engagement highlights

The following key themes emerged from an analysis of all community engagement activities for the PRMP.

- Generally residents are satisfied with Guelph’s splash pads and wading pools. Several requests for more were received through community engagement.

Needs assessment

As described above, by all industry standard metrics, Guelph is well supplied for splash pads and wading pools. As such, no additional water play facilities are recommended over the next 10 years, beyond what is existing, under construction, or already approved through the capital budget process.

It should be noted that in 2017 Council approved a recommendation to convert wading pools at Exhibition Park and Sunny Acres Park to splash pads when these facilities reach the end of their service life. As described in Staff Report PS-17-10, the reason for converting aging wading pools to splash pads is to improve accessibility, to be more water efficient in accordance with Guelph’s Water Efficiency Strategy and to reduce operating costs of water play facilities. Ontario Regulation 535: Public Pools, under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, requires that all wading pools have attendant supervision from a certified aquatics staff during operation. This additional human resource requirement, especially in light of North-American-wide aquatics staffing shortages, further drives trends away from wading pools and towards splash pads.

The Staff Report also committed to engaging the community in the decision-making process when these wading pools reach the end of their service lives, as many in the community are fond of these facilities. The water feature at Market Square is planned to remain in place.

Recommendations for splash pads and wading pools

31. Convert wading pools at Exhibition Park and Sunny Acres Park to splash pads. Engage the community about replacement of these assets when they are nearing the end of their service life.

Community gardens

Guelph supports 36 community gardens, 32 of which are traditional food-based gardens and 4 are orchards. Of the total inventory, 13 are on City property. It is important to note that the City is the coordinator and central hub for information on community gardens, however they are volunteer-run and the City does not directly operate any of them. Although Guelph does not own and operate all of these gardens, as the facilitator of the network, it is still valuable to understand how the service level compares to other municipalities. The provision of community gardens in Guelph is 1 garden per 3,993 residents. This is significantly higher than the median provision of 1 garden per 17,348 among comparator municipalities. It should be noted that because of the nature of municipalities' role in coordinating community gardens but not necessarily operating them, there are variations in the way different cities inventory them.

Figure 16: York Road Park community garden



Community engagement highlights

The following key themes emerged from an analysis of all community engagement activities for the PRMP.

- In a 2019 survey, 23% of survey respondents reported that they participate in a community garden program.
- Several requests for more community gardens were received.

Needs assessment

While Guelph is well served for community gardens in comparison to other municipalities, there is a significant local demand for these spaces. City staff report that many of the existing vegetable garden projects are full and have waitlists. Demand has grown significantly, with 10% reported increase of program participants year over year.

The participation data and numerous requests for additional space received by City staff indicate that Guelph should continue to expand the community garden network. It is recommended that demand and available space for community gardens be assessed during the design process for individual parks to identify opportunities to include them in parks.

One of the challenges that City staff encounter when evaluating appropriate locations for community gardens is insufficient information on where water service exists in or near park properties. Water is essential for the operation of community gardens. This is a challenge when doing site analysis for other park infrastructure as well, including washrooms, water bottle refill stations, water play facilities and irrigation. For this reason, it is recommended that the City undertake an exercise to inventory water service locations in and near parks and map them in GIS to improve daily operational efficiency.

Recommendations for community gardens

32. During the design process for individual parks, assess demand and available space for community gardens.
33. Seek to align new community garden locations with other park facilities that use water, for water and capital cost efficiency.
34. Undertake a GIS mapping exercise to inventory water service locations in and near parks.

Dog parks and leash-free areas

Guelph has a current inventory of 2 fenced dog parks. This results in a provision ration of 1 dog park per 71,870 residents which is about the same as the median provision of 1 dog park per 72,892 residents among benchmarked communities. This means that Guelph has about the same service level of leash-free areas in comparison to other municipalities. In addition to fenced dog parks, the City has 49 permitted leash-free areas, which include some unoccupied sports fields and some open space areas. There is no industry standard provision for dog parks.

Dog parks and leash-free areas are well distributed throughout the city. See Appendix A, Map 12 for more detail on distribution.

Table 15: Dog parks and leash-free areas

Current inventory total	53
Fenced dog parks	2
Permitted leash-free areas	10
Unoccupied sports fields permitted as leash-free areas	41
Current fenced dog park service level	1: 71,870
Median service level among comparator municipalities	1: 72,892

Figure 17: Fenced dog park



Community engagement highlights

The following key themes emerged from an analysis of all community engagement activities for the PRMP.

- In a 2019 survey, 47% of survey respondents reported that they use Guelph parks for dog walking.
- In a 2020 survey, dog parks ranked 4th among residents for the preferred park amenities to serve teens, adults and seniors.
- Many residents note concerns with off-leash dogs during their park and trail experiences.

Needs assessment

Opinions on dog parks and leash-free areas are extremely polarizing in Guelph. On one hand people feel very strongly that dog parks are important not only for their dogs' wellbeing but also as recreational and social activities for dog owners. On the other hand just as many people have concerns with prioritizing park space for dogs over people, the noise from dog parks, and fears over interaction with leash-free dogs.

In 2019 the City updated it's Leash Free Program Policy and associated Leash Free Study. Council approved the study, which recommended the implementation of three fenced dog parks. After numerous resident complaints about noise in two of the newly constructed dog parks, in 2020 Council directed staff not to implement the third fenced dog park.

Given that comparator data suggests that Guelph is appropriately served for dog parks and leash-free areas, and Council direction to not implement more, no additional dog parks or leash-free areas are recommended at this time.

Park infrastructure that supports recreation

In addition to the many park facilities that offer recreational opportunity to Guelph's residents, the City has also has infrastructure that enhances recreational function and user experience in parks. This infrastructure includes permanent restrooms, picnic shelters, shade structures, water bottle refill stations, and seating. Aside from seating, this type of infrastructure is usually reserved for locations where there are major attractions, like splash pads or the carousel at Riverside Park. These attractions draw people from the broader community and tend to influence longer park visits. This creates a need for more robust supporting infrastructure. Because restrooms, picnic shelters, shade structures and water bottle refill stations are supporting infrastructure to recreational amenities, it is not particularly useful to analyze provision ratios. Locations are shown in Appendix A, Map 13.

Community engagement highlights

The following key themes emerged from an analysis of all community engagement activities for the PRMP.

- Combined, shade and trees were the most requested park elements in all the open-ended questions throughout community engagement.
- Permanent restrooms were the 5th most requested park element in all the open-ended questions throughout community engagement.
- Water bottle refill stations were requested frequently throughout community engagement.

Needs assessment

Picnic shelters and shade

Guelph has four bookable picnic shelters in three locations, and 20 shade structures throughout the park system. Community engagement revealed that shade is one of the most important elements the park system to the community. Not only does shade enhance user comfort during hot summer months, but it also has public health benefits by reducing harmful UV exposure. In 2022 researchers in the Department of Population Medicine at the University of Guelph undertook a shade audit of Guelph's playgrounds. The study found that there was positive correlation between playgrounds that offered shade and the number of users visiting playgrounds. It also revealed that most playground structures in Guelph have little shade coverage.²⁸

²⁸ Department of Population Medicine, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, Canada, "An evaluation of the amount, type and use of shade at public playgrounds in Guelph, Ontario, Canada," *Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention in Canada* Vol 42, No 5 (2022).

Providing shade in parks is complex. The most cost-effective way to provide shade in parks is by planting large-growing deciduous trees. Long-term, trees also provide the most expansive shade coverage. However, it can take years before trees grow large enough to provide significant shade. It can also be difficult to build within the root zone of mature trees, and this often limits where park features can be located. However, despite the challenges, and given the amount of shade that can be achieved long-term with reasonably low investment, trees should be the preferred option for providing shade in parks. Tree planting in parks is supported by the goal of Guelph's Urban Forest Management Plan to increase canopy cover in the city. During the construction of new parks or renovation of existing parks, every effort should be made to include new trees for shade.

At specialized park attractions like splash pads and playgrounds with rubber surface, immediate shade cover should be prioritized in the design process. While trees should still be included in the design, shade structures should be considered standard supporting infrastructure for specialized attractions going forward. Shade structures should be provided in the following circumstances:

- At water play facilities;
- At playgrounds with rubber surfacing; and
- At specialized facilities like skateboard parks, bike parks, amusement rides, and fenced dog parks.

Permanent restrooms

Guelph has 16 permanent restrooms in key park and trailhead locations. All park restrooms are seasonal, operating from May until October. The permanent restroom inventory is supplemented by many portable restrooms throughout the park system in the warmer months. Restrooms in parks are very important to the community, having ranked 5th for the most requested facilities in open-ended questions asked throughout community engagement activities. Guelph has committed through the Older Adult Strategy to make outdoor spaces more age-friendly by improving the availability, location and accessibility of public washrooms.²⁹

Many residents identified a desire for restrooms along trail sections. Although the PRMP does not focus on trails, the park and trail system are interconnected, with parks as destination points along the trail system. Implementing permanent washrooms along trail segments is challenging for many reasons including the size of land parcels on which trails are situated; construction equipment access into trail parcels; disturbance to the natural heritage system that many trails are located within; and concerns relating to Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles. As such, permanent washrooms are better located within parks where they serve both park and trail users.

²⁹ City of Guelph, 2014, Older Adult Strategy

As can be seen in Appendix A, Map 13, there is uneven distribution of permanent restrooms in parks throughout the city. The north part of the city is well served for restrooms but there are gaps in the south part of the city, with no parks east of Gordon Street having restrooms at all. To fill this gap, it is recommended that Guelph implement two permanent restrooms in the southeast portion of the city. Site selection for these restrooms should consider location, integration with the trail network, and amenities that are currently on site or planned to be on site that could benefit from having restrooms as supporting infrastructure.

Water bottle refill stations

Guelph has six water bottle refill stations in parks. Community engagement revealed that this is becoming a more popular desire for the community. In order to encourage longer stays at parks, the City should continue to implement water bottle refill stations in strategic locations.

As can be seen in Appendix A, Map 13, there is uneven distribution of water bottle refill stations in parks throughout the city. Like restroom distribution, the north part of the city is better served for water bottle refill stations than the south end, with no parks east of Gordon Street having water refill stations at all. To fill this gap, it is recommended that when Guelph implements the two recommended permanent restrooms, that water bottle refill stations are included in the building designs.

Recommendations for park infrastructure that supports recreation

35. During the construction of new parks or renovation of existing parks, every effort should be made to include new trees for shade.
36. Install shade structures in the following circumstances: at water play facilities; at playgrounds with rubber surfacing; and at specialized facilities like skateboard parks, bike parks, amusement rides, and dog parks.
37. Implement two new permanent restrooms in the southeast portion of the city. Water bottle refill stations should be included in the building designs. As park restrooms are built or renovated, consideration for all-season access should be evaluated.
38. Identify locations throughout the park system to add more public benches and seating. Consider creative ways of financing these benches including but not limited to offering naming rights, sponsorships, and donations.
39. Ensure that adequate signage exists at all municipal parks. These signs should be restored or replaced when they deteriorate.
40. Provide amenities to encourage and support park users who walk and cycle.
41. Continue to incorporate sustainable and environmental design features into the development of new or renewed parkland.

Recreation facilities

Aquatics facilities

With the development of the South End Community Centre (SECC), Guelph will have an inventory of 3 indoor aquatics facilities. This results in a provision rate of 1 indoor aquatic facility per 47,913 residents, which is higher than median average among benchmarked communities. This means Guelph has a healthy supply of indoor aquatic facilities in comparison to other municipalities.

The City's indoor aquatic facilities are located within the Victoria Road Recreation Centre (VRRRC) and West End Community Centre (WECC). VRRRC is located in the Northeast area of the city and WECC in the Northwest area. VRRRC offers a 50-metre swimming pool (subdividable into two 25 metre pools) and a leisure pool, while WECC offers a 25-metre, four-lane lap pool, a leisure pool, and a therapy pool. The University of Guelph, YMCA of Three Rivers, and Movati Athletic Club also have aquatics facilities in Guelph that provide opportunities for residents. As primarily or exclusively member-focused, these facilities are not included in the scope of this assessment.

The 2009 Recreation, Parks and Culture Strategic Master Plan identified a targeted service level of 1 facility for every 50,000 residents. With the closure of Centennial Pool in 2020, the city fell below this target; however the development of the SECC will move the City above this provision target and back into a healthy supply, as well as improve [geographic distribution of aquatics facilities](#).

Table 16: Indoor pool provision

Current inventory	3
Current service level	1:47,913
Median service level among comparator municipalities	1:48,817
Service level target	1:50,000

Booking analysis

A review of City 2021-2022 booking data was undertaken to understand facility utilization. The City of Guelph continues to experience strong demand for drop-in and registered aquatics programming, as well as community organization use. From September 2021 to August 2022, the City's indoor pools provided almost 16,000 hours of community programming through both internal activities and user group rentals.

Table 17: Indoor pool utilization

User	Total Prime Hours	Total Hours
City Registered Programs	4,959.75	6,453.5
City Drop-In Programs	3,557.5	7,371.00
Community User Groups	1,590.00	1,865.25

Figure 18: Indoor aquatics



Community engagement highlights

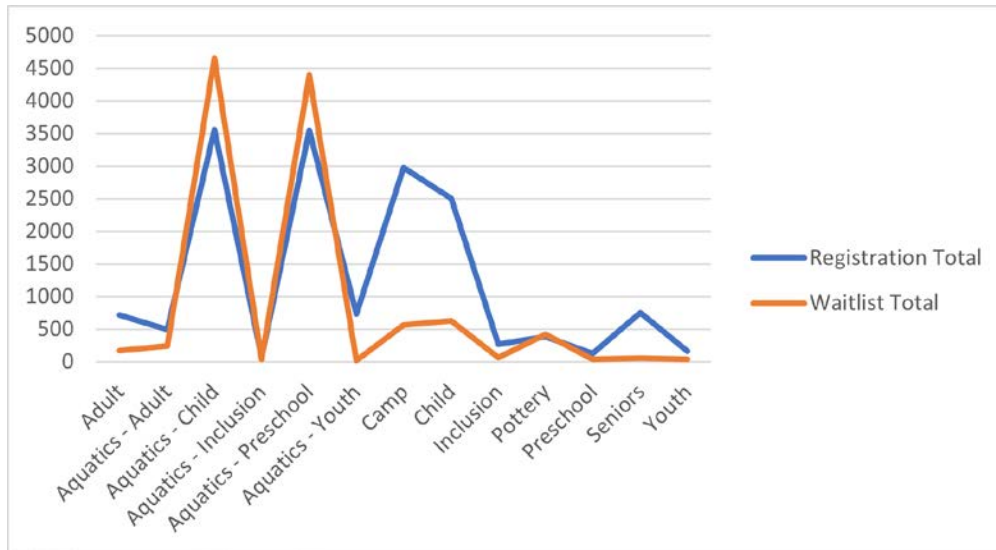
The following key themes emerged from an analysis of all community engagement activities for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

- Residents and sport user groups reported that the closure of Centennial Pool made the City’s other pools busier and harder to access and reduced local organizations’ ability to grow and meet community demand.
- Sport user groups reported that there is a lack of “deep water” pool time available for activities like artistic swimming and water polo.
- Geographic distribution of pools makes them hard to get to if you do not drive (e.g. Downtown residents do not have easy, proximate access to a pool).

Aquatics trends

Since the 2009 Recreation, Parks and Culture Strategic Plan, many aquatic sports such as water polo, artistic swimming, and competitive swimming have grown in popularity in Canada. Recreational and Learn to Swim options however remain some of the most popular recreation pursuits amongst Canadians. Guelph is no exception, with waitlists for municipal aquatics programs now exceeding total registrations – especially for children under 12.

Figure 19: 2022 City recreation registrations and waitlists by program area



Needs assessment

With the development of the SECC, Guelph will return to a healthy supply of aquatics facilities. Following projected population targets though, the City will begin to fall back below service level targets by 2033, when the population is anticipated to be 180,500 if no new supply is added to inventory. Feedback through all phases of community engagement for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan suggest that city pools are already busy and challenging to access. While this is true for prime-time, non-prime availability does present opportunities to engage new and different audiences without the need for new supply. Nationwide aquatics staffing shortages, exacerbated by the pandemic, also play a significant role in current program provision levels. As such, service level targets for aquatics should not be considered solely in terms of infrastructure inventory.

It should also be noted that West End Community Centre will likely require capital investments over the lifespan of this plan to manage aging infrastructure. Any potential intermittent or longer-term closures for facility renovations would negatively impact the City's ability to meet provision targets and the needs of its growing population.

Recommendations for indoor aquatics facilities

42. Adopt a provision target for Indoor Aquatics Facilities that is based on the number of registered participants in City and community organization programs rather than total population to better understand local demand for aquatics amenities.
43. Investigate feasibility of increasing municipal pool inventory based on projected service levels deficits beyond 2033.

Outdoor aquatics facilities

The City of Guelph currently has 1 outdoor pool, Lyon Pool, located just outside the downtown area. This results in a provision rate of 1 outdoor pool for every 143,740 residents. This is lower than the median average among benchmarked communities for outdoor pools. It should be noted however that several benchmark municipalities do not have outdoor pools, and municipal trends are moving away from outdoor pools and wading pools, replacing them with recirculating splash pads, based on water use policies, increased maintenance requirements, and increased staffing requirements. Given the limited, seasonal operation of outdoor pools, they are not included in the overall aquatics service levels or provision targets.

Table 18: Outdoor aquatic facility provision

Current inventory of outdoor pools	1
Current service level (outdoor pools)	1:143,740
Median service level among comparator municipalities	1:121,436
Service level target	To be determined through site feasibility study

Booking analysis

A review of City summer 2022 booking data was undertaken to understand outdoor pool utilization. As noted in the Indoor Aquatics section, the City of Guelph continues to experience strong demand for drop-in and registered aquatics programming, as well as community organization use. During summer operation, Lyon Pool provided 1,251 hours of community recreation, primarily through City recreation registered and drop-in programs (98.7% of total use).

Community engagement highlights

The following key themes emerged from an analysis of all community engagement activities for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

- Residents reported a desire for more outdoor pools and water features.

- Residents reported a desire for greater geographic distribution of outdoor pools and water features.

Aquatics trends

As noted in the introduction to this section, many municipalities are moving away from outdoor pools and wading pools, replacing them with recirculating splash pads to better align with water use and efficiency strategies, reduce maintenance costs, and reduce staffing requirements.

Needs assessment

In 2022, Lyon Pool saw over 13,000 visits. Community feedback for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan consistently highlighted demand for more outdoor pools and water features. Outdoor pools are also becoming key components of urban climate and heat relief responses,^{30,31} placing unanticipated service needs and community demands on these facilities.

Built in the 1950s, Lyon Pool was designed to serve a population of around 33,000. As Guelph's only outdoor pool, it currently operates at a service level more than four-times original intention – a pressure that will reach over 5 times by 2033. Based on age and facility condition assessment, it is also at the end of its service life. As such, expansion or repurposing should be considered to continue to meet community needs and service level targets.

Recommendations for outdoor aquatics facilities

44. Undertake a feasibility study to investigate expansion or repurposing of Lyon Pool

³⁰ City of Toronto. Heat Relief Strategy, 2022. Retrieved from toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/8f66-Heat-Relief-Strategy-2022.pdf

³¹ Raza, Ali. "Toronto is designed for a climate that doesn't exist anymore and it needs to 'face the reality,' experts say: IPCC study warns of more heat waves, droughts, floods and other extreme weather." CBC, August 13, 2021, www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/climate-change-toronto-adaptation-1.6138067

Ice pads

The City of Guelph currently has an inventory of 5 indoor ice pads: two in WECC, one in VRRRC, one in Exhibition Arena, and one in Centennial Arena. The Sleeman Centre also has a municipal ice pad that does provide some recreational use; it is not included in this assessment however as the facility’s primary function is entertainment. The University of Guelph and The Zone Training Hockey Development Centre (private sector provider) also have indoor ice facilities that provide opportunities for residents, although these facilities are not included in the scope of this assessment.

With the development of SECC, the City’s municipal supply will rise to 7 ice pads, provide balanced geographic distribution across the city, and result in a provision ration of 1 ice pad per 20,534 residents. This is higher than the median average amongst benchmarked communities, indicating that the City has a healthy supply of ice rinks.

The 2009 Recreation, Parks and Culture Strategic Master Plan set a provision target of 1 pad per 550 registered youth participants. The city does not currently collect registration data from sports organizations that book and use ice facilities, which limits the ability to validate or build on this provision target. Going forward, the City should develop a data collection and evaluation plan, including registration data from organizations using municipal facilities and unaccommodated booking requests, to better understand local demand and establish appropriate service levels for the community.

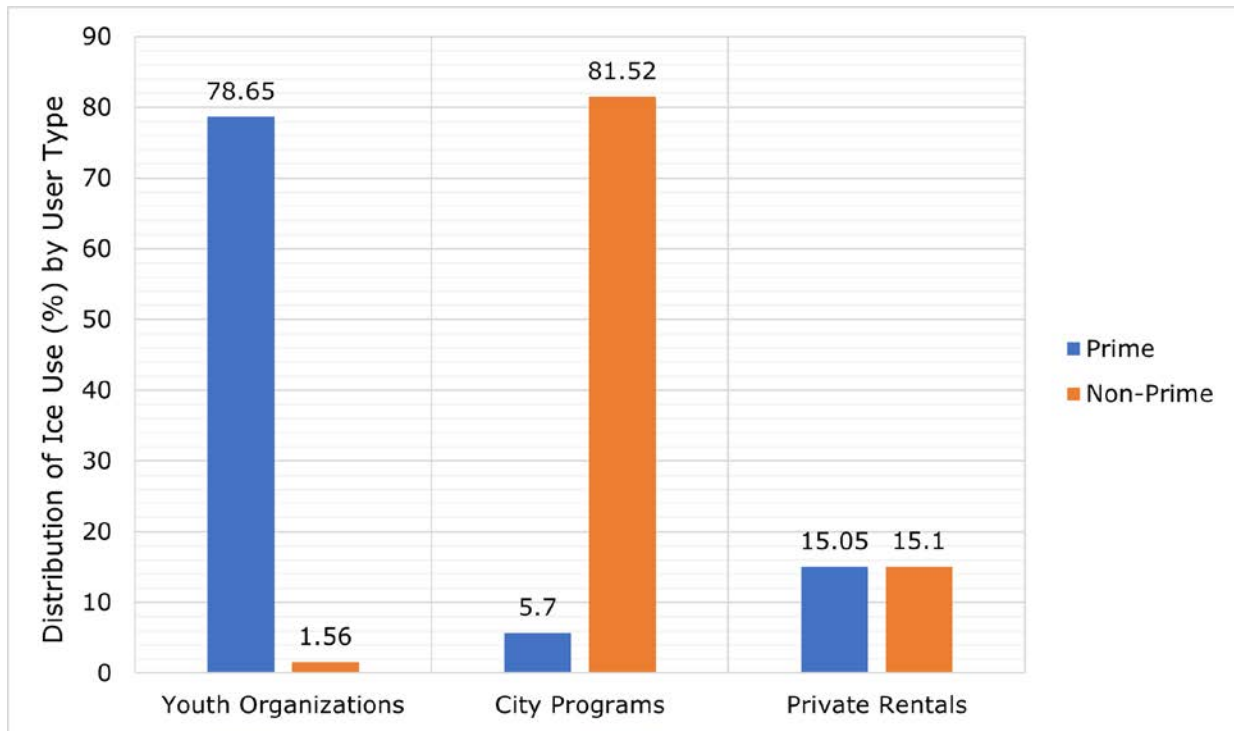
Table 19: Indoor ice pad provision

Current inventory	7
Current service level	1: 20,534
Median service level among comparator municipalities	1: 20,826
Provision target	1: 22,000

Booking analysis

A review of City 2021-2022 ice season booking data was undertaken to understand who the primary ice users are in Guelph and the distribution and utilization of municipal ice facilities.

Figure 20: Ice use by user type



City of Guelph ice pads provided over 8,600 hours of community programming during the 2021-2022 ice season, resulting in a prime time³² ice utilization rate of 93%. Prime time ice is used predominantly by youth organizations (78.65%), while City Recreation programs (shinny, public skates, family skates, etc) account for most of the non-prime use (81.52%).

Ice sport trends

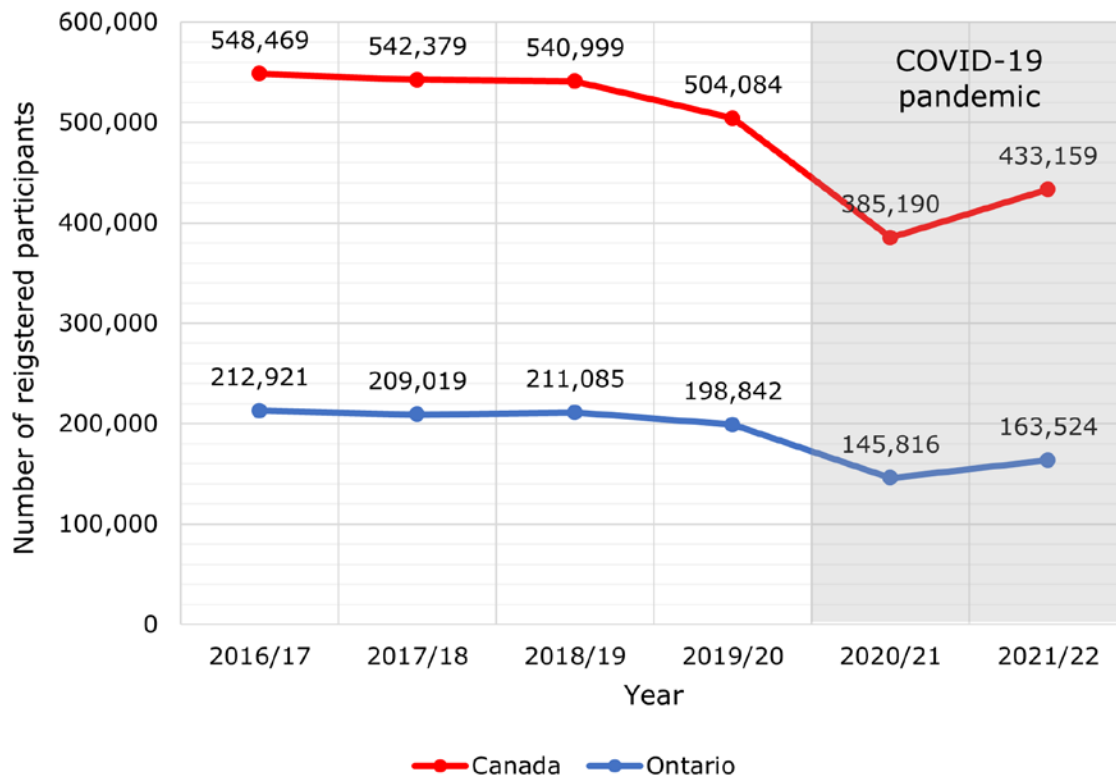
Hockey

While hockey remains the largest user of Guelph's ice pads, overall participation in hockey has been trending downwards. Between 2016 and 2019 Hockey Canada participation declined year over year, losing over 8% of registered participants during that time.³³ The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted participation during the 2020-2021 period, although 2022 figures indicate rebounding participation. The City should continue to monitor hockey trends to understand market demand for ice, as it is expected that hockey organizations will continue to be the primary users of Guelph ice facilities and these trends will have significant impacts on future provisioning targets.

³² Mon-Fri, 6-8am & 4-11pm; Sat-Sun, 6am-11pm

³³ Hockey Canada, 2016-2022 Annual Reports. Retrieved from [hockeycanada.ca](https://www.hockeycanada.ca)

Figure 21: National and provincial hockey participation³⁴



Girls/womens hockey

Overall participation in girls and women's hockey experienced an upward trend, growing steadily from 2016 to 2019 and showing steady participation through 2020. Data is unavailable for 2020/21 period due to COVID-19 pandemic impacts. Participation rebounded strongly in the 2021/22 season. The City of Guelph should continue to monitor this trend to understand market demand, as it is expected that girls and women's hockey organizations will continue to be primary users of Guelph ice facilities.

³⁴ Hockey Canada, 2016-2022 Annual Reports. Retrieved from hockeycanada.ca

Figure 22: National and provincial participation in girls/women’s hockey³⁵
³⁶

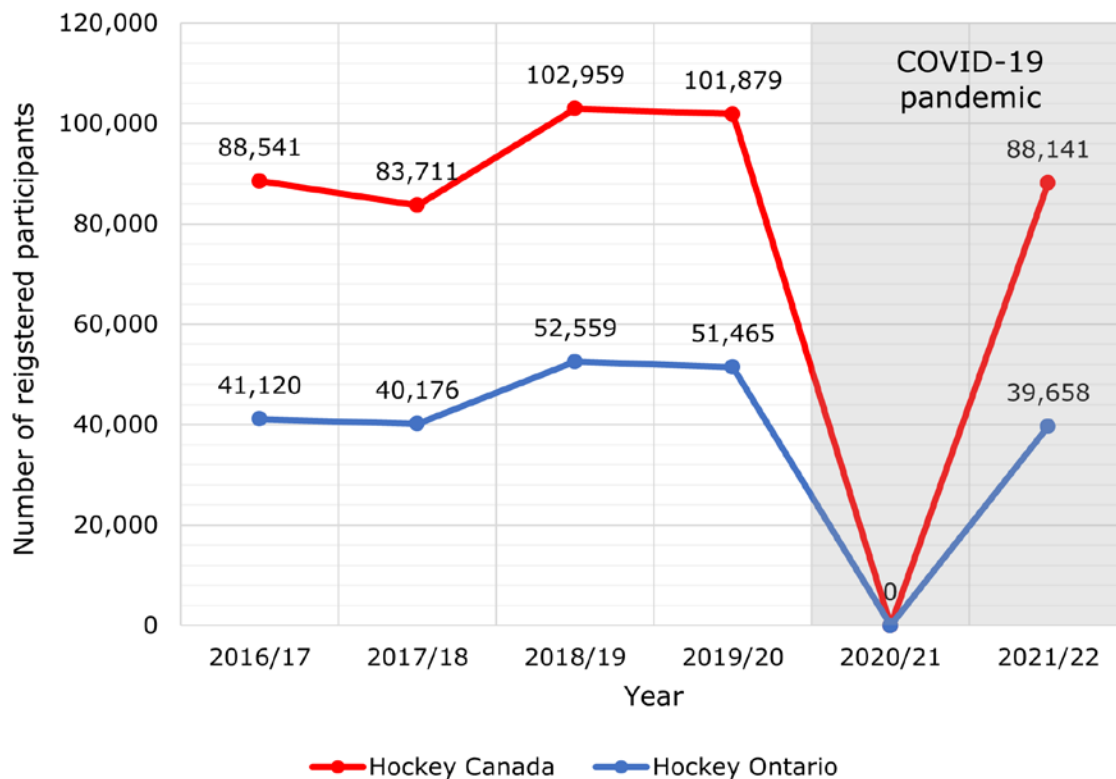


Figure Skating

There is little public registration data available for figure skating at the national and provincial levels. Anecdotally, city staff have observed steady ice use by local figure skating clubs year over year, and figure skating remains one of the primary ice users in Guelph. Going forward, the City of Guelph should collect registration data from local figure skating organizations to better understand how the sport is trending and inform future provisioning.

Ringette

At a provincial level, overall participation in ringette trended downwards from 2011 to 2017 before experiencing a slight upward trend from 2017 to 2019.³⁷ Throughout this period of fluctuation, however, registration numbers remained fairly stable, with overall growth only about 3.6%. At a national level, Ringette Canada registrations were trending upwards prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and currently show signs of upward recovery. Based on trends in Ringette, it is expected that

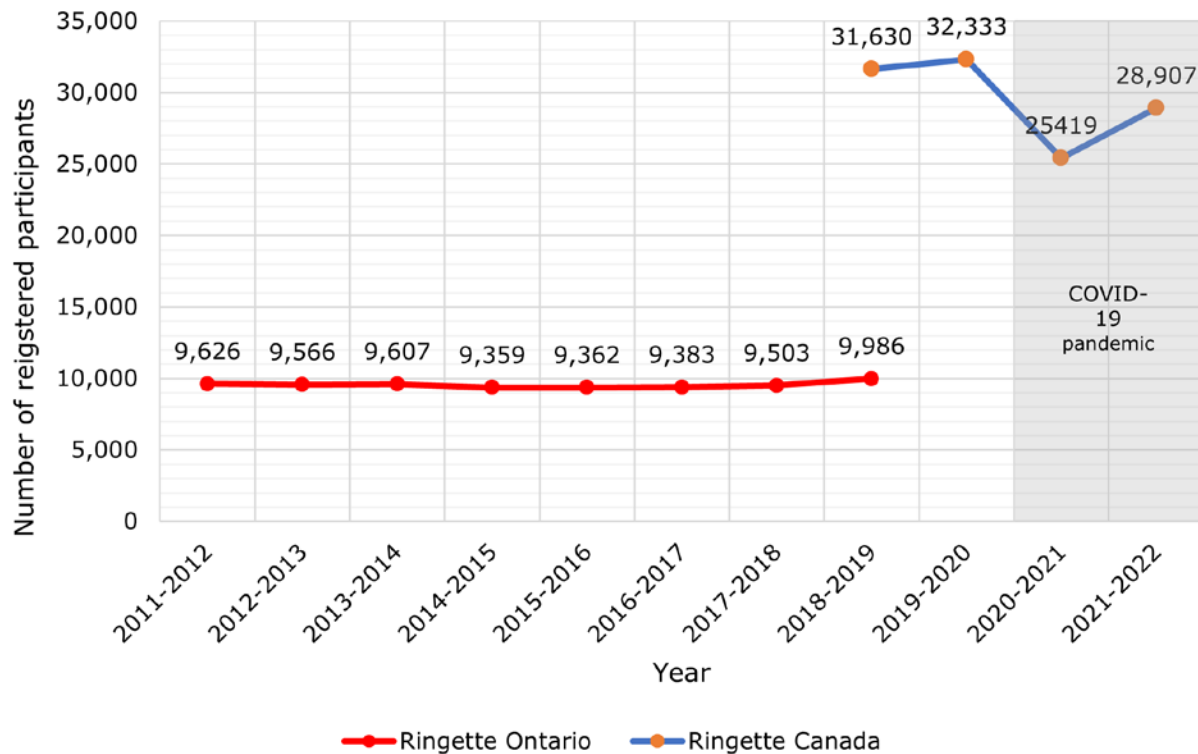
³⁵ Hockey Canada, 2016-2022 Annual Reports. Retrieved from hockeycanada.ca

³⁶ Data not reported for 2020/21

³⁷ Ringette Ontario, 2018-2019 Annual Report. Retrieved from ringetteontario.com

local demand for ice facilities will continue to rise. As with other ice sports, the City should collect registration data from local organizations and continue to monitor national and provincial trends in order to accurately assess market demand and inform future provisioning targets.

Figure 23: National and Provincial Ringette participation^{38 39}



Inclusion and Parasport

As municipalities make targeted efforts to improve equity in and access to recreational opportunities for underserved communities, inclusive programs like Sensory Skates and Parasports like sledging and sledging hockey are becoming staples of municipal program portfolios. The City of Guelph currently offers 44 hours of public sensory skates per season, and in 2022, purchased 6 sledges which are available for public use at the West End Community Centre arenas. Expanding inclusive ice opportunities should remain a priority for the City. Tracking participation data will help the City understand how these activities are trending and help establish appropriate service levels for the community.

³⁸ Ringette Ontario, 2018-2019 Annual Report. Retrieved from ringetteontario.com

³⁹ Ringette Canada, 2018-2022 Annual Reports. Retrieved from ringette.ca

Community engagement highlights

The following key themes emerged from an analysis of all community engagement activities for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

- Sports organizations and residents that use ice facilities report that there is not enough availability to support registrations.
- Sports organizations and residents reported that some of the City's ice facilities are beyond their lifespan.
- Residents reported that more public ice programming is needed and at more convenient times.

Needs assessment

If Guelph maintains its current provision of 1 ice pad per 20,534 residents, it will need one additional ice pad (in addition to SECC) by 2033 to support population growth. However, given generally downward ice sport trends, the city should realign with participant-based provision targets, as per the 2009 Recreation, Parks and Culture Strategic Plan, rather than a population-based provision target for ice pads to get a true picture of market demand. This will align Guelph with comparator municipalities and industry standards, and further, help align provisioning with prevailing sport trends. Registration data from user groups, assessment of unaccommodated requests and community-level data will also confirm if there is a higher local demand requiring adjustments to future provision planning.

Based on Facility Condition Assessments, The City's two standalone arenas are now at or nearing the end of their useable life and require infrastructure improvements, renewal or repurposing to maintain growing service levels. Accessibility updates are also required in some older facilities. The impacts of lifecycling and any closures due to renovations should be considered in future planning given the impacts to potential service levels.

Booking data shows that ice is heavily used in prime hours. There is however a notable variation in prime-time utilization across the course of the season, with shoulder months (e.g. September) showing marked drops (70%) compared to the overall season. The drops are largely accounted for by inconsistent play during try-out periods and end of season playoff eliminations. Still, there is room to explore ice optimization opportunities within existing supply. Ice building timelines also impact availability and utilization, primarily at Centennial Arena, where about 300 hours of additional ice could be made available through facility upgrades and operational adjustments.

Recommendations for indoor ice pads

45. Adopt a provision target for indoor ice facilities that is based on the number of registered participants in City and community organization programs

rather than total population to better understand local demand for ice amenities.

46. Continue to operate Exhibition and Centennial Arenas. Undertake assessment to determine the potential for increased use if existing facilities were upgraded, expanded or repurposed.
47. Develop a Facility Optimization Strategy to evaluate facility and operational efficiencies, address historical patterns of availability, and explore opportunities for non-prime use.
48. Explore opportunities to increase community recreation in the Sleeman Centre to increase service provision – especially for geographically underserved downtown residents.

Gymnasiums

Guelph has a current inventory of 1.5 Gymnasiums. This includes the full-sized gym at the West End Community Centre and the smaller-sized Auditorium (provided an equivalency calculation of 0.5) at the Evergreen Seniors Community Centre (ESCC), collectively providing a provision of 1 Gymnasium per 95,826 residents. The development of the SECC will add another 2 full size gyms to City inventory, resulting in an overall provision of 1 gym per 41,068 residents.

The 2009 Recreation, Parks and Culture Strategic Master Plan identified a targeted service level of 1 gym per 50,000 residents. This assessment however provided a full gym ranking for the auditorium in the ESCC, slightly misrepresenting true supply given the limited size and functionality of the amenity. Regardless, with the development of the SECC, the city's provision will be well above recommended service level targets.

Table 20: Gymnasium provision

Current inventory	1.5
Supply including SECC	3.5
Current service level (including SECC)	1:41,068
Median service level among comparator municipalities	1:21,407
Service level target	1:40,000

Booking analysis

Figure 24: Distribution of City gym use

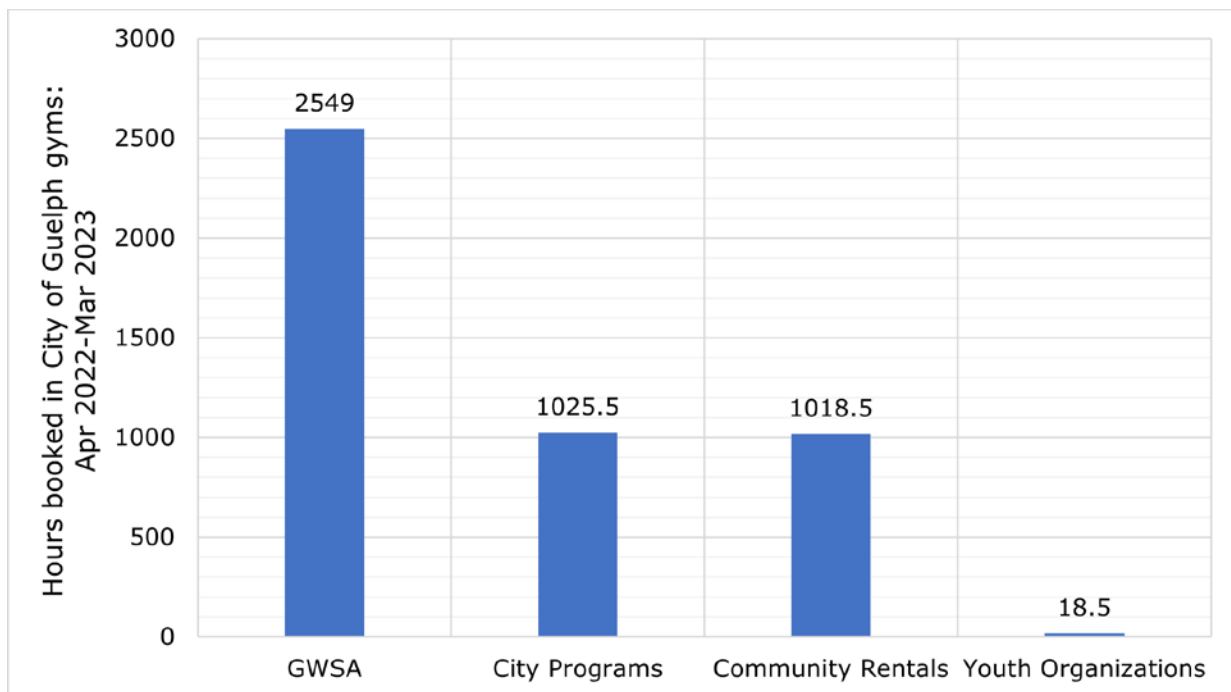


Figure 25: Indoor gyms



A review of 2022 booking data was undertaken to understand who uses City gyms and how much.

The Guelph-Wellington Seniors Association (GWSA) is the largest user of City gymnasiums, booking over 2,400 hours of gym time and accounting for more than 55% of total use. This is in large part due to a Community Benefit Agreement with the organization providing priority facility allocations to enable older adult participation in recreation. The main GWSA activities in City gyms include pickleball, table tennis, badminton, shuffleboard and line dancing.

City recreation programs and community rentals collectively account for about 44% of total gym use, providing over 2,000 hours of recreation activities in City gyms. Uses vary, providing diverse activities like volleyball, pickleball, basketball, archery, day camps, and drop-in youth programming.

Overall, booking data shows that City gymnasiums are well used, but that patterns of use leave significant room for optimization opportunities within existing supply.

The WECC gym has a utilization rate of approximately 44% during prime hours and 53% during non-prime hours.

Conversely, EGSC auditorium has an overall utilization rate of 75%, with demand consistent throughout both prime and non-prime hours. As noted above, both prime and non-prime utilization in this facility are largely explained through the Community Benefit Agreement with the GWSA.

Community engagement highlights

The following key themes emerged from an analysis of all community engagement activities for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

- Sport user groups noted lack of prime-time gym availability.
- Sport user groups reported that Guelph struggles to compete with other communities for sports tournaments due to a lack of gym/court facilities.
- Pickleball players and organizations reported the need for dedicated indoor court space to accommodate the growing number of players and potential teaching and tournament opportunities.

Court sport trends

City of Guelph Gymnasiums accommodate a wide range of uses and users. National, Provincial, and/or Regional trends for the primary sports using City gyms are included in the Outdoor Facility Assessment. Given the upward trends and anticipated growth in most court sports, the City should consider collecting, monitoring and evaluate booking and sport-specific registration data to inform future provision targets and optimization strategies.

The City and community users also provide a diverse range of recreational and cultural activities, beyond court specific sports, in gym spaces, and as such, current and future provision targets should be considered within both a sporting and broader recreational context to ensure appropriate service levels for these multi-purpose facilities. Evaluation of booking and program data would provide a better understanding of gym use potential and inform future provision targets.

Needs assessment

Current City gym inventory – especially in the context of SECC development – along with City booking data suggests that there is an adequate supply of gymnasiums to support community use and demand. It should also be noted that local schools also provide a healthy supply of gymnasiums available through the

Community Use of Schools program,⁴⁰ ⁴¹ further supporting community access to gymnasiums in Guelph.

The SECC will increase supply and geographic distribution of municipal gymnasiums, and provide an opportunity to operationalize and evaluate demand and use of a double-gym facility. This will provide a clearer understanding of community need and support the development of data-driven service level targets.

Recommendations for indoor gymnasiums

49. Continue to collect and analyze facility booking and program data to better understand community use and demand for gym spaces.
 - a. Develop a provision target for gymnasiums that is based on the number of registered participants in City and community organization programs rather than total population to better understand local demand for gym spaces.
50. Continue to monitor and respond to trends in recreation to maximize the use of gym spaces and ensure programming for diverse audiences in Guelph.
51. Develop a Facility Optimization Strategy to address patterns of historical availability and expand community access to City Recreation facilities.

⁴⁰ www.ugdsb.ca/community/community-use-of-school-facilities/

⁴¹ www.wellingtoncdsb.ca/apps/pages/communityuse

Indoor turf facilities

The City has a current inventory of 1 indoor turf facility: the Guelph Sportsdome. This results in a provision rate of 1 facility for every 143,740 residents. This is below the median average provision of 1 per 128,285 residents among benchmarked communities, however, almost half of municipal comparators do not have any turf facilities in their Recreation inventory, suggesting Guelph has a healthy supply comparatively.

The University of Guelph also has one indoor turf facility that provides for some community use, although its primary function is University Athletics. Neighbouring Guelph-Eramosa Township also has one indoor turf facility, the Royal Distributing Athletic Performance Centre, that currently provides use for several Guelph sports organizations.

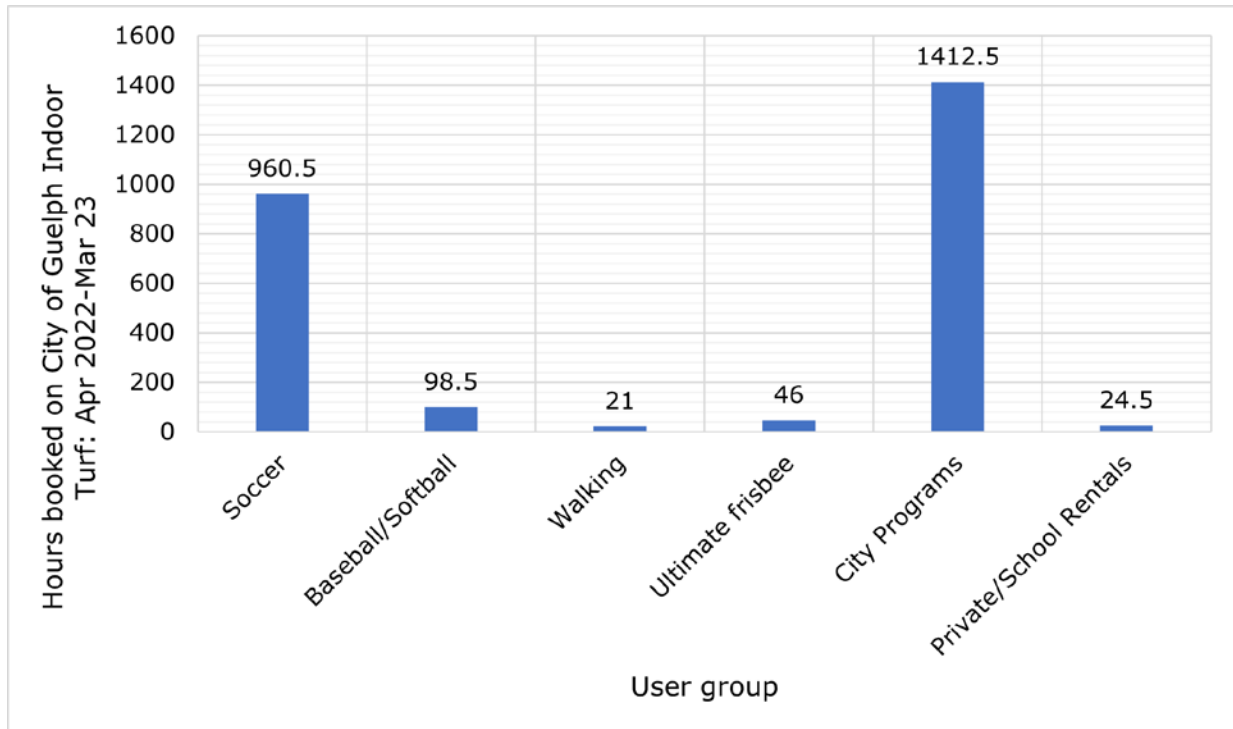
Previously owned and operated by a community not-for-profit organization, the Sportsdome has been a vital indoor recreation space in Guelph since 2007. The City of Guelph brought the Sportsdome Indoor Turf Facility into municipal inventory in 2019. As such, the 2009 Recreation, Parks and Culture Strategic Master Plan did not identify a service level target for indoor turf facilities. Moreover, rentals and programming were interrupted by COVID-19 related closures and restriction, so true use and demand for the facility is still being evaluated. The City should continue to collect and analyze facility booking and program data to better understand community use and demand and establish data-driven provision targets for indoor turf facilities.

Table 21: Indoor turf facility provision

Current inventory	1
Supply including SECC	1
Current service level	1:143,740
Median service level among comparator municipalities	1:128,285
Service level target	To be determined based on five-year evaluation of sportsdome use and demand

Booking analysis

Figure 26: Indoor turf facility use



A review of 2022 to 2023 booking data was undertaken to understand the main uses of the City's indoor turf facility.

City programming makes up the highest level of use at the Sportsdome. As directed by [City Council](#) when the City assumed operation of the Sportsdome facility, the Recreation department expanded program activities and opportunities in the facility to "transform [it] from a historically one-sport facility to a hub of varied activity to encourage and support community wellbeing on a broader and more equitable scale." As part of this transformation, City recreation introduced a range of programs for different audiences, including family movie nights, nerf tag, quidditch, remote control flying and drone racing, camps, and adult and seniors fitness.

Beyond City programs, soccer continues to be the primary user of the City's indoor turf facility, accounting for 37.5% of current bookings. Efforts to introduce other non-traditional users and uses, including baseball, softball and ultimate frisbee, are also underway to help support broader use of the facility and understand overall demand for indoor turf facilities.

Community engagement highlights

The following key themes emerged from an analysis of all community engagement activities for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

- Sport user groups and residents reported a need for more indoor turf space to support year-round sport participation.
- Residents requested more drop-in soccer opportunities – especially for adults.

Indoor turf facility trends

National, Provincial, and/or Regional trends for the primary sports using City indoor turf facilities are included in the Outdoor Facility Assessment. Given the anticipated growth in most turf sports, it is anticipated that demand for indoor turf facilities will continue to grow into the future. This type of facility also enables a diverse range of recreation and cultural activities, beyond sport-specific uses, and as such, current and future provision targets should be considered within both a sporting and broader recreational context to ensure appropriate service levels for these multi-purpose facilities.

Figure 27: Indoor turf facilities



Needs assessment

The City's supply of indoor turf facilities is currently below municipally benchmarked levels. That said, most municipal comparators do not have indoor turf facilities in their inventories, suggesting Guelph is in a healthy position comparatively. Indoor turf facility management is still relatively new to the City, with utilization and demand still being assessed following the asset coming into municipal supply and interruptions due to COVID-19 related closures and restrictions.

Booking data shows that the City's indoor turf facility is well-used year-round, providing over 2,500 hours of community recreation from April 2022 to March 2023. Outside of City summer camp programming, however, the facility is significantly underused during weekday, daytime hours. Windows of availability also exist on weekends, suggesting there is opportunity to explore new users and uses to optimize facility utilization within existing supply.

To get a true understanding of market demand and community need, and establish appropriate service levels and future provision targets, the City should develop a data collection and evaluation plan to fully understand community need and demand, the local programming potential of turf facilities, and identify facility optimization opportunities.

Recommendations for Indoor Turf Facilities

52. Continue to collect and analyze facility booking and program data to better understand community demand for indoor turf facilities.
 - a. Develop a provision target for indoor turf facilities that is based on the number of registered participants in City and community organization programs rather than total population to better understand local demand for indoor turf amenities.
53. Continue to monitor and respond to trends in recreation to maximize indoor turf use and ensure programming for diverse audiences in Guelph
54. Develop a Facility Optimization Strategy to address patterns of historical availability and expand community access to City Recreation facilities.

Spatial analysis of indoor facilities and programs

GIS analysis of City registered and drop-in programs was used to understand geographic distribution of current participants in City recreation programming and identify areas of over- and under-representation.

Overall, City recreation registrations follow the general geographic distribution of the City's population.⁴² The south- and east-areas of the city account for the majority of program registrations, in-line with areas of high population growth and density and reinforcing the need for the SECC to better meet the service level needs and community demand in this geographic region of the city.

When considered from a facility-specific perspective, VRRRC's registrations are highly geographically informed, coming almost entirely from the east side of Guelph, if following the Gordon/Norfolk/Woolwich Street divide. Conversely, the West End Community Centre's (WECC) registration patterns are more geographically diverse, likely due to the wider range of amenities and programming (e.g. gym, fitness room, double ice pad/floor surface) and designation as a Seniors Active Living Centre (SALC). This suggests there is opportunity to introduce a broader range of programming in the east side of Guelph, potentially through community spaces, to address gaps and interests.

Proximity to recreation centres also results in higher levels of participation, aligning with research suggesting that distance to and distribution of recreation opportunities impacts levels of engagement and participation.⁴³ ⁴⁴ Mapping further shows a registration underrepresentation in the Southwest region of Guelph, likely explained by the neighbourhood proximity to the YMCA of Three Rivers' Guelph facility.

Priority areas

In alignment with Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health's identified priority neighbourhoods based on the Social Determinants of Health,⁴⁵ GIS analysis shows undersubscription in City recreation programs in the Onward Willow neighbourhood. This neighbourhood is home to the Shelldale Community Centre, a not-for-profit community centre and service hub, which might at least partially explain the

⁴² See Appendix B, [Map 14](#) and [Map 15](#)

⁴³ McCormack GR, Giles-Corti B, Bulsara M, Pikora TJ. Correlates of distances traveled to use recreational facilities for physical activity behaviors. *Int J Behav Nutr Phys Act.* 2006 Jul 19;3:18. doi: 10.1186/1479-5868-3-18. PMID: 16854232; PMCID: PMC1557534.

⁴⁴ William L Rice, Timothy J Mateer, Nathan Reigner, Peter Newman, Ben Lawhon, B Derrick Taff, Changes in recreational behaviors of outdoor enthusiasts during the COVID-19 pandemic: analysis across urban and rural communities, *Journal of Urban Ecology*, Volume 6, Issue 1, 2020, juaa020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jue/juaa020>

⁴⁵ Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (2013). Addressing Social Determinants of Health in the City of Guelph: A public health perspective on local health, policy, and program needs. Guelph, Ontario.

registration gap – for, as previously noted, proximity to recreation programs and amenities has a notable impact on participation rates. However, GIS analysis of Recreation subsidy applications⁴⁶ shows higher application rates in this area of Guelph, suggesting unique barriers to access and a service level deficiency exist for this particular neighbourhood.⁴⁷

Similarly, there is a notably low rate of City registrations and high rate of subsidy applications in the downtown area. As a largely commercial area, a lower provision need is expected in this area. The downtown neighbourhood is a significant area of population growth in Guelph though, and a lack of recreation facilities and opportunities in the downtown area was consistently noted through all phases of community engagement for this plan. As such, further investigation and strategic actions to address potential service level deficiencies and barriers to participation in this neighbourhood should be considered.

The distribution of recreation subsidy applications further identifies priority areas throughout the city – many of which are identified priority neighbourhoods and/or lack proximity to recreation facilities – which could help inform the development of recreation initiatives that reduce barriers to participation and improve community access.

Older adults

As with overall registrations, proximity to City recreation facilities highly influences participation in City Seniors (55+) programming.⁴⁸ There is a notable undersubscription in older adult registrations in the south-end of the city – especially to the west of Gordon Street – potentially resulting from the proximity to the YMCA of Three Rivers, Guelph facility.

Given the high older adult population in the south-end of Guelph, there is significant opportunity to increase programming options and opportunities in the south-end of Guelph to better distribute recreation resources and address geographic service level deficiencies for this identified priority population. Moreover, the City should explore SALC designation for the SECC to further increase funding opportunities and recreation programs for older adults in this area of Guelph.

Recommendations for spatial analysis

55. Undertake a comprehensive equity mapping process to establish priority initiative areas for recreation investment and engagement.

⁴⁶ Fee Assistance in Recreation (FAIR) and Children's Foundation of Guelph-Wellington, Free to Grow

⁴⁷ See Appendix B, [Map 16](#)

⁴⁸ See Appendix B, [Map 17](#) and [Map 18](#)

56. Increase older adult programming in the south-end of Guelph to better distribute recreation resources and opportunities.
57. Investigate designating the South End Community Centre as a Seniors Active Living Centre.

Barriers to recreation participation

Barriers to participation in recreation are varied and complex. There is no single or exhaustive list of barriers, and many people face multiple, intersecting barriers, making everyone's experience unique. As such, it is vitally important that recreation services are flexible and reflective to appropriately address barriers and improve equitable experiences for all Guelph residents.

With that in mind, the following summary speaks to specific barriers to recreation identified through local research^{49 50 51} and all phases of community engagement for the City of Guelph's Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

- **Affordability:** noted prominently throughout all phases of community engagement, the cost of recreation is prohibitive for many local households. Although the City froze rates for recreation programs at the beginning of the pandemic and limits most annual recreation fee adjustments to 2% in an effort to maintain affordability while balancing cost recovery, local feedback and research suggests that participation in formal recreation is becoming a privileged experience as households prioritize expenditures and needs.
- **Geography and transportation:** development of the SECC will help balance geographic distribution of City recreation facilities in Guelph. Still, gaps remain throughout the City. Many residents need to travel further than the 10-minute walkability benchmark set out for parks to access recreation programming, making participation challenging and increasing demand for more "in neighbourhood" opportunities.
- **Scheduling:** recreation programs are often planned around traditional 9-5 work and school schedules. With growing diversity in work forces and work schedules, especially in thriving sectors of Guelph's business economy, this planning limits opportunities for many residents.

⁴⁹ ParticipACTION. Lost & Found: Pandemic-related challenges and opportunities for physical activity. The 2022 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth. Toronto: ParticipACTION; 2022

⁵⁰ Shrestha, Niva. Understanding Barriers of Recent Immigrants to Access Recreational Activities in Guelph (2022). www.guelphwellingtonlip.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Best-Practices-for-Inclusion-in-Parks-and-Recreation-A-Review-of-Existing-Literature-FINAL.pdf

⁵¹ Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership. "Best Practices for Inclusion in Parks and Recreation" (2022). www.guelphwellingtonlip.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Best-Practices-for-Inclusion-in-Parks-and-Recreation-A-Review-of-Existing-Literature-FINAL.pdf

- Time and childcare: As work, life, family and household obligations place growing demands on peoples' time, participation in formal recreation often takes a back seat to more pressing needs and priorities. Caregivers also report sacrificing their own participation to ensure that children are cared for and have access to recreational experiences.
- Language: People whose primary language is not English face communication and information barriers. Knowing how to use and navigate the different registration systems and processes can also be a new, complex and inconsistent process for newcomers.
- Culturally relevant activities: As Guelph grows and becomes more diverse, it is important that the program portfolio grows and becomes more diverse along with it. Engaging residents with lived experience and embedding cultural competency into program design and service delivery will ensure meaningful activities that meet the needs and interests of equity-deserving people and groups in the community.
- Discrimination: Public spaces, including recreation centres, arenas and parks were identified by immigrants, visible minorities and Indigenous peoples as environments or contexts where they were more likely to experience discrimination.⁵²
- Confidence and Stigma: many people lack confidence in their ability to learn or participate successfully in a new activity or to feel comfortable and welcome in establish recreation networks. This is especially true for those lacking a social network, where the fear of not fitting in is amplified and often perpetuates social isolation. Not having the "right" clothing or equipment can also be stigmatizing and prevents people from engaging in recreation activities.
- Competition and specialized activity: Recreational programs that focus on winning or competition over fun and self-development are shown to contribute to disparities in participation.⁵³ Compounding the confidence barriers noted above, these approaches to recreation lead to highly engaged, specialized groups, but more broadly, discourage engagement and sustained participation.
- Performance measures: The City's Community Plan and 2021 Service Rationalization Report both note the need for better data to appropriately

⁵² Lapshina, Natalia and Esses, Victoria. Discrimination Experienced by Immigrants, Visible Minorities, and Indigenous Peoples in Guelph: an empirical study by the Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership. March 2022. guelphwellingtonlip.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/GWLIP-Discrimination-Report-Guelph-final-web.pdf

⁵³ ParticipACTION. Lost & Found: Pandemic-related challenges and opportunities for physical activity. The 2022 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth. Toronto: ParticipACTION; 2022

measure Recreation department performance and fully understand the value of recreation to the community. Local Equity Research⁵⁴ also points out that one of the key barriers to addressing inequities and improving access to recreation for at-risk communities is a lack of local data.

Programs and Services Analysis

This section identifies high-level strengths, challenges and opportunities for City of Guelph Recreation programs and services

Strengths

Recreation subsidies

The City of Guelph has a Community Investment Strategy, including the management of Adult (18+) recreation subsidies through the Fee Assistance in Recreation (FAIR) Program and a Community Benefit Agreement with the Children's Foundation of Guelph and Wellington to distribute recreation subsidies for children and youth through the Free to Grow Program. Community Investment also oversees the "Welcome to Guelph" program, which provides temporary, free access to City of Guelph transit, museums, and public skates and swims for Newcomers to Canada and Guelph.

No and low cost opportunities

The City of Guelph offers numerous no- and low-cost opportunities to participate in recreation activities. Park Activation is a free, community-based program, offering facilitated and unstructured play for children and caregivers in local parks. Recreation offers free, weekly LGBTQS+ drop-in programming and Friday-night youth drop-in programming. Guelph Youth Council, hosted by City Recreation, also provides an opportunity for local youth to engage in civic participation, advocacy, fundraising, and support community development activities. City Recreation also has a dedicated, low-cost rate for "try-it" child and youth activities to reduce barriers and increase participation in unique recreation activities.

Adapted programs and inclusion supports

City Recreation Inclusion Services provides one-to-one support, adapted programming and specialized summer camps to ensure individuals living with disabilities can meaningfully participate in recreation activities. In 2019, Inclusion Services received the Parks and Recreation Ontario Access and Equity Award for the Limitless Guelph initiative, which provided education and barrier-free adaptive sport programming to over 1800 local children and youth.

⁵⁴ Ariba, Mark, Sam Laban, Chris Schuck, and Lindsey Thompson. Equity and Recreation Policy. Community Engaged Scholarship Institute, University of Guelph (2022; currently in review).

Pottery

The City of Guelph is one of only a few municipalities with a dedicated pottery studio and program portfolio. With a fill rate over 97%, Pottery is one of City Recreation's most sought after programs.

Aquatics programs

Offering a range of aquatics programming, from Learn to Swim to Lane Swims to more innovative programming like Doggie Dip and SUP Yoga, City aquatics is highly subscribed and continually in demand from the community. City Recreation also boasts a partnership with the Upper Grand District School Board to deliver the Leadership Aquatics Program (LAP). The LAP program provides high school students with high-school credit and aquatic leadership certifications for participation in aquatics trainings. The certifications qualify students for employment with the City of Guelph and other aquatics service providers, strengthening the sector and addressing the North American wide aquatics staffing shortage.

Facility bookings and special events

From April 2022 to March 2023, City Recreation processed and permitted 1,051 special events throughout the City, supporting diverse and engaging activities for the community and guiding sport tourism in Guelph.

City Recreation also coordinated the booking and rental of over 56,000 hours of indoor and outdoor facilities, generating thousands of recreation opportunities for residents through local service providers.

Figure 28: no cost programs



Challenges

Reducing barriers

As noted previously, barriers to recreation are varied, complex and impact everyone differently. Addressing barriers is a common issue for municipal recreation services. Some, such as type or scheduling of programs, are within the immediate control of City Recreation, whereas others are more complex and require strategic planning and partnerships to address.

Inclusion supports

Over the past 10 years, City Inclusion Services has experienced a significant increase in participants requiring Inclusion supports to meaningfully participate in recreation programming. In recent years, City Recreation has invested in training staff in behaviour management and non-violent crisis intervention and contracted specialized 3rd party services to accommodate meaningful participation, maintain staff and participant safety, and provide positive recreation experiences. Inclusion service levels and program demands are expected to continue to rise over the next 10 years, and as such, staffing and service level increases will be required to meet community needs.

Ensuring equitable access throughout Guelph

As noted throughout this assessment, some residents and parts of the city enjoy more privileged access to City recreation than others. Strategies and initiatives to more equitably distribute recreation resources and create opportunities for equity-deserving communities are needed to better serve Guelph's growing and diverse population.

Affordability

Despite offering no- and low-cost recreation opportunities, and freezing recreation rates and fees during the pandemic, many in the community still identify affordability as a primary barrier to participation. While subsidies are available for individuals and households living at or below LICO, many households above that thresholds are also struggling to make ends meet and cannot prioritize recreation in the face of other needs.

Opportunities

Partnerships

The City of Guelph has numerous formal and informal partnerships with community providers across all sectors. These partnerships help ensure reach and opportunities for residents. Continuing to develop and foster community partnerships will help the City meet the diverse needs of all residents.

Youth strategy

Updating the City's Youth Strategy, in collaboration with local youth and youth-serving organizations, will help develop initiatives to improve sustained engagement in recreation, healthy behaviours and civic participation.

Age friendly strategy

Updating the City's Older Adult Strategy, and reframing as an age-friendly strategy to better align with industry terminology, in collaboration with community members and community-serving organizations, will help the department address the evolving needs of older adults and ensure the City remains a great place to live and age well.

Inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility (IDEA) strategy

Development of a Recreation-focused IDEA Strategy, in collaboration with community members and community-serving organizations, would embed cultural competency and an equity lens into the development and delivery of recreation programs and services, ensuring meaningful engagement and the removal of barriers for equity-deserving people and communities.

Service delivery model

Updating Recreation's Service Delivery Model would allow City Recreation to expand its reach in the community, build relationships with equity deserving communities, serve a larger portion of the population, more equitably distribute recreation resources, and build community through partnerships and collaboration. It would also create a more supportive journey through City Recreation, improving customer service and quality experiences.

Performance measures

Recreation lacks a clear and well-resourced evaluation plan and dedicated staff to properly collect and analyze data. Investing in an evaluation plan and identifying meaningful performance measures would help optimize facility use, determine if services and initiatives are meeting intended goals and community expectations, and develop data-driven provision targets for recreation facilities.

Recommendations for barriers and service analysis

58. Develop an evidence-informed service delivery model to address barriers to recreation, more equitably distribute recreation resources throughout the city, and support sustained participation through vulnerable ages and stages.
59. Develop a Recreation-focused IDEA Strategy to embed cultural competency and an equity lens into the development and delivery of all recreation

programs and services, ensuring meaningful engagement and the removal of barriers to access for equity-deserving people and communities.

60. Update the City's Youth Strategy to understand and support the evolving needs and interests of local youth, and developing initiatives to improve sustained engagement in recreation, healthy behaviours and civic participation.
61. Update the City's Older Adult Strategy, reframing as an Age Friendly Strategy to better align with current industry terminology, to understand and support the evolving needs of older adults and ensure the City remains a great place to live and age well.
62. Develop a Recreation Evaluation Plan to collect and analyze data from City programs and community users, and identify gaps in available data, in order determine whether services and initiatives are meeting intended goals and community expectations, identify areas for priority initiatives and investments, and inform future recreation provision and service level targets.

Recommendation summary

Below is a consolidated list of all the recommendations of the Needs Assessment.

1. Develop a Sports Field Strategy that will optimize sports field service levels.
2. Undertake further consultation with baseball and softball groups to gather feedback regarding actual participation rates, field quality, maintenance issues and projected usage.
3. Adopt a provision target for baseball diamonds that is based on the number of registered participants in baseball programs rather than total population to better understand local demand for ball facilities.
4. Undertake a quality assessment of all diamonds to identify opportunities for optimization of ball fields, which may include adding lighting or irrigation, converting groups of smaller fields to larger diamonds or re-purposing existing diamonds to other park uses that are more in demand.
5. Undertake further consultation with rectangular field groups to gather feedback regarding actual participation rates, field quality, maintenance issues and projected usage.
6. Adopt a provision target for rectangular fields that is based on the number of registered participants in sports programs rather than total population to better understand local demand for fields.
7. Undertake a quality assessment of all outdoor fields to identify opportunities for optimization, which may include adding lighting, irrigation or converting groups of smaller fields to larger fields that are more in demand.
8. Undertake further consultation with local cricket user groups to gather feedback regarding actual participation rates, field quality, maintenance issues and projected usage.
9. Monitor use and demand of the new cricket ground at Riverside Park.
10. As part of a future sports field strategy, identify opportunities to increase quantity of cricket grounds or availability of playing time on existing cricket grounds. Look for opportunities for include lighting to extend playing times.
11. Renovate Drew Park basketball court.
12. Construct 11 new outdoor multi-use tennis and pickleball courts to the city's inventory in the next 10 years.
13. Consider constructing dedicated outdoor pickleball and tennis courts in the next 10 years.

14. Investigate the need and practicality of a booking system for drop-in rentals of court sports. Consider an online option for booking and viewing court availability.
15. Evaluate the impacts of climate change on the Outdoor Ice Rink Program and identify strategies to fulfill community ice rink needs in other ways, including but not limited to synthetic ice and refrigerated rinks in key locations. Consideration should be given to capital cost, as well as maintenance and operational requirements.
16. Investigate the implementation of an outdoor sport facility with boards to accommodate ice hockey, ball hockey and lacrosse.
17. Continue to partner with the Wellington Catholic District School Board to offer community use of the running track at St. James Catholic High School.
18. When new outdoor tracks are brought online by new schools in Guelph, the city should consider partnering with those school boards to allow community use of facilities.
19. Construct one major skateboard park in an area south of the Speed River in the next 10 years.
20. Construct four skateboard nodes in the next 10 years. The skateboard nodes may be implemented in smaller parks to fill distribution gaps or areas of need.
21. Evaluate the ability to add lights at Silvercreek Skateboard Park.
22. Continue to monitor demand for disc golf.
23. Develop a sports equipment borrowing or rental program.
24. Continue to monitor demand for lawn bowling in Guelph.
25. When the lawn bowling green is nearing the end of its service life, the City should undertake a master plan exercise for the portion of Royal City Park east of Gordon Street. In consultation with the Lawn Bowling Club consider whether the facility should be re-located. Consideration should be given to the settling period required for new bowling greens to ensure minimal disruption to the Club's operations and opportunities for play.
26. If fitness equipment is requested during community engagement for neighbourhood parks, consider utilizing signage to encourage fitness rather than dedicated outdoor equipment.
27. Explore creative solutions to providing a dynamic youth/adult fitness park as a specialized destination facility within the park system. Engage the community on what type of facility is preferred.

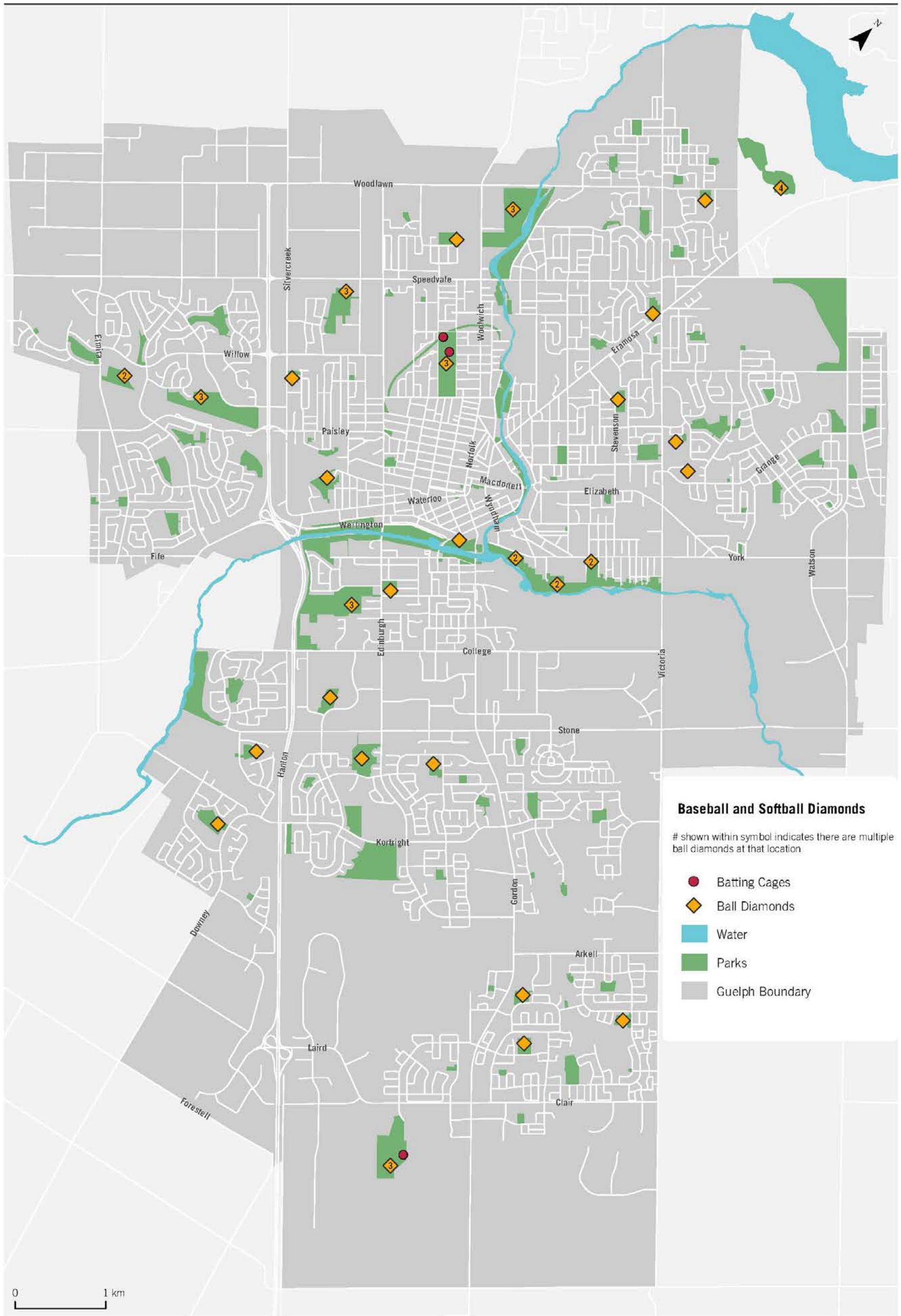
28. Continue to promote awareness of the fitness classes the city offers in park settings.
29. In the next 10 years, construct two new rubber surfaced playgrounds: one at University Village Park and one in the northwest portion of the city.
30. Continue to monitor capital investment against operational and maintenance costs to ensure optimal life cycle of playground assets.
31. Convert wading pools at Exhibition Park and Sunny Acres Park to splash pads. Engage the community about replacement of these assets when they are nearing the end of their service life.
32. During the design process for individual parks, assess demand and available space for community gardens.
33. Seek to align new community garden locations with other park facilities that use water, for water and capital cost efficiency.
34. Undertake a GIS mapping exercise to inventory water service locations in and near parks.
35. During the construction of new parks or renovation of existing parks, every effort should be made to include new trees for shade.
36. Install shade structures in the following circumstances: at water play facilities; at playgrounds with rubber surfacing; and at specialized facilities like skateboard parks, bike parks, amusement rides, and dog parks.
37. Implement two new permanent restrooms in the southeast portion of the city. Water bottle refill stations should be included in the building designs. As park restrooms are built or renovated, consideration for all-season access should be evaluated.
38. Identify locations throughout the park system to add more public benches and seating. Consider creative ways of financing these benches including but not limited to offering naming rights, sponsorships, and donations.
39. Ensure that adequate signage exists at all municipal parks. These signs should be restored or replaced when they deteriorate.
40. Provide amenities to encourage and support park users who walk and cycle.
41. Continue to incorporate sustainable and environmental design features into the development of new or renewed parkland.
42. Adopt a provision target for Indoor Aquatics Facilities that is based on the number of registered participants in City and community organization programs rather than total population to better understand local demand for aquatics amenities.

43. Investigate feasibility of increasing municipal pool inventory based on projected service levels deficits beyond 2033.
44. Undertake a feasibility study to investigate expansion or repurposing of Lyon Pool
45. Adopt a provision target for indoor ice facilities that is based on the number of registered participants in City and community organization programs rather than total population to better understand local demand for ice amenities.
46. Continue to operate Exhibition and Centennial Arenas. Undertake assessment to determine the potential for increased use if existing facilities were upgraded, expanded or repurposed.
47. Develop a Facility Optimization Strategy to evaluate facility and operational efficiencies, address historical patterns of availability, and explore opportunities for non-prime use.
48. Explore opportunities to increase community recreation in the Sleeman Centre to increase service provision – especially for geographically underserved downtown residents.
49. Continue to collect and analyze facility booking and program data to better understand community use and demand for gym spaces.
 - a. Develop a provision target for gymnasiums that is based on the number of registered participants in City and community organization programs rather than total population to better understand local demand for gym spaces.
50. Continue to monitor and respond to trends in recreation to maximize the use of gym spaces and ensure programming for diverse audiences in Guelph
51. Develop a Facility Optimization Strategy to address patterns of historical availability and expand community access to City Recreation facilities.
52. Continue to collect and analyze facility booking and program data to better understand community demand for indoor turf facilities.
 - a. Develop a provision target for indoor turf facilities that is based on the number of registered participants in City and community organization programs rather than total population to better understand local demand for indoor turf amenities.
53. Continue to monitor and respond to trends in recreation to maximize indoor turf use and ensure programming for diverse audiences in Guelph
54. Develop a Facility Optimization Strategy to address patterns of historical availability and expand community access to City Recreation facilities.

55. Undertake a comprehensive equity mapping process to establish priority initiative areas for recreation investment and engagement.
56. Increase older adult programming in the south-end of Guelph to better distribute recreation resources and opportunities.
57. Investigate designating the South End Community Centre as a Seniors Active Living Centre.
58. Develop an evidence-informed service delivery model to address barriers to recreation, more equitably distribute recreation resources throughout the city, and support sustained participation through vulnerable ages and stages.
59. Develop a recreation-focused IDEA Strategy to embed cultural competency and an equity lens into the development and delivery of all recreation programs and services, ensuring meaningful engagement and the removal of barriers to access for equity-deserving people and communities.
60. Update the City's Youth Strategy to understand and support the evolving needs and interests of local youth, and developing initiatives to improve sustained engagement in recreation, healthy behaviours and civic participation.
61. Update the City's Older Adult Strategy, reframing as an Age Friendly Strategy to better align with current industry terminology, to understand and support the evolving needs of older adults and ensure the City remains a great place to live and age well.
62. Develop a Recreation Evaluation Plan to collect and analyze data from City programs and community users, and identify gaps in available data, in order determine whether services and initiatives are meeting intended goals and community expectations, identify areas for priority initiatives and investments, and inform future recreation provision and service level targets.

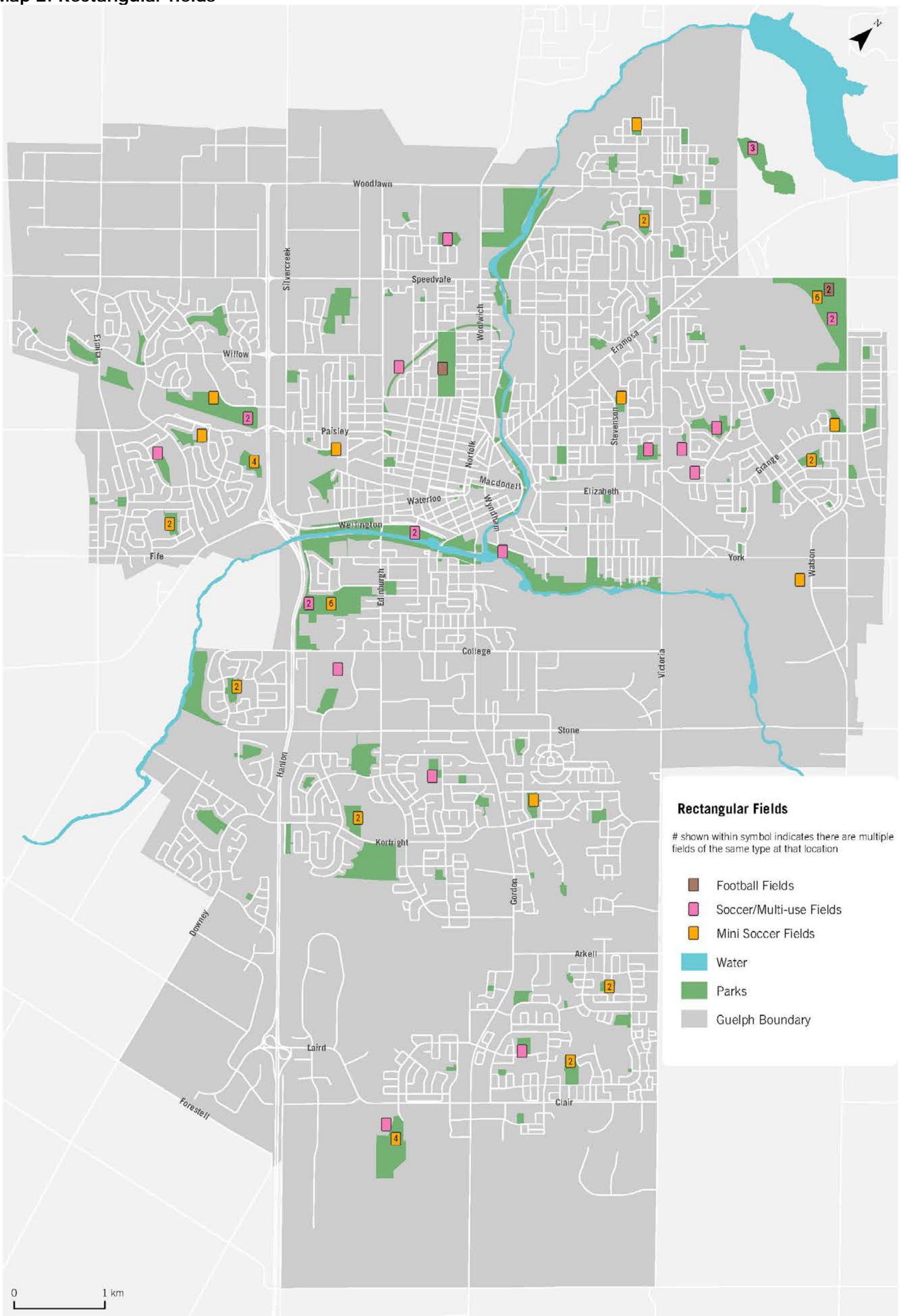
Appendix A: Park amenity maps

Map 1: Baseball and softball diamonds



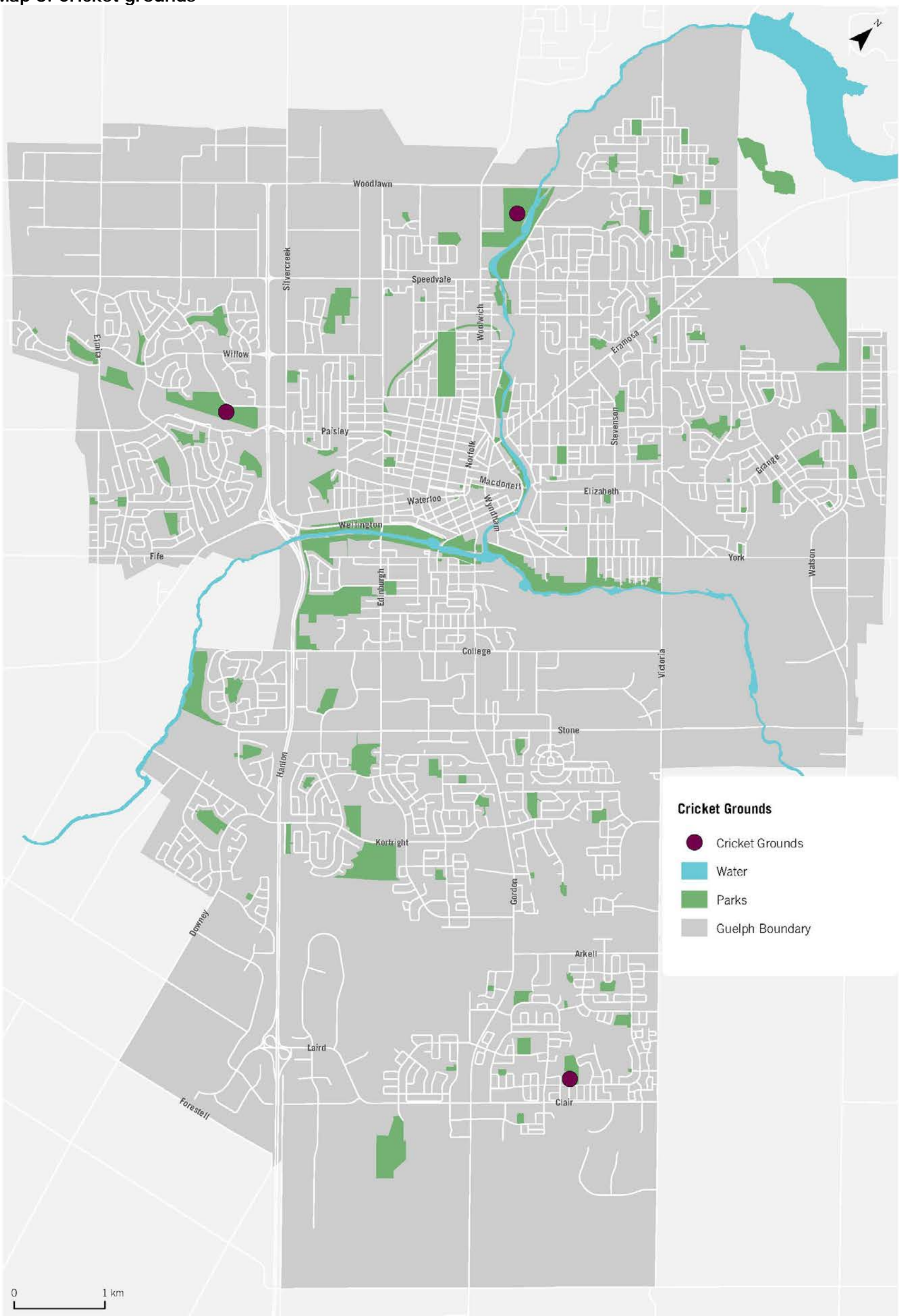
Data provided by: City of Guelph
 Map produced by: SSMIC - AIS, February 2023

Map 2: Rectangular fields



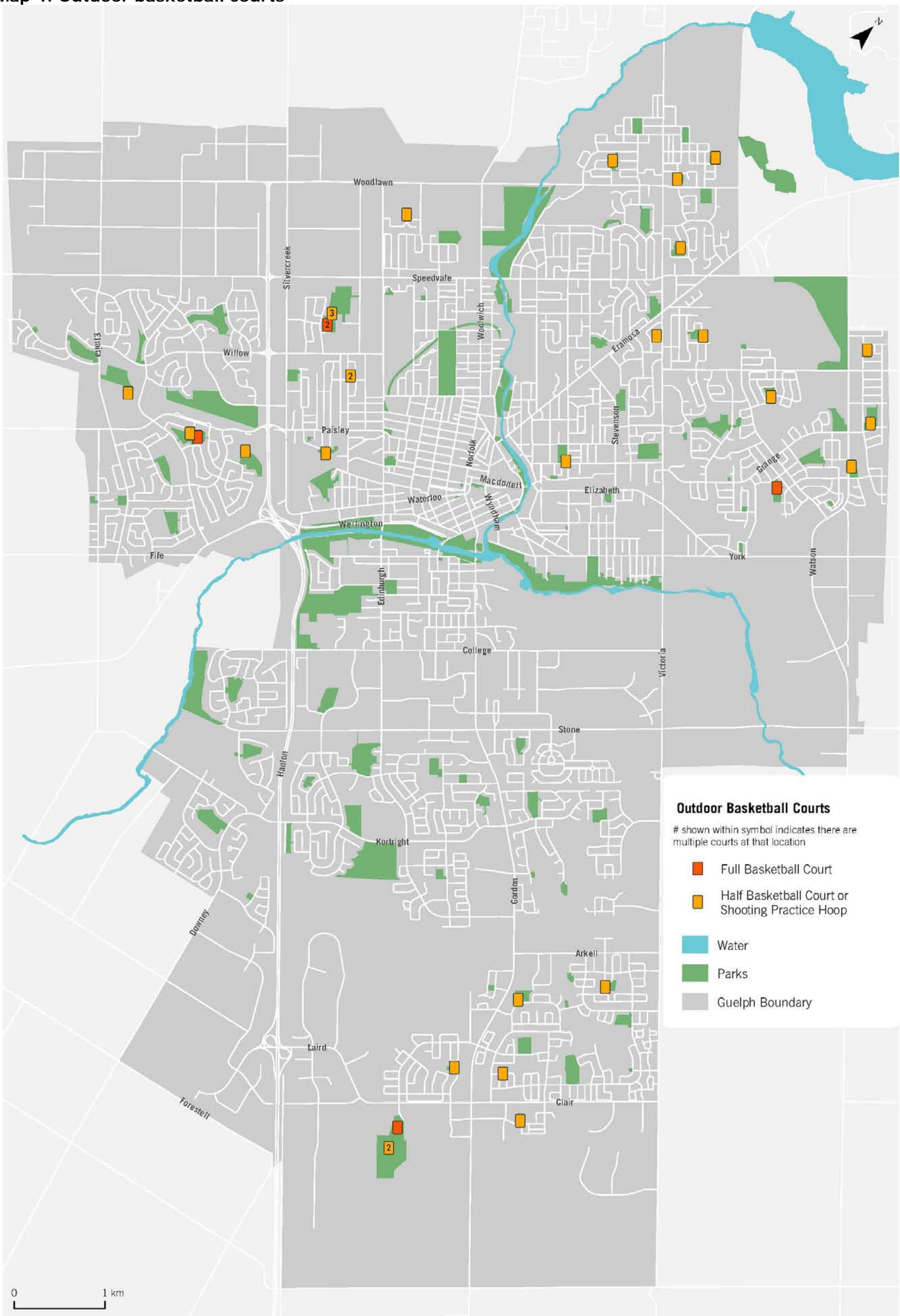
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Map 3: Cricket grounds



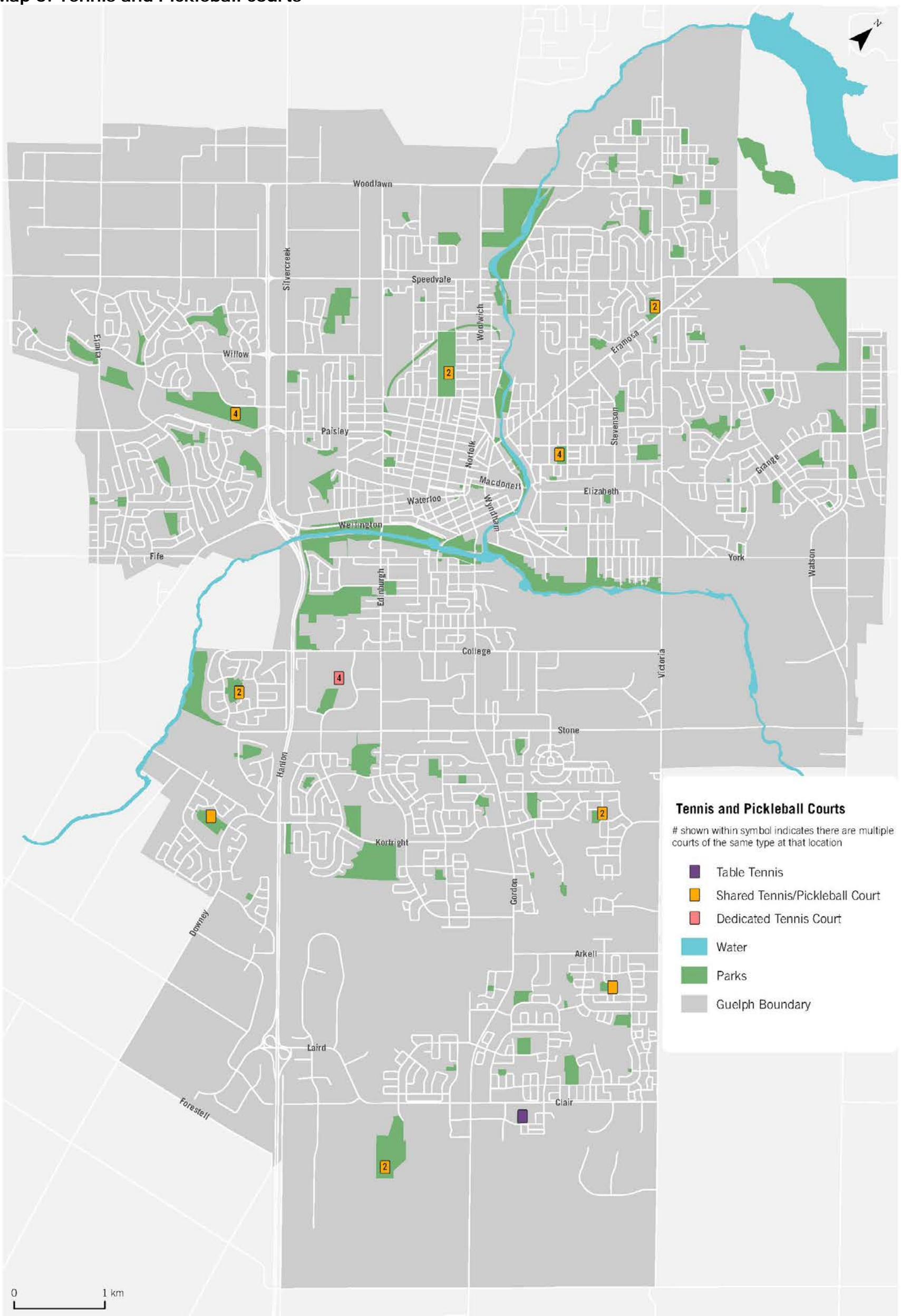
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Map produced by: SSMIC - AIS, February 2023

Map 4: Outdoor basketball courts



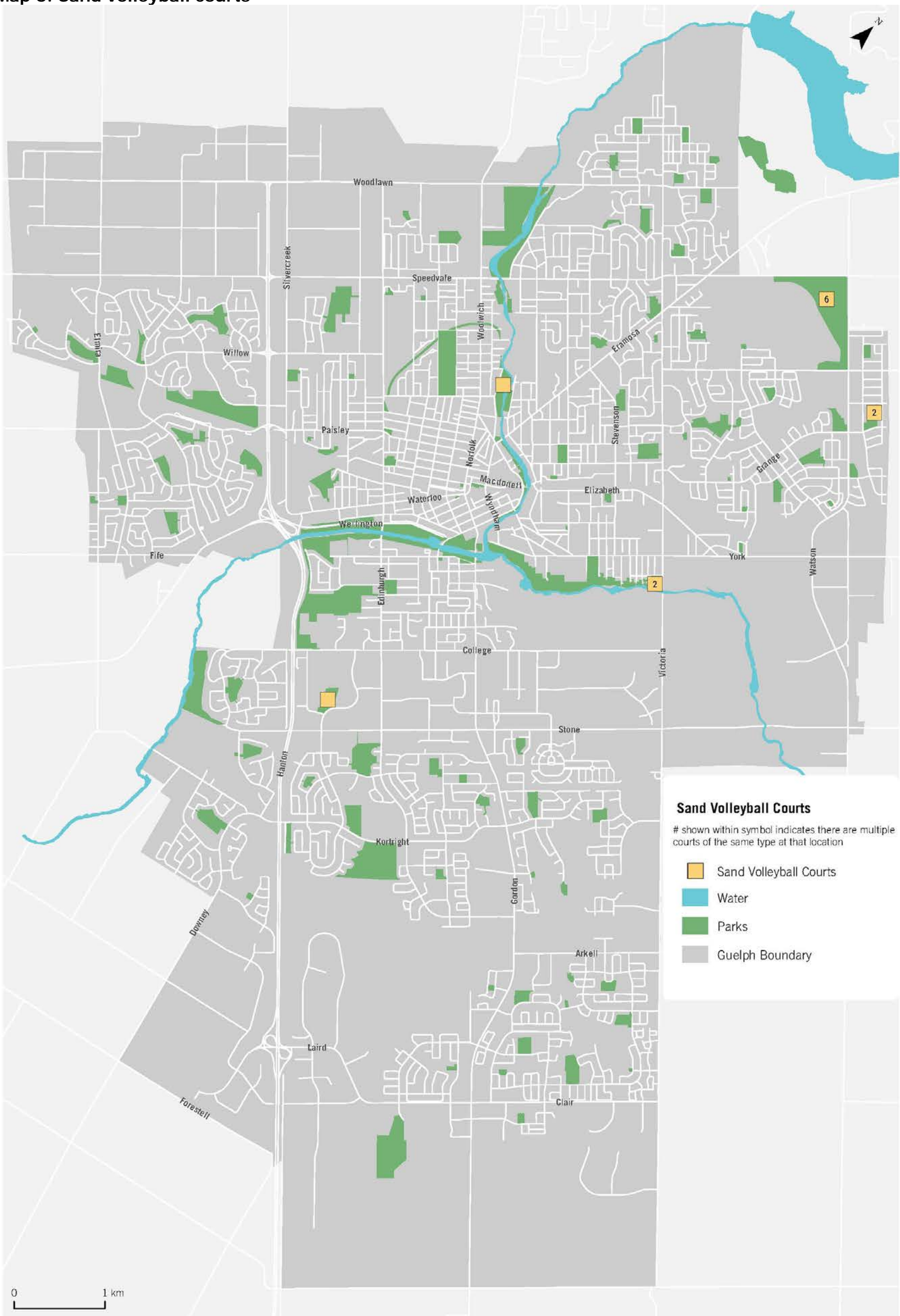
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Map 5: Tennis and Pickleball courts



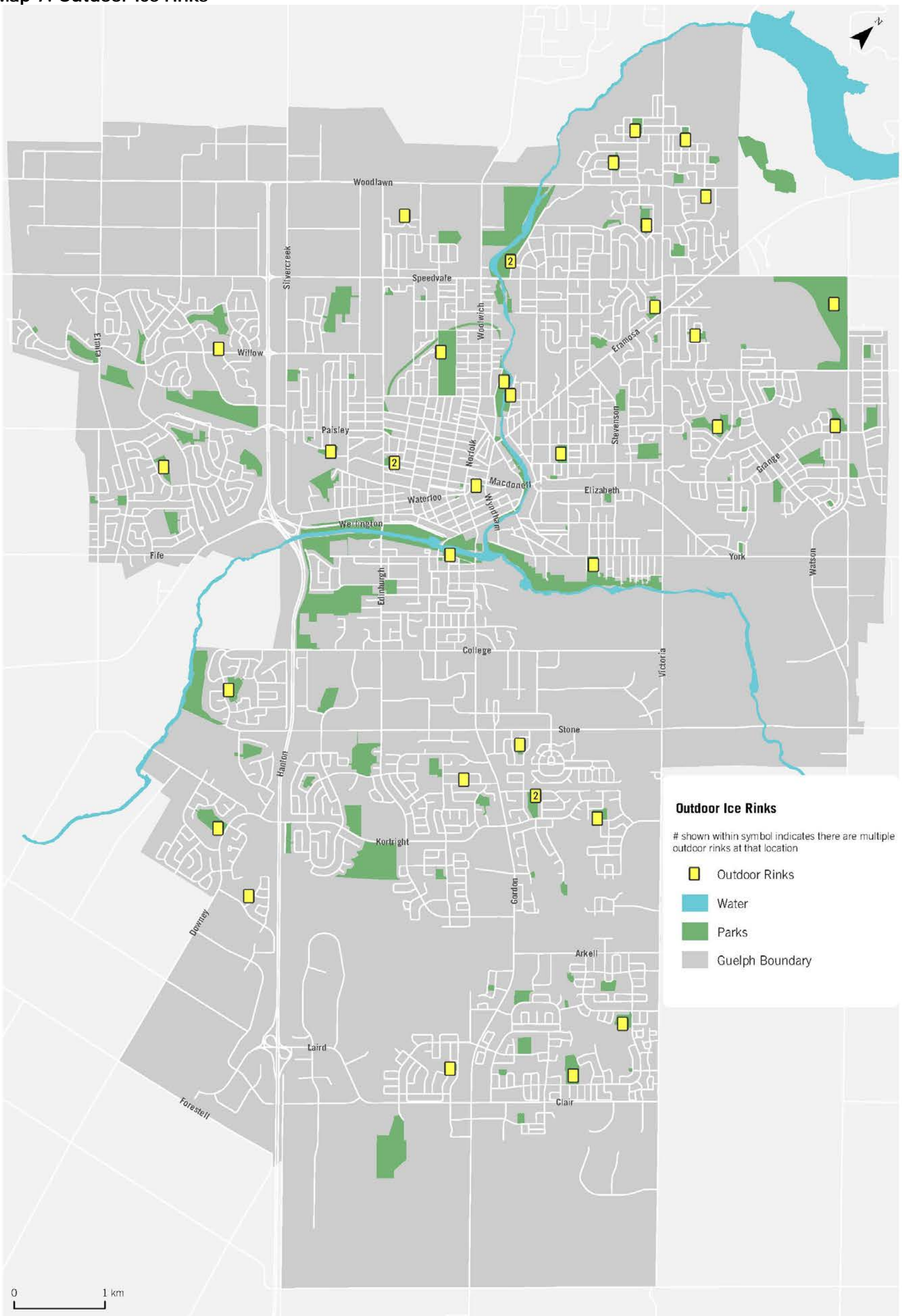
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Map 6: Sand volleyball courts



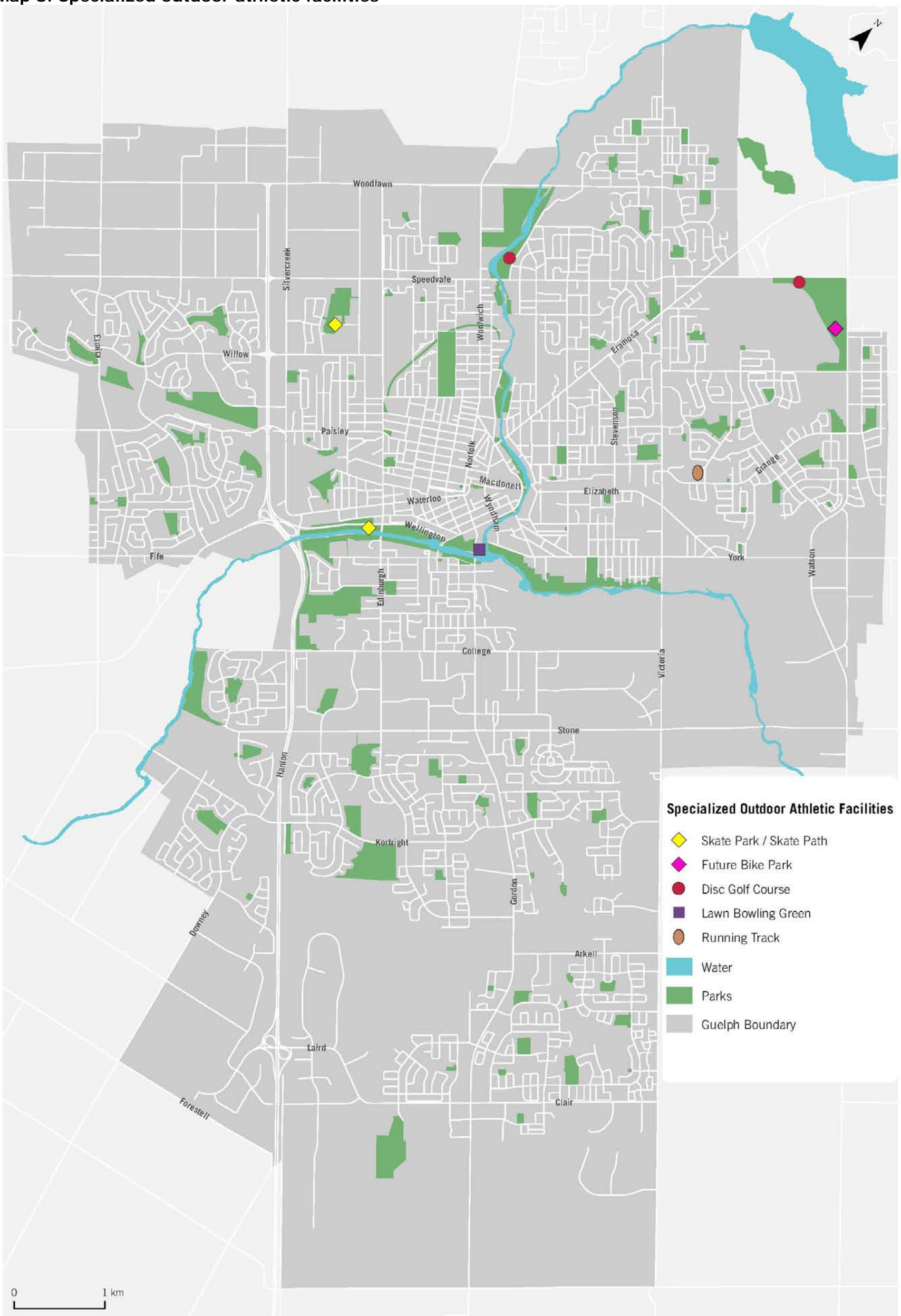
Data provided by: City of Guelph
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Map 7: Outdoor ice rinks



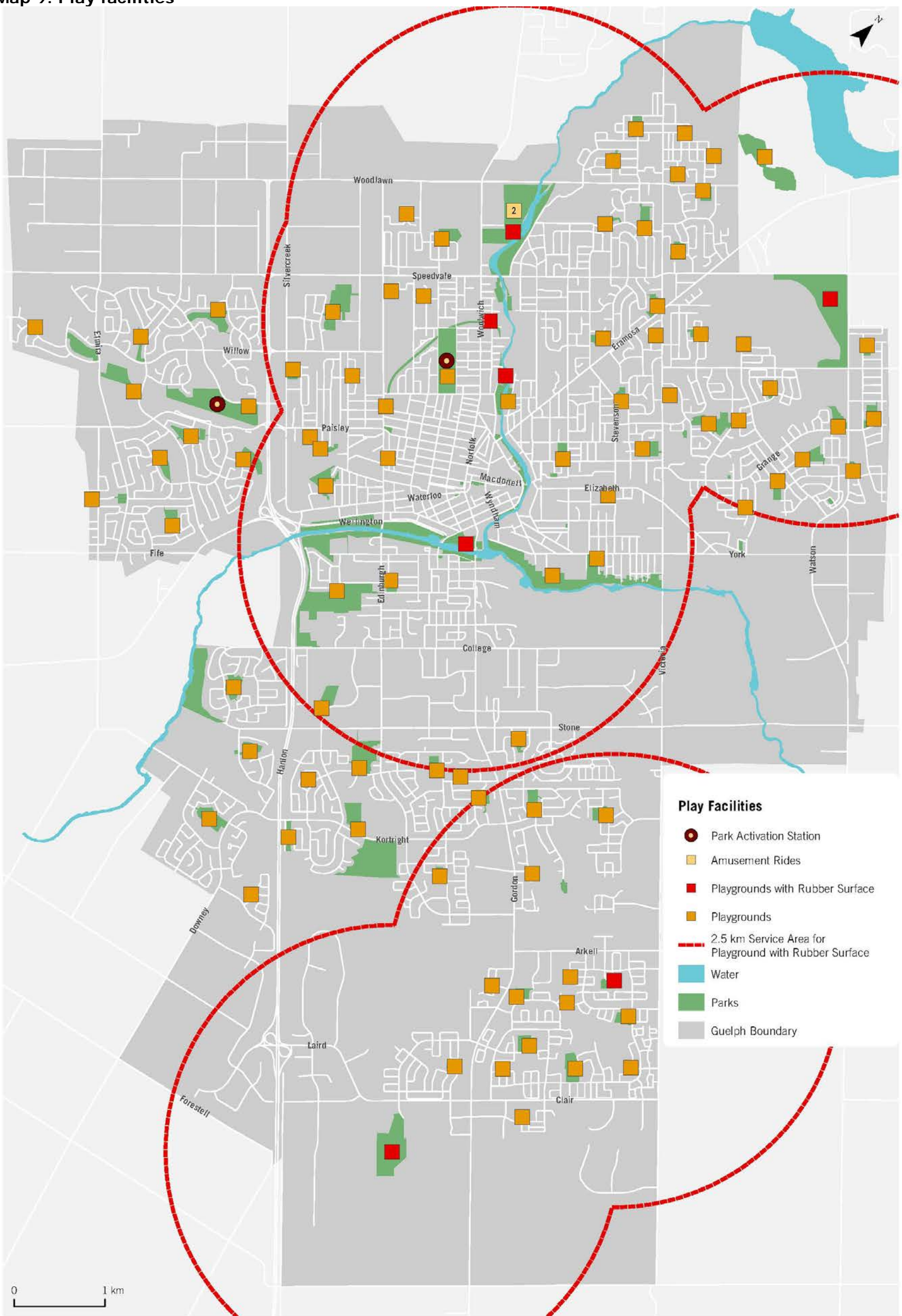
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Map 8: Specialized outdoor athletic facilities



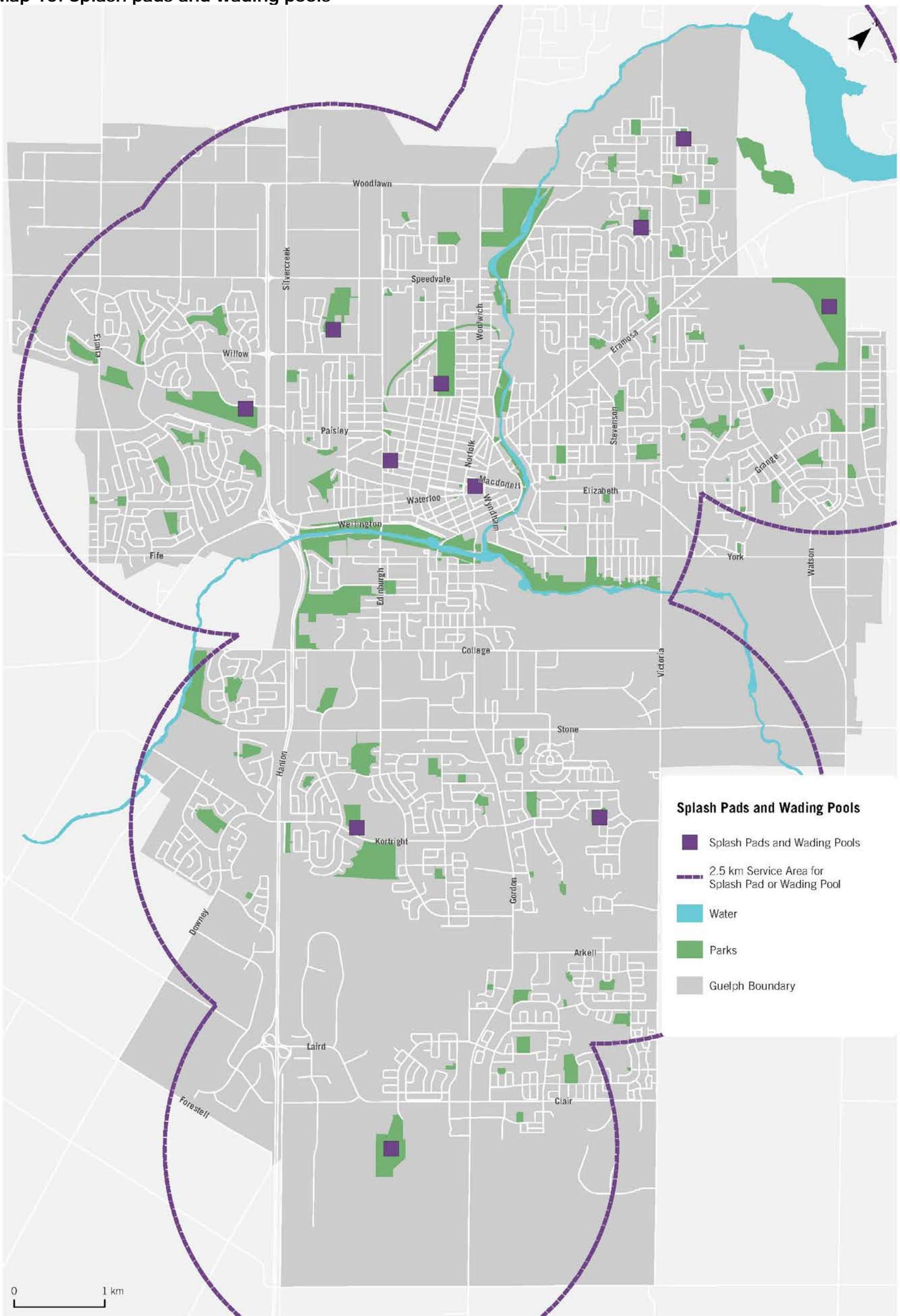
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Map 9: Play facilities



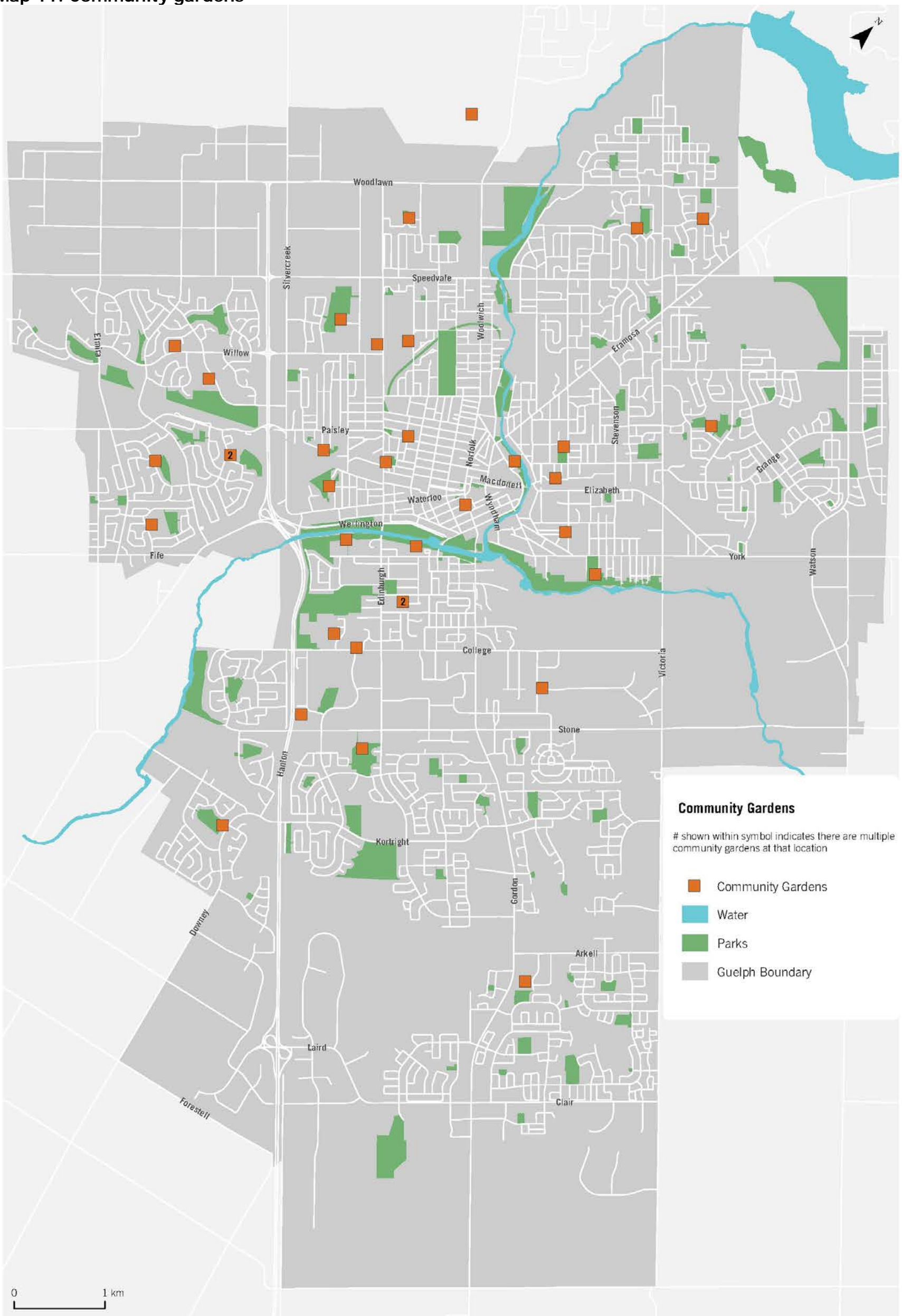
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Map 10: Splash pads and wading pools



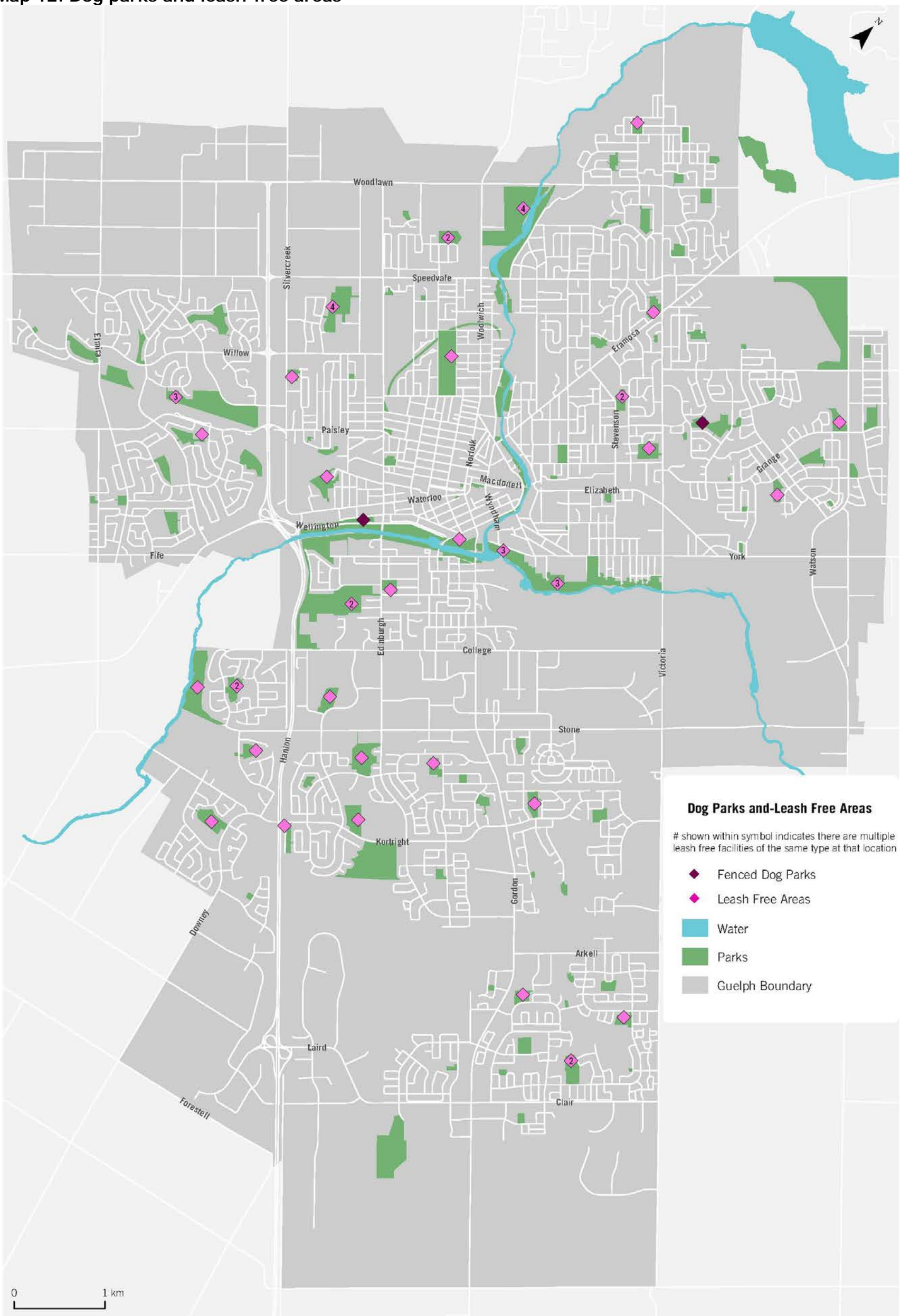
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Map 11: Community gardens



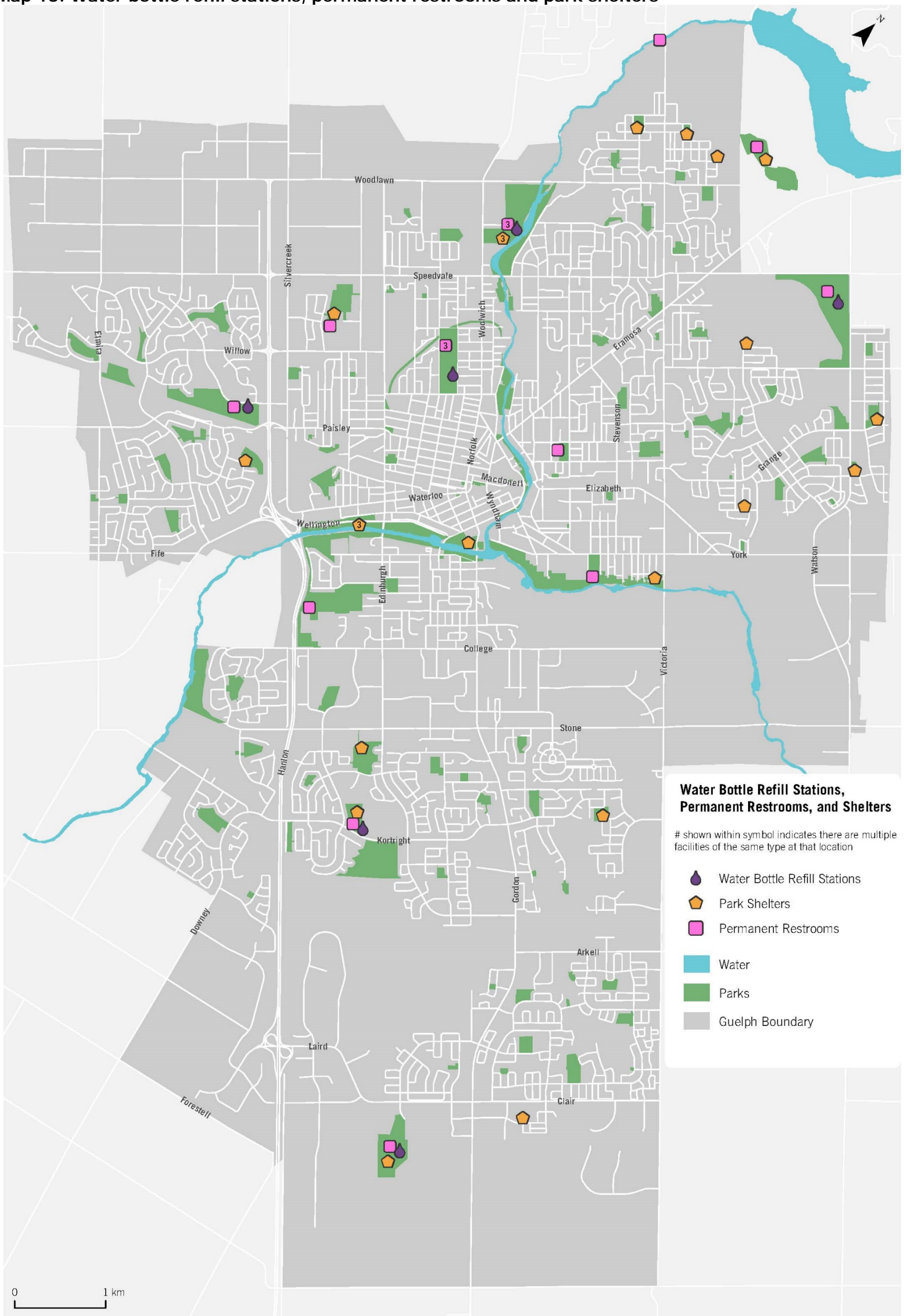
Data provided by: City of Guelph
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Map 12: Dog parks and leash-free areas



Data provided by: City of Guelph
 Map produced by: SSMIC - AIS, February 2023

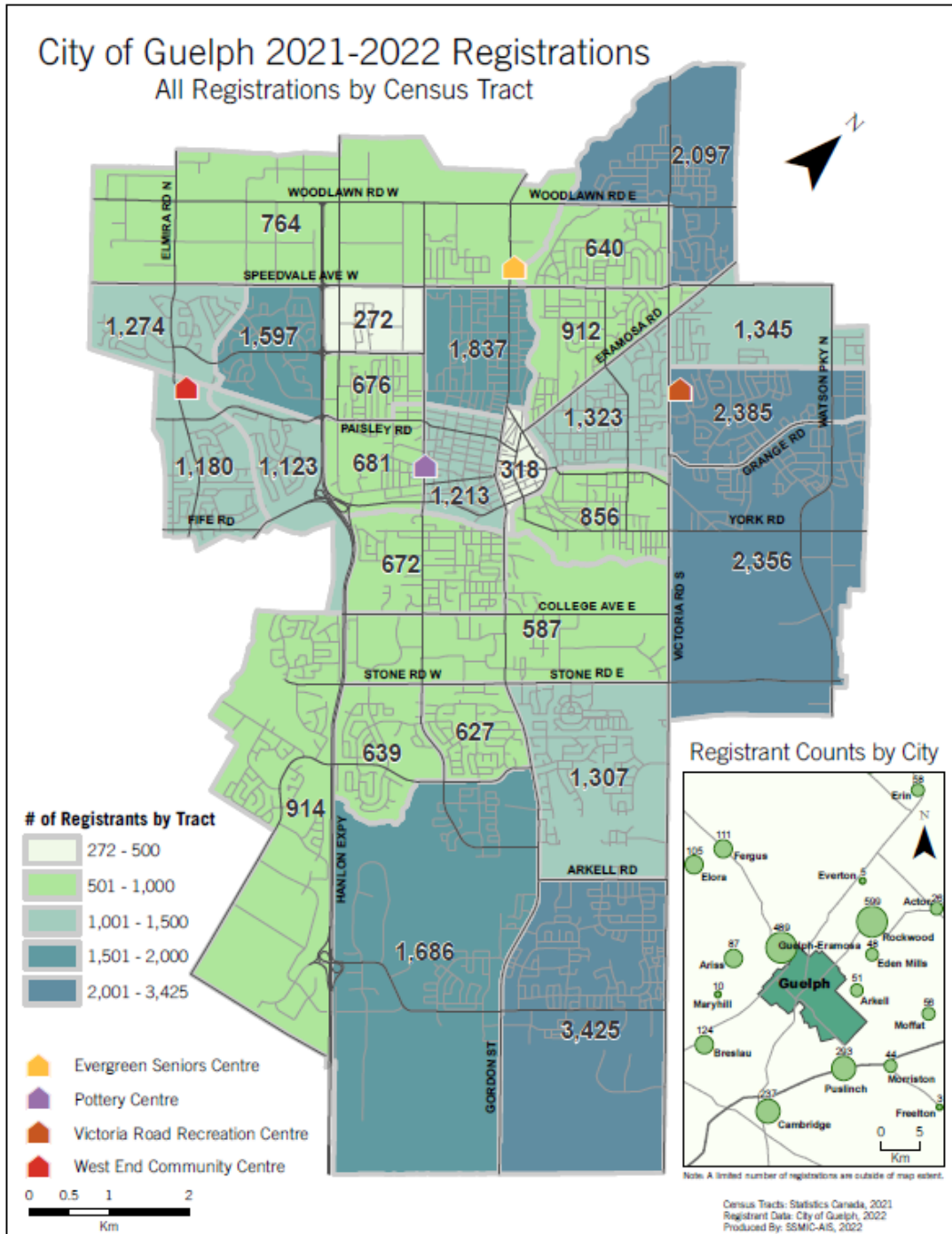
Map 13: Water bottle refill stations, permanent restrooms and park shelters



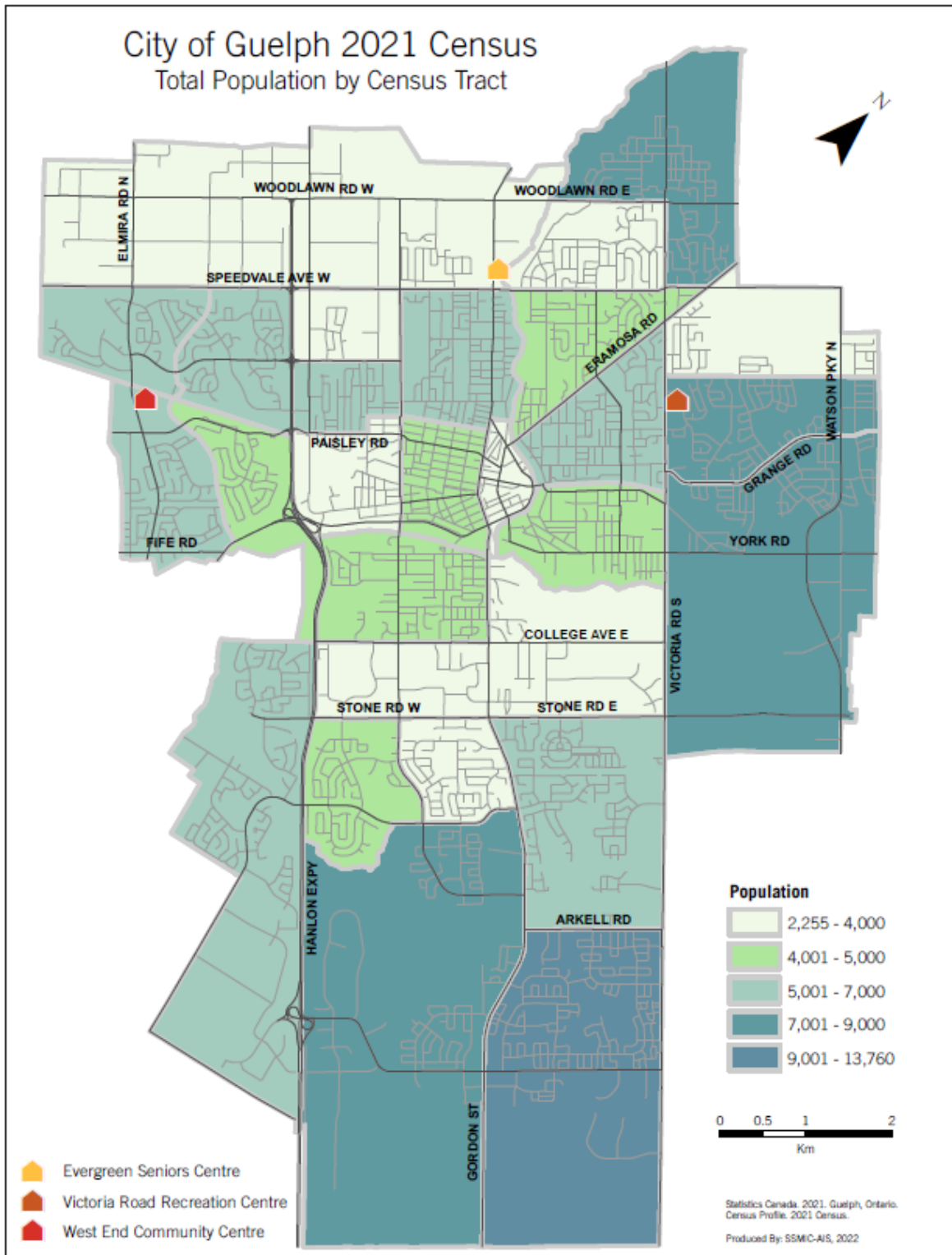
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Appendix B: Recreation facility and registration maps

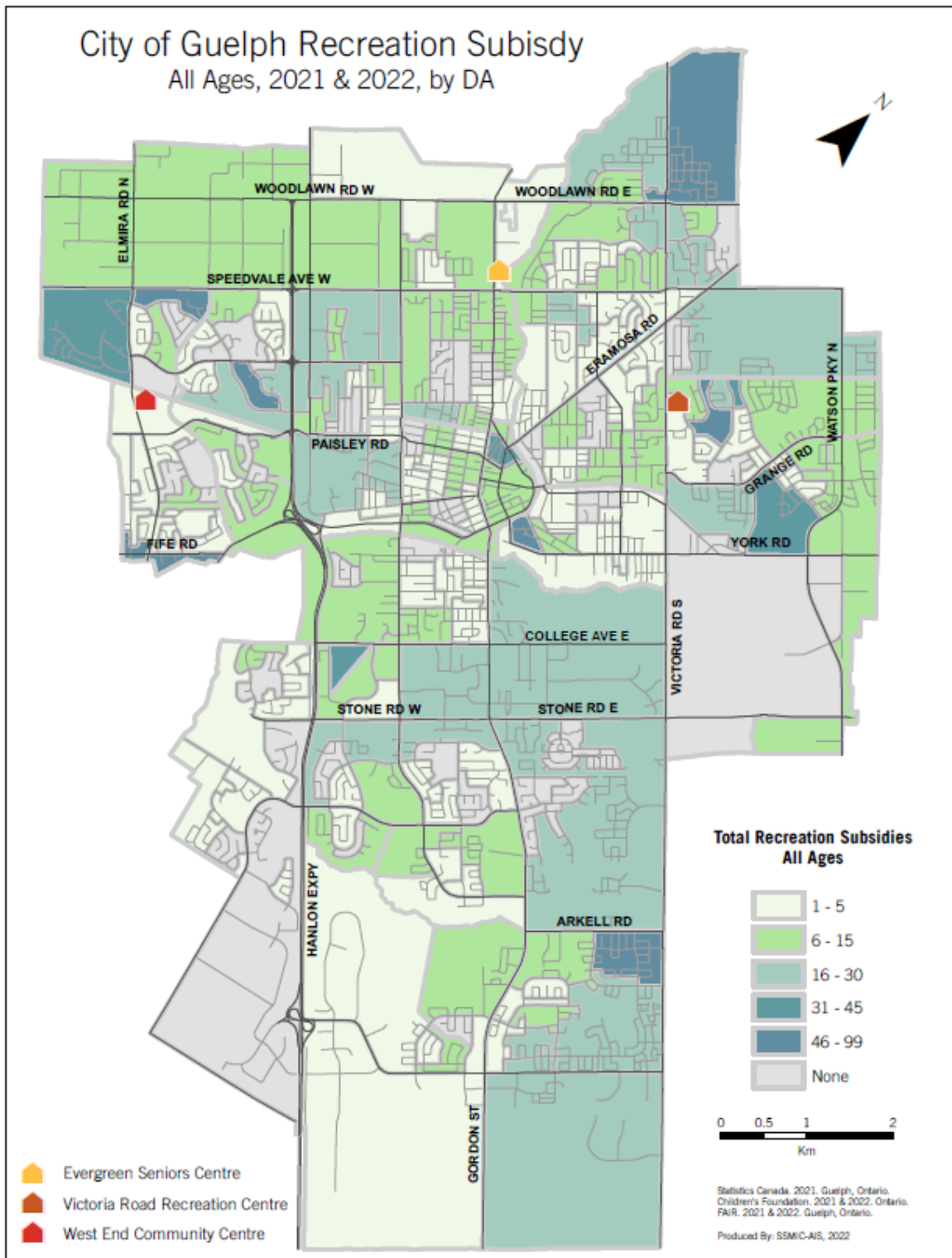
Map 14: All City recreation registrations by census tract



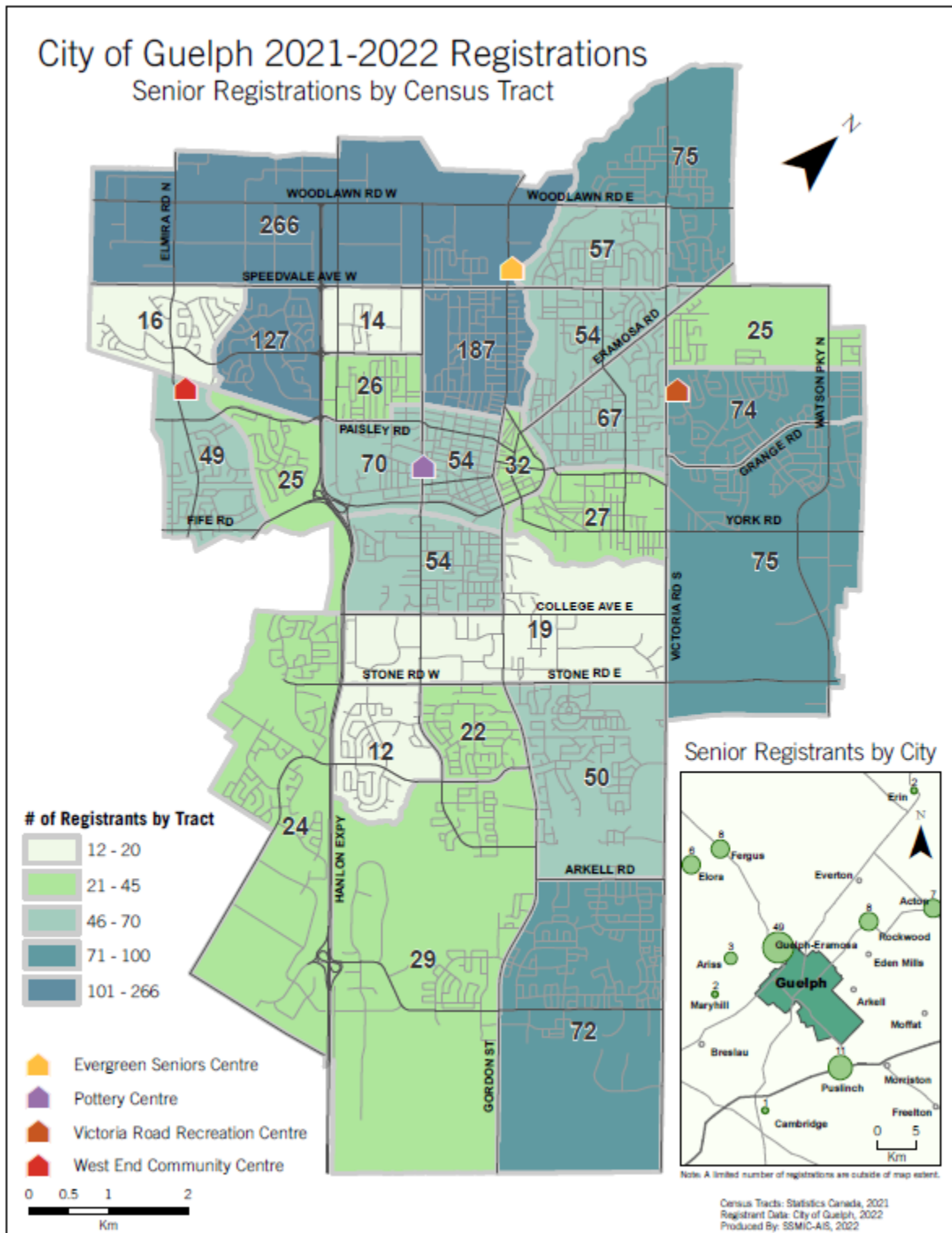
Map 15: Total population by census tract



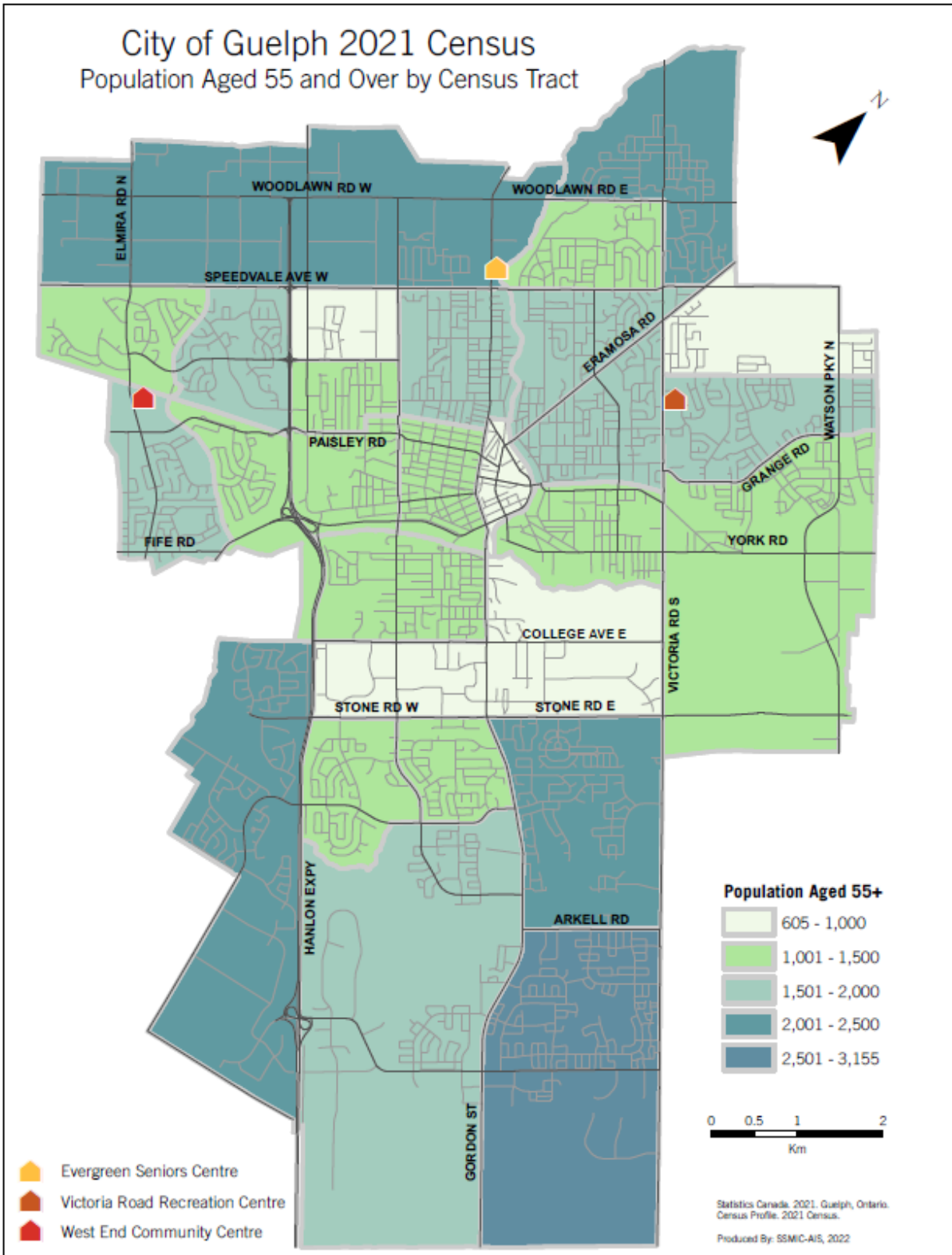
Map 16: All recreation subsidies by dissemination area



Map 17: Seniors registrations by census tract



Map 18: Guelph population aged 55 and over by census tract



Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Council presentation

Committee of the Whole: October 3, 2023



Agenda

- ▶ Strategic Plan alignment
- ▶ Purpose of the PRMP
- ▶ Study process
- ▶ Community engagement
- ▶ Vision and core values
- ▶ Plan outcomes
- ▶ Plan implementation

Strategic Plan alignment



Sustaining our future



Working together for our future



Building our future



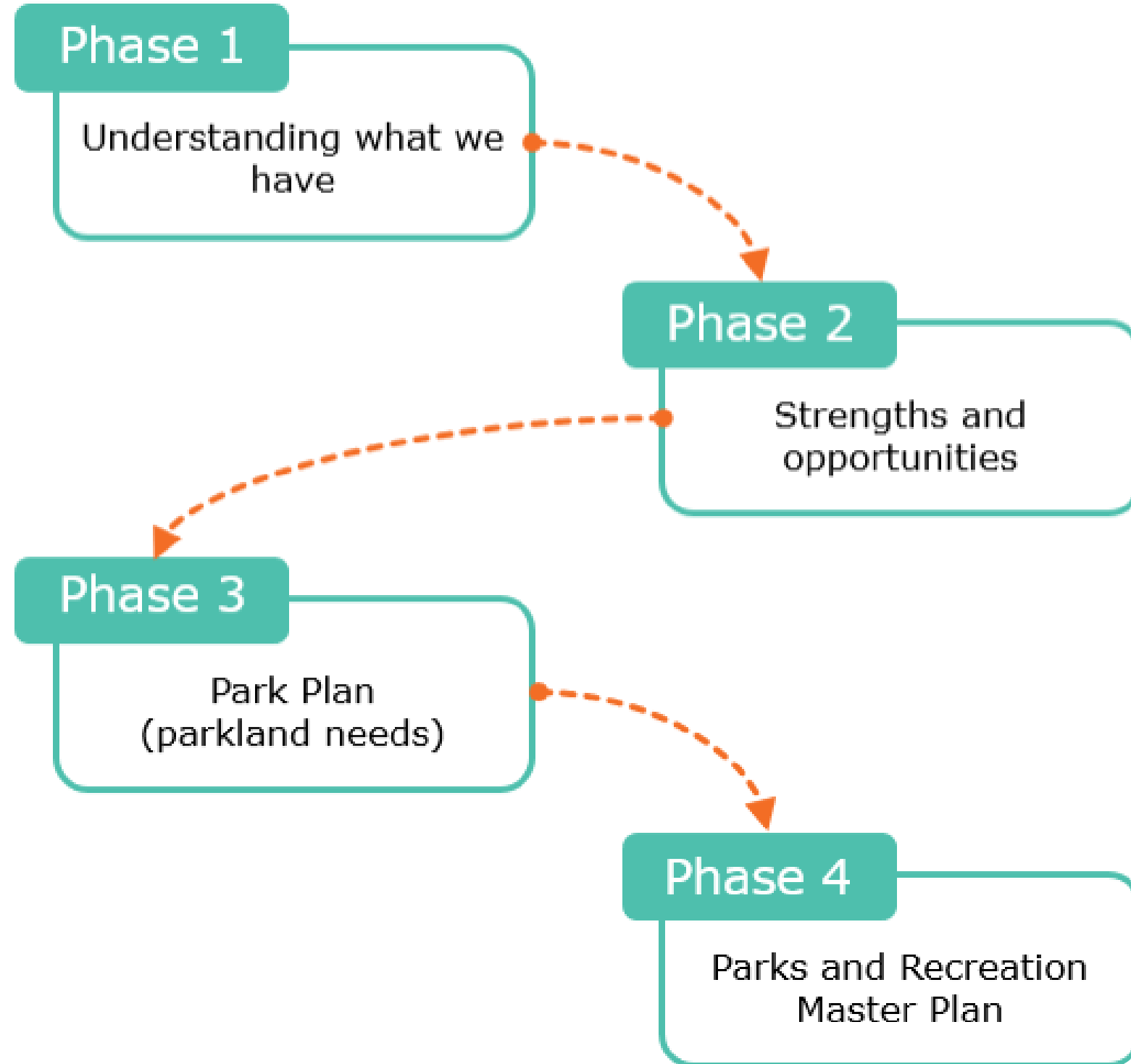


Purpose of the PRMP

- ▶ Replaces the 2009 Recreation, Parks and Culture Strategic Master Plan.
- ▶ Identifies needs for current and future residents.
- ▶ Sets direction for parkland, recreation facilities and recreation programs in the City over the next 10 years and beyond.
- ▶ Guides how the City plans, designs, funds, builds and maintains the park and recreation network.



Study process





Community engagement

- 4 Community surveys
- 2 Public open houses
- 3 Community workshops
- 2 Community focus groups
- 1 Developer focus group
- 1 Sport user group meeting
- 15 Parks and recreation facility pop-ups
- 5 Community pop-ups
- 5 Presentations to Advisory Committees of Council, including the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Natural Heritage Advisory Committee
- 1 Brainstorming session with over 300 children in grades 2-5 during the City's Local Government Week visits
- 10 Internal participant workshops with key municipal departments
- 10 Individual community group meetings with Youth Council, Youth Providers Committee, Local Immigration Partnership, Upper Grand District School Board, Guelph Neighbourhood Support Coalition and Indigenous Nations
- 1 Virtual Sharing Circle as part of an ongoing relationship building initiative with community members of First Nation, Inuit, Métis and mixed Indigenous ancestry. The conversation was themed around parks and outdoor spaces.

Over **40** different opportunities to share feedback



Vision and core values

Parks and recreation are essential to everyday life in Guelph. To be future-ready, Guelph needs parks, facilities and programs that are sustainable, inclusive, adaptable and have a built-in ability to respond to a growing and diverse community. The City needs to connect people to each other, healthy living and the environment.



All people can participate in recreation



Parks and recreation facilities are welcoming and meaningful places for all people



A healthy and vibrant community is supported through parks and recreation



Infrastructure is maintained, sustainable and responsive to community changes



The natural environment is protected, restored and responsibly managed.



The Parks and Recreation departments work together with the community.



Plan outcomes





Plan implementation

- ▶ Investment is required to ensure that parks and recreation levels of service are maintained as the population grows.
- ▶ Capital investment to deliver PRMP initiatives is approximately \$17.25 million over the next 10 years.
- ▶ Pace of implementation allows for flexibility and will be based on need, resource capacity, budget approval, and in some cases, timing of Secondary Plan development, including Guelph Innovation District and Clair-Maltby.
- ▶ Updates to the master plan recommended at five-year intervals.

Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Questions