

# City of Guelph Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment



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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 180,500<sup>1</sup>. 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.

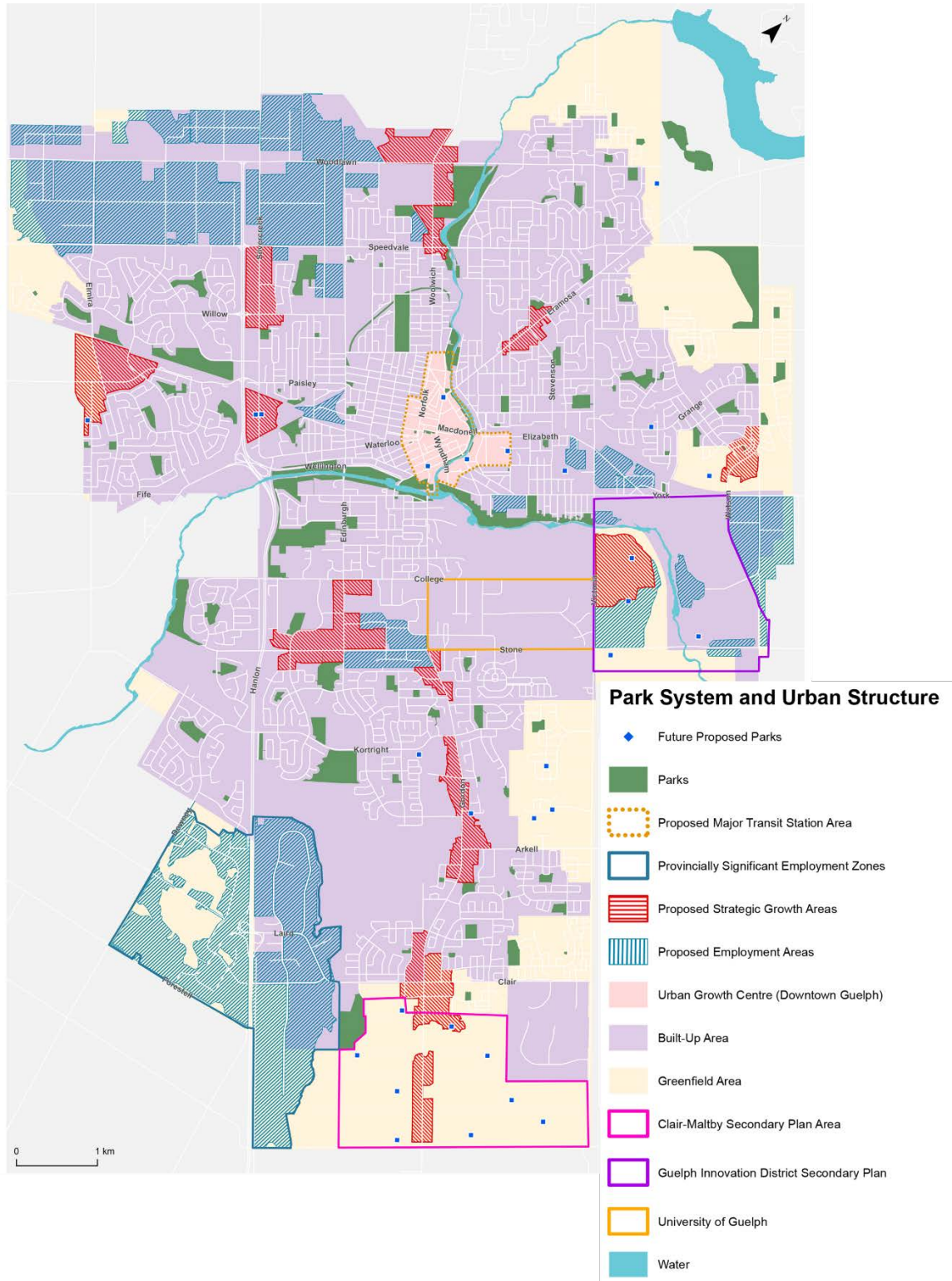
The City's role as a recreation service provider is to fill the local demand for introductory and intermediate level facilities to support life-long participation in sports and recreation for a wide range of people. In the past, the City has developed a few elite level outdoor sport facilities including 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.

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<sup>2</sup> City of Guelph, 2022, Shaping Guelph: Growth Management Strategy

<sup>3</sup> City of Guelph, 2022, Shaping Guelph: Growth Management Strategy

**Figure 1: Guelph's proposed urban structure and park system<sup>4</sup>**



<sup>4</sup> 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)
<b>Outdoor athletic facilities</b>		
<b>Baseball and softball diamonds</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>54.5</b>
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
<b>Rectangular fields</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>70</b>
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
<b>Cricket grounds</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Basketball courts</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>38</b>
Full court (2 hoops)	5	10
Half court and free throw pads (1 hoop)	28	28
<b>Tennis courts</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>
Dedicated courts	4	4
Multi-use courts	21*	21
<b>Pickleball courts</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>
Dedicated courts	0	0
Multi-use courts	21*	21
<b>Running tracks</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Youth parks</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2.25</b>
Skateboard parks	2	1.25
Bike parks (planned)	1	1
<b>Disc golf courses</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Lawn bowling greens</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Outdoor rinks</b>	<b>36**</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Fitness stations</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Outdoor leisure facilities</b>		
<b>Playgrounds</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>Splash pads and wading pools</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>
Splash pads	6	6
Splash pad (planned in 2023/2024)	2	2
Wading pools	2	2
Market square water feature	1	1
<b>Community gardens</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Dog parks</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>53</b>
Fenced dog parks	2	2
Permitted leash-free areas	10	10
Unoccupied sports fields permitted as leash-free areas	41	41
<b>Picnic shelters and shade structures</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Permanent restrooms</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Water bottle refill stations</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>

\* 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**

<b>Facility type</b>	<b>Inventory</b>	<b>Inventory including SECC</b>
<b>Indoor Aquatics Facility</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Ice Pads</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Gymnasiums</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>3.5</b>
<b>Fitness Facility</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Artificial Turf Field</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Indoor Walking Track</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Multi-purpose rooms</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Seniors Active Living Centre</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3<sup>5</sup></b>

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.

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<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup>

In 2016 over 8 million Canadians over the age of 15 participated in sporting activities.<sup>7</sup> In Ontario, 69% of parents view their children's participation in sports as essential or very important.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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.

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<sup>6</sup> Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, 2022, *Power of Sport: The True Sport Report 2022*

<sup>7</sup> Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, 2022, *Power of Sport: The True Sport Report 2022*

<sup>8</sup> Ontario Sport Network, 2021, *The State of Sport in Ontario: IMI International Benchmark Study Report*

<sup>9</sup> 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.

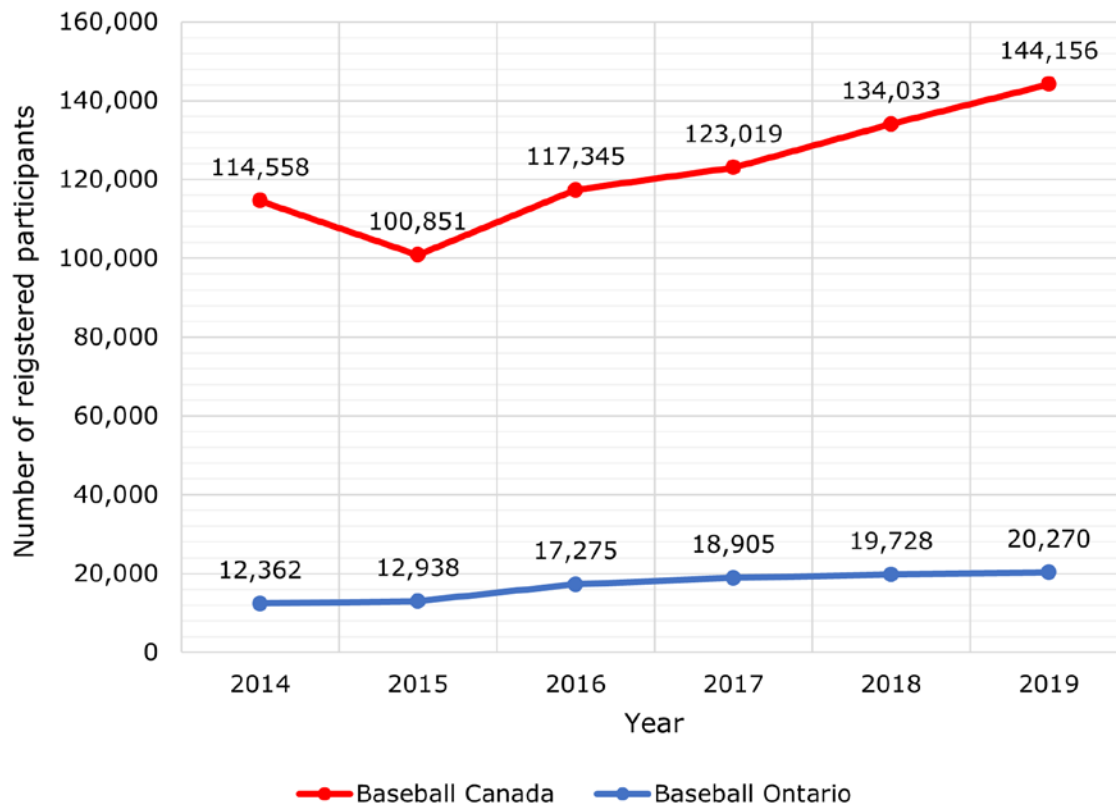
- Baseball organizations report that quality of diamonds in Guelph should be improved.
- Baseball organizations report that existing diamonds should be more consistent with technical guidelines (e.g. field dimensions).

### **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.<sup>10 11</sup> 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 participation<sup>12</sup>**



### 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

<sup>10</sup> Baseball Canada, 2016, *Baseball participation on the rise across Canada*, Retrieved from [www.baseball.ca](http://www.baseball.ca)

<sup>11</sup> Guelph Minor Baseball Association, 2015-2021, Annual General Meeting Minutes, Retrieved from <http://gmba.ca>

<sup>12</sup> 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**

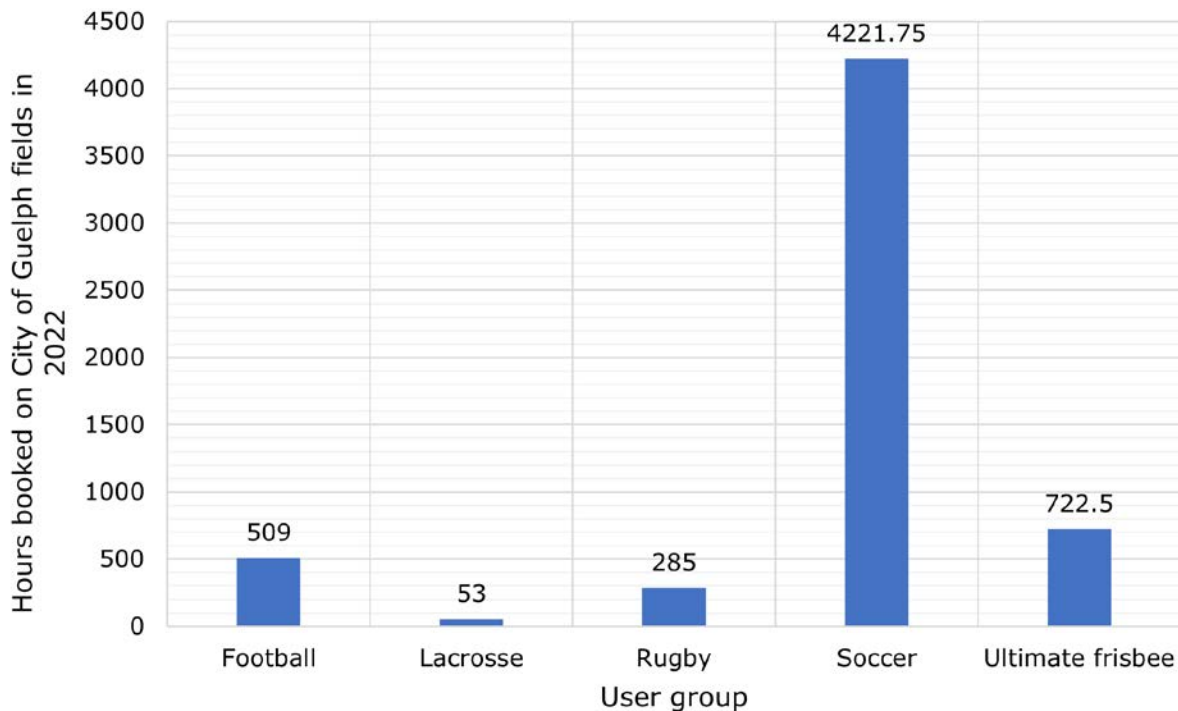
Current inventory	66
Effective supply (ULE)	70
Current service level	1:2,053
Median service level among comparator municipalities	1:2,392
Service level target	To be determined through future Sports Field Strategy
Additional facilities needed by 2033 to meet service level target	To be determined through 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.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, in 2022, Southwest Soccer's registrations climbed above registrations from 2019 – the last pre-pandemic full soccer season.<sup>15</sup> 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.

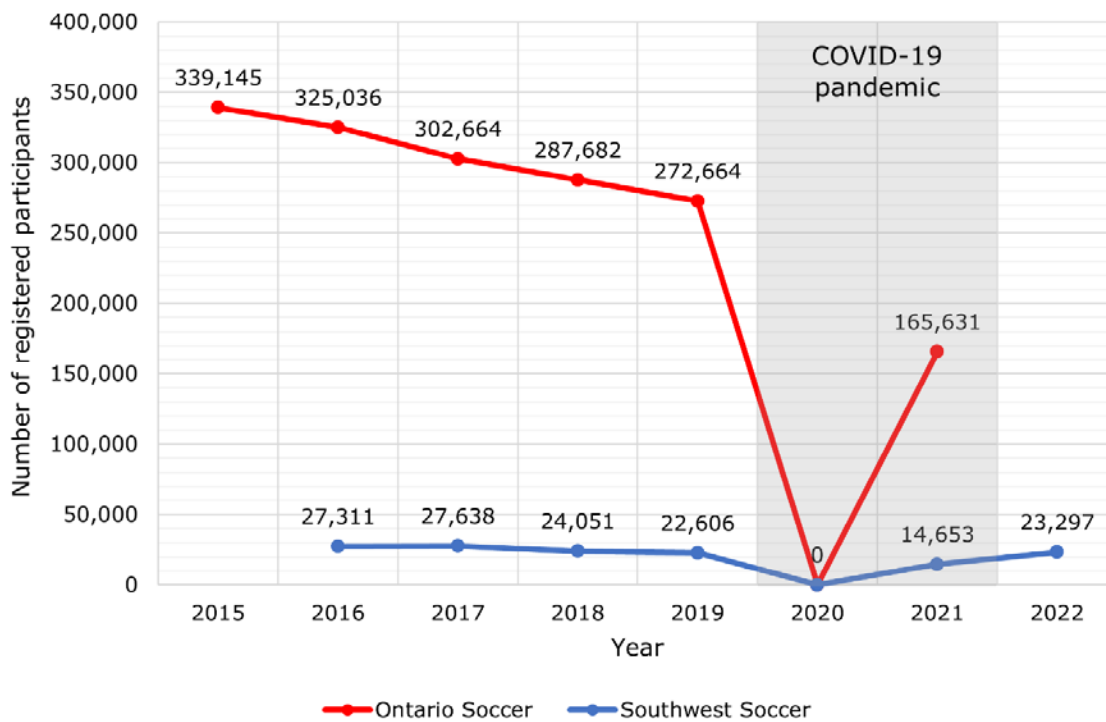
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<sup>13</sup> Ontario Soccer, 2016-2022, Annual Reports, Retrieved from [www.ontariosoccer.net](http://www.ontariosoccer.net)

<sup>14</sup> Ontario Soccer, 2016-2022, Annual Reports, Retrieved from [www.ontariosoccer.net](http://www.ontariosoccer.net)

<sup>15</sup> Southwest Soccer, 2022, Annual General Meeting booklet, Retrieved from [www.swrsa.ca](http://www.swrsa.ca)

**Figure 5: Provincial and regional soccer participation<sup>16 17</sup>**



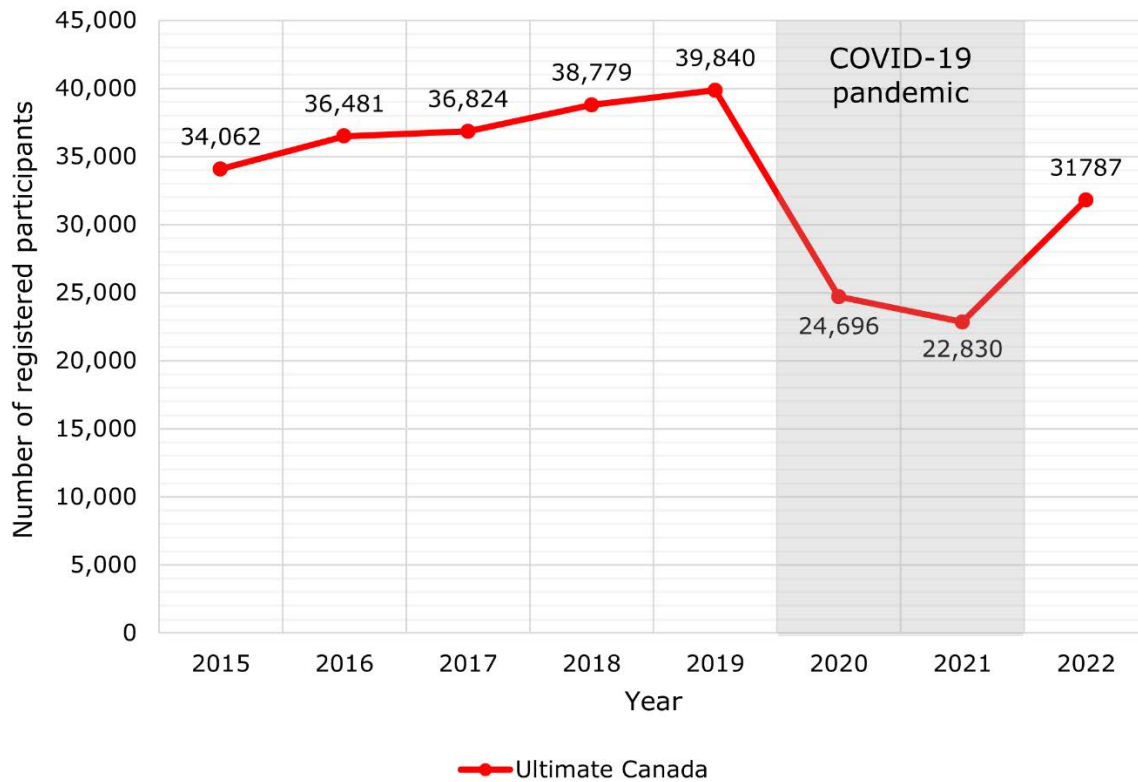
**Ultimate frisbee**

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.

<sup>16</sup> Ontario Soccer, 2016-2022, Annual Reports, Retrieved from [www.ontariosoccer.net](http://www.ontariosoccer.net)

<sup>17</sup> Southwest Soccer, 2022, Annual General Meeting booklet, Retrieved from [www.swrsa.ca](http://www.swrsa.ca)

**Figure 6: National ultimate frisbee participation<sup>18</sup>**



### 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.

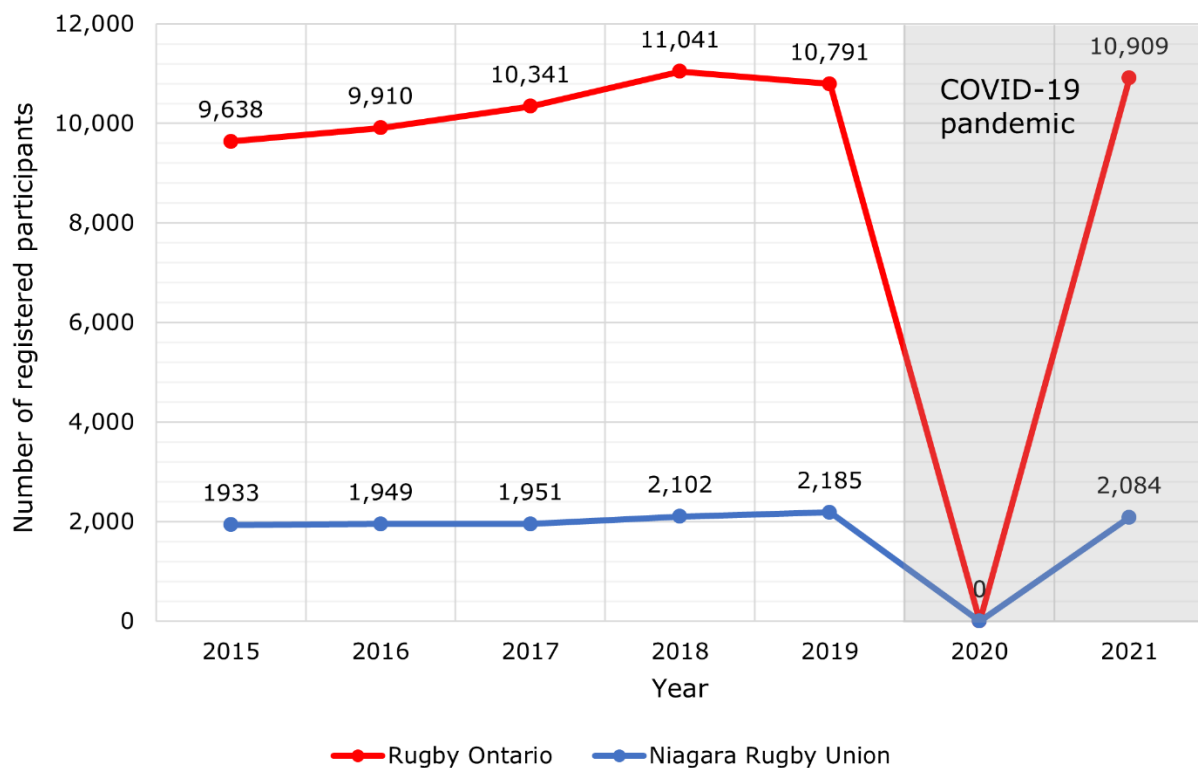
<sup>18</sup> Registration data provided by Ultimate Canada



## 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 participation<sup>19</sup>**



## 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.

<sup>19</sup> Rugby Ontario, 2016-2022, Annual General Meeting Reports, retrieved from [www.rugbyontario.com](http://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.<sup>20</sup> 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.

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<sup>20</sup> Cricket Canada. Retrieved from [www.canadacricket.com](http://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.<sup>21</sup>

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.

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<sup>21</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> 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.

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<sup>22</sup> Tennis Canada, 2018, Annual Report, Retrieved from <https://annualreport2018.tenniscanada.com/>

<sup>23</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup>

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.

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<sup>24</sup> 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	<b>3</b>
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.

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\*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.<sup>25</sup> 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.

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<sup>25</sup> UDisc, 2022, The Disc Golf Growth Report, Retrieved from [www.UDisc.com](http://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.<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup>

A better strategy to encourage fitness in smaller neighbourhood parks without implementing costly, under-utilized equipment is to install signage that illustrates

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<sup>26</sup> 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.

<sup>27</sup> 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	<b>11</b>
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 ratio 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	<b>53</b>
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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>29</sup>

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.

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<sup>29</sup> 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**

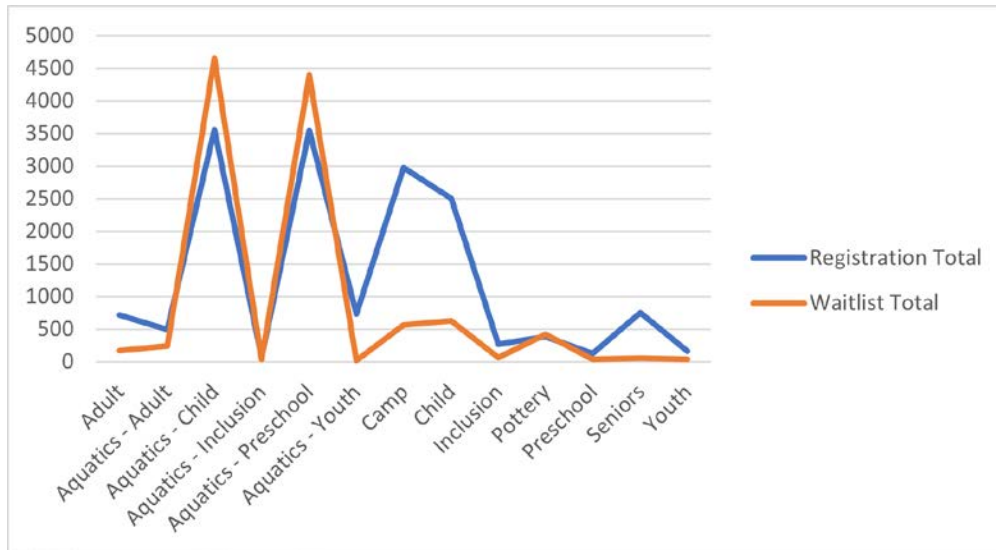
The following key themes emerged from an analysis of all community engagement activities for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

- 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,<sup>30,31</sup> 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

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<sup>30</sup> City of Toronto. Heat Relief Strategy, 2022. Retrieved from [toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/8f66-Heat-Relief-Strategy-2022.pdf](https://toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/8f66-Heat-Relief-Strategy-2022.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> 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](https://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.

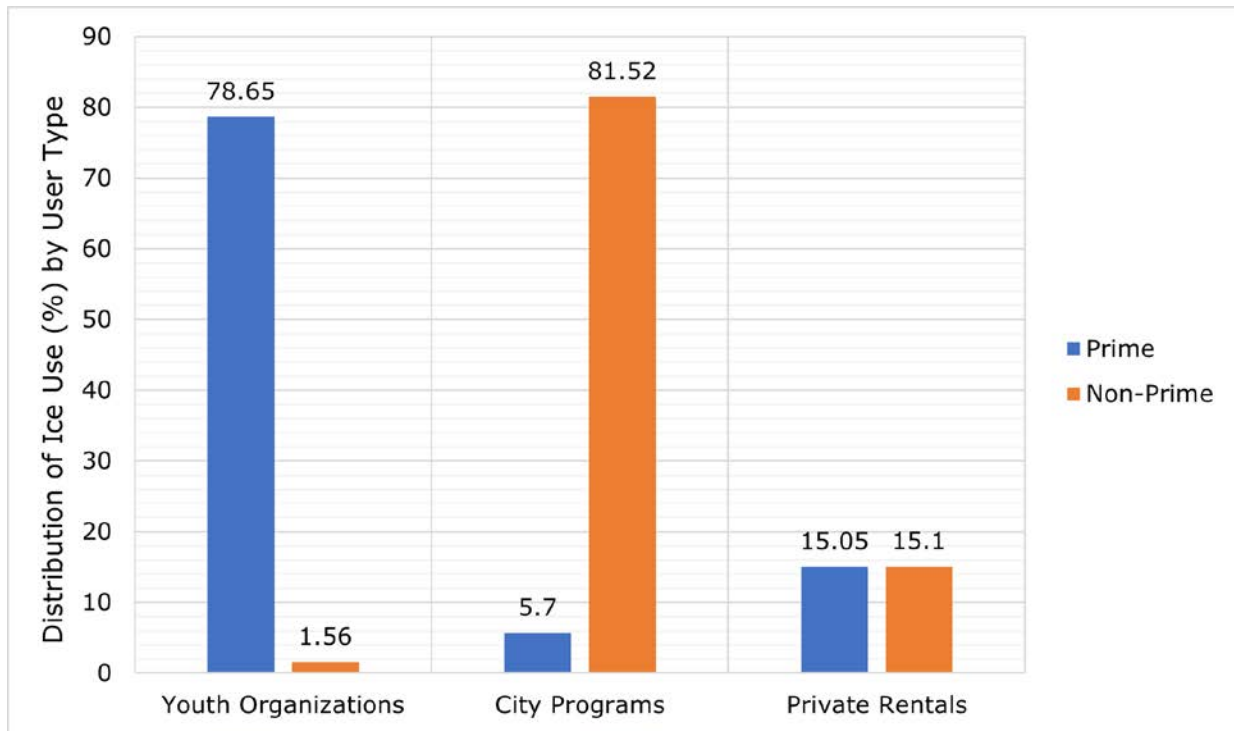
**Table 19: Indoor ice pad provision**

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 time<sup>32</sup> 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

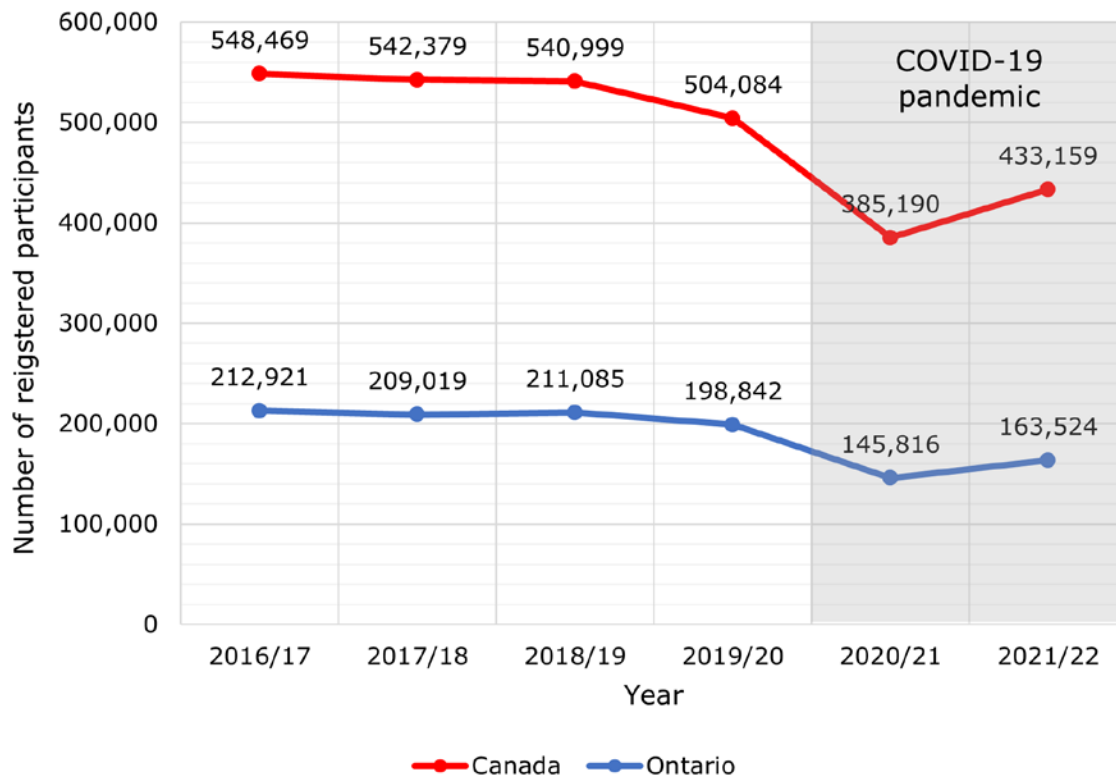
#### Hockey

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.<sup>33</sup> 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.

<sup>32</sup> Mon-Fri, 6-8am & 4-11pm; Sat-Sun, 6am-11pm

<sup>33</sup> Hockey Canada, 2016-2022 Annual Reports. Retrieved from [hockeycanada.ca](https://www.hockeycanada.ca)

**Figure 21: National and provincial hockey participation<sup>34</sup>**



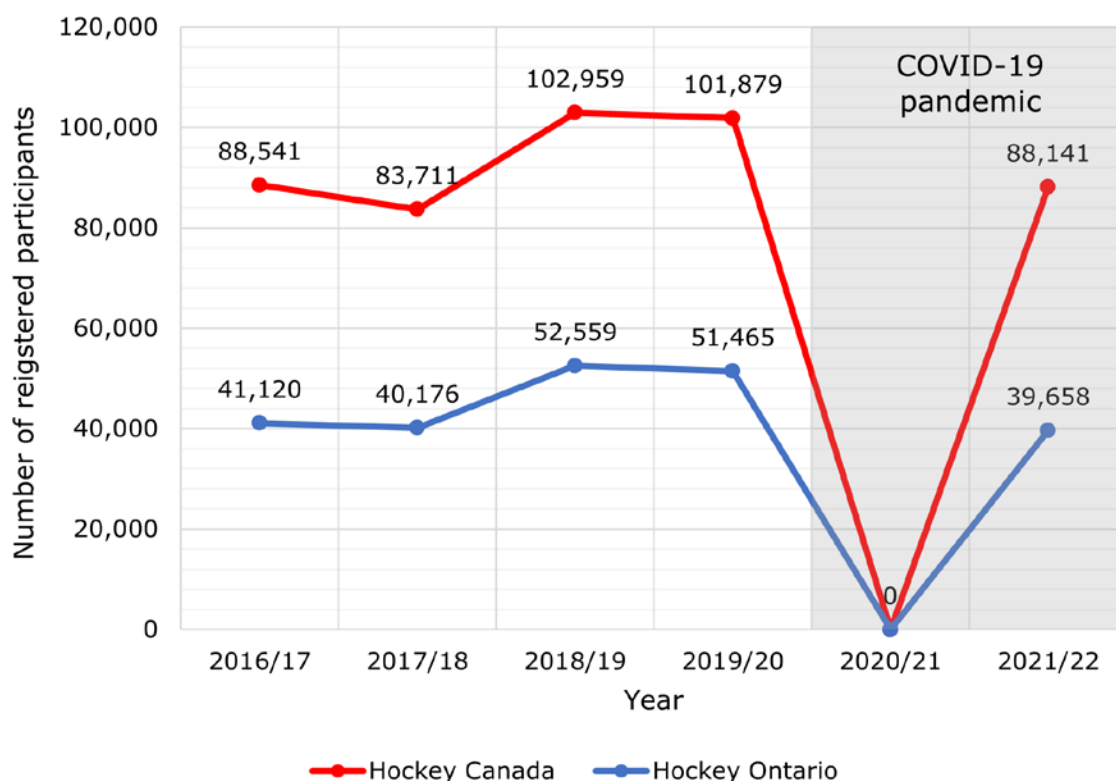
### Girls/womens hockey

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.

<sup>34</sup> Hockey Canada, 2016-2022 Annual Reports. Retrieved from [hockeycanada.ca](http://hockeycanada.ca)

**Figure 22: National and provincial participation in girls/women’s hockey<sup>35</sup>**

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.<sup>37</sup> 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

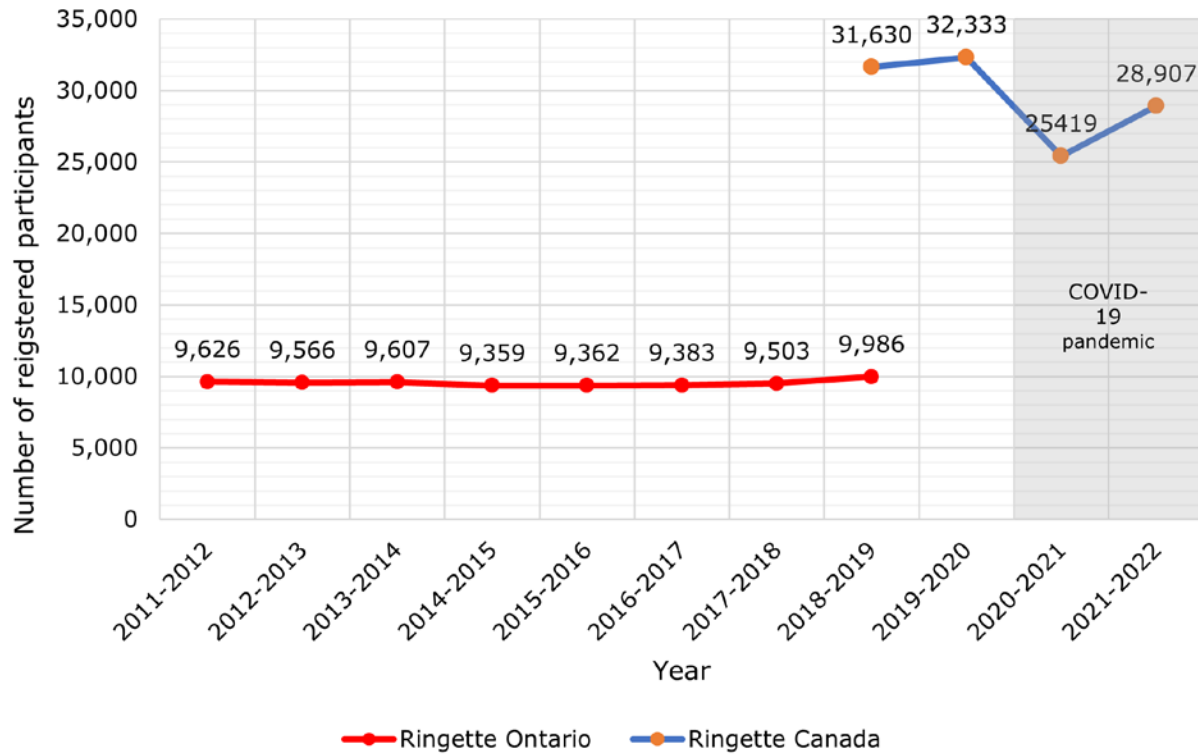
<sup>35</sup> Hockey Canada, 2016-2022 Annual Reports. Retrieved from hockeycanada.ca

<sup>36</sup> Data not reported for 2020/21

<sup>37</sup> 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<sup>38 39</sup>**



### 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.

<sup>38</sup> Ringette Ontario, 2018-2019 Annual Report. Retrieved from ringetteontario.com

<sup>39</sup> 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.

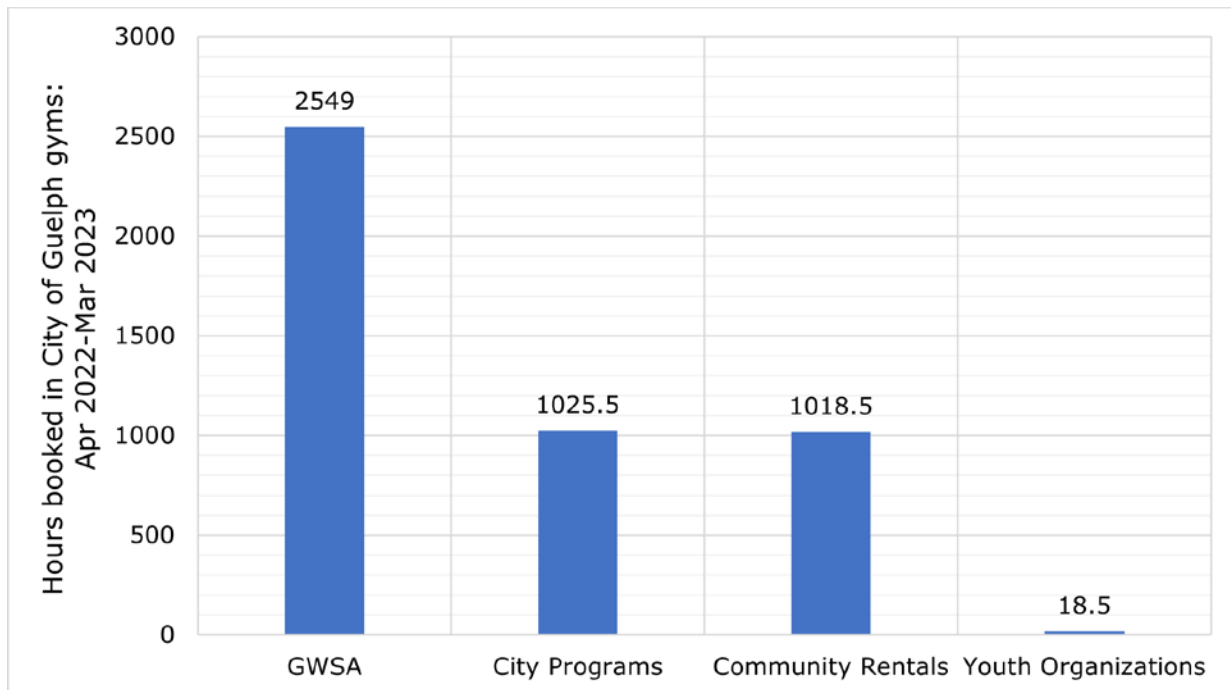
The 2009 Recreation, Parks and Culture Strategic Master Plan identified a targeted service level of 1 gym per 50,000 residents. This assessment however provided a full gym ranking for the auditorium in the ESCC, slightly misrepresenting true supply given the limited size and functionality of the amenity. 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,<sup>40</sup> <sup>41</sup> 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.

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<sup>40</sup> [www.ugdsb.ca/community/community-use-of-school-facilities/](http://www.ugdsb.ca/community/community-use-of-school-facilities/)

<sup>41</sup> [www.wellingtoncdsb.ca/apps/pages/communityuse](http://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.

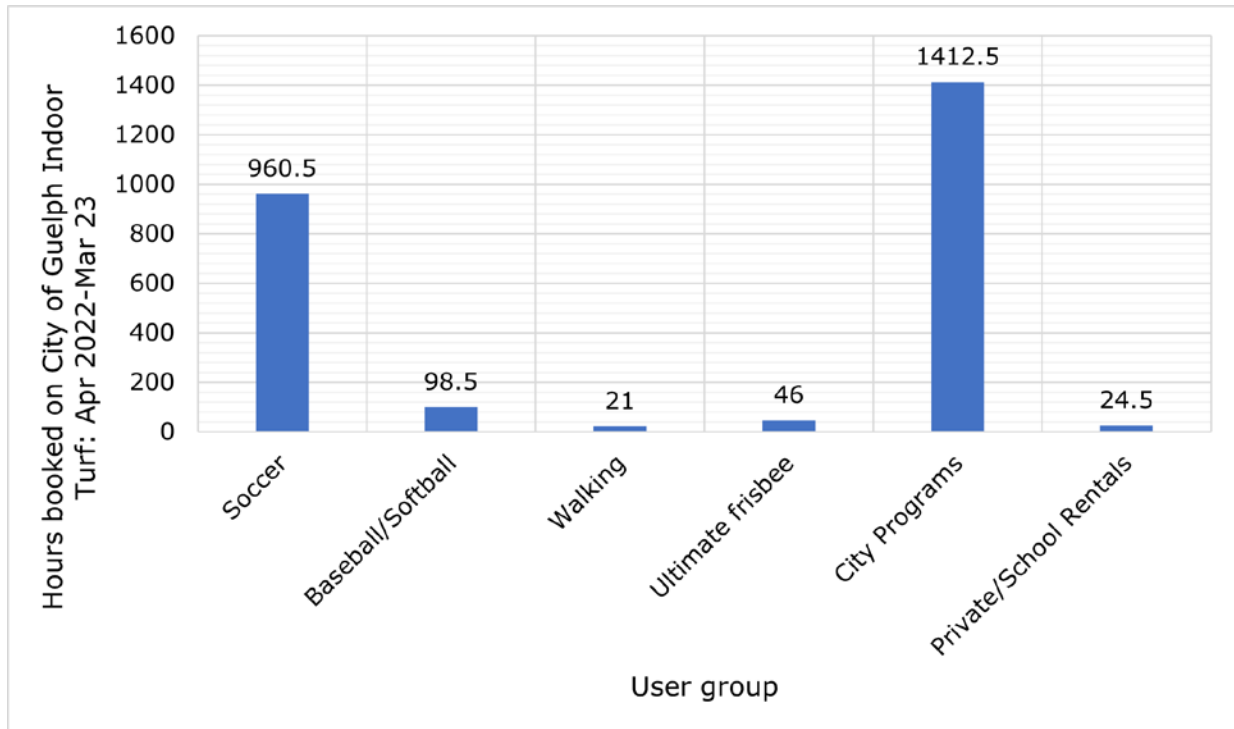
Previously owned and operated by a community not-for-profit organization, the Sportsdome has been a vital indoor recreation space in Guelph since 2007. The City of Guelph brought the Sportsdome Indoor Turf Facility into municipal inventory in 2019. As such, the 2009 Recreation, Parks and Culture Strategic 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.<sup>42</sup> 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.<sup>43 44</sup> 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,<sup>45</sup> 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

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<sup>42</sup> See Appendix B, [Map 14](#) and [Map 15](#)

<sup>43</sup> 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.

<sup>44</sup> 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>

<sup>45</sup> 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 applications<sup>46</sup> shows higher application rates in this area of Guelph, suggesting unique barriers to access and a service level deficiency exist for this particular neighbourhood.<sup>47</sup>

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.<sup>48</sup> 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.

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<sup>46</sup> Fee Assistance in Recreation (FAIR) and Children's Foundation of Guelph-Wellington, Free to Grow

<sup>47</sup> See Appendix B, [Map 16](#)

<sup>48</sup> 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<sup>49 50 51</sup> 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.

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<sup>49</sup> 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

<sup>50</sup> 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](http://www.guelphwellingtonlip.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Best-Practices-for-Inclusion-in-Parks-and-Recreation-A-Review-of-Existing-Literature-FINAL.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> 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](http://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.<sup>52</sup>
- 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.<sup>53</sup> 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

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<sup>52</sup> 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](https://guelphwellingtonlip.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/GWLIP-Discrimination-Report-Guelph-final-web.pdf)

<sup>53</sup> 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 Research<sup>54</sup> 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.

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<sup>54</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

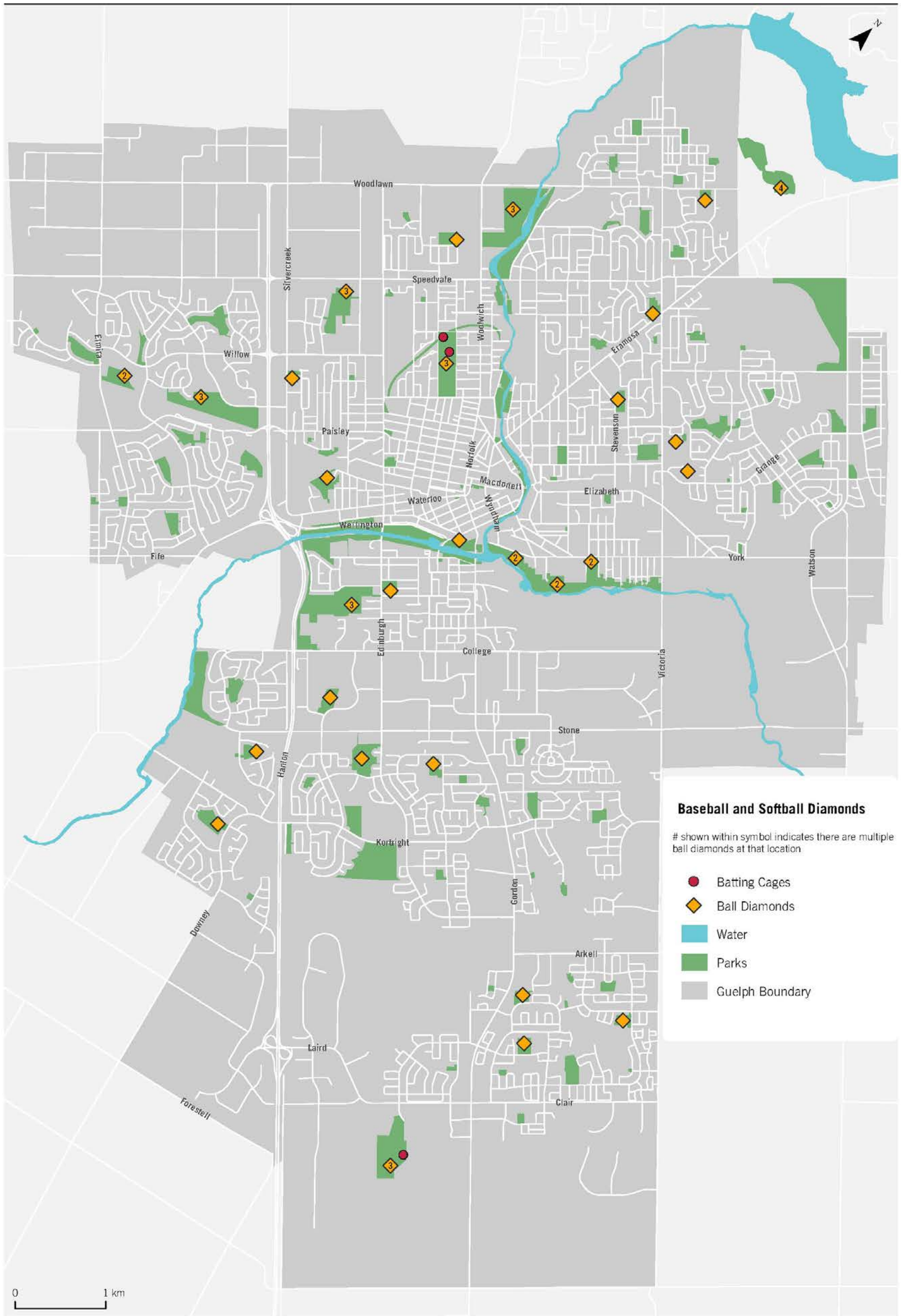
28. Continue to promote awareness of the fitness classes the city offers in park settings.
29. In the next 10 years, construct two new rubber surfaced playgrounds: one at University Village Park and one in the northwest portion of the city.
30. Continue to monitor capital investment against operational 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

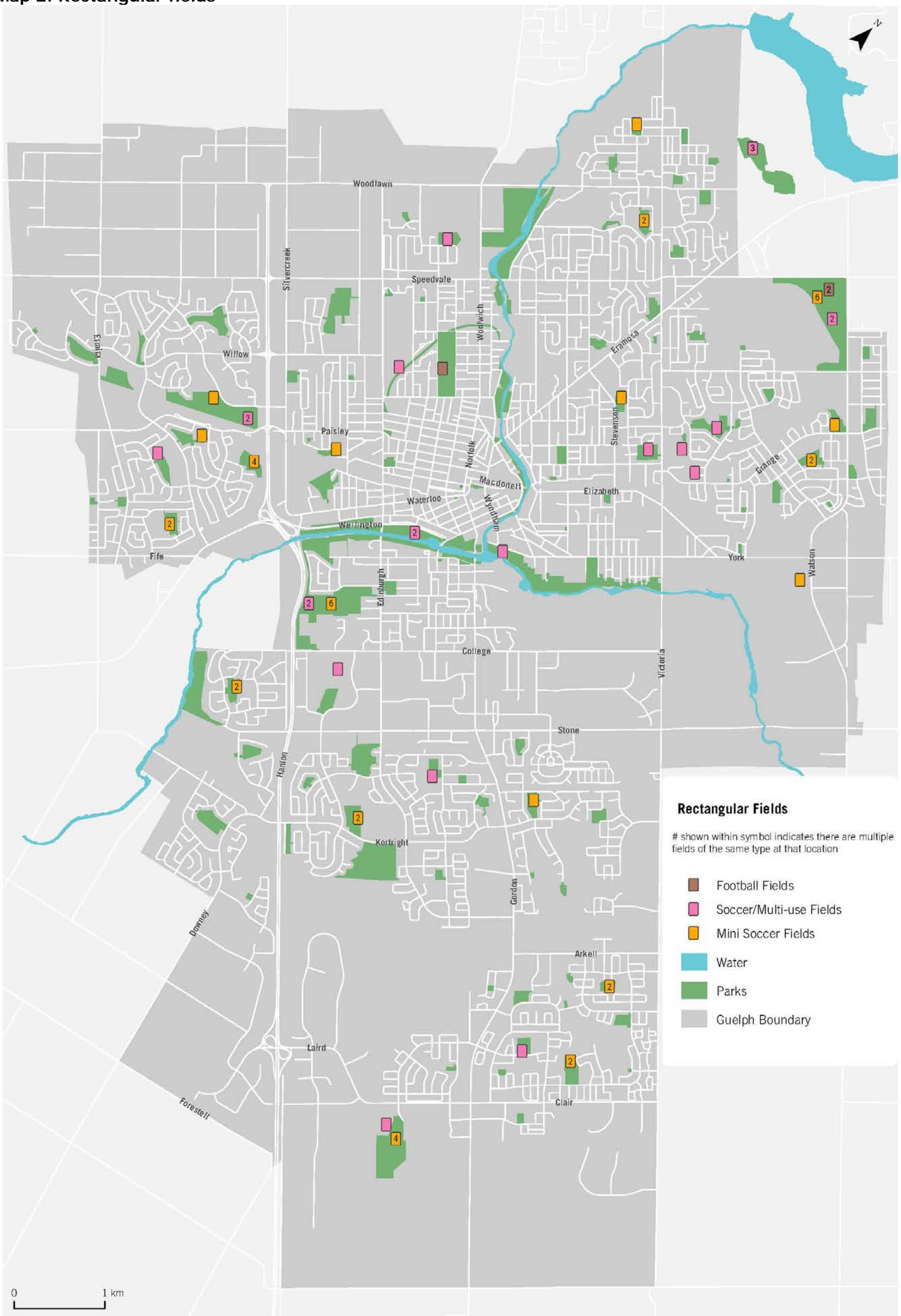
Map 1: Baseball and softball diamonds



Data provided by: City of Guelph  
 Map produced by: SSMIC - AIS, February 2023

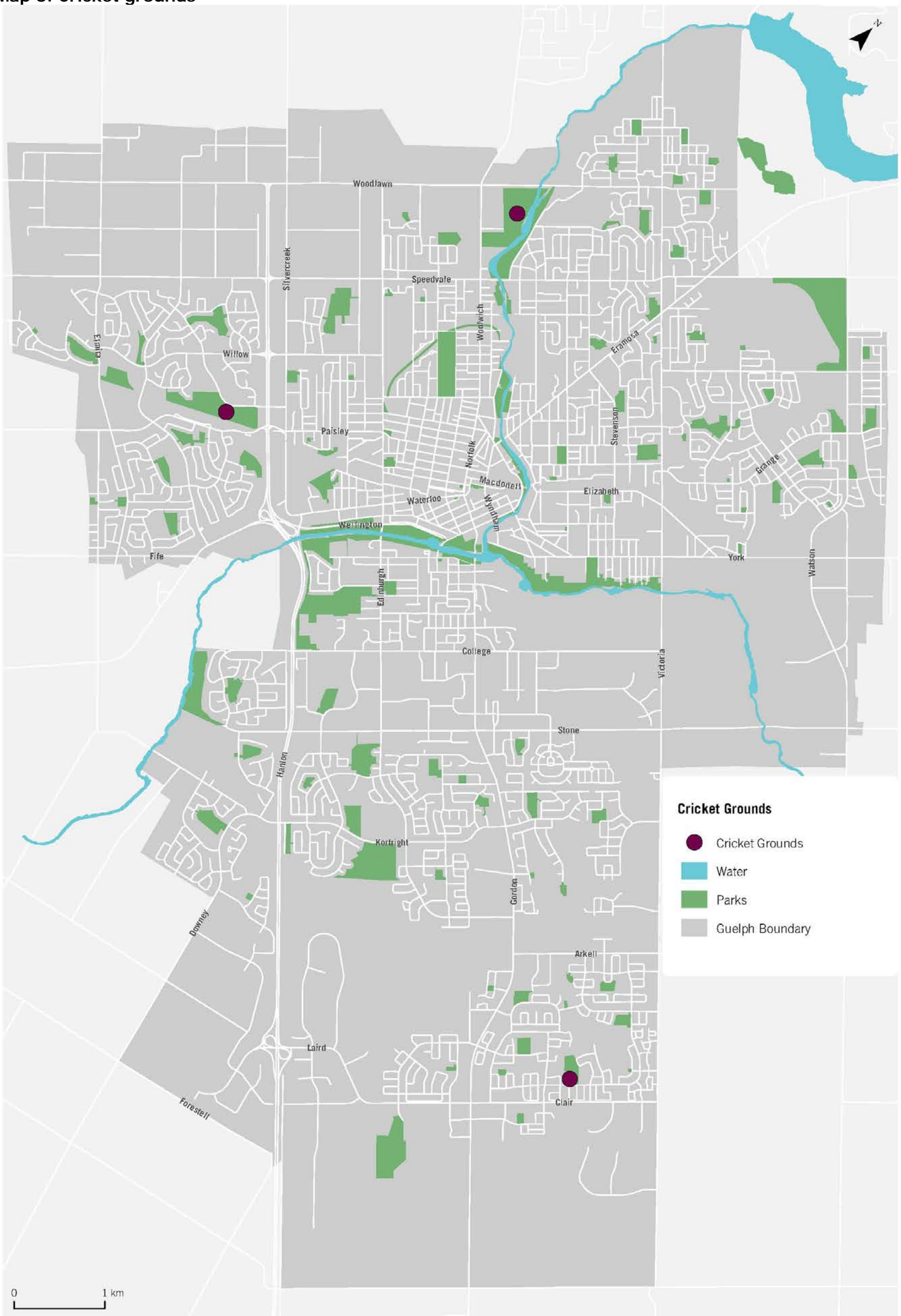


Map 2: Rectangular fields



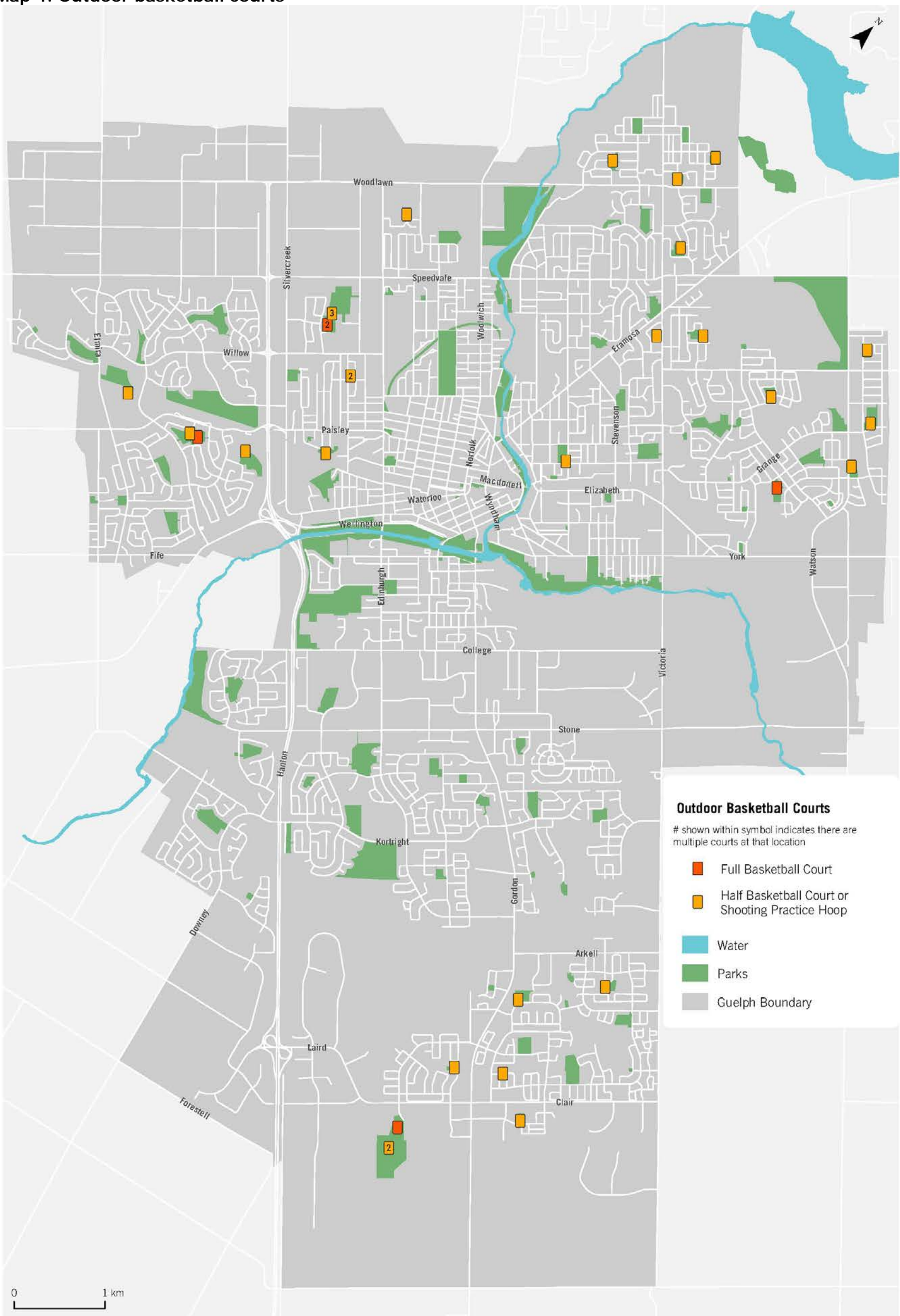
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Map 3: Cricket grounds



Data provided by: City of Guelph  
Map produced by: SSMIC - AIS, February 2023

Map 4: Outdoor basketball courts



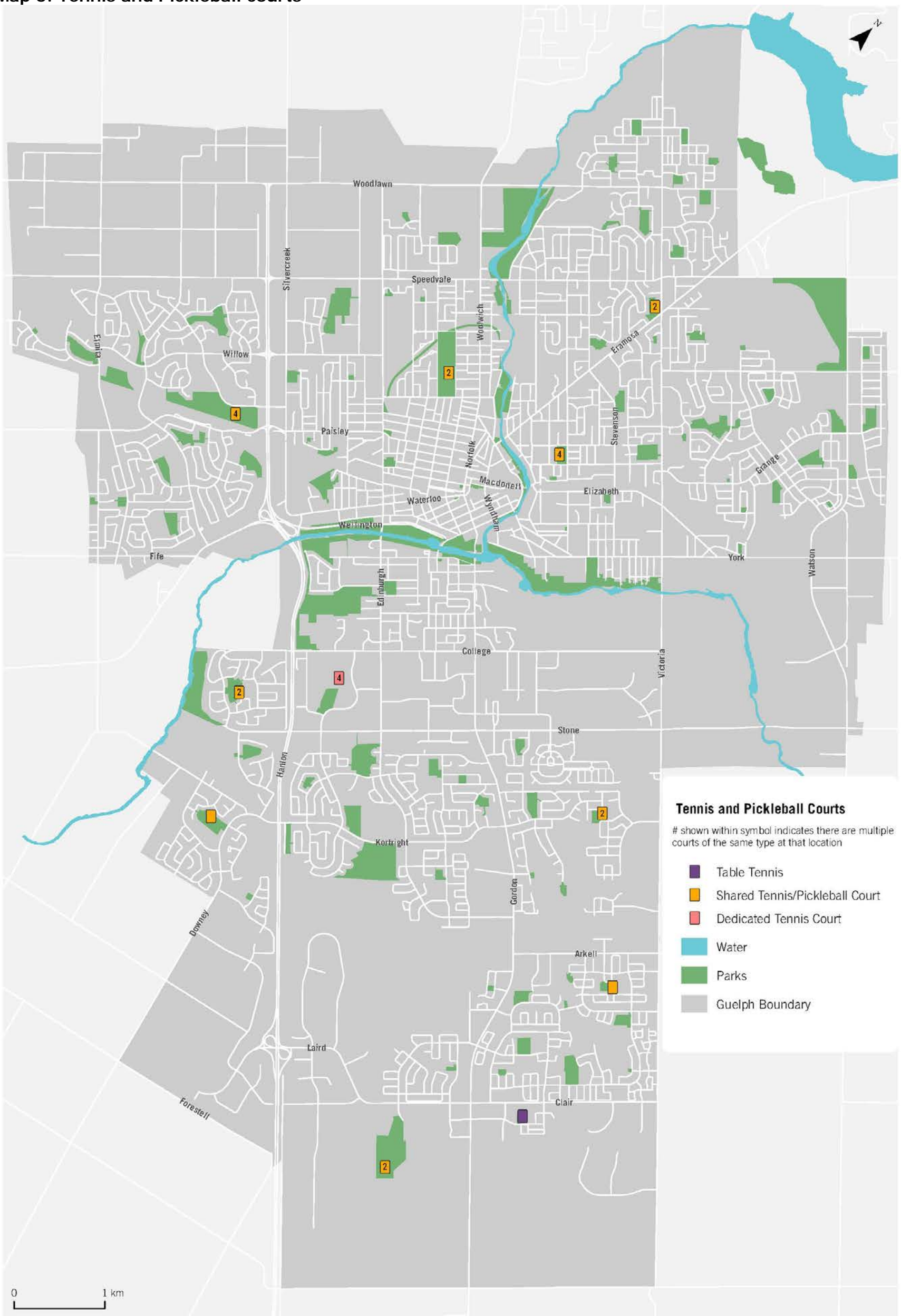
**Outdoor Basketball Courts**

# shown within symbol indicates there are multiple courts at that location

- Full Basketball Court
- Half Basketball Court or Shooting Practice Hoop
- Water
- Parks
- Guelph Boundary

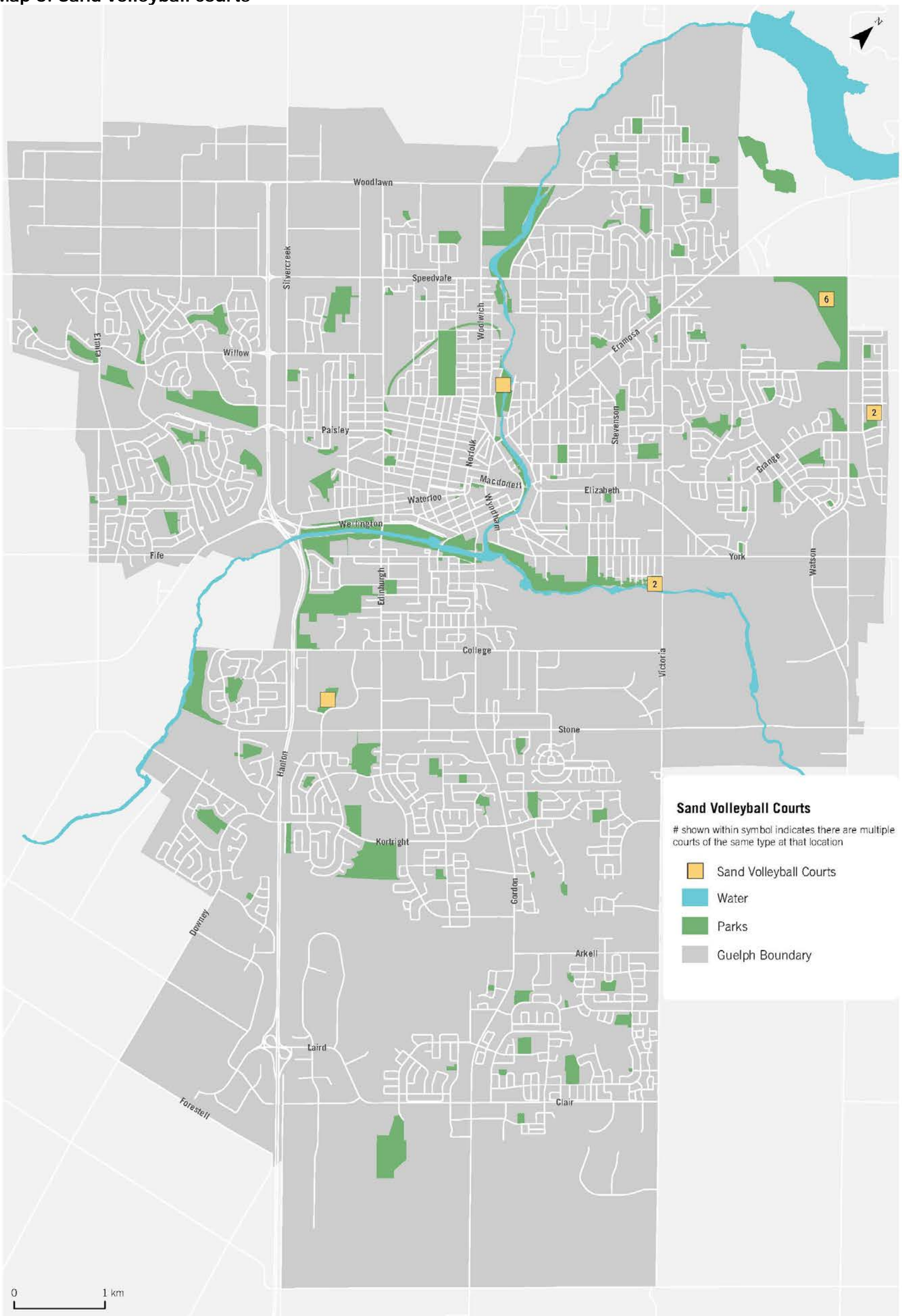
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Map 5: Tennis and Pickleball courts



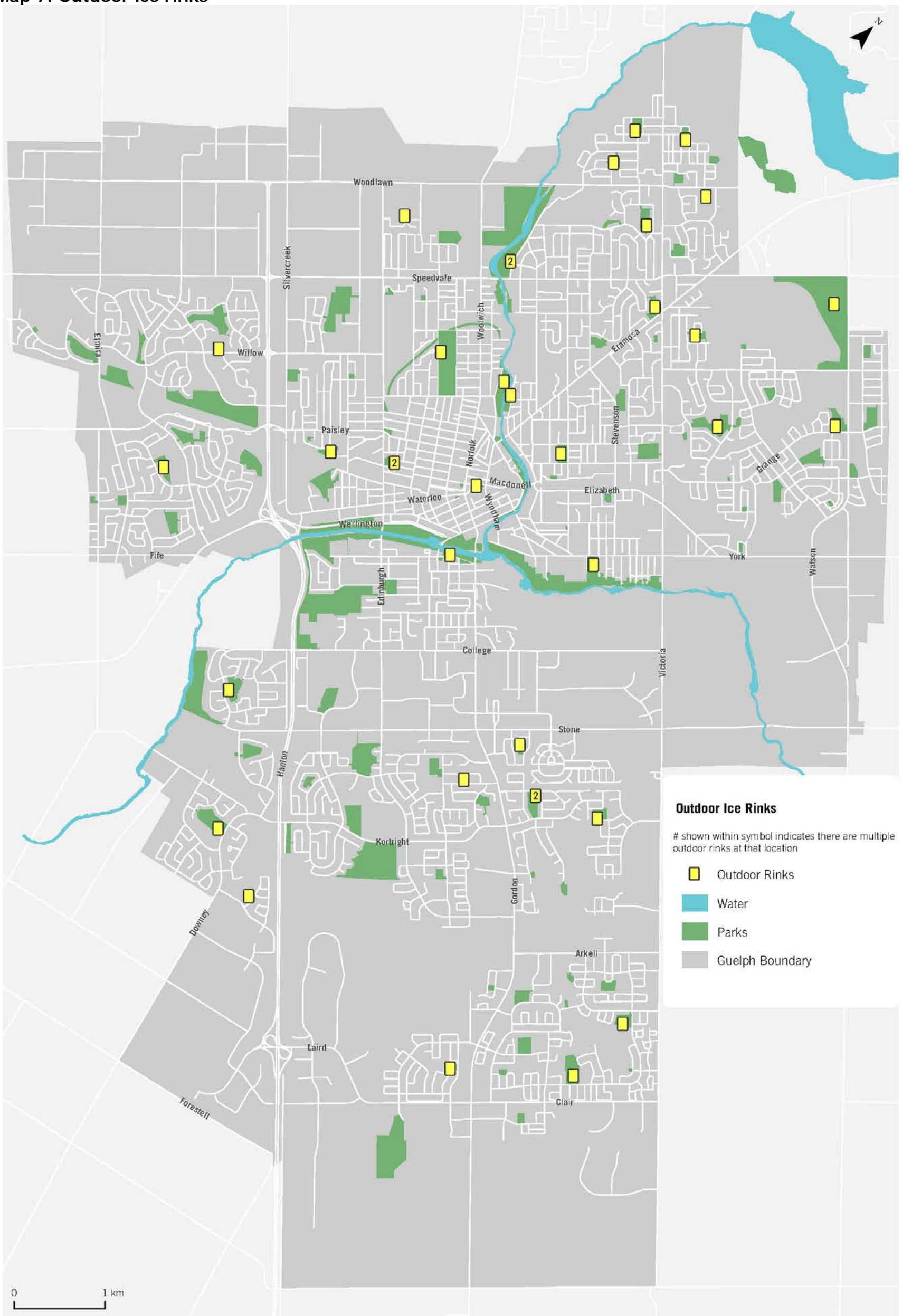
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Map 6: Sand volleyball courts



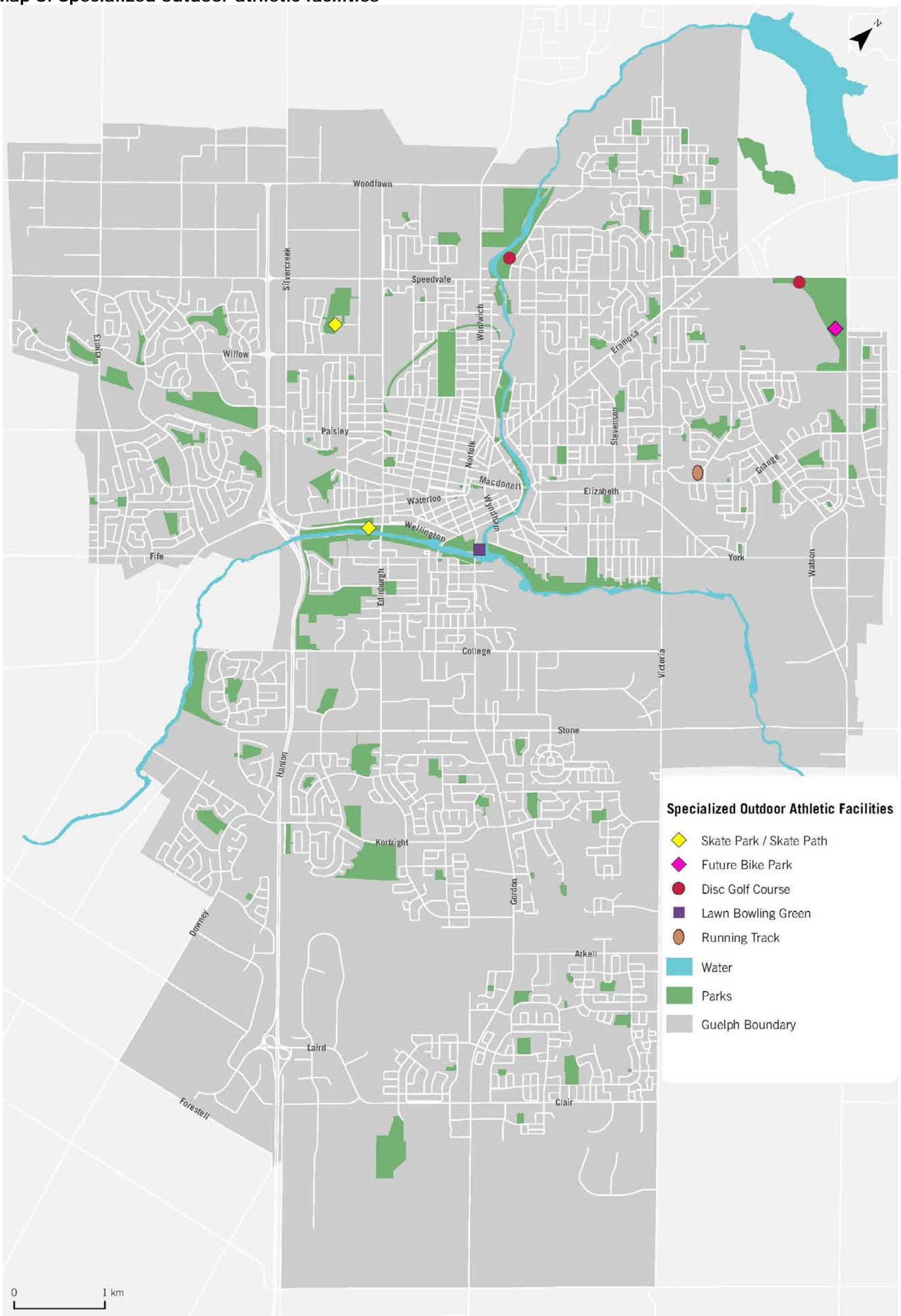
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Map 7: Outdoor ice rinks



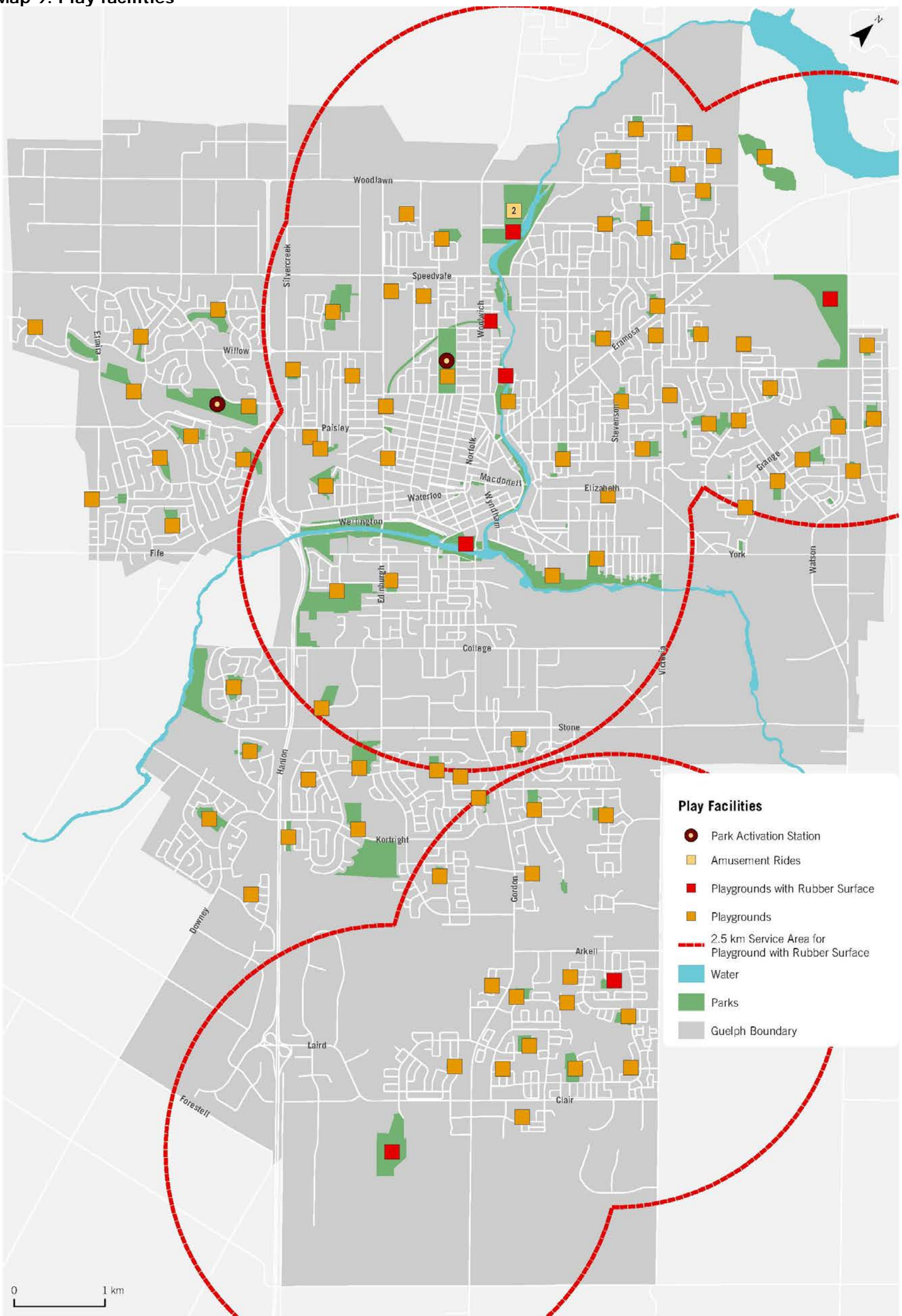
Data provided by: City of Guelph  
 Map produced by: SSMIC - AIS, February 2023

Map 8: Specialized outdoor athletic facilities



Data provided by: City of Guelph  
 Map produced by: SSMIC - AIS, February 2023

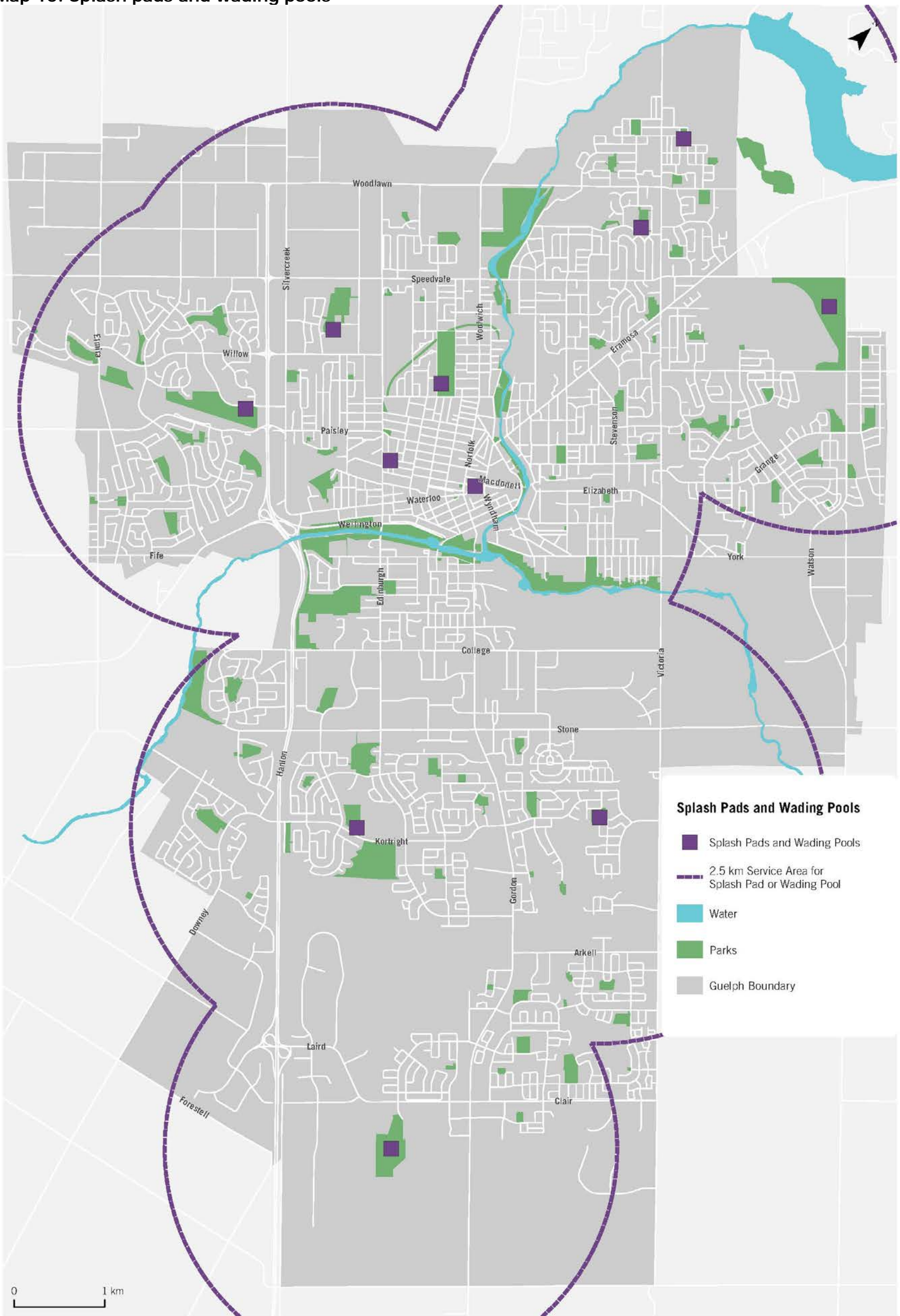
Map 9: Play facilities



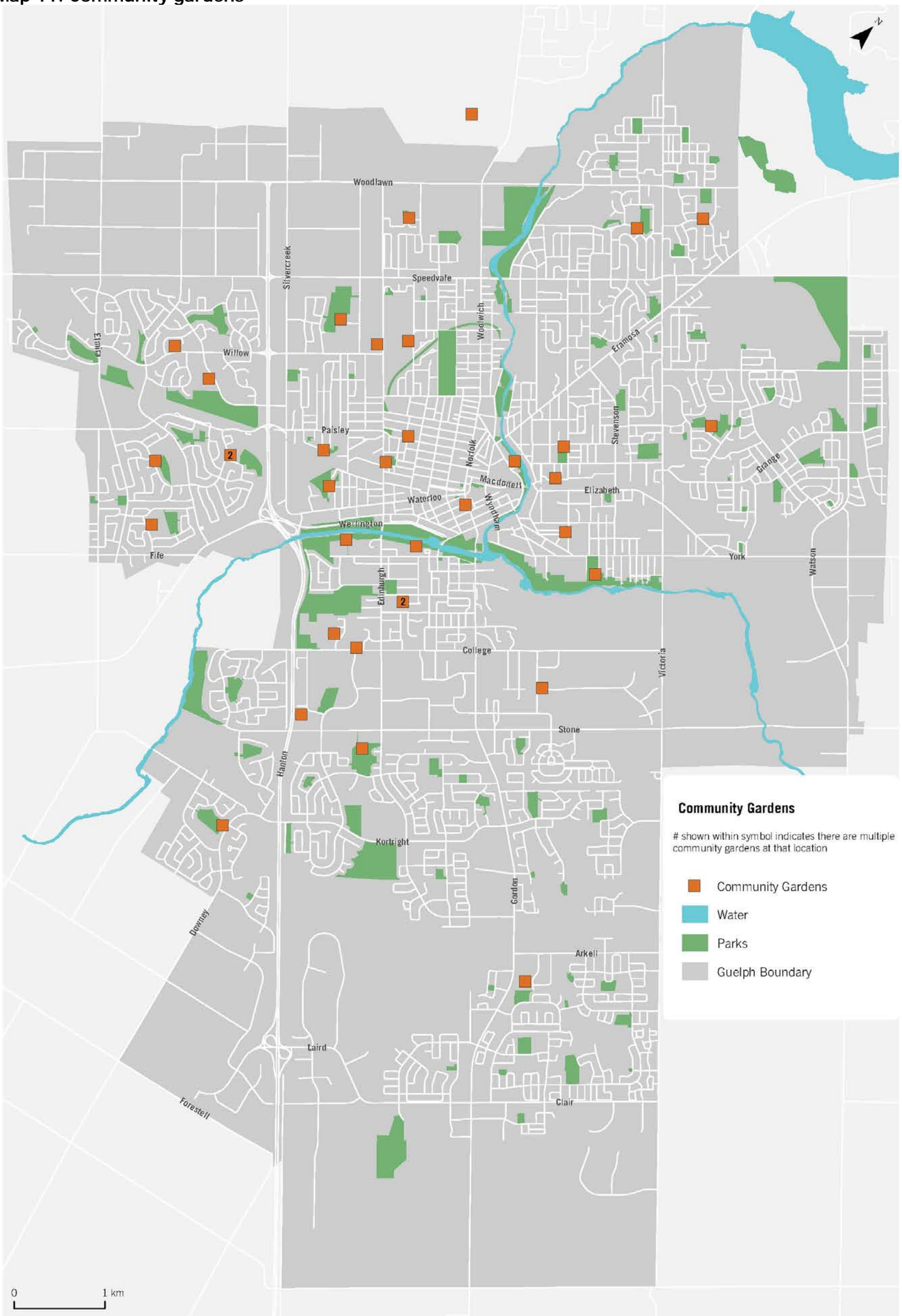
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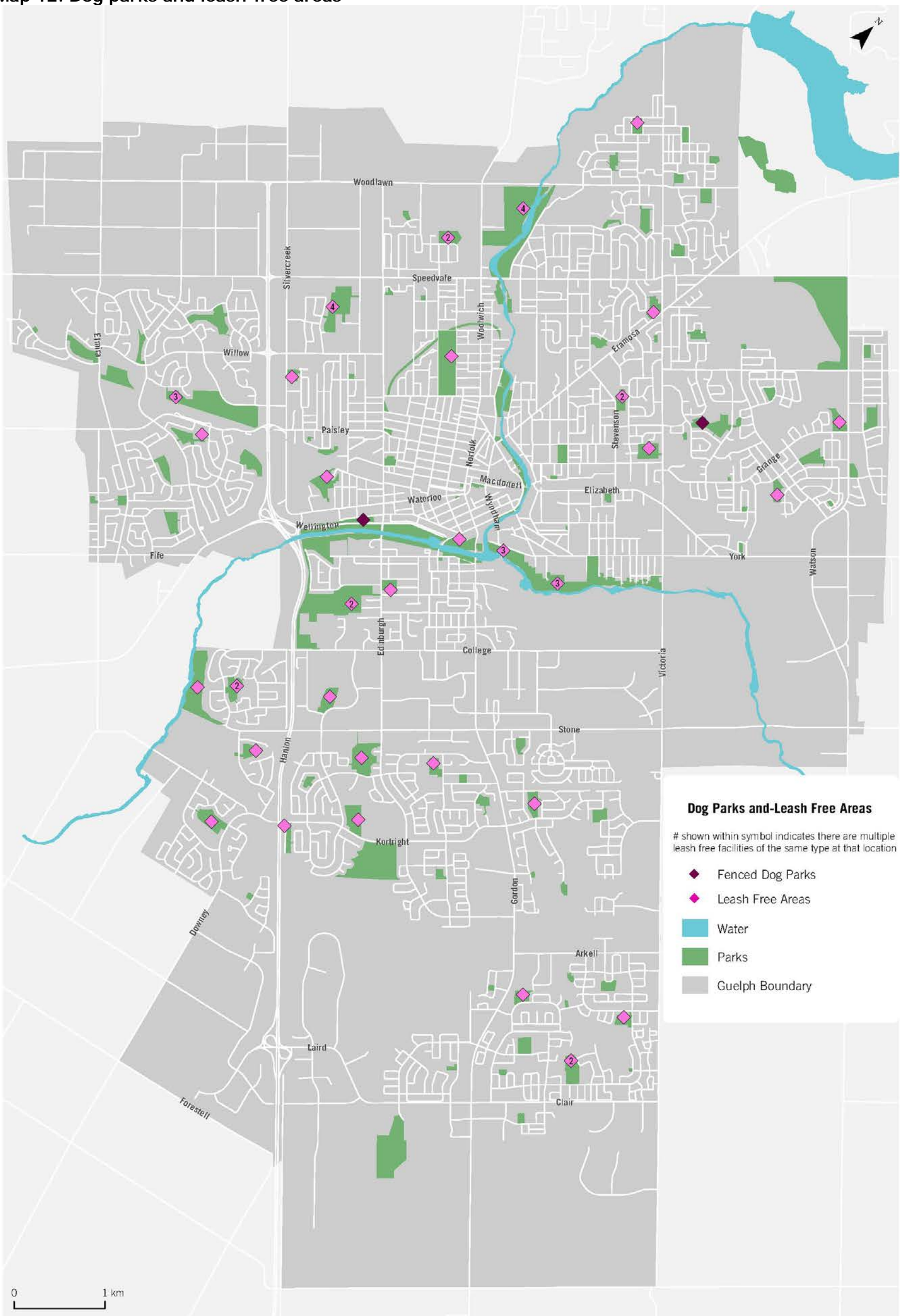
Map 10: Splash pads and wading pools



Map 11: Community gardens

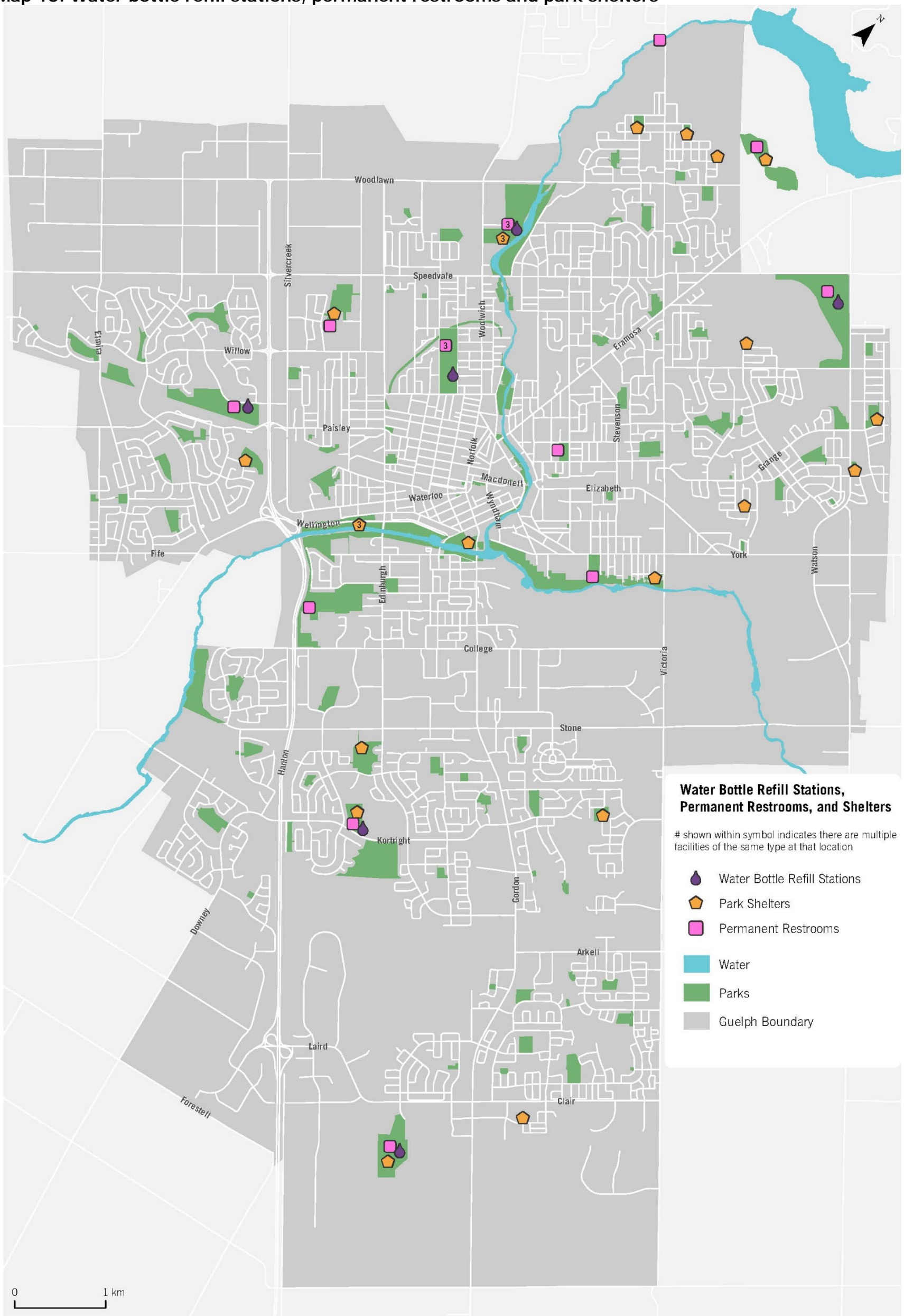


Map 12: Dog parks and leash-free areas



Data provided by: City of Guelph  
 Map produced by: SSMIC - AIS, February 2023

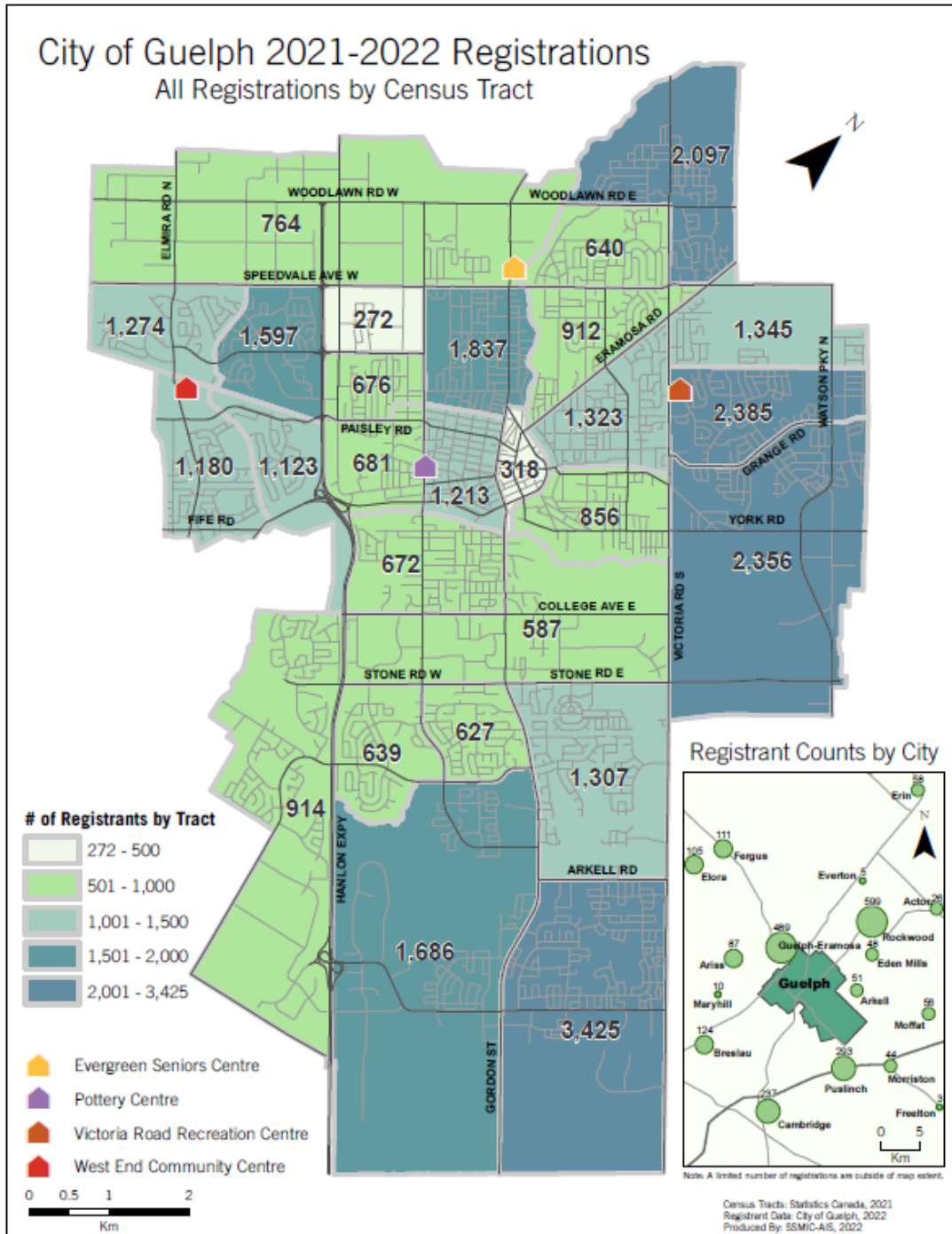
Map 13: Water bottle refill stations, permanent restrooms and park shelters



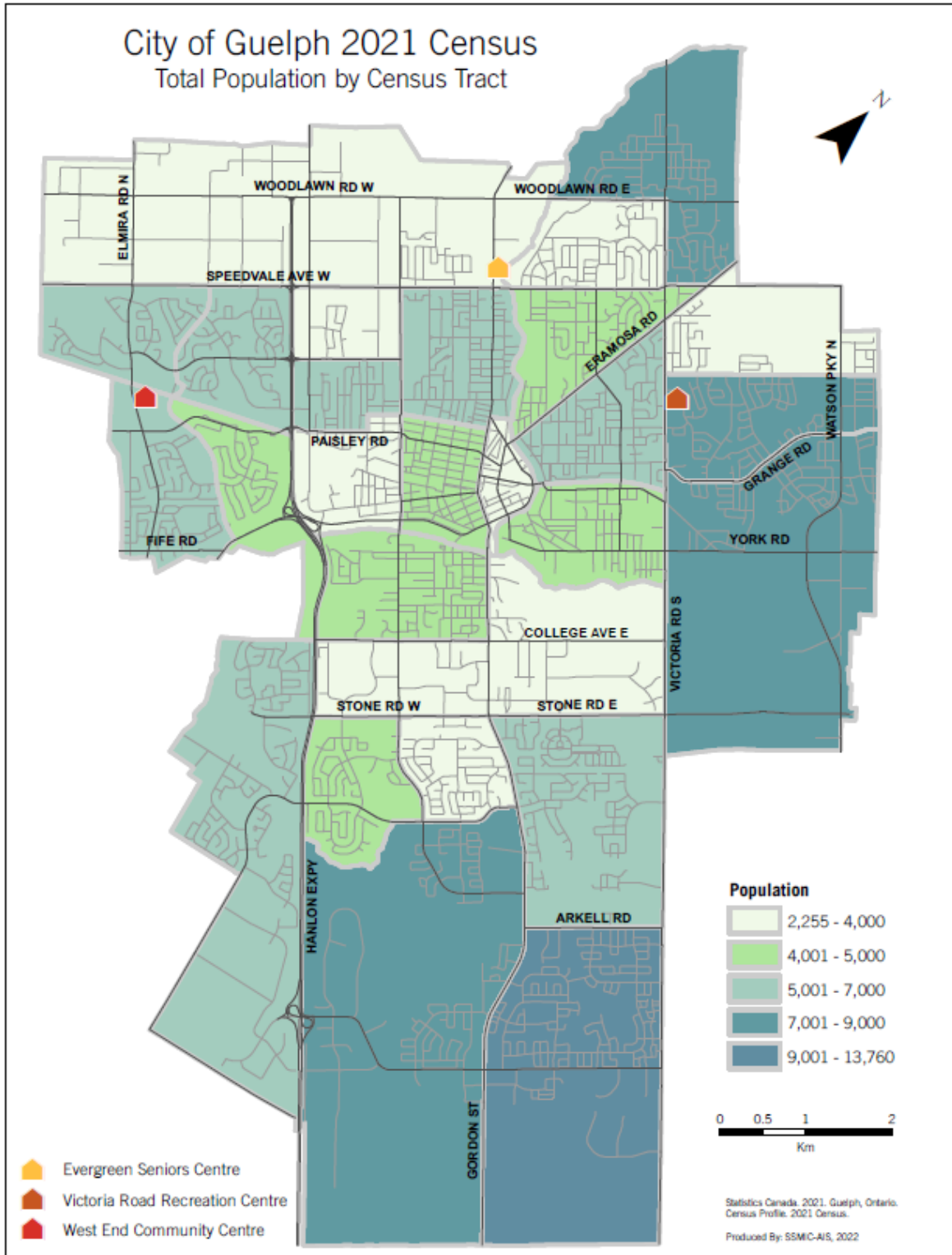
Data provided by: City of Guelph  
 Map produced by: SSMIC - AIS, February 2023

# Appendix B: Recreation facility and registration maps

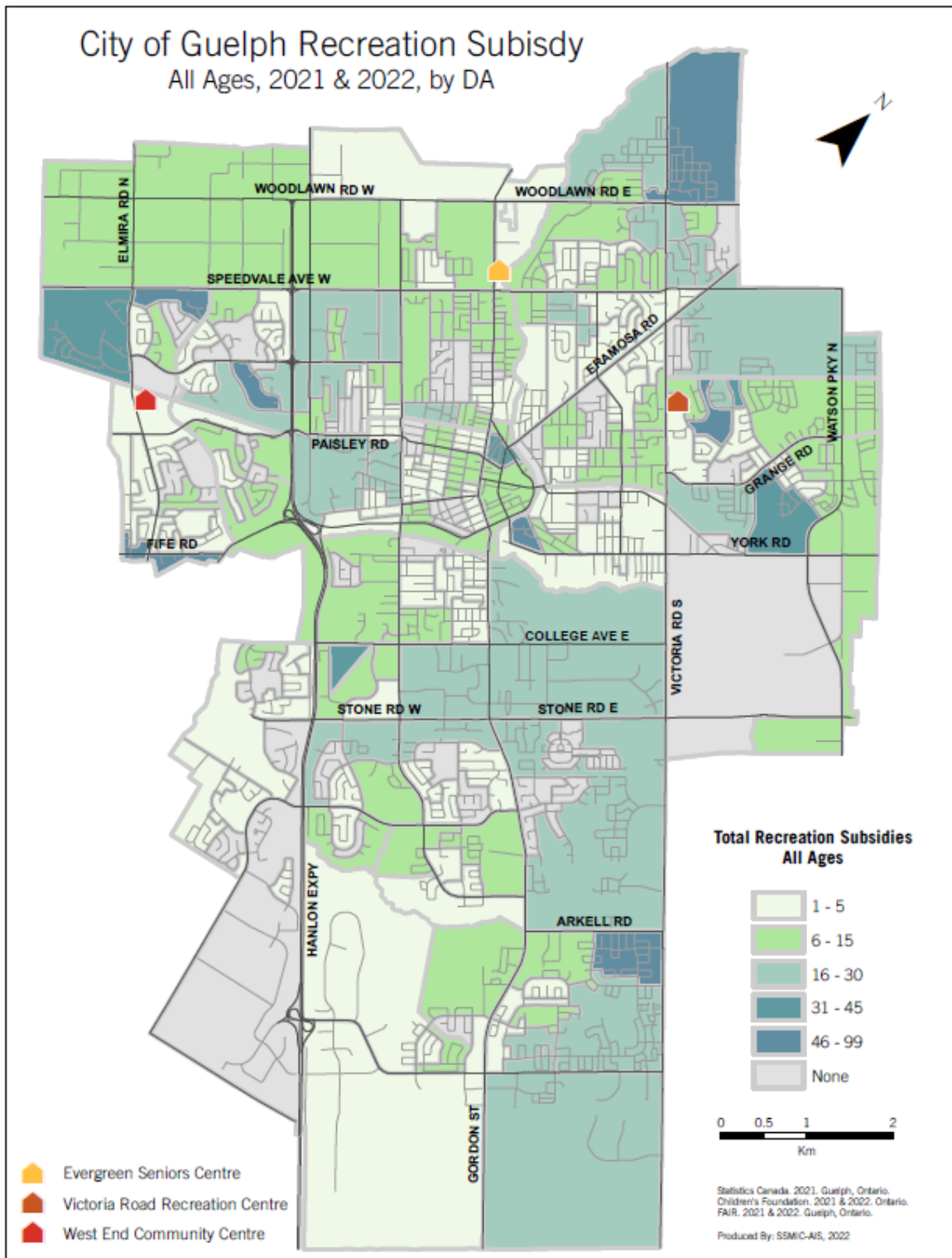
Map 14: All City recreation registrations by census tract



Map 15: Total population by census tract

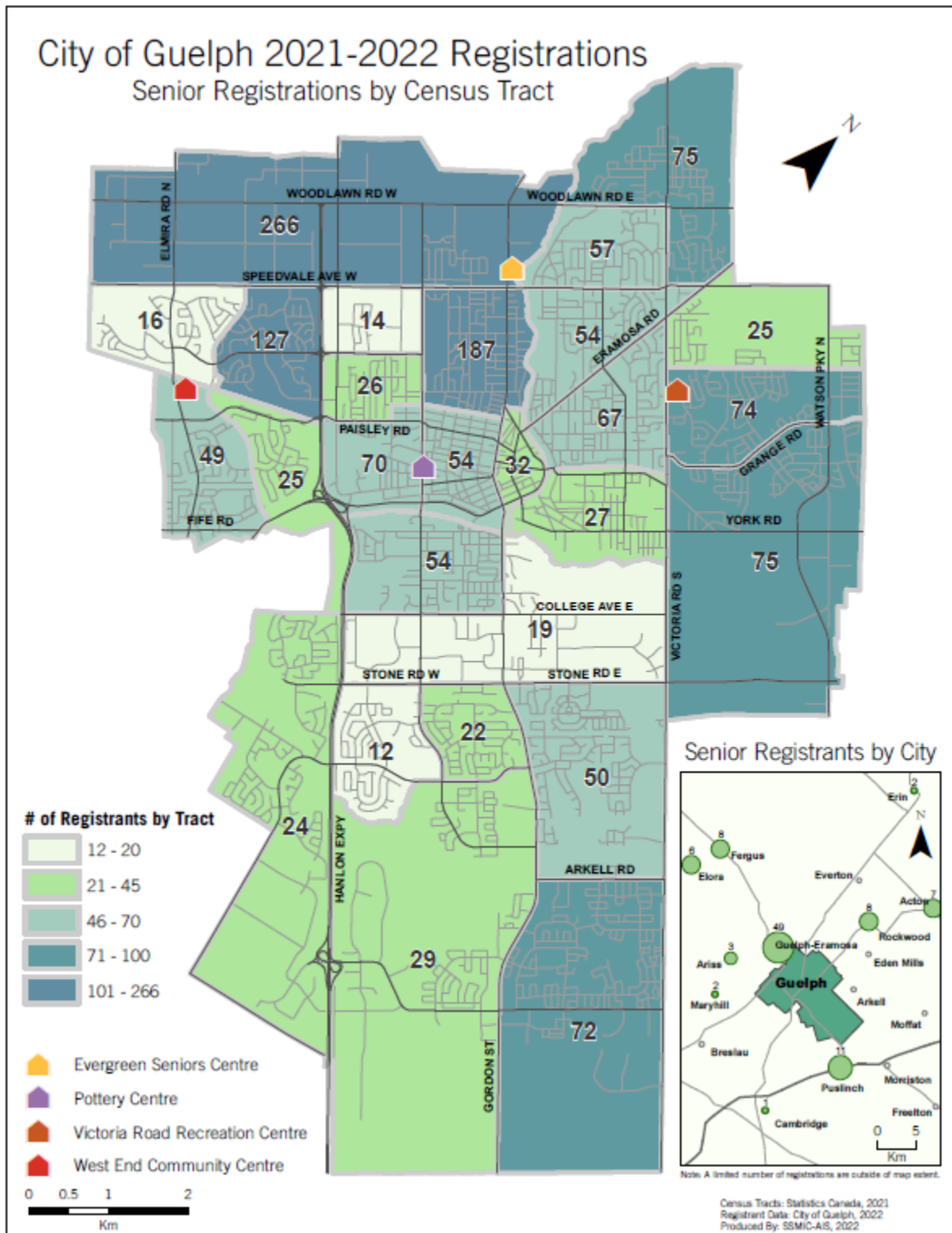


Map 16: All recreation subsidies by dissemination area





Map 17: Seniors registrations by census tract



Map 18: Guelph population aged 55 and over by census tract

