



# **Parks and Recreation Master Plan**

**January 2020**





## **Parks and Recreation Master Plan**

January 2020



## Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Purpose.....	2
1.2	Process.....	5
<b>2</b>	<b>Master Planning Context</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1	About the City of St. Thomas.....	7
2.2	How St. Thomas is Expected to Grow.....	8
2.3	The People Who Live Here Now .....	10
2.4	Sector Trends .....	13
2.5	Community Consultation.....	20
<b>3</b>	<b>Strategic Framework</b>	<b>45</b>
3.1	Vision for Parks, Recreation and Culture in St. Thomas.....	46
3.2	Guiding Principles.....	46
<b>4</b>	<b>Service Delivery, Programming and Policies</b>	<b>47</b>
4.1	Program and Service Delivery Section .....	48
4.2	The Role of the City's Parks and Recreation Department.....	48
4.3	Strengthening Municipal Supports and Building Internal Capacity.....	65
<b>5</b>	<b>Indoor and Outdoor Recreation Analysis</b>	<b>76</b>
5.1	Recreation Facilities.....	77
5.2	Outdoor Recreation Facilities.....	77
5.3	Indoor Recreation Facilities .....	105
5.4	Other Facilities .....	117

<b>6</b>	<b>Arts and Culture</b>	<b>118</b>
6.1	Arts and Culture in St. Thomas .....	119
6.2	Arts and Culture Facilities and Spaces.....	120
6.3	Supporting Local Arts and Culture.....	121
6.4	Arts and Culture Programs, Festivals and Events.....	125
<b>7</b>	<b>Park Policy, Planning and Design</b>	<b>128</b>
7.1	Parkland Supply, Needs and Policies.....	129
7.2	Parkland Design and Maintenance .....	138
<b>8</b>	<b>Implementation Framework</b>	<b>143</b>
8.1	Reviewing and Updating the Plan .....	144
8.2	Potential Funding Sources.....	145
8.3	Timing and Priority of Recommendations.....	148
<b>APPENDIX A:</b>	<b>Community Survey – Detailed Data Tables</b>	<b>A-1</b>
<b>APPENDIX B:</b>	<b>Parks Inventory – Detailed Data Tables</b>	<b>B-1</b>
<b>APPENDIX C:</b>	<b>User Fee Process</b>	<b>C-1</b>





# 1 Introduction



## 1.1 Purpose

This project is an update to the 2008 City of St. Thomas Recreation, Leisure and Parks Master Plan. This renewed Parks and Recreation Master Plan is an actionable, working document that can readily adapt to changes in the community and address emerging trends. It is intended to guide decisions over a ten-year period (with a longer-term outlook to 2041) by responding to anticipated growth and development in the city. It will assist the City of St. Thomas and stakeholders in making strategic investments to ensure a healthy community, improve the quality of life of residents, and encourage a strong economy and sustainable environment.

Specifically, the Master Plan analyzes and provides recommendations on the following:

- Parks, open spaces and trails;
- Recreation, sport and cultural facilities;
- Programs, events and activities (including those delivered by the community and City); and
- Operations and service delivery (e.g., organizational effectiveness, partnerships, policies and procedures, etc.).

### 1.1.1 Positioned for Growth

The City of St. Thomas has a projected 20-year residential forecast of 52,700 people by 2041<sup>1</sup> and needs to adjust its Settlement Area boundary to accommodate this potential growth as part of an Official Plan review. In June 2018, the City completed a population and housing study that identified the need for an additional 76 gross hectares of residential land to accommodate the projected population growth. In response to this, the City initiated **Positioned for Growth**.

The Positioned for Growth Project is divided into four unique studies, the first three focus on the Settlement Area Expansion, while the fourth (this plan) has a city-wide scope.

1. Planning Studies   2. Engineering Studies   3. Fire Station Location Study   **4. Parks & Recreation Master Plan**

The four studies contained within Positioned for Growth are being undertaken along the same timeline and benefit from efficiencies and collaboration such as: public engagement and consultation; collective analysis and shared resources; and consistent direction. Specific findings from the associated studies will be presented under separate cover.

---

<sup>1</sup> Watson & Associates Economists (2018); figure includes undercount



### 1.1.2 Benefits of Parks, Recreation and Culture

Parks, recreation and cultural opportunities provide extensive benefits to individuals and communities. For example, they:

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

The City is commended for recognizing these benefits and investing in the renewal of this Master Plan to guide decision-making relating to parks, recreation and culture services and facilities.



### 1.1.3 Status and Accomplishments – 2008 Master Plan

The 2008 Recreation, Leisure and Parks Master Plan has served as a guiding document for programs, services and facilities over the past eleven years. The Plan contained 75 recommendations to be accomplished within a ten-year timeframe (2008 – 2018). Approximately half of the recommendations were focused on Service Delivery and Policies while the other half were focused on Facilities and Parks. Many of the best practices identified in the Plan remain pertinent today.

The majority (87%) of the recommendations from the 2008 Master Plan have been completed or are in progress. This illustrates the City's commitment to its parks, recreation and culture system, as well as the need to chart a new course for the next ten years.

The Master Plan is being revised at the end of the ten-year implementation cycle and only 13% of recommendations have not yet been initiated or require further review. This may be due to shifting directions caused by emerging priorities or a shortage of funding / partners; these directions are revisited through this update.

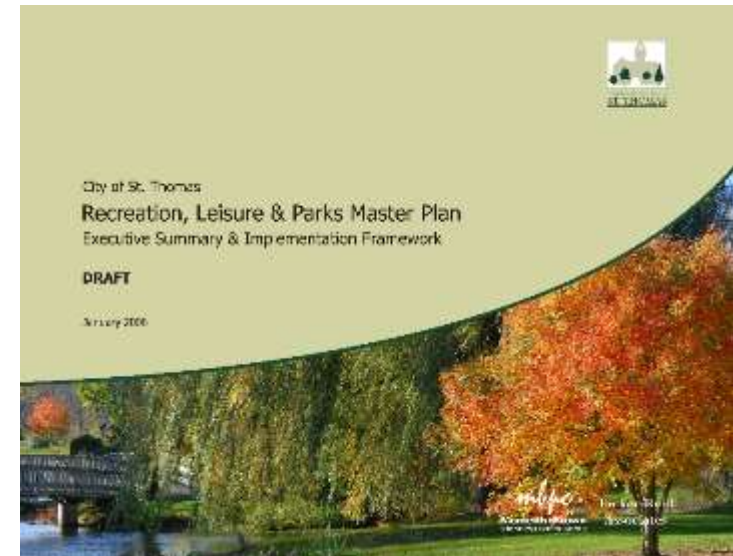


Figure 1 2008 Master Plan Implementation to Date

Action (to date)	Recommendations			Percent
	Service Delivery	Facilities and Parks	Total	
Completed	7	15	22	87%
Ongoing	27	16	43	
No Action	1	2	3	13%
Further Review Required		7	7	
Total	35	40	75	100%



## 1.2 Process

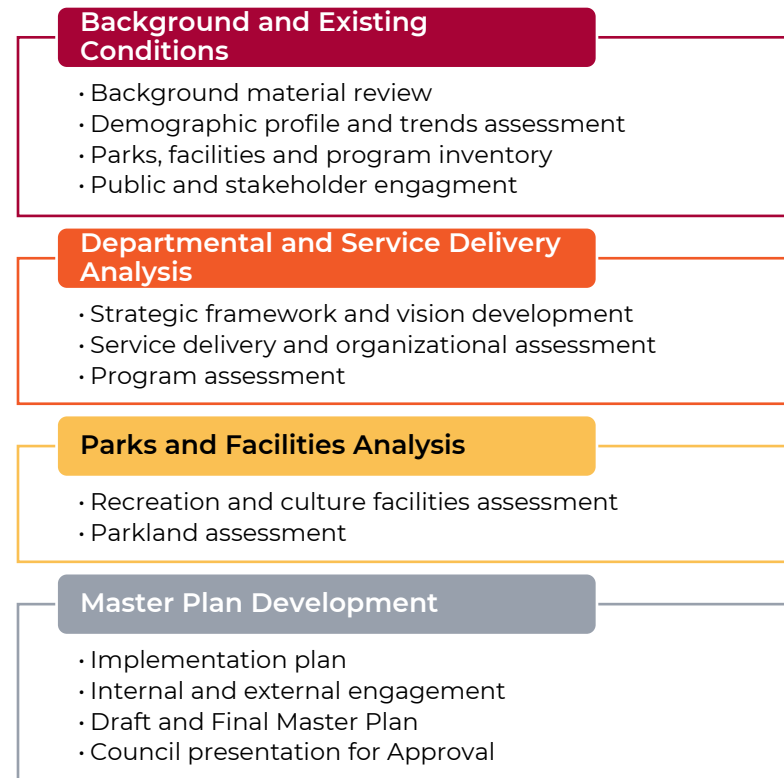
Development of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan has been divided into four phases: background and existing conditions; departmental and service delivery analysis; parks and facilities analysis; and master plan development. Each phase was designed to accomplish a variety of tasks and also included internal meetings and reporting. Figure 2 identifies tasks undertaken in each of the four phases.

Strategic advice and direction to the project consultants was provided by the City's Parks and Recreation Department and was aligned with the Positioned for Growth initiative.

As was the approach in the 2008 Master Plan, the assessment of facility and park needs considered both the provision (i.e., the total number of each facility type as determined by applying population-based "targets") and geographic distribution (i.e., where facilities / parks are physically located in relation to the population).

Provision targets represent a recommended measure toward which a community should strive in order to meet the demand for parks and facilities. The targets are created based on a combination of accepted industry standards, market-driven factors (such as demand / participation, trends and demographics), and past and present circumstances of the community, as well as public and staff input. The needs analysis incorporates several local inputs – including public consultation – before confirming appropriate targets for St. Thomas. It should be noted that although these targets may not be realized for a variety of reasons, the key is to continue to work towards meeting them.

Figure 2 Parks and Recreation Master Plan Methodology





## 2 Master Planning Context





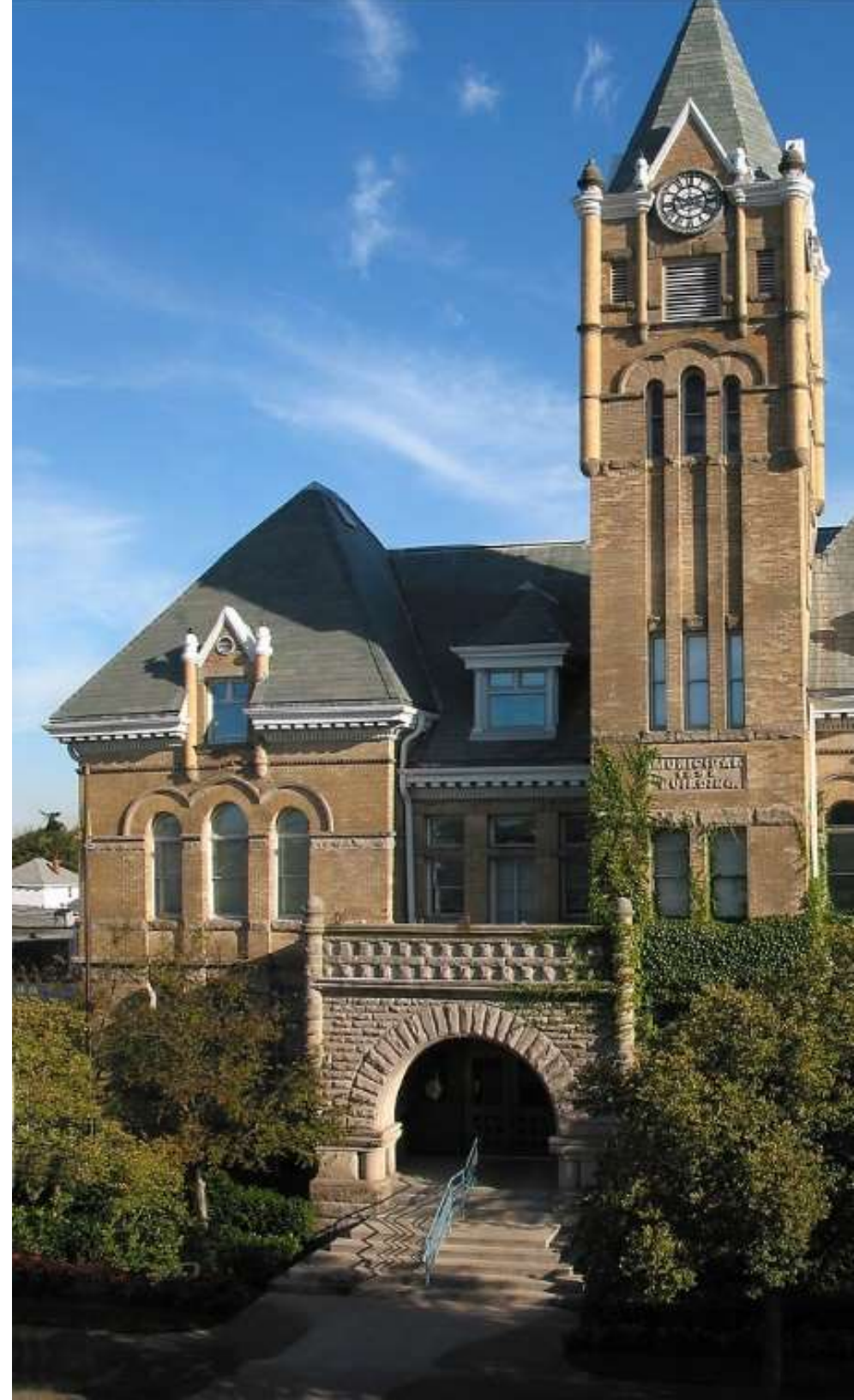
## 2.1 About the City of St. Thomas

The City of St. Thomas is the largest municipality in Elgin County, located in southwestern Ontario. The City continues to be a magnet for growth, with the residential forecast exceeding 50,000 people by 2041. This growth will lead to increased demand for parks, recreation and cultural facilities and programs provided by and within the City of St. Thomas.

St. Thomas has vibrant recreational and cultural communities, as well as strong industrial and commercial sectors that are supported through the City's role as a regional centre for the county. As a regional centre, St. Thomas' parks and recreation programs and facilities also accommodate use from residents of neighbouring municipalities (e.g., Southwold Township, Municipality of Central Elgin, etc.). An expanding trails system seeks to connect to many destinations within and surrounding St. Thomas, including the Great Trail.

Residents of St. Thomas also benefit from close proximity to a variety of parks, recreation and cultural facilities and services in the City of London (to the north) as well as Lake Erie waterfront access in Port Stanley (to the south).

The City's Parks and Recreation department enhances local quality of life by facilitating the development of sport, recreation and cultural opportunities. The Department offers a growing range of programs such as children's dance classes, drop-in racquet sports, day camps, public skating, and events such as the Canada Day celebrations in Pinafore Park.



St. Thomas residents are well-served by a wide variety of established service clubs, public agencies and not-for-profit organizations. These service providers contribute to a well-rounded supply of parks, recreation and cultural offerings which benefit community health. Some examples include: Southwestern Ontario Public Health, local Conservation Authorities, St. Thomas-Elgin Public Art Centre, the YMCA of Southwestern Ontario, minor sports organizations, museums, libraries and more.

St. Thomas recently undertook a very successful corporate rebranding campaign and now promotes itself as the “Railway City”. A renewed focus on the municipality’s railway heritage has helped new businesses to establish and incorporate the branding into their marketing; encouraged visitation at heritage sites; supports tourism in St. Thomas; and unifies the city under one image.

## 2.2 How St. Thomas is Expected to Grow

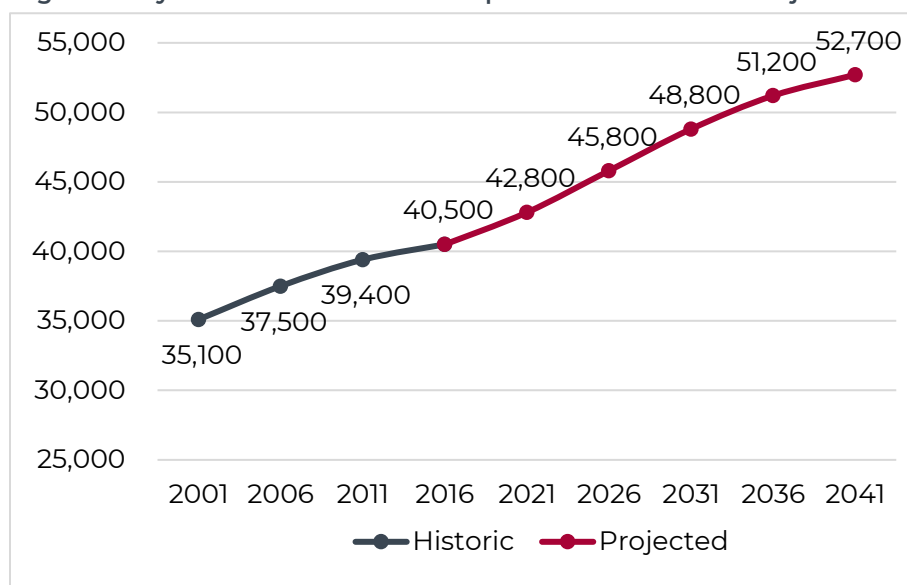
### 2.2.1 Historic and Projected Population

The City’s 2016 population of 40,500 residents<sup>2</sup> is projected to grow by approximately 12,200 residents (30% to 52,700) by the year 2041. This growth will result in a need to strike an appropriate balance and mix of parks, recreation and cultural opportunities to respond to the needs of residents and ensure St. Thomas is positioned for growth.

### 2.2.2 Residential Growth

St. Thomas is seeing strong residential growth. This has generated a need to further expand the Settlement Area boundary in the Official Plan to accommodate projected needs for housing and continue to position St. Thomas for long-term sustainability. In the interim, various lands have been identified to accommodate shorter-term residential growth:

Figure 3 City of St. Thomas Historic Population and Growth Projection



**Source:** Statistics Canada; Watson & Associates Economists (2018); figures include undercount

<sup>2</sup> Adjusted to reflect undercount (Watson & Associates Economists 2018)



- **Greenfield Growth:** Presently, most of the City's greenfield / vacant residential lands are within proposed, draft approved and registered plans at the southwestern, southern and southeastern edges of the settlement area boundary. One other plan of subdivision is approved in the north.
- **Intensification Potential:** Most of the lands identified with intensification potential are located along the primary corridors of Talbot Street (east-west) and Elgin Street / Wilson Avenue (north-south). Other pockets with intensification potential include lands around the St. Thomas-Elgin Memorial Centre, north-east of the Joe Thornton Community Centre, the surplus school on Parish Street and the intersection of Manor Road and Wellington Street.
- **Settlement Area Boundary Expansion:** Through the Positioned for Growth Studies, the City is examining opportunities to extend the Settlement Area Boundary to the west. Four potential sites along the western edge of the municipality are being examined through the Positioned for Growth study.

### 2.2.3 Age Cohort Forecasts

Age cohort forecasts contained in the City's 2018 Population and Housing Study provide an indication of the changes that could occur within St. Thomas' population between 2016 and 2031. St. Thomas' senior population (age 70+) is forecasted to experience the most growth (85%) as the baby boomers move into this age cohort. All other age cohorts are forecasted to experience more modest levels of growth, with children and youth (under 20 years of age) increasing slower (6%) than the overall population (20%). Creating a robust parks, recreation and cultural system is critical to engaging residents of all ages.

Table 1 Age Cohort Forecasts (2016-2031) – City of St. Thomas

Age Group	2016	2031	Growth (#)	Growth (%)
Pre-School and Children (0 – 9 years)	4,722	4,900	178	4%
Youth (10 – 19 years)	4,685	5,100	415	9%
Young Adults (20 – 34 years)	6,653	8,100	1,447	22%
Adults (35 – 54 years)	10,984	11,400	416	4%
Older Adults (55 – 69 years)	8,256	9,600	1,344	16%
Seniors (70+ years)	5,200	9,600	4,400	85%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40,500</b>	<b>48,800</b>	<b>8,300</b>	<b>20%</b>

Source: Watson & Associates Economists (2018); figures include undercount; totals may not add due to rounding

## 2.3 The People Who Live Here Now

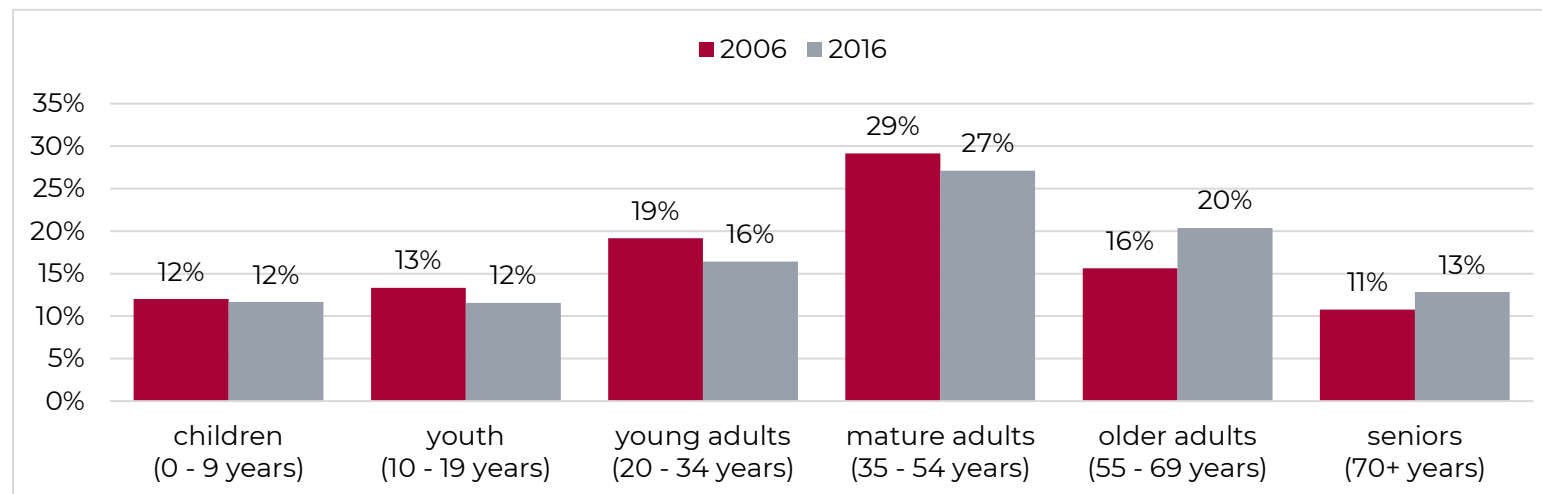
This section contains an overview of socio-demographic characteristics of St. Thomas, including historical population growth, population forecasts and other key demographic factors.

### 2.3.1 Age and Household Composition

St. Thomas' population is aging – a phenomenon being experienced throughout North America. The median age of St. Thomas residents has increased by four years over the last decade; from 38.8 years in 2006 to 42.9 years in 2016. A similar aging (although slightly less pronounced) was experienced in Elgin County where the median age increased from 39.1 in 2006 to 42.5 in 2016. The median age of local, county-wide and provincial residents has been steadily increasing over time, this trend is expected to continue as the Baby Boomer generation transitions from mature adults into the older adult and seniors age cohorts. With the aging of the population, a wider range of housing choices are emerging and a greater focus is being placed on age-friendly community design and leisure programming.

As can be seen in the figure below, mature adults aged 35 to 54 year remain the largest segment of the population (27%), but the most significant growth can be seen in older adults aged 55 to 69 years (which increased by 4% to 20% in 2016). The only other age group that experienced proportional growth between the 2006 and 2016 Census was seniors aged 70 years and older, which increased from 11% (2006) to 13% (2016). Older adults and seniors were also the only groups to experience true population growth (not only as a proportion of the population). It should also be noted that children, youth and young adults all experienced a decrease in representation over the last 10 years.

Figure 4 City of St. Thomas Age Cohort Distribution (2006 and 2016 Census)





### 2.3.2 Education, Income and Employment

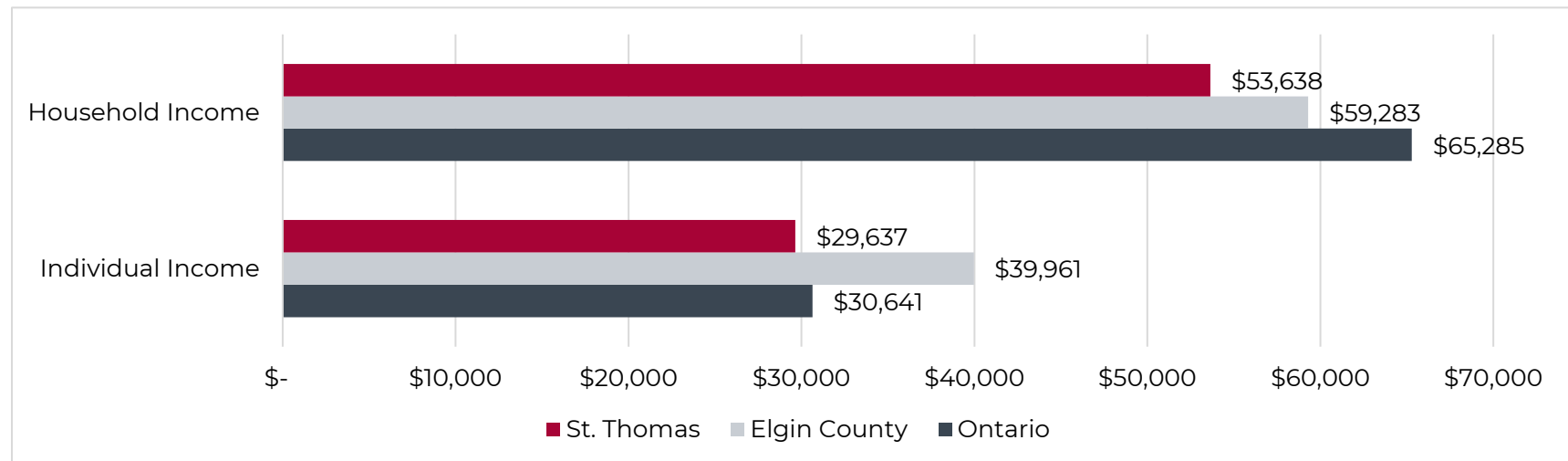
Studies have shown positive correlations between income, education and participation in parks, recreation and cultural activities. Researchers have associated increased participation in leisure activities with higher levels of income, likely due to the participant's (or guardian's) ability to afford such things as registration fees, necessary equipment and are able to travel to activity sites.

Similarly, residents who have attained higher levels of education have been found more likely to participate in parks, recreation and cultural activities. This has been attributed to a better knowledge and understanding of the importance and value of regular physical activity and social interaction as well as individual and community health.

According to the 2016 Census, median after-tax household incomes in St. Thomas were lower than incomes in both Elgin County and Ontario (11% and 22% lower, respectively). St. Thomas fared slightly better when examining individual after-tax household incomes: local resident earnings were only 3% lower than the provincial median, but 35% lower than Elgin County residents.

These findings indicate that residents of St. Thomas may experience economic barriers to participation in parks, recreation and cultural offerings in the city and therefore are less likely to participate in leisure activities. Financial assistance programs are valuable resources to help overcome this barrier and are available through third-party providers, such as Canadian Tire Jump Start and service club sponsorships.

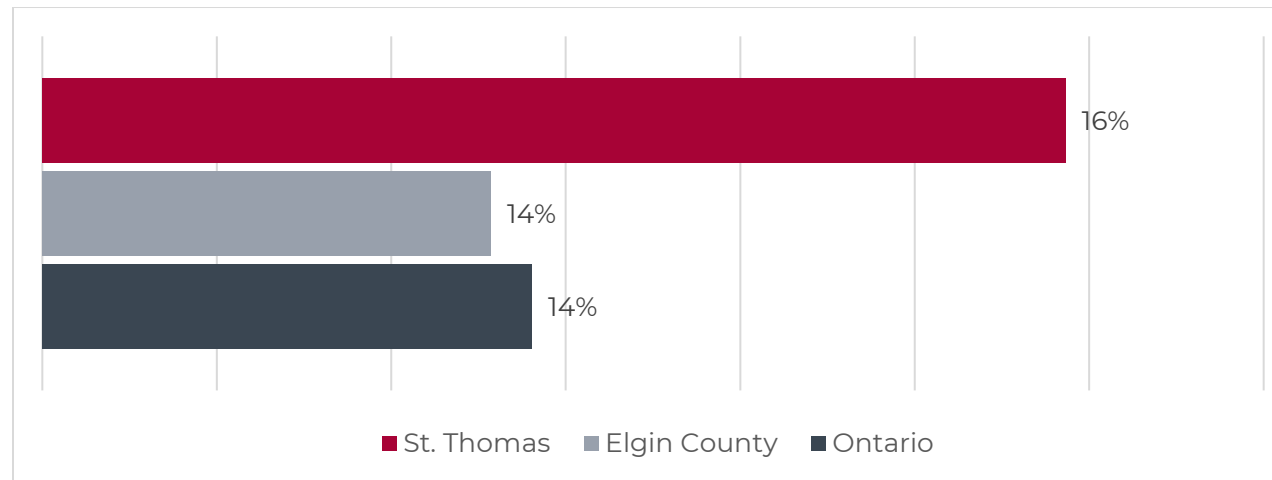
Figure 5 Individual and Household Income (2015) According to 2016 Census



It should also be noted that the City of St. Thomas has a slightly higher rate of residents considered low-income than Elgin County and Ontario. This is calculated using the low-income measure – after tax (LIM-AT), which is a socio-

economic measure used to compare actual household income, adjusting for household needs (i.e., a household of six likely has greater needs than a household of two). The average number of residents considered low-income in both the county and province is 14%, while the rate in St. Thomas is 2% higher (16%). This further emphasises previous statements made about the demand for affordable leisure activities in St. Thomas.

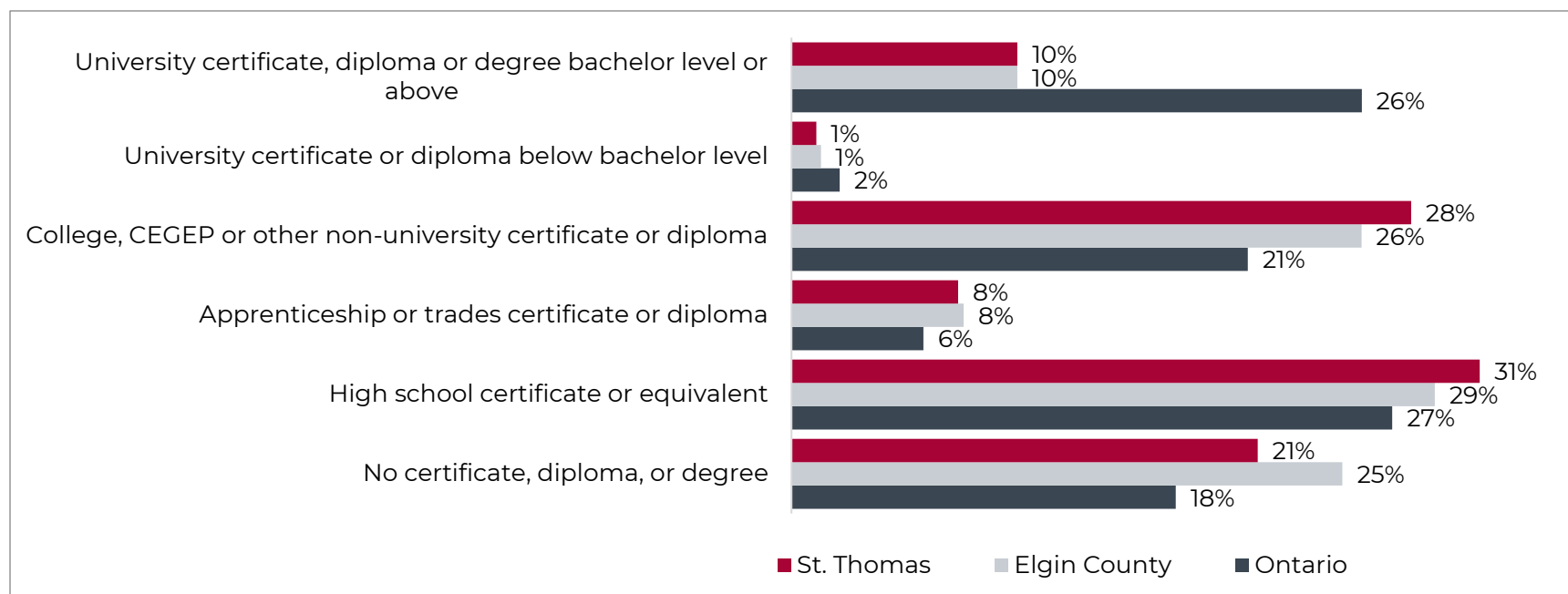
**Figure 6 Percentage of Population at or below the Low-Income Cut-Off After Tax (2016 Census)**



St. Thomas has strong levels of educational attainment for completion of high school (or equivalent) as well as College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diplomas (higher than the county and province for both). Overall, residents of St. Thomas rank higher than or are within a 2% margin of levels of educational attainment among the remaining four categories when compared with averages in Elgin County and Ontario (see figure below). The largest gap is attainment of a university certificate, diploma or degree bachelor level or above, where St. Thomas and Elgin County's attainment levels are 10% each compared to 26% across the province.

According to the 2016 Census, sales and trades are dominant employment sectors, which is reflected in the local economy and educational attainment data. Additionally, more than half (52%) of St. Thomas residents live and work within the city. This is significantly higher than the rest of Elgin County, where only 34% travel within the municipality for work. This further emphasizes the demand for local parks and recreational opportunities within the city.

**Figure 7 Educational Attainment Levels in St. Thomas, Elgin County and Ontario (2016 Census)**



### 2.3.3 Diversity

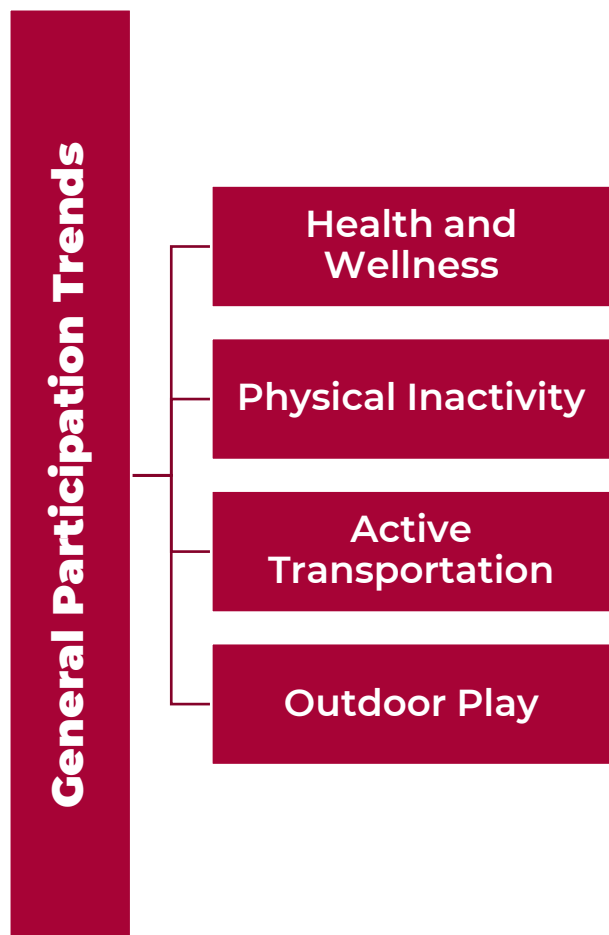
The proportion of St. Thomas residents who identify as visible minorities has increased modestly over the last decade; from 3.6% in 2006, and now 4.0% as of 2016. According to the 2016 Census, 9% of St. Thomas' population is comprised of immigrants to Canada. St. Thomas' rates of cultural diversity and immigration are comparable to the rest of Elgin County (3% visible minority and 12% immigrants), but much lower than those being experienced in many other Ontario municipalities. In the longer-term, it can be expected that these rates will increase, and as a result new parks, recreation and culture activities may be introduced to St. Thomas.

## 2.4 Sector Trends

This section provides a review of emerging trends from communities across Ontario that are impacting parks, recreation and culture facilities, programs and services. These trends will be considered throughout the development of the Master Plan with local implications discussed in subsequent sections.





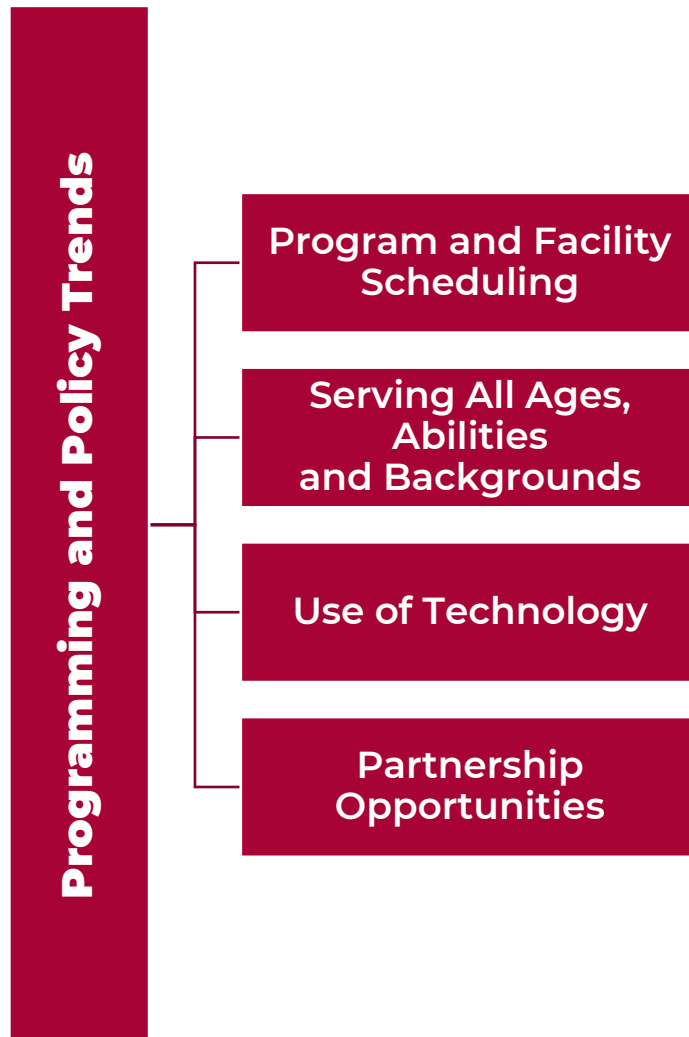


**Health and Wellness:** A holistic and multi-faceted approach to health and wellbeing (including health promotion, socialization, mindfulness and management of stress and anxiety) is significantly influencing active living. Another key trend is adoption of Sport for Life's Long-Term Athlete Development Model and introduction of physical literacy in programs and training.

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

**Active Transportation:** More and more, active transportation is becoming a core requirement of complete communities. Human-powered modes of travel that are undertaken for utilitarian (day-to-day) purposes such as cycling, walking or skateboarding are common forms of active transportation. Examples of active transportation facilities may include dedicated cycling infrastructure, signed pathways and trails, or wayfinding and navigation assistance.

**Outdoor Play:** Recent childhood and adolescent health research has cited multiple benefits associated with "challenging play" and encourages opportunities for children to explore creative play. In response to this, many municipalities are providing natural play features and adventure playgrounds, encouraging children to stay and play outdoors longer.



**Demand for Unstructured Activities:** Participation has shifted away from structured programs and set participation schedules; residents have demonstrated an increasing desire for more drop-in, unstructured and self-scheduled times to participate. This is compounded by changes in demand for prime-time access – more adults and seniors are seeking prime-time activities, a shift from traditional daytime or late-evening provision. Participation in adult recreational sports is growing and youth engagement is being embraced in many municipalities.

**Serving All Ages, Abilities and Backgrounds:** Inclusion and access is a key goal for municipal recreation departments. To ensure access for all, the following barriers to participation should be considered: economic (i.e., costs associated with participation), information (i.e., knowledge and information sharing about available opportunities), geographic (i.e., equitable distribution of facilities and services), and inclusivity (i.e., ensuring all participants feel welcome and supported).

**Use of Technology:** Recent technological advances have enabled both service providers and users to be more aware of leisure opportunities in their communities. This may include: websites that summarize facilities, services and program offerings; online portals for program registration; synchronization with smartphone applications; and more.

**Partnership Opportunities:** Collaborations with private or non-profit organizations are becoming increasingly common in Ontario municipalities. These help to distribute financial costs and benefit from economies of scale and shared expertise. Similarly, many municipalities also rely on community use of schools to supplement their facility inventory.





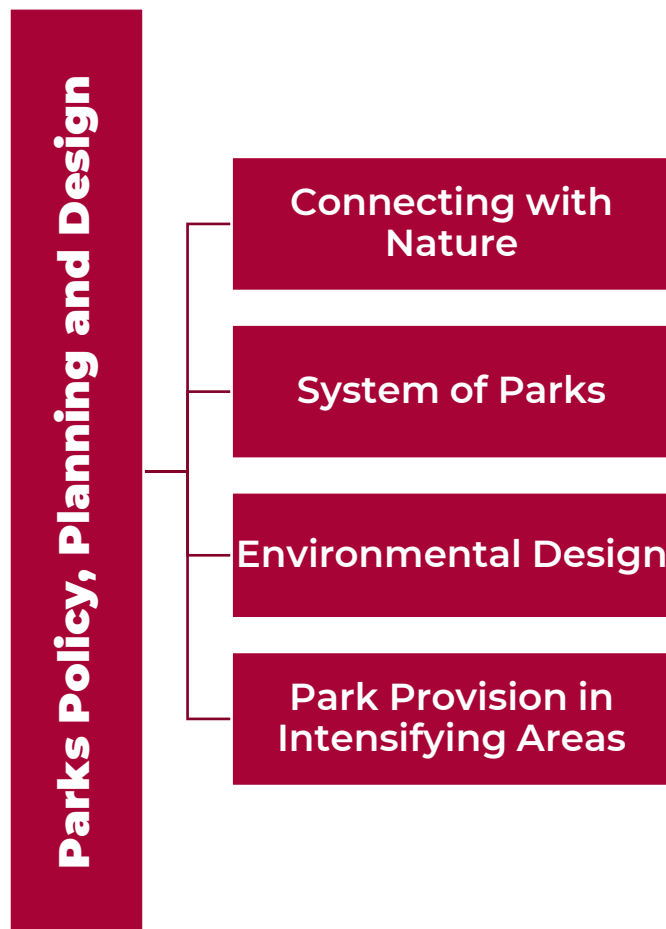
**Aging Infrastructure:** Many municipalities in Ontario are faced with aging recreation infrastructure and are pursuing renewal and reinvestment projects, often using non-traditional funding approaches. These projects also provide opportunities to rethink provision and consider facility conversion or adaptive re-use options that accommodate emerging activities.

**Maximizing Existing Assets:** Strategic programming and design are key factors in maximizing functionality and utilization of existing parks and facilities. Municipal providers have maximized use of non-prime time by encouraging non-traditional uses. This may include partnerships with school boards, service clubs or other emerging activities.

**Multi-Use and Multi-Generational:** Modern recreation facilities provide a convenient “one-stop-shop” experience. The community campus (hub) model has been applied to indoor recreation facilities as well as parks designed to engage users of all ages and abilities. A community centre that provides ice pads, walking track, activity space, public library branch and outdoor amenities on a single site is one example of a community campus.

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

**Elite Training and Competition Facilities:** Elite athletes and sport organizations desire that major recreation infrastructure be built “competition ready”, such as multi-field / court / pad designs that accommodate tournament play and efficiencies in scheduling. Although most municipalities focus on community recreation, sport tourism and regional needs are other factors to consider when planning facility design and determining appropriate locations.

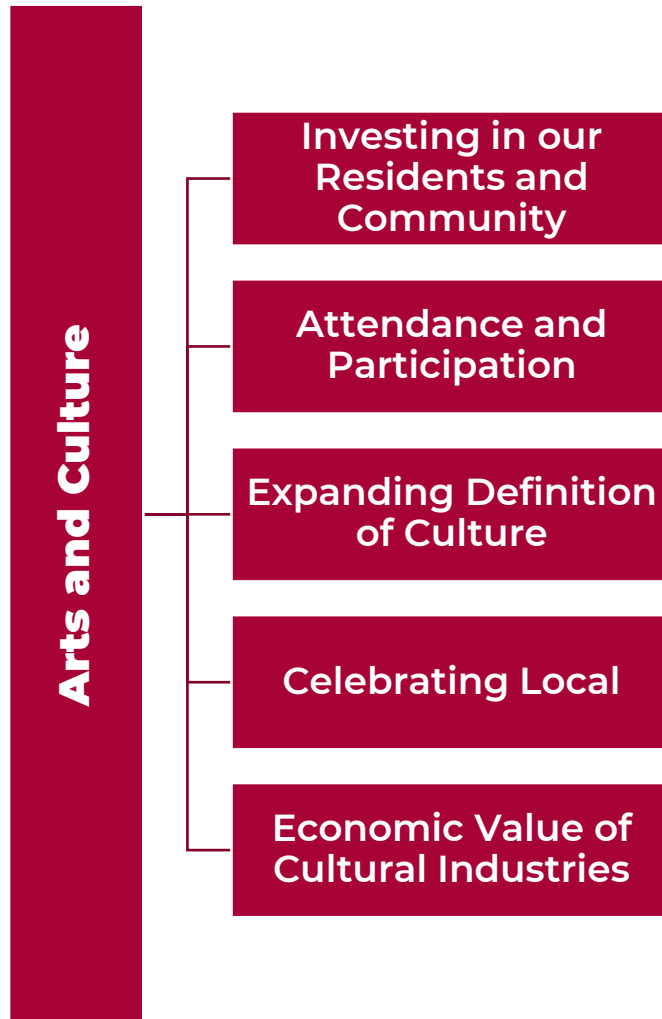


**Connecting with Nature:** Recent academic works highlight the benefits of interacting with nature, especially through participation in physical activity. Some ways that municipalities have encouraged residents to spend time outdoors are through provision of community food gardens and establishing partnerships with environmental stewardship groups to educate the public on sustainability and ecologically-friendly activities. As discussed earlier, emphasis is also being placed on outdoor play opportunities for children and youth, including natural playgrounds.

**System of Parks:** It is important for municipalities to provide a variety of parks with varying functions, including active and passive spaces. These parks should be animated through thoughtful design and promotion of community activities and events (where appropriate).

**Environmental Design:** Principles of environmental sustainability and environmentally-conscious facility designs are being ingrained in the sector. Common standards for environmental sustainability help to guide investment and ensure that new infrastructure includes design features such as low impact development practices, solar panels, geothermal heating, recirculation systems, etc.

**Park Provision in Intensifying Areas:** As the population grows the requirements for complete communities also increases. Intensifying urban communities rely heavily on public open space and municipal parks because of limited access to personal greenery. Where possible, public green space, urban parkettes, public squares, connected trail systems, etc. are being provided to support recreation and socialization in the public realm.



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

**Attendance and Participation:** Research on attendance is broad but highlights growing participation and high levels of appreciation for arts and culture across the country. Residents value authentic experiences and the unique attributes of our communities.

**Expanding Definition of Culture:** There has been a shift away from visual, creative and performing arts, although these are still popular attractions. People are experiencing and appreciating arts and culture in less traditional ways and have increasing expectations for programs and events.

**Celebrating Local:** Support for cultural activities can be a means of achieving many social goals, beyond simply supporting arts and culture for its own sake. For example, large-scale community events and public engagement opportunities highlight the value of celebrating local experiences. St. Thomas has embraced this through several local events, celebrations and festivals.

**Economic Value of Cultural Industries:** Many communities are working to enhance their local economy through the incubation, attraction and retention of creative talents and innovative industries. Increased collaboration among groups and local businesses helps to build grassroots and sustainable support for creative industries. It is critical that municipalities help organizations build capacity and establish a sense of place.



## 2.5 Community Consultation

### 2.5.1 Community Engagement Strategy

City of St. Thomas staff and the Consulting Team developed a comprehensive community engagement strategy to involve the public and stakeholders (e.g., residents, service clubs, sports organizations, City staff, City Council, etc.) in the identification of needs and expectations related to parks, recreation and culture in St. Thomas. To help the City better understand how residents use municipal facilities, programs and services, a variety of tactics were employed throughout the engagement period, coordinated with the other Positioned for Growth studies.

The consultation program included both in-person and digital opportunities to discuss the Master Plan and provide feedback. These opportunities were promoted through word-of-mouth, email distribution lists, social media updates, promotional hand-outs, and a media release on the City's website. Online engagement tools were open for a pre-determined window of time and in-person sessions were by invitation and facilitated by members of the Consulting Team. A project website and email address were maintained for the duration of the planning process.

The first phase of engagement opportunities was designed to generate comments about St. Thomas' parks, recreation and culture system and was available throughout spring 2019. Public consultation will continue throughout the course of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan project. The second phase of engagement solicited input on the draft Master Plan.

Below is a list of the community engagement tactics employed throughout the consultation process; they are discussed in greater detail throughout the following subsections.

#### **Community and Online**

- Community Online Survey (Spring 2019)
- Social Pinpoint Mapping Tool (Spring 2019)

#### **External In-person**

- Stakeholder Workshops (Spring 2019)
- Coffee Conversations with the Mayor (Spring 2019)
- Public Open House (Winter 2020)

#### **Internal In-person**

- Staff Workshops (Spring 2019)
- Consultation Sessions Mayor and Council (Spring & Fall 2019)

## 2.5.2 Community Survey

To support the development of this Master Plan, the City of St. Thomas hosted an online community survey that was available for six weeks from April to May, 2019. The survey was posted on the City's website and was promoted through the local media, printed handouts and stakeholder events. A total of 430 unique responses were received; being a voluntary, self-directed survey, response rates vary by question.

The purpose of the community survey was to elicit information on the parks, recreation and culture needs of St. Thomas residents. The City of St. Thomas wants to ensure that the right facilities, programs and services are in place to improve quality of life for all residents, and the survey provided the public with an opportunity to have their say.

The survey was designed to take about 10 to 15 minutes of time to complete depending on the number of questions answered and level of detail provided. The questions were designed to gather information regarding: participation rates in both organized and unorganized activities; barriers to activity; facility use; recommended improvements; support for investment; and opinion / agreement with statements regarding municipal support for parks, recreation and culture. Finally, the survey helped to establish a profile of parks, recreation and culture users in St. Thomas by collecting relevant demographic information. Tabulated survey response data has been provided in **Appendix A**.

### Cross-Tabs

An analysis of relevant cross-tabs (i.e., correlations) was undertaken based on the following variables:

- Area of Residency: surveys completed by St. Thomas respondents living north of Talbot Street versus those living south of Talbot Street;
- Barriers to Participation – Parks and Recreation / Arts and Cultural Activities: surveys completed by respondents indicating that members of their household are able to participate in parks and recreation / arts and culture activities as often as they would like versus those that are unable to participate as often as they would like; and
- Household Composition: surveys completed by respondents with children and youth (ages 0 to 19 years) in their household versus those without children and youth in their household.

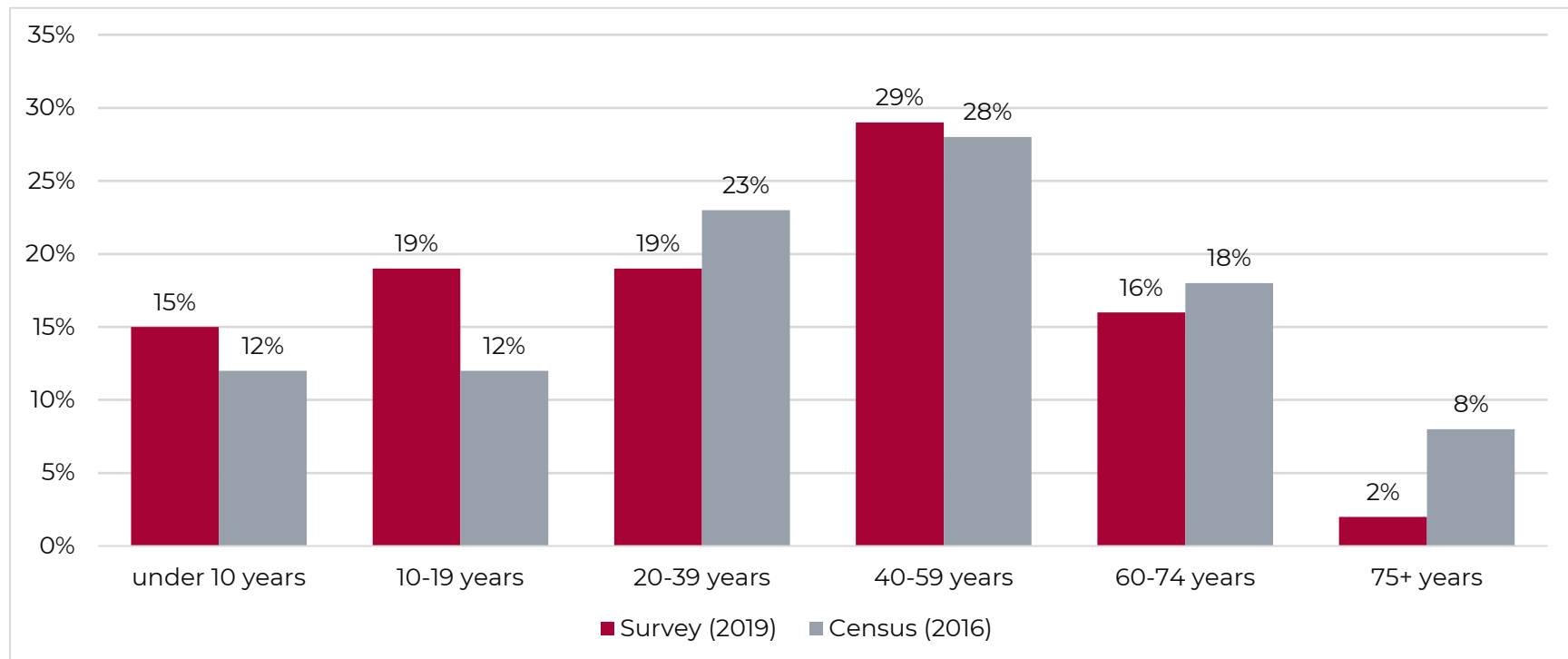
Although the survey was self-selected, the analysis assumed a significant sample with 95% confidence level (correct 19 times out of 20). The margin of error varies by subset according to the number of responses. Based on these parameters, significant findings are noted through the survey analysis where applicable.



## Demographics

The household composition of survey respondents was generally representative of St. Thomas' population, with the exception of youth between the ages of 10 and 19 years (overrepresented) and seniors 75 years and older (underrepresented). Compared to St. Thomas' population, families with teenage children are most highly represented in the survey, while older adults and seniors are less so. This is common in self-selected surveys of this nature.

Figure 8 Household Composition of survey respondents compared to 2016 Census (n = 338)



The median age of survey respondents was 46 years, slightly higher than the 2016 Census median age of 43 years. This may be attributed to the target adult audience of the survey (people age 16 and older were encouraged to complete the survey) and strong representation from families with older children.

## Residency

Nearly nine-in-ten (87%) survey respondents were residents of St. Thomas. Of those living within the municipal border, one-quarter (25%) indicated an N5P postal code (north of Talbot Street) while nearly three-quarters (73%) indicated an N5R postal code (south of Talbot Street), and the remaining 2% indicated a rural address or didn't know their postal code.

Of those that live outside of St. Thomas (n = 41), the vast majority live in Central Elgin (n = 25) while the remaining live in other nearby municipalities.

The figure below illustrates geographic representation of survey responses compared to Canada Post records. Although the survey was marketed across the entire city, this graphic shows that residents living in north St. Thomas are slightly underrepresented.

Figure 10 Geographic distribution of St. Thomas households (n = 299)

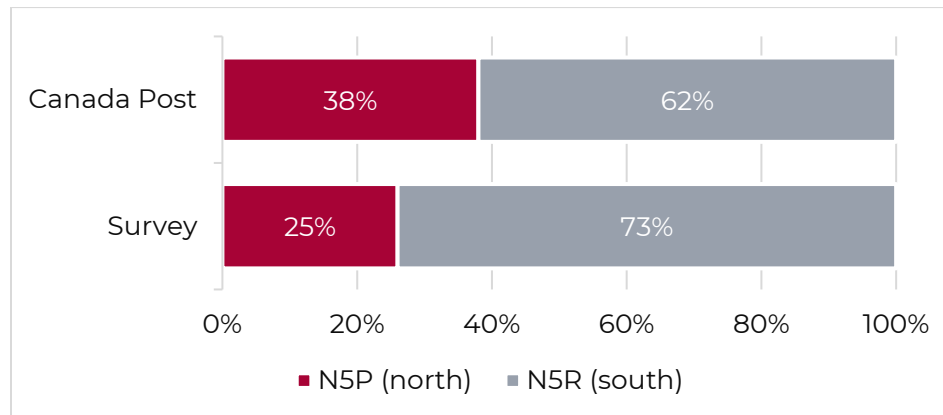
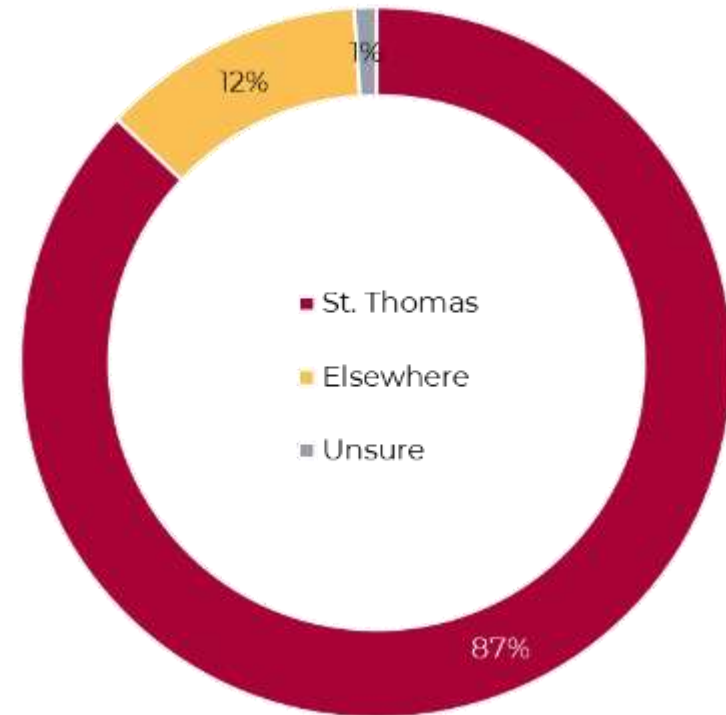


Figure 9 Geographic distribution of survey respondents (n = 342)



## Participation

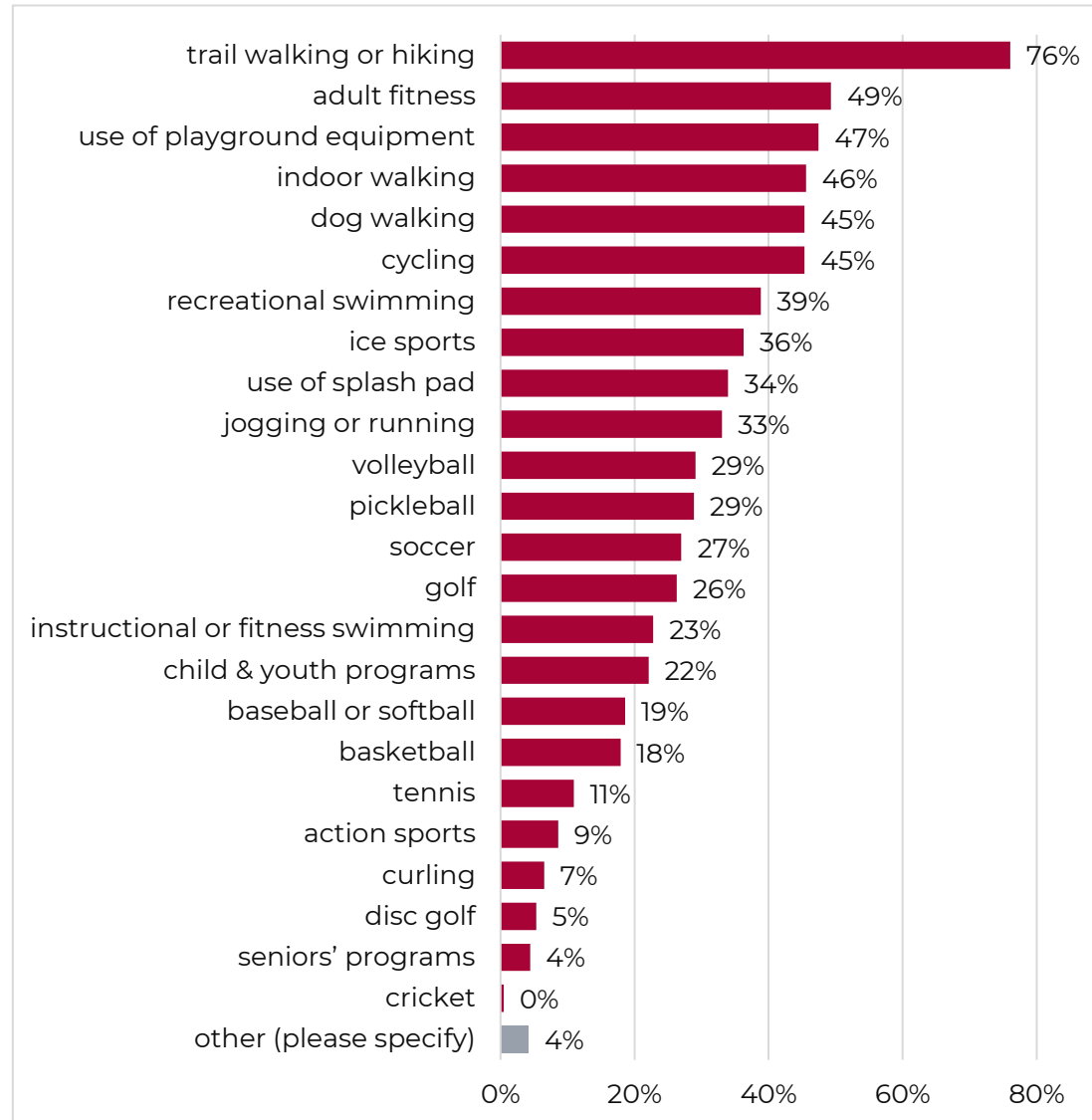
### Parks and Recreation

According to survey respondents, the most popular parks and recreation activities were unstructured and self-scheduled. More than three-quarters (76%) had participated in trail walking or hiking in the last twelve months, nearly half (49%) had participated in aerobics, fitness or weight training, and 47% had used playground equipment. Other common unstructured opportunities included indoor walking (46%), cycling (45%), recreational swimming (39%), use of splash pads (34%) and jogging or running (33%).

Organized sports such as ice sports (36%), volleyball (29%), pickleball (29%), soccer (27%), baseball or softball (19%) and basketball (18%), ranked in the middle of the listed options suggesting these are popular activities, but do not appeal to the larger population.

More specialized, personal interest or individual activities ranked lowest among the available activity options. These included wheeled action sports (9%), curling (7%), disc golf (5%) and seniors' programs (4%).

Figure 11 Participation in parks and recreation activities and programs, past 12 months (n = 430)

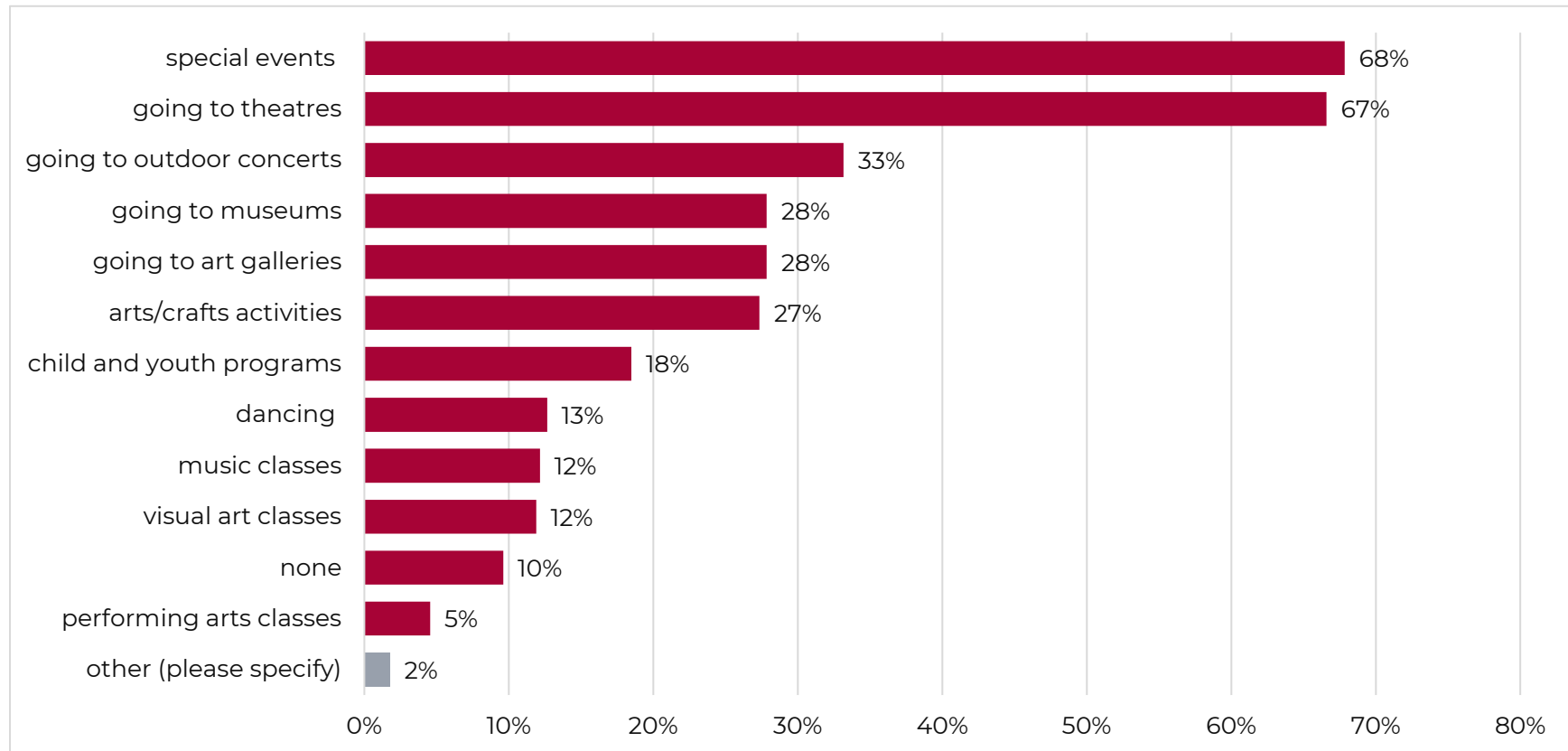




## Arts and Culture

More than two-thirds (68%) of survey respondents indicated they had attended special events in the last twelve months. Going to theatres was a similarly popular activity for 67% of survey respondents while one-third (33%) had attended outdoor concerts. Registered classes were among the lowest levels of participation: music classes (12%), visual art classes (12%) and performing arts classes (5%).

Figure 12 Participation in arts and cultural activities and programs, past 12 months (n = 395)



Respondents without children and youth (ages 0 to 19 years) in their household were more likely to indicate that they are able to participate in arts and cultural events/activities as often as they would like.

## Barriers

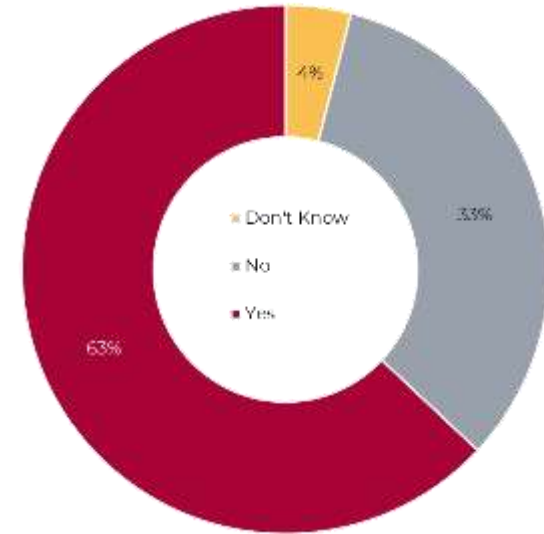
### Parks and Recreation

Just below two-thirds (63%) survey respondents indicated that they are able to participate in parks and recreation activities as often as they would like. One-third (33%) said they were not able to participate as often as they would like, and 4% said they didn't know.

More than half (56%) of those that are not able to participate in parks and recreation activities as often as they would like cited a “lack of desired programs or facilities”. The second most common barrier to participation was “program not offered at a convenient time” (41%) followed by “lack of personal time / too busy” (33%).

As municipal program, park and facility offerings continue to grow and expand, it is important to understand these barriers to participation. These survey results suggest that variety and convenience are key to successful programs.

Figure 13 Ability to participate in parks and recreation (n = 430)



Respondents indicating that their household is unable to participate in parks and recreation activities as often as they would like were more likely than respondents not reporting barriers to indicate that they travel outside St. Thomas because parks and recreation activities are not available at a preferred time. Opinions on activity gaps and locational aspects of participation are discussed on the following pages.

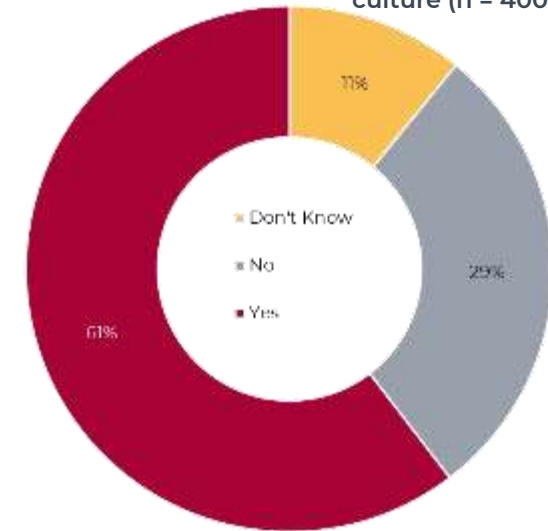
## Arts and Culture

Three-in-five (61%) survey respondents indicated that they are able to participate in arts and cultural events and activities as often as they would like. Just below one-third (29%) said they were not able to participate as often as they would like, and 11% said they didn't know.

When asked why they were not able to participate in arts and cultural activities as often as they would like, the two most common responses were: "lack of personal time / too busy" (46%) and "lack of desired programs or facilities" (44%). The third most common response was "lack of information / unaware of opportunities" (31%).

As the City of St. Thomas continues to grow, it is important to consider these dominant barriers to participation. These common responses indicate that personal interest and / or willingness to participate is a significant factor in the decision to participate in activities and events, so flexibility and variety in offerings is key. The City may also seek to promote opportunities to participate using a variety of methods (posters, social media, emails, participant engagement, etc.).

Figure 14 Ability to participate in arts and culture (n = 400)



Respondents living north of Talbot Street were more likely to suggest that a lack of time and money are barriers to their participation in arts and cultural events/activities.



## Local and Regional Participation

### Parks and Recreation

Two-in-five (42%) survey respondents indicated that they travel outside of St. Thomas to participate in trail walking or hiking. Another one-in-five travelled to other municipalities to participate in golf (21%) and recreational swimming (20%).

The primary factors leading residents to participate outside of St. Thomas were: “facility / program is not available in the area” (37%); “tournaments / special events / travel teams” (22%); and “quality of facility / program is superior” (21%).

These responses indicate that residents are generally leaving the municipality to participate in parks and recreation as a result of specialized activities and / or services not currently available within St. Thomas. Future planning by the City should consider all local and regional service providers to ensure gaps in service are being met.

### Arts and Culture

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of survey respondents travelled outside of St. Thomas to go to theatres. Special events such as fairs, festivals or movie nights were the second most common destination activity, with almost half (47%) of survey respondents travelling to attend. Outdoor concerts were also popular, with 37% of survey respondents travelling outside of St. Thomas.

The most commonly listed reasons why respondents chose to travel outside of St. Thomas to participate in arts and cultural events / activities were: “facility / program is not available in the area” (40%); “special events / exhibitions / festivals / fairs” (37%); and quality of facility / program is superior” (23%).

This data suggests that availability of cultural facilities significantly influences participation and use. Across all local and regional participation questions, the majority of respondents indicated that they travelled to visit or participate in specialized arts and cultural programs and facilities (e.g., theatres, museums, galleries), many of which are more common in larger municipalities.

Respondents indicating that their household is unable to participate in arts and cultural events/activities as often as they would like were more likely than respondents not reporting barriers to indicate that they travel outside St. Thomas because arts and cultural facilities/programs are not available in their area.

## Program and Activity Gaps

More than half (54%) of survey respondents indicated that there are parks, recreation arts or cultural events / activities not currently available in St. Thomas that they would like to see offered. When asked to list examples of activities not currently available, the most common requests included: events (n=58), aquatics (n=56), concerts (n=51), volleyball (n=44), trails (n=37), pickleball (n=35), performing arts (n=24), and adult fitness (n=20).

### Parks and Recreation

The three most commonly requested parks and recreation activities not currently available focused on a lack of facilities or saturation of current programming. To expand upon the open-ended responses, the following details should be considered:

- Of the 56 respondents who listed **aquatics**, most of the responses specifically requested a publicly-accessible indoor aquatic facility.
- Many of the 44 respondents who listed **volleyball** also suggested that a municipal gymnasium could further support use by other court sports including basketball and pickleball.
- **Trails** were identified by 37 respondents, many of whom would like to see increased connectivity of existing trail loops to provide a more continuous walking / hiking experience.
- Of the 35 respondents who listed **pickleball**, the majority were very pleased with the existing municipal outdoor courts, but wish to see more opportunities for indoor play.
- Both indoor and outdoor **adult fitness** options were included in the 20 requests; these described more outdoor fitness equipment in parks as well as expanded municipal program offerings such as yoga, bootcamp, etc.

### Arts and Culture

- The most commonly requested arts and cultural offering that respondents would like to see offered in St. Thomas was **events**. The 58 respondents who listed this further suggested that there is demand for a dedicated event space in the City and that more events could be offered throughout the year.
- **Concerts** were another popular request; the 51 who listed this activity suggested a variety of small busker-style performances as well as some larger / established attractions.
- Of the 24 respondents who listed opportunities to appreciate or participate in **performing arts**, many requested that the City host more travelling theatre companies or encourage local groups to put on performances at existing venues to promote cultural offerings in St. Thomas.

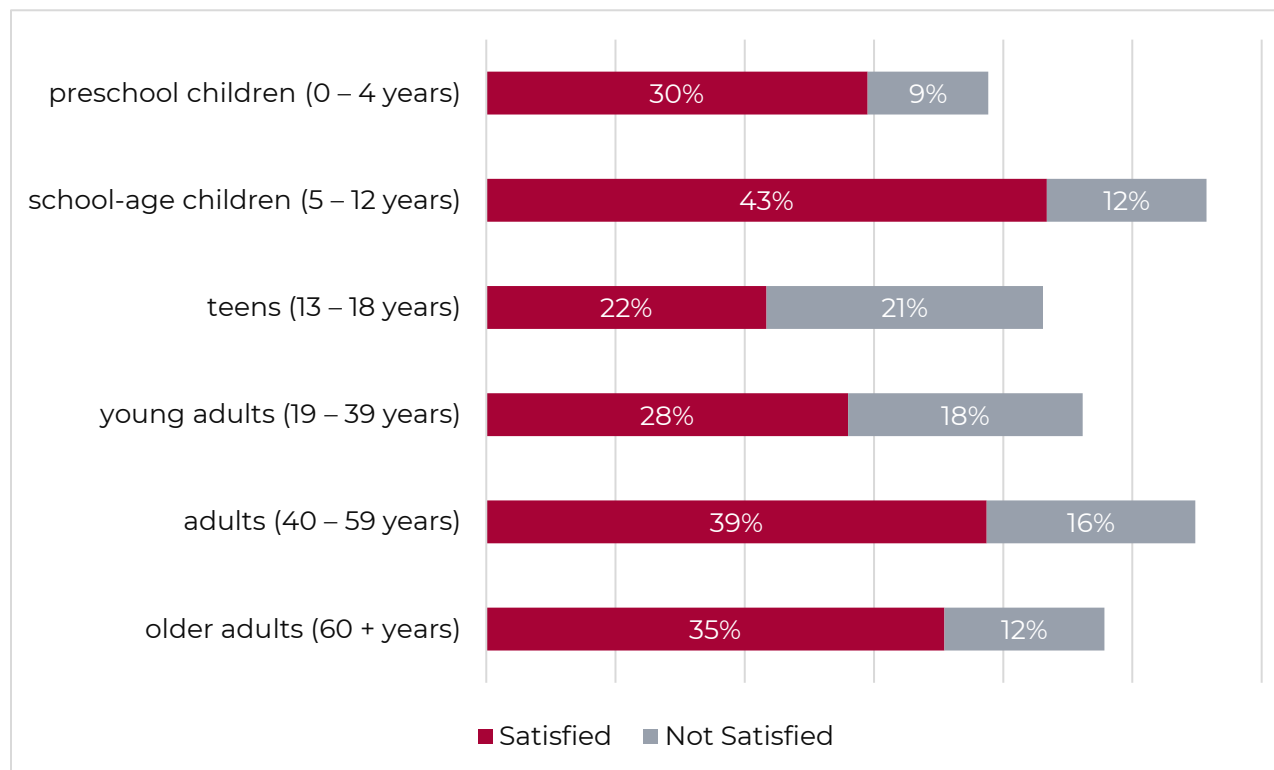
## Importance and Satisfaction

### Program Opportunities

The following series of questions examine levels of satisfaction and importance placed on parks, recreation, arts and cultural opportunities within the municipality. The first question addresses opportunities available for various demographic age groups.

Survey respondents were most satisfied with opportunities for school age children (43%) and least satisfied with opportunities for young adults (28%) and teens (22%).

**Figure 15 Levels of satisfaction with age-group opportunities (n = 325 to 347)**



Note: Neutral and 'Don't Know' responses are not shown

Respondents indicating that their household is unable to participate in parks and recreation activities as often as they would like were more likely than respondents not reporting barriers to be dissatisfied with leisure opportunities for teens, young adults, adults and older adults.

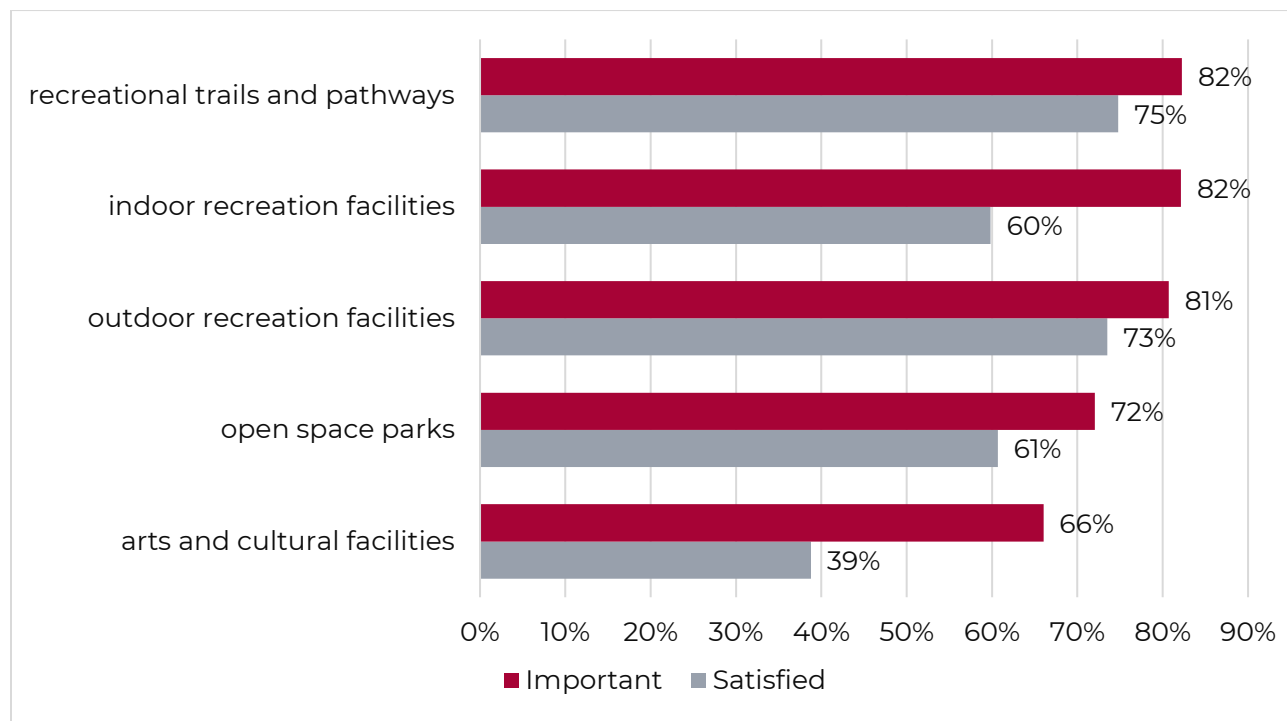
## Parks, Recreation and Culture Facilities

Survey respondents were provided with a list of five parks, recreation and culture facility types available in St. Thomas. They were asked to rank each based on their personal and / or household levels of **importance and satisfaction**.

According to survey respondents, the three **most important** facility types were: recreational trails and pathways (82%); indoor recreation facilities (82%); and outdoor recreation facilities (81%). Levels of **satisfaction** were also highest among two of the three most important; 75% of residents were satisfied with recreational trails and pathways and 73% were satisfied with outdoor recreation facilities. However, satisfaction dropped to 60% for indoor recreation facilities, indicating that the City is not meeting the full range of resident expectations.

The following figure illustrates **visible gaps** between levels of importance and satisfaction with parks, recreation and culture facilities in St. Thomas. For all five listed options, levels of importance were higher than satisfaction, indicating a gap between expected and provided levels of service for these facilities. The gap is largest for arts and cultural facilities (66% important, 39% satisfied), followed by indoor recreation facilities as indicated earlier.

Figure 16 Levels of importance and satisfaction with municipal parks, recreation and cultural facilities (n = 361 to 369)



Respondents indicating that their household is unable to participate in arts and cultural events / activities as often as they would like were more likely than respondents not reporting barriers to be dissatisfied with indoor recreation facilities, such as arenas and community spaces and also be dissatisfied with leisure opportunities for teens and young adults.



## Additional Investment

Survey respondents were asked to indicate their level of **support for improvement** in the number and / or quality of a variety of specific facilities. The following figure illustrates the full investment results. Note: results do not include “neutral”, “don’t know” or skipped responses and therefore may not add to 100%.

The **top facilities** with support for additional investment were all associated with unstructured, casual and comfortable opportunities for recreation and received more than 80% support. These included: recreational trails (90%), park washrooms (89%), acquisition of parks and open space (84%), parkland beautification (82%), walking tracks (81%) and park pavilions (80%). Similar to previous responses in the survey, these results indicate strong demand for unstructured, passive, convenient recreation opportunities by the majority of respondents. Investment in facilities that serve a broad range of uses for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities were well supported.

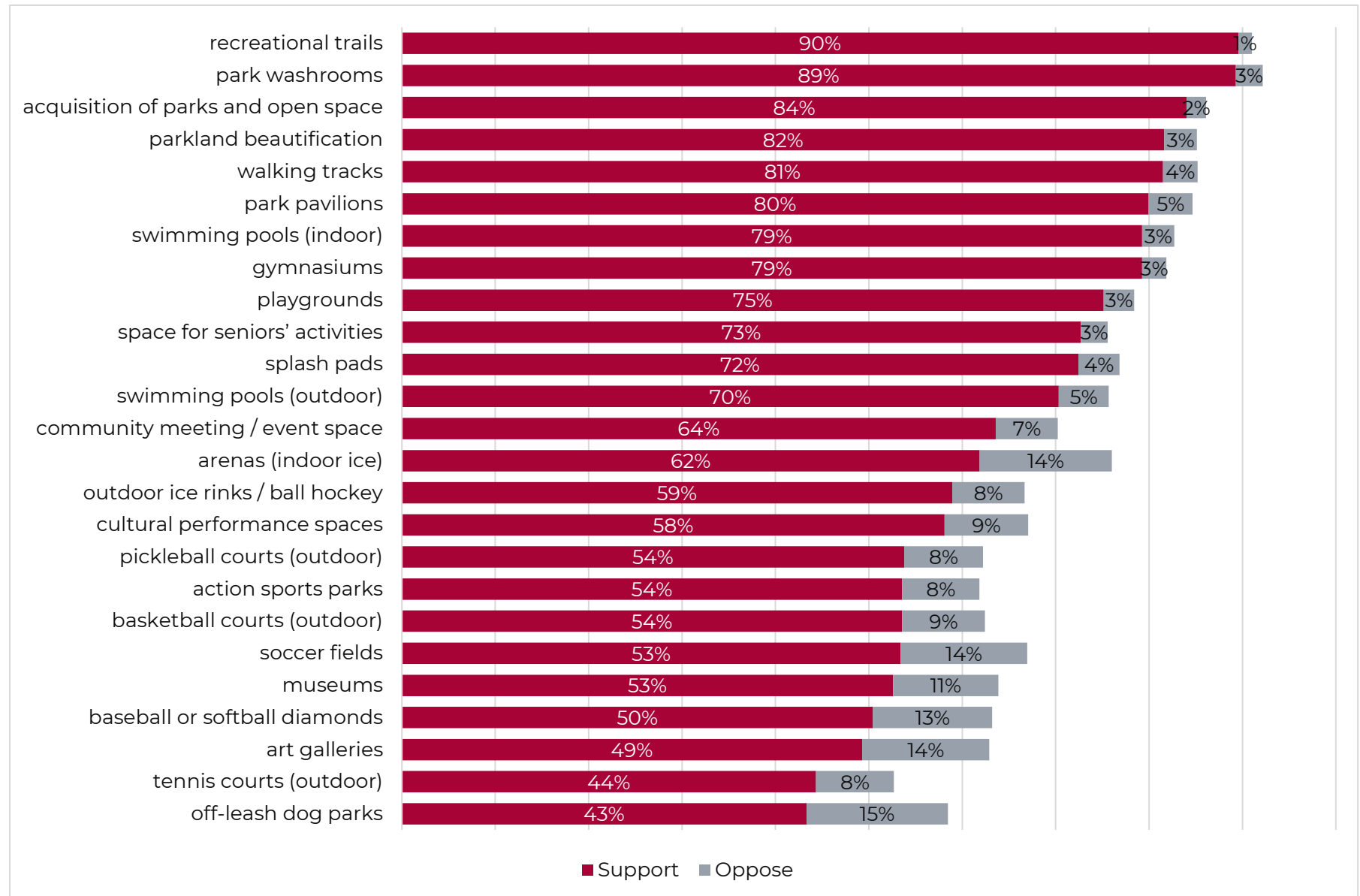
Conversely, the **lowest-ranked facilities** which received support from less than 50% of survey respondents were special-interest or individually focused. These included: art galleries (49%), outdoor tennis courts (44%) and off-leash dog parks (43%). This suggests that needs are generally being met for these activities and / or that they appeal to a smaller proportion of survey respondents.

It is interesting to note that facilities for traditional team sports such as arenas, soccer fields and ball diamonds were ranked on the lower half of the list. This may be reflective of recent investment in many of these facilities (e.g., 1Password Park, Joe Thornton Community Centre, etc.) and suggests that these groups are fairly well-served with their current facilities.

Respondents with children and youth (ages 0 to 19 years) in their household were more likely to support additional investment in outdoor basketball courts, soccer fields, outdoor ball hockey/ice rinks and outdoor swimming pools.

Respondents without children and youth (ages 0 to 19 years) in their household were more likely to support additional investment in outdoor pickleball courts.

Figure 17 Support for investment in parks, recreation and culture facilities (n = 336 to 351)



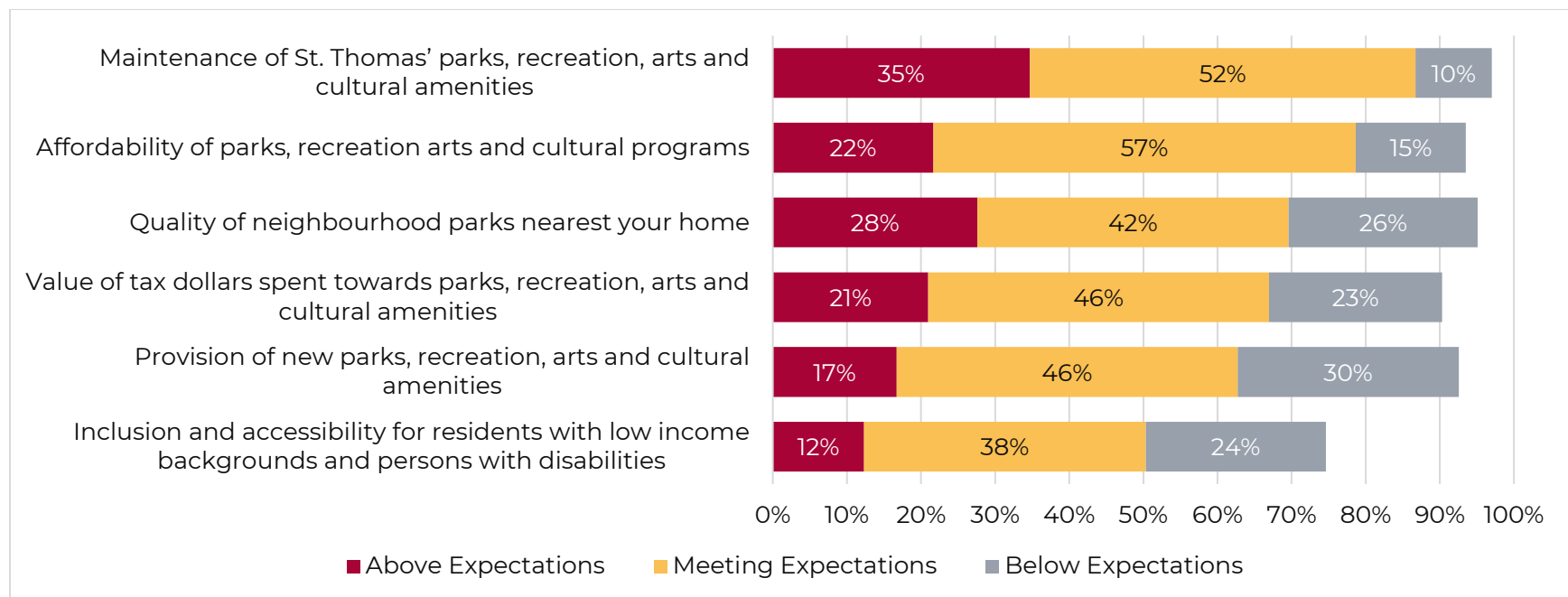
## Perceived Support

Respondents were asked to indicate their satisfaction with the City's current ability to provide adequate parks, recreation arts and culture services. Of the options listed, survey respondents were (proportionally) **most satisfied** with "maintenance of St. Thomas' parks, recreation, arts and cultural amenities" (35% above expectations, 10% below expectations) and "affordability of parks, recreation, arts and cultural programs" (22% above expectations, 15% below expectations).

Conversely, respondents were **least satisfied** with "inclusion and accessibility for residents with low income background and persons with disabilities" (12% above expectations, 24% below expectations) and "provision of new parks, recreation, arts and cultural amenities" (17% above expectations, 30% below expectations).

Levels of service generally **matched expectations** among the two remaining options: "quality of neighbourhood parks nearest your home" (28% above expectations, 26% below expectations) and "value of tax dollar spent towards parks, recreation, arts and cultural amenities" (21% above expectations, 23% below expectations).

Figure 18 Perception of City's ability to provide parks, recreation, arts and culture services (n = 333 to 340)



Note: 'Don't Know' responses are not shown

### 2.5.3 Online Mapping Exercise and Coffee Conversations

In coordination with the concurrent Positioned for Growth Planning studies, two Master Plan-related consultation and engagement techniques were employed. Due to their targeted nature, it is important to note that the comments received through these engagement processes may not be fully reflective of the community and the results summarized below do not represent recommendations of the Master Plan. The following summaries describe key themes that emerged and do not include feedback pertaining to items outside the scope of the Master Plan.

#### Online Mapping Exercise

St. Thomas residents were invited to participate in an online mapping exercise using Social Pinpoint software. Participants were encouraged to share their thoughts on specific parks, recreation and cultural sites in St. Thomas by zooming in on the map page, adding a symbol and leaving a comment within the study area.

A set of key questions to consider were offered:

1. Where do you currently like to play / relax?
2. Where would you like to play / relax if some improvements were made?
3. Are there any other issues or concerns that you feel the City should be made aware of?

The mapping exercise launched in April 2019 (at the same time as the online community survey) and closed on June 20, 2019. Over the course of the submission period, a total of 174 unique pins were placed by 50 contributors.

Participants could also “up vote” an existing pin if they agreed with the posted statement; nine of the pins received 4 or more up votes from fellow contributors. Those popular statements have been captured in the summary table below:

**Table 2 Summary of peer-supported mapping exercise feedback**

Summarized user comment	Up Votes	General Location
1. Suggestion for a playground and splash pad in Southeast St. Thomas	8	Southeast St. Thomas
2. Appreciation and support for winter use of Lake Margaret for activities such as skating	8	Pinafore Park
3. Suggestion to add a lookout and / or area to launch a kayak or canoe at Lake Margaret	5	Pinafore Park
4. Appreciation for year-round use of the hard surface trail around the lake	5	Pinafore Park
5. Suggestion for additional active transportation infrastructure (i.e., bike lanes, sidewalks)	4	Southeast St. Thomas
6. Suggestion for installation of a splash pad in a future park development (similar to #1)	4	Southeast St. Thomas
7. Appreciation and pride for the City's newly developed tennis and pickleball complex	4	Pinafore Park
8. Appreciation for the YMCA indoor pool and recognition of limited opportunities for training / events	4	Central St. Thomas

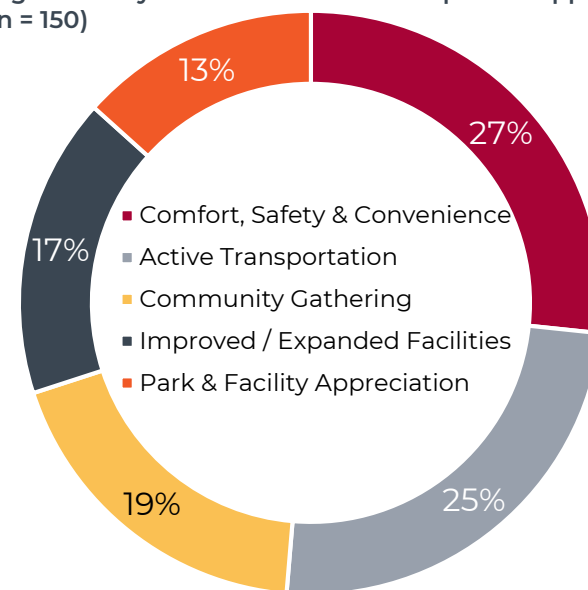


A spatial analysis was also conducted to evaluate peak areas of interest from the perspective of online contributors. The areas of St. Thomas which received the most comments were primarily the city's largest parks and open space areas. Some key areas of interest were: Pinafore Park, D.J. Tarry Sports Park (and surrounding trail network) and the vacant railway lands (between Elgin County Railway Museum and Joe Thornton Community Centre).

Following detailed review of all written submissions and map points, five key themes emerged. These common themes observed throughout the mapping exercise have been visually represented in Figure 19 with a brief summary of comments described in Table 3.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all comments received through this consultation initiative. All feedback provided have been considered through the development of the Master Plan.

**Figure 19 Key themes from Social Pinpoint Mapping (n = 150)**



**Table 3 Summary of comments representing key themes**

Key Theme	Summary of Comments
Comfort, Safety & Convenience (27%)	Comfort amenities such as seating and shade were prominent among responses and many discussed the importance of considering safety (i.e., sharps disposal sites) and convenience (i.e., walkability and parking).
Active Transportation (25%)	Many contributors discussed a desire for more active transportation options through increased trail connectivity, additional infrastructure (i.e., bike lanes), improved signage and wayfinding.
Community Gathering (19%)	Opportunities for free play and community gatherings were commonly noted among respondents. The Railway Lands were specifically noted by many as a potential venue for public events, a community gathering space and public art installations.
Expanded Facilities (17%)	A few specific facilities were noted throughout the mapping exercise. Facilities that were noted by 5 or more participants included: Lake Margaret viewing platform / boat launch, splash pads, and playgrounds.
Park & Facility Appreciation (13%)	Respondents were generally pleased with existing parks and facilities, particularly parkland beautification efforts and recent investments in recreation infrastructure (e.g., 1Password Park development, improved and expanded trails, tennis and pickleball court installation).

## **Coffee Conversations with the Mayor**

The Coffee Conversations event held on May 8, 2019 provided an opportunity for residents to discuss the Positioned for Growth Project in an informal setting. Attendees were able to engage with Mayor Preston and members of City Council and learn more about the project from City staff and the Project Team.

Some of the parks, recreation and cultural suggestions that emerged from these conversations include:

- Diversity in park types (i.e., include both active and passive uses).
- Environmental sustainability and stewardship (e.g., natural retaining ponds, habitat protection, etc.).
- Connectivity of trails and pathways.

This and other input received throughout the course of the Positioned for Growth Project (emails, phone calls, conversations with Council, City Staff and the Project Team, etc.) has been considered through the development of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

### **2.5.4 Stakeholder Workshops**

Ten stakeholder workshops were arranged to support the development of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The purpose of the sessions was to engage key stakeholders, create awareness of the Master Plan, and seek feedback on challenges and priorities related to parks, recreation and culture programs, services and facilities. The sessions took place on April 30 and May 1, 2019 and featured the same content and information at each.

Each session began with an overview presentation outlining the Master Plan process and additional opportunities for organizations, their members and others to get involved and share feedback. Following the presentation, participants took part in facilitated discussions guided by a series of questions related to the role of their organization, participation trends, challenges, needs and opportunities to work together. At the end of each session the consultant thanked participants for their time and feedback and provided them with a brief overview of next steps in the process.

A total of 79 organizations were invited to participate in these sessions and provide written input. This summary represents the input of 44 organizations.

**Figure 20 Stakeholder Attendance and Participation**

Attended Session	Provided Written Input	Invited but did NOT Provide Input
Day Out with Thomas	Civic Honours Committee	Accessibility Advisory Committee
Downtown Development Board	Mr. Cool Ice Cream Vendor	Canada Day
EarlyON Child and Family Centres	Railway City Pickleball League*	Canadian Mental Health
Economic Development Committee	Seniors Centre Board	Catfish Creek Conservation Authority
Elgin County Museum	St. Thomas Express Volleyball Club*	Centennial Sports Club
Environmental Stewardship Committee	St. Thomas Pickleball Association *	Central Community Health Centre
Great Lakes International Air Show	<b>Total: 6 groups</b>	Chamber of Commerce
Ironhorse Festival		Destination Church
Joe Thornton Community Centre Pickleball	* also attended focus group session	Elgin Beef Farmers Annual Beef BBQ
Kettle Creek Conservation Authority		Elgin Hiking Trail Club
Lions Club Car Show		Employment Services Elgin
Pinafore Tennis Club		Fire Muster
Police Department Board		Heritage Committee
Railway City Cycling Club		Knights of Columbus
Railway City Pickleball League		Light the Night
Railway City Tourism		London District Catholic School Board
Southwestern Public Health		Nostalgia Nights
St. Thomas Christian Community School		NSA Canada Slo-Pitch
St. Thomas Co-ed Slo-Pitch		Optimist Club Santa Claus Parade
St. Thomas Express Volleyball Club		Public Art Committee
St. Thomas Hawks Football		Railway Coalition Inc.
St. Thomas Kinsmen Club		Senior Picnic
St. Thomas Ladies Slo-Pitch		Slo-Pitch National
St. Thomas Lions Club		Slo-Pitch Ontario
St. Thomas Minor Baseball		St. Joes Hockey Academy
St. Thomas Minor Hockey		St. Thomas Cemetery
St. Thomas Optimist Softball		St. Thomas Curling Club
St. Thomas Panthers		St. Thomas Disc Sports Club
St. Thomas Pickleball Association		St. Thomas Dog Walkers/Owners
St. Thomas Public Library		St. Thomas Field Naturalist Club
St. Thomas Ringette		St. Thomas Home Show
St. Thomas Rotary Club		St. Thomas Men's Slo-Pitch
St. Thomas Skating Club		St. Thomas Optimist Club
St. Thomas Stars		St. Thomas Soccer Club
St. Thomas-Elgin Family YMCA		St. Thomas Special Olympics
St. Thomas-Elgin Public Art Centre		Thames Valley District School Board
Talbot Teen Centre		Valleyview Home for the Aged
Teddy Bear Picnic		YWCA St. Thomas-Elgin
<b>Total: 38 groups (50 people)</b>		<b>Total: 38 groups</b>

The following high-level summary synthesizes common themes that emerged from stakeholder feedback, organized by subject area. It should be noted that very little interpretation or fact-checking of statements made by stakeholders has been completed and, therefore, the summary may not represent final themes or directions for the Master Plan.

## **Parks**

### Connecting with Parks and Nature

Participants expressed a desire to increase opportunities to interact with nature and connect to municipal parks and outdoor recreation facilities. Stakeholders discussed a need to enhance connections with nature and **natural heritage “infrastructure”**. It was suggested that the City continue to pursue open space acquisition to provide residents with access close to home. This would assist with providing diversity in park types to offer residents of all interests and abilities a variety of opportunities to enjoy the outdoors, learn about nature and become better stewards of the environment.

### Park Development and Improvement

Stakeholders noted that future parkland development should address **park distribution and gaps** in existing provision. Attendees specifically described demand for **civic space downtown**. They are seeking high quality spaces that could function as a civic square including green space; providing residents with opportunities for social interaction.

Development of a **Railway Park** on the vacant railway lands (between Talbot Street and Wellington Street west of the Joe Thornton Community Centre) was discussed by multiple groups. It was suggested that if properly remediated, this site could function as a multi-use event venue including trails and a splash pad. Many groups expressed interest in working together with the City to develop a strategy to help realize this project.

**Comfort, safety and geographic access** were also mentioned by many groups. Stakeholders discussed a desire for shade structures and increased access to washrooms in parks and along trails. Increasing **trail connectivity** was also a common request. Stakeholders suggested that a citywide loop (including secondary trails) and strategic design (interface, trees, rest points, signage, etc.) would support increased use of trails by residents.

**Specific sites** were identified by stakeholders for parkland improvements:

- **Kin Park:** requests were made for installation of a shade structure and construction of a pavilion on site
- **Burwell Road:** ball groups requested installation of lights on the diamond to increase duration of play
- **Douglas J. Tarry Complex:** stakeholders identified issues with parking, particularly for weekend tournaments
- **Cardinal Field:** there were requests for a larger umpires’ building on site to accommodate game play

### Lake Margaret

Access to **Lake Margaret** for water-based activities has been an ongoing issue. Many groups discussed how access and use of Lake Margaret may change as a result of City ownership of the property. Stakeholders expressed a desire to work



with the City to enhance access to the shoreline (e.g., pier, lookout tower, etc.) and water for fishing and flatwater activities (non-motorized boating, paddle boarding, etc.). Proper shoreline management and changes to current by-laws would be required for this increased access and maintenance.

## **Recreation**

### Development of New Facilities

Workshop participants discussed a desire for more **casual use amenities**. Some of the suggestions included: sport pads (multi-use courts), an outdoor ice rink in the north end or downtown, or outdoor pickleball courts in the north end (long-term).

Multiple groups also discussed high demand for **gymnasium** space in St. Thomas (particularly with high ceiling clearance). School gymnasiums are at capacity and groups struggle with scheduling around school functions. School gymnasiums are not ideal to support growing demand or host tournaments. Specifically:

- A **volleyball club** is seeking a 16-court indoor complex suitable for tournament hosting and competitive training;
- **Pickleball groups** are seeking additional indoor space with adequate dimensions and times to accommodate year-round play;
- **Basketball organizations** are seeking additional gymnasium space as well for youth and adult league play; and
- Some **ice sport organizations** could use a gymnasium to offer dryland training space during off-ice practices.

**The Family YMCA of St. Thomas-Elgin** is interested in working with the City on a new **indoor facility** to replace their current complex. Private-public partnerships have worked well in other centres and this is an option that may be explored in St. Thomas. Features to consider in a new indoor facility may include: gymnasium, fitness centre, indoor pool, walking track, etc.

Ice organizations (hockey, figure skating, ringette, etc.) are seeking **additional ice time** to accommodate growth in registration and increasing demand for training and play. Some groups indicated that they use ice outside of the City to meet their needs. Female teams are experiencing significant growth and are seeking additional ice time to allow players to participate locally.

In general, competitive sport organizations agreed that the **lack of overnight accommodations** (i.e., hotel) is a detriment to tournament-hosting. Many groups expressed frustration that participants and their families travel outside of St. Thomas between games for food, entertainment and accommodations. It should be noted that the Economic Development Corporation announced a full-service hotel proposal in June 2019.

Although not a City-owned facility, the **Elevated Park** was discussed by many workshop participants. Service Clubs are interested in assisting with development of the site and were eager for it to form part of the Great Trail (since completed).

## Expansion / Improvement of Existing Facilities

Stakeholders were generally satisfied with existing recreation facilities but provided some suggestions for improvement and / or expansion of the existing supply. Specific facilities and sites are listed below:

- **Jaycees Pool** recently underwent upgrades to the pool and deck areas, but stakeholders feel the site would benefit from: regeneration of the adjacent green space; installation of shade structures and seating on deck; and parking lot remediation.
- **Tennis and pickleball** players in the city are pleased with the recently developed outdoor complex and want to ensure that it remains well maintained. These groups are also seeking increased access to washrooms at Pinafore Park, an issue that the City is currently working to resolve.
- Municipal **ball diamonds** are well-used and stakeholders anticipate steady growth in the sport. This increase will generate demand for more diamonds to accommodate groups such as co-ed slo-pitch and youth ball.
- The **mountain biking community** is seeking a site to establish trails suitable for riding. Representatives have discussed this with the Conservation Authority as well as City staff and are working to create a course near Waterworks Park.
- Participants also identified challenges with the **Joe Thornton Community Centre**. Some concerns include: insufficient parking during peak hours; vandalism, theft and inappropriate behaviour by some patrons; and a lack of complementary amenities such as skate sharpening (the City has since addressed this) or additional third-party concessions during tournaments (with consideration of existing contracts).

## **Culture**

Participants representing arts and cultural organizations noted that **interest in the sector is growing**. Recently there have been more arts and cultural events and activities and this has aligned well with Elgin County Tourism initiatives. The newly developed **Railway City** branding has established a strong presence in St. Thomas and stakeholders noted that it will be important to maintain and enhance this image.

Regarding arts, culture and heritage facilities, three primary sites were discussed:

- The **Elgin County Railway Museum** relies heavily on support from volunteers and is in need of financial support; the museum is seeking tax exempt status to offset municipal charges.
- Many attendees discussed demand for **dedicated festival grounds**, preferably in the core. Further, many stakeholders are seeking **additional support** from the City for existing festivals and events. This may include upgrades to electrical access, assistance with set-up and take-down of portable equipment or maintenance and repairs as necessary.
- The **St. Thomas-Elgin Public Art Centre** is looking to build relationships with the City as well as local artists, artisans and historians to promote arts and culture in the city. The Art Centre supports local artists, encourages public display of art, and inspires visitors to experience culture in St. Thomas.

## Service Delivery

### Accessibility and Inclusion

Several groups suggested that all service providers in the city should consider **vulnerable populations** when developing and operating facilities; planning programs, and providing services. Specific populations that may experience **barriers** to participation to parks, recreation and culture in St. Thomas – as identified by stakeholders - include seniors, low income households, single parents, and more. Southwestern Public Health is working on an affordable access strategy and has recently completed research on at risk neighbourhoods in the area. To help alleviate the impact of barriers to participation, the City should consider low-to-no cost activities, a variety of program options and times, and availability of transportation / geographic distribution of options.

Another potential opportunity to promote participation for all is to apply a health equity lens in planning for these programs, services and facilities. One best practice example that was shared was the use of “**neighbourhood animators**”. These are persons who are tasked with animating spaces, encouraging participation in programs, and regularly interacting with community members to better understand local needs and provide services appropriate for vulnerable or marginalized populations. The City’s partnership with Active Elgin continues to evolve and also helps to support community health.

### Policies, Partnerships and Collaboration

In general, stakeholders expressed a desire to better understand **municipal policies**. Many of the groups identified sports and ice allocation policies, as well as access/waivers for service clubs and event/tournament bookings.

**Rates and fees** were also discussed by multiple groups. They desire more transparency and consistency in how fees are set and applied, and perhaps a review of the fee structure. For example, many organizations discussed the cost of booking the Doug Tarry Room at the Joe Thornton Community Centre and believe that some fees are too high, particularly for full day or weekend-long events.

Many of the participating organizations discussed the municipal **grant program**. Stakeholders believe that too few groups receive assistance and suggested that the City review the criteria, application and distribution processes.

Collaborative **program planning** was also discussed by multiple stakeholder groups. Workshop participants believe that service providers and participants alike would benefit from a coordinated approach to program planning and offerings. Collaboration could help to avoid duplication, ensure a variety of programs and services are offered, allow specialized providers to share their expertise and offer grass-roots / introductory options from suitable organizations.

### Awareness and Communication

Stakeholders would like to be better informed of programs, services, events, facilities and various providers in the city. Consistent **communication** was identified as a challenge for many groups; they believe that using multiple tactics is

necessary to engage all users and providers (e.g., print, digital, word-of-mouth, etc.). It was suggested that regular information-sharing forums (led by the city and / or community organizations) would help to improve coordination, information-sharing and future planning.

Another opportunity to disseminate information to residents and stakeholders (as suggested by participants) is to establish and promote a municipal **web calendar**. Attendees felt that this could be a useful tool and opportunity to promote local facilities, services and events (both municipal and non-municipal).

## **2.5.5 Internal Consultation**

### **Staff Workshops**

Three separate sessions were held with more than twenty City of St. Thomas Parks and Recreation Services staff on April 10, 2019. The purpose of these sessions was to learn about the daily operations and functions of each segment of the department from those who engage directly with users (front-line staff) as well as maintenance, operations, supervisory, management and administrative staff.

Input from the sessions is not published within this report but will be used to inform the development of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

### **Mayor and Council Input**

A presentation was made to City Council Reference Committee on April 1, 2019. The purpose of this session was to introduce the Master Plan and share information on expected timelines and opportunities for community engagement. Members of Reference Committee were provided an opportunity to share their insight on what makes St. Thomas unique and identify key priorities to be considered through the Master Plan.

Input from Council consultations will be used to inform the development of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.



## 2.5.6 Public Open House to Review the Draft Master Plan

The draft Master Plan was posted on the City's website for review. A Public Open House was held on January 15, 2020 at the St. Thomas Memorial Arena to solicit input from stakeholders and residents regarding the draft Plan. Members of the consulting team, City staff and members of Council were present to discuss the report with the approximately 20 participants that attended.

The session was advertised in the City's newsletter, local newspapers, online and through email distribution lists. Those unable to attend the session were invited to provide written submissions; three such responses were received. Feedback from attendees and written submissions has been summarized below:

- **Indoor Aquatics:** Several attendees strongly supported the provision of a publicly-accessible indoor aquatic facility. Opportunities for partnership with an external service provider such as the YMCA were also discussed, with public access and affordability noted as key considerations (along with warm water / therapeutic facilities, program variety, swimming lessons / water safety, access to rental space, and opportunities for drop-in swimming). Aquatic Sport Council Ontario provided a written submission supporting the development of a municipal indoor aquatic facility.
- **Outdoor Skating:** Some residents are seeking opportunities for outdoor skating (rinks or skating trails), which could possibly be used for ball hockey or other uses in the warmer months.
- **Trail Connectivity:** Interest was expressed for active transportation opportunities and participation in trail-based recreation. Specific suggestions included expanded trail routes, connectivity to the north end of the city and linkages to major amenities.
- **Accessibility and Affordability:** The value and importance of offering low-to-no cost activities was discussed. Many felt that activities should be affordable and available to St. Thomas residents of all ages, interests, abilities, and backgrounds.
- **Ball Diamonds:** The St. Thomas Coed Slo-Pitch League indicated that popularity of the sport is growing and that they could add 12 new teams this season, but are lacking access to sufficient diamonds.



### 3 Strategic Framework



### 3.1 Vision for Parks, Recreation and Culture in St. Thomas

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

Based on supporting documents and public input, the following vision statement has been established to guide the development and implementation of this Master Plan.

**Working together to provide high-quality and affordable opportunities that foster social connections, celebrate local heritage and encourage healthy physical activity for all.**

### 3.2 Guiding Principles

The Master Plan’s development and implementation are also guided by a series of guiding principles that reflect the values and aspirations articulated by the City and the community as a whole. Together, the guiding principles describe the core directions that the City and its partners should strive to achieve over time.

1. **Enhancing Participation:** We will support activities that promote health and wellbeing, including opportunities for all residents to be physically active, connect with others, and experience nature.
2. **Strengthening Services:** We will proactively plan, deliver and manage a broad range of accessible, affordable and inclusive services that address the highest priority needs of St. Thomas residents, now and in the future.
3. **Sustaining Facilities and Parks:** We will set a high standard in maintaining our recreation facilities, parks and trails and be a leader in sustainable infrastructure renewal and development.
4. **Supporting Arts, Culture and Heritage:** We will encourage the coordinated delivery of arts and cultural experiences, including those that celebrate our rich heritage.
5. **Building Capacity and Partnerships:** We will work with community partners and volunteers to build capacity and collaborate on relevant community-led initiatives.
6. **Ensuring Financial Responsibility:** We will maintain fiscal accountability through the efficient use of public resources, user fees and third-party funding opportunities.





## **4 Service Delivery, Programming and Policies**





## 4.1 Program and Service Delivery Section

This section articulates an understanding of the current and prevalent local parks, recreation and cultural service-related issues with a view toward enhancing public satisfaction and maximizing participation across all age groups. Potential program and service delivery improvements are identified, along with internal improvements that will help build staff capacity and internal supports to deliver on the program and service recommendations.

The analysis has been derived from community and Council/staff input, an assessment of the current state, a synthesis of key issues, research and best practices from other jurisdictions. This approach ensures that the Master Plan is based on local conditions and trends, is knowledge-based and is meaningful to the community. The Plan's Implementation Strategy speaks to addressing the recommendations in an order that first addresses pressing issues along with those that can be addressed quickly and bear early results

## 4.2 The Role of the City's Parks and Recreation Department

### 4.2.1 Current State

The role of the municipality in delivering recreation and parks services centres on future planning, being nimble in modifying services as the community changes, ensuring full access (especially for marginalized populations), and providing/enabling a full range of services for all ages and abilities. Programs and services are provided with a view to being cost efficient while delivering high quality and safe services that foster strong levels of public participation and satisfaction.

Specific responsibilities of the City in delivering parks and recreation services include:

- Understand the growth of the municipality and plan for any increase/decrease in service provision based on changes to demographics, income levels and social issues (including marginalized residents);
- Ensure that the infrastructure and amenities are in a state of good repair and flexible in terms of their uses;
- Incorporate quality assurance measures and legislative compliance in the delivery of service;
- Provide a full range of activities based on the needs of the general population and within specific age groupings;

### **It's All About Increasing Participation in St. Thomas**

Maximizing participation in recreation and outdoor pursuits is at the core purpose of all parks, recreation and culture departments in Canada. Every recommendation and subsequent action resulting from this Master Plan must drive at the ability for all residents to have barrier free access to a range of leisure pursuits. It is St. Thomas' work to make the active choice the simplest choice in concert with community groups, volunteers and other providers. The greater the level of participation, the better health outcomes for individuals, families and the community at large. Sharing of resources and working together with like partners toward this common goal will serve to maximize participation.



- Incorporate program/service approaches that can address social development issues within the community, such as youth engagement, isolation in older adults and improving physical activity levels;
- Enable partners and other providers to excel and play their part in complementing a full range of services;
- Articulate levels of service and test satisfaction levels on a regular basis;
- Support staff and volunteers in the delivery of service;
- Promote the benefits of being engaged in recreational pursuits and communicate current health priorities such as getting more time outdoors and increasing the frequency, duration and intensity of physical activity;
- Work collectively with partners and stakeholders in addressing needed improvements;
- Communicate and share knowledge with partners and stakeholders;
- Seek out alternate revenue sources in order to expand services efficiently; and
- Measure the efficiencies and effectiveness of the City-wide parks, recreation and cultural delivery system.

#### 4.2.2 Emerging Issues and Needs

Public and staff input, socio-demographic trends, best practices in other jurisdictions, as well local, provision and national research, strategies and trends have served to identify the emerging issues and needs that may impact St. Thomas over the course of this Master Plan. To summarize, service improvements efforts should centre on:

- a) Working smarter together with other like service providers
- b) Offering a fuller range of varied programs and service choices to all age groups
- c) Engaging and empowering youth
- d) Planning for older adults and their activity choices
- e) Inclusion of marginalized populations
- f) Increasing the frequency, duration and intensity of physical activity levels
- g) Increasing access to nature and to outdoors
- h) A discussion of these emerging issues and needs follows, including recommendations for the City's consideration.



## Working Smarter Together with Other Like Service Providers

The current service delivery model in St. Thomas centres on a range of service providers offering programs and opportunities to families and individuals based on the focus of the respective organization and available resources. Many community stakeholder groups work in concert with the City to utilize facilities for their respective programs and sports (indoor and outdoor sport organizations); others work independent of the City (the YMCA, Talbot Teen Centre, etc.,) while all effectively contributing to the public good. This is a typical model for a community of the size of St. Thomas.

St. Thomas offers a range of formalized activities and programs whereby participants register and pay for programs and commit to a series of days and times to advance their skills or attend a summer or school break camp. Other more informal opportunities are offered that include seasonal drop-in swimming and skating. The City also maintains a trails and parks system open for formalized sports and casual use. The objective is to provide a wide range to serve varied interests and age groups. The Seniors Centre is owned by the City of Thomas and operated by a volunteer board of directors and a volunteer corps. There is a significant amount of coordination and communications involved to ensure the parks and recreation service delivery model reflects varied interests and quality management. This model is reflective of most parks and recreation departments in Ontario and there is movement to work more formally with other service providers to demonstrate more of an integrated system that works to cross promote, reduce duplication and address key community issues such as increasing activity rates and increasing access for all.

To address many of the recommendations presented in this Master Plan, a suggested model begins with gaining agreement to work more formally together to share resources and expertise while reducing duplication. This model can be effective in addressing key issues facing the field of parks and recreation and in addressing ongoing service delivery priorities. A process to arrive at a work plan – such as the integrated service delivery model shown in the following graphic – would involve a process of sharing information about priorities, what's being done to address critical issues and how the group could work in a more focused manner to address priorities, share resources (e.g., communications vehicles, training opportunities, etc.) and measure the effectiveness of the work.

### Promising Practice

Recreation practitioners from municipal, non-profit, and for-profit organizations in the Region of Durham collectively undertook a study with respect to advancing affordable access to recreation. One of the recommendations was to develop a common access policy within the region and work collectively to implement and measure its effectiveness. The development of targets and measures served to increase affordable access to 15% of the lower income population – a similar percentage of access to recreation by residents overall. This integrated approach has made a significant difference and the group was awarded \$550,000 from the Poverty Reduction Fund to study the impacts of subsidized access to recreation to lower income residents over a three-year period. This approach supports the notion that much more can be achieved by working collectively.

## Recreation Program Provision in St. Thomas

The City of St. Thomas has been providing recreation programs and camps since 2006. The original premise was to offer recreation programming opportunities to fill vacant facility spaces. The evolution of program provision has become much more sophisticated since that time. Efforts are now being made to ensure that there is a full range of recreation opportunities for all age groups. The current approach is much more intentional and proactive in providing citizen-centred services that revolve around quality, learning, enjoyment and safe experiences.

### Offering a Fuller Range of Varied Programs and Service Choices to All Age Groups

Categorizing program types into groups helps to ensure the varied interests of the public are reflected in the range of programs offered. Community arrangements may be made through further discussion to avoid duplication of staff efforts. For example, the St. Thomas Public Library offers recreational programs to the same age groups as the Parks and Recreation Department – the current working relationship is effective as the two staff teams discuss the program types offered and the utilization of space in libraries for City recreation programs. This is a good example of an effective working relationship that best serves the needs of the public.

The following table demonstrates what types of opportunities are currently available to the general public through the City of St. Thomas Parks and Recreation Department. The role of staff is to demonstrate a need for additional program and opportunity types by testing other interests in the community. Further, a look to other agencies and institutions should also be undertaken to ensure that duplication is avoided and potential gaps are addressed. This exercise should be completed on an annual basis to inform service and program provision

Figure 21 Integrated Service Delivery Model



Figure 22 Sampling of programs delivered by the City of St. Thomas Parks and Recreation Department

Age Group	Active	Creative	STEM*	Nature & Outdoors	General Interest
<b>Pre-School</b>	Swimming (lessons and drop-in) Soccer Public Skating Floor Hockey Basketball Badminton	Dance Beginner Painting		Parks and Trails Playgrounds Sport Courts	
<b>Children</b>	Swimming (lessons and drop-in) Soccer Hockey (intro, 3 on 3) Skating (power and public) Floor Hockey Basketball Badminton	Dance Beginner Painting	Homework Assistant	Parks and Trails Playgrounds Camps Sport Courts	Camps Break Camps
<b>Youth</b>	Swimming (lessons and drop-in) Soccer Public Skating & Shinny Drop-in Badminton Pickleball	Dance Dance to Music	Homework Assistant	Parks and Trails Sport Courts	
<b>Adults</b>	Length Swims Public Swims Public Skating & Shinny Drop-in Badminton Pickleball	Dance to Music		Parks and Trails Sport Courts	
<b>Older Adults (City and Senior's Centre)</b>	Length Swims Public Swims Public Skating & Shinny Drop-in Badminton Pickleball	Dance to Music		Parks and Trails Sport Courts	
<b>Family Opportunities</b>				Parks and Trails Playgrounds Camps Canada Day Music in the Park Movies in the Park	

\*Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

The review of program types offered demonstrates that there are some gaps in creative and STEM type programs. This may be a result of the programs already being offered by other groups/agencies or the take up of these program types offered in the past not being sustainable. An annual review program of participation by type of program type and age group is required to ensure that participation is increasing year over year.

### **Promising Practice**

In an effort to provide a wide range of program choices to all age groups, the City of Richmond Hill decided to contract specialty type programs to third-party providers. The City delivers aquatics, creative and general interest programs as a basic level of service. Third party contracted providers offer STEM programs and camps as well as other specialized programs. The City publishes the opportunities in the Recreation Guide and registers participants to ensure that the system is seamless. The City and the third-party providers share the revenues received for the specialized programs. This approach uses staff resource efficiently, maximizes the utilization of public assets and delivers net revenues to the City.

## **4.2.3 Assessment**

### **Measuring Participation by Age Group**

Measuring participation by age group ensures that all residents have equitable access to parks, recreation and cultural services. The goal would be to see an increase in registrations and casual participation by all age groups every year. Tracking participation will ensure that any decreases in participation are addressed proactively and any corrections to service provision are made considering community input, new trends and current satisfaction levels.

The following tables seek to demonstrate the registration levels over the last three years in programs by age group as well as use of casual and drop-in opportunities. This data is used to increase participation by identifying gaps and implementing meaningful strategies to further increase resident participation.

#### Recreation Registration Observations

- Direct program participation has remained relatively stable with overall registrations being 7% below the three-year average (2016 to 2018); 2016 was the high-water mark for registrations.
- Registrations are stabilizing over the course of 2017 and 2018 with a slight decline of 54 registrants.
- The work of the Department is to maximize the use of public spaces for recreational opportunities and increase participation in programs and services year over year. This is done by monitoring and revising programs to maximize the utilization of public spaces, the take up of programs in each of the age groups, and introducing new programs that meet the trends of each of the age groups. Much of the program revisions must involve consultation with the various age groups or parents of younger participants. Satisfaction surveys at the end of each program session will provide some baseline data on which to build.



### Drop-in Participation Observations

- Drop-in attendance decreased by an average of 9% between the years 2016 and 2018. (788 fewer participants).
- Decreased participation is seen in drop-in programs for children (53), adults (107) and older adults (1,827).
- Ensuring that opportunities are scheduled when varying participants are available, monitoring usage, and engaging participants in the review and revision of program offerings is critical to the growth and sustainability of these opportunities.
- Utilization data indicates that public spaces are nearing capacity for programs and the City will need to look to alternate spaces in order to increase program capacity.

Table 4 Registered and Drop-in Program Participation Summaries

Recreation Registrations by Age Group 2016-2018				
Age Group	2016	2017	2018	3-year Average
Pre-School	537	387	401	442
Children's Programs	1,592	1,272	1,204	1,356
Children's Camps / Breaks	543	558	560	554
Youth	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Adults / Older Adults	88	106	104	99
Families	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,760</b>	<b>2,323</b>	<b>2,269</b>	<b>2,451</b>

Drop-In Numbers by Age Group 2016-2018				
Age Group	2016	2017	2018	3-year Average
Pre-School	335	351	385	357
Children's Camps / Breaks	1,149	586	947	894
Youth	1,583	1,659	1,709	1,650
Adults	2,121	2,154	1,976	2,083
Older Adults	4,750	4,716	3,493	4,320
Families	251	242	255	249
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,189</b>	<b>9,708</b>	<b>8,765</b>	<b>9,553</b>

## Engaging and Empowering Youth

The consultation program identified a need for greater supports for youth. The Parks and Recreation Department and other community groups such as the Talbot Teen Centre provide sports, active, creative and educational opportunities. Additional community youth-driven organizations include the YMCA, Wellkin, Youth for Christ and Air Cadets Squadron 741, to name a few. Each organization has their own emphasis and approach; however, it would benefit youth if these organizations worked together on matters such as youth engagement to understand common issues and develop local youth-centric solutions. The City of St. Thomas is a significant employer of youth on annual basis (34 staff are currently between the ages of 16 and 19 years old). Youth employed in recreation and parks develop values and skills that are transferable to other employment opportunities. The introduction of youth leadership programs would provide all youth with the opportunity to compete for employment and volunteer opportunities within the City and other sectors.

While the registrations in youth programs has increased slightly over the last three years, there were specific concerns shared by the public and staff about continued and troublesome behaviours at one of the community centres. These frequent behaviours (as described) often disrupted patrons' opportunities to be active and feel welcomed in the centre. Some felt unsafe in certain circumstances. While youth have every right to access community centres, greater communication and engagement would result hopefully in better outcomes. This issue was mentioned a significant number of times throughout the consultation and requires attention. A punitive approach was sometimes implemented by calling the police or banning youth from the centre. This is a short-term approach which offers a temporary solution. The method that other communities have embraced is to engage youth in developing their own solutions and this would be an initial first step.

There are many resources available to youth serving organizations and some are identified below to assist St. Thomas in ensuring youth are engaged and have the best chances for a successful future.

### Promising Practice

The use of Youth Workers to engage youth has been a promising practice employed throughout Ontario for the last 25 years. Youth Workers tend to engage youth wherever they congregate (parks, community centres, malls, etc.). The Government of Ontario's Youth Action Plan states the importance of Youth Workers in communities.<sup>1</sup> Youth Workers engage youth to assist with issues by connecting them with the right resources and by encouraging positive behaviours and active lifestyles. Employment is often a concern of youth and leadership programs offered can lead to part-time employment opportunities.

### The Playworks Consortium – Youth Friendly Community Designation

The Playworks Partnership is a consortium of youth serving agencies in Ontario. The Playworks Partnership consists of organizations and institutions that support youth development, engagement and leadership opportunities including 4H-Ontario, Ontario Physical Health Educators Association, Parks and Recreation Ontario, Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada – Central Region, and the YMCA of Ontario.

Playworks' aim is to provide a framework to communities that is research-based and to outline the requirements in providing environments for youth to thrive and increase their life chances. Playworks evaluates and awards the Youth Friendly Community designation which was developed to ensure that youth have local supports and a voice in their communities.

The Partnership has completed extensive research as to what approaches will keep youth engaged and consider communities "youth friendly". Embracing and implementing these criteria as a group of youth serving organizations would demonstrate that the City has a commitment to youth within St. Thomas and will show leadership by continuing to improve the provision of service through engaging youth.

The Playworks Partnership has recently evaluated their criteria to simplify the understanding of youth supports within a community and amongst community partners. These revised criteria include:

1. Youth have options for play
2. Youth are formally connected community-wide
3. It is easy for youth to find information about play activities in their community
4. The community recognizes and celebrates youth
5. The community formally commits funding for youth play
6. The community supports Positive Youth Development
7. Youth feel valued by their community
8. Schools and school boards support the Youth Friendly approach
9. Play is accessible to youth
10. Play is socially inclusive

### YouthREX

YouthREX is an organization that has set about to provide resources, education and evaluative tools to youth service providers. Supported by York University in Toronto, YouthREX supports and is aligned with Ontario's Stepping Up Strategic Framework (a Provincial youth plan). YouthREX has produced a series of webinars that span research, practice and experience. Webinars developed and delivered to date include:

- Youth Centred Approaches to Meaningful Engagement

- Six ways to Strengthen Your Work with Youth
- Working Together Against Anti-Black Racism in Ontario's Youth Sector
- Youth and Substance Use: Engaging and Supporting Through Reflective Practice
- Understanding Inter-Generational Healing – Recovery Resilience and Wellness
- Engaging the Power of Technology for Youth Work
- Gender Identity and Gender Expression Tool Kit (developed by 519 Space for Change)

### **Planning for Older Adults and their Activity Choices**

The average age of St. Thomas' population is increasing as the number of children, youth and young adults are decreasing. The anticipated growth of the older adult population (those over 55 years) is anticipated to increase by 5,700 residents from the current number of 13,500 residents, representing a 42% increase in this age group by 2041. In order to increase activity levels and participation in recreation and parks pursuits overall, greater emphasis on the older adult population will be required.

While there are many opportunities for older adults to recreate in St. Thomas currently, it is not known what percentage of the older adult population is engaged now, if there are pent up demands and how other factors influence future service provision. There needs to be a more comprehensive understanding of the percentage of those that are engaged now, the general change in volunteerism, anticipated decreased mobility and issues such as social isolation (Statistics Canada estimates that 16% of the older adult population are isolated and lonely).

Statistics Canada indicates that suicide rates in older adults over the age of 65 years is the highest of any age group in Canada. This should prompt all related stakeholders to engage isolated older adults in recreational and social pursuits and assist them in accessing the recreation and social services that they may need.

#### **Promising Practice**

The Life After Fifty Older Adult Group in the City of Windsor has developed and supports a volunteer corps that phones isolated seniors on a regular basis to check in. The conversation involves gaining an understanding of recreational interests and if there is any assistance that is needed to encourage elders to get involved leisure pursuits. This program is run by volunteers who have received training in what recreational opportunities and community supports (transportation, subsidies, etc.) are available for older adults.

Current initiatives funded by the government of Ontario in health regions are focused on "Social Prescriptions" in order to get seniors to join recreational opportunities, increase a sense of belonging and decrease isolation. Preliminary findings indicate that clients are reporting positive outcomes including an increased sense of belonging and wellbeing. With the aging population special efforts must be undertaken to ensure that St. Thomas has the infrastructure and program offerings as well as a strong volunteer corps.

## **Inclusion of Marginalized Populations**

Serving and including all residents requires differing approaches to address varying needs within the population. Continued study, community engagement to understand needs and refashioning standard approaches are ways in which staff can identify marginalized groups, engage them, and develop effective access and delivery mechanisms. Persons from low income backgrounds require financial assistance for fees, equipment and transportation generally. Persons with disabilities require supports and modification of some opportunities including equipment and assistance. It is staff's role to communicate and collectively develop services that will attract greater participation. Identifying marginalized populations have traditionally focused on low income residents, persons with disabilities and newcomers to Canada. Municipalities are beginning to widen their reach to women and girls, Culturally Diverse residents, Indigenous populations and LGBTQ+ residents.

### Persons from Low Income Backgrounds

As of 2016, approximately 16% of the St. Thomas population lived in low-income households. This represents approximately 7,000 persons who will likely experience limited access to essential recreation opportunities. This number of residents is significant, and they are the percentage of the population who have the most to gain from participation. The benefits of recreation and cultural participation centre on the confidence one gains in mastering new skills which gives them the confidence to address other facets of their lives. They may be participating less due to fiscal and other barriers, compared to the rest of the population with average to higher than average annual incomes. Often persons from low income households must focus on providing the necessities of life and this may also limit participation. Persons with higher incomes can generally navigate systems and have their families engaged in active pursuits; the same may not be true for lower income residents. It is a best practice to offer a range of free and low fee recreation and cultural opportunities as well as to work with social and settlement agencies and workers to ensure that residents know the importance of participating and that they can be assisted in accessing programs.

The YMCA monitors and addresses access to funding through the Canadian Tire Jumpstart Fund for low-income residents in St. Thomas. Both Ontario Works and Family and Children's Services offer clients opportunities to access recreation and sport opportunities. It is also understood that many community sport groups ensure that residents who show and interest are welcomed with little to no fees attached. While these efforts are commendable, consideration should be given to more intentional approaches. As a starting point, it is important to understand the number of low-income residents who are participating through subsidized access and how barriers can be reduced. The City does not have an "Access to Affordable Recreation Policy", which could assist in reaching out and including a stronger proportion of low-income residents. While the City has an informal policy that indicates that no discounts be given; a baseline access policy will support the belief that there are significant benefits to low-income residents as result of participating in recreation. The responsibility to be inclusive does not rest solely with the City; there is a collective responsibility through the Human Rights Code to ensure that all residents have equitable access to services. Greater progress will be made working with all related organizations as a collective to increase access.



Southwest Public Health developed a discussion paper entitled Access to Affordable Recreation in both structured and unstructured play for low-income residents. The report presented 20 recommended actions which are reflective of best practices and evidence-based initiatives to ensure that all residents can gain equitable access to recreation. It is unknown at this point how many residents are gaining access to recreation from low income backgrounds (other than the Canadian Tire Jumpstart program, Ontario Works, and Family and Children's Services), where the gaps are and what targets should be set. It was also suggested as part of the public consultation program that St. Thomas investigate providing recreation programs in partnership with other organizations within public housing complexes.

#### Persons with Decreased Mobility and Disabilities

The 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability reported that approximately 3.8 million Canadians were living with a disability, representing 13.7% of Canadians and 15.4% of Ontarians.<sup>3</sup> Applying the Provincial rate to St. Thomas's population leads to an estimate of over 6,000 residents with some form of disability in the City. It is anticipated that these numbers will grow with an aging population. Given these findings, the importance of ensuring St. Thomas's recreation system and programs are inclusive of persons with disabilities is recognized and requires attention.

The approach that many municipalities have taken to provide equitable services to persons with disabilities is to develop a policy that describes how the municipality will be inclusive and ensures that staff are trained, work to reduce barriers and increase participation in this community. "Program Buddies" or caregivers are welcome to assist the participant in programs and gain entry to recreation opportunities at no cost. Special equipment is available to ensure that residents can participate freely. Further, municipalities work with agencies that support persons with disabilities and often provide facility spaces for recreation programs and opportunities specific to persons with disabilities. Accessibility Advisory Committees assist in the provision of service by reviewing plans for new programs and services.

#### Gender Equity

Participation in recreation and sport provides encouragement and the confidence to females and those who identify as female that comes with mastering new skills and competencies. These benefits are immeasurable and transfer to other areas of life. Unfortunately, female participation in recreation pursuits begins to decline in adolescence. Every effort must be made to understand specific needs and ensure that females and those who identify as female have every opportunity to participate so that there is comfort in being active throughout one's life. Recreation providers have been instrumental in providing leadership opportunities, gender-related sport leagues and supporting local STEM opportunities. Initial efforts to assess participation would include an audit of female participation in recreation, sport and other activities. The true measure of success is to demonstrate that there is equitable participation between and amongst genders and those who identify as female at all ages.

---

<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada. Canadian survey on disability, 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca>

## Indigenous Peoples

The Truth and Reconciliation Report (2015) and the Parks for All report (2017) speak to the role that Canadians have in reconciling with Indigenous Peoples over history. The following excerpt from the Truth and Reconciliation Report denotes the call to action through sport.

*Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action (2015)*

Sports and Reconciliation (all levels of government):

87. *We call upon all levels of government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, sports halls of fame, and other relevant organizations, to provide public education that tells the national story of Aboriginal athletes in history.*
88. *We call upon all levels of government to take action to ensure long-term Aboriginal athlete development and growth, and continued support for the North American Indigenous Games, including funding to host the games and for provincial and territorial team preparation and travel.*

### **Promising Practice**

The Town of Collingwood worked with the Indigenous community and the United Steelworkers Union to fund and construct the “Awen” Gathering Place which serves as an attractive park feature and a community meeting place to celebrate Indigenous sharing, learning and celebrating. The gathering circle serves to link the Seven Grandfather Teachings of proper conduct and the good ways of life.

All communities have a role to play in recognizing the land that Indigenous Peoples thrived on, before land settlements, and in being inclusive of this population. A number of cities and organizations emphasize the contribution of Indigenous Peoples have made and continue to make through education, arts, sports, parks amenities and interpretative efforts.

The Province of Ontario Ministry of Indigenous Relations, in concert with the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, the Metis Nation of Ontario and the Native Women’s Association, developed the Urban Indigenous Action Plan which encourages partnerships, relationships, collaboration and co-development of service planning and delivery.

## Increasing the Frequency, Duration and Intensity of Physical Activity Levels

The City of St. Thomas has collaborated with Southwestern Public Health to develop the Healthy Communities Network. Amongst the many social and health issues addressed by this initiative, a key focus is to increase the physical activity levels of residents. The initiative to address increasing physical activity is called Active Elgin and the supporting slogan is “Move Your Way Today.” To increase communications, education and awareness the website lists all related plans and studies, offers educational videos and all active opportunities in Elgin County. This approach demonstrates best practices in increasing healthy behaviours in communities and all efforts to support this initiative should continue. The commitment is considered long-term as changing behaviours to become consistently active and reduce screen time will take decades of concentrated effort.

### Promising Practice

The City of St. Thomas has placed signs and kiosks along parks and trails to indicate how far it is to walk to key locations in the community. This is based on research that found that placing distance markings on trails was an effective and simple way of increasing physical activity.

## Increasing Access to Nature and the Outdoors

St. Thomas boasts many opportunities to be outdoors in naturalized and well-maintained open parks spaces and trails. Educating and encouraging residents to get engaged in increasing their access to nature, outdoor activities and animating outdoor spaces is a role that the Parks and Recreation Department does and should continue to play.

In recent decades, with the concern for children’s safety and a greater number of parents in the workforce, casual outdoor play opportunities have decreased for children. The adage of “be home when the streetlights come on” is no longer a direction parents often offer their children. They are supervised for their safety and outdoor play is scheduled within busy family schedules. Research is demonstrating that lack of access to nature is resulting in higher levels of anxiety in children and youth, as well as other mental health issues. The sedentary behaviours associated with an increase in screen time are also contributing to less time in nature and the outdoors.

Canadian author Drew Monkman in his book “The Big Book of Nature Activities” shares some surprising statistics:

- The average North American child sits in front of a screen 2,738 hours per year;
- The average child is spending 183 hours per year in outdoor unstructured play;
- The average child can recognise 300 corporate logos; and
- Children can identify 10 native plants and animals.

Many communities are embracing the importance of outdoor play from a child development and lifelong health perspective and are offering a multi-faceted approach to increasing outdoor play. Strategies include increasing education and awareness of the importance of access to the outdoors, as well as the provision of challenging play opportunities to keeping children outdoors longer.

### **Promising Practice**

Two examples of simple and inexpensive applications in keeping children outdoors longer include the large sand / dirt hill existing in Trinity Bellwoods Park in Toronto – children climb, dig, play games, and run up and down the hill and thoroughly enjoy the experience. The hill is just beside a playground and tends to extend children's time outdoors and adds to their sense of fun and skill mastery.

Many municipalities are placing larger toys in playgrounds to increase the time spent in the outdoors and to centre on imagination and mastering different skills. Large toy bulldozers, play kitchens, wheelbarrows, pails and shovels are placed in the playground to the delight of children. Anecdotally, parents have stated that they are pleased with this approach, stay in the playgrounds longer and are using social media to promote the use of local playgrounds.

ParticipACTION released a position statement on Outdoor Play aimed at increasing access to nature and activity levels in children. The statement centres on children being more active when they are outdoors opposed to more sedentary behaviours while indoors. The key statement reads:

***“Access to active play in nature and outdoors - with its risks – is essential for healthy child development. We recommend increasing children’s opportunities for self-directed play outdoors in all settings – at home, at school, in the community and in nature.”***

### Connecting Canadians with Nature

The Canadian Parks Council undertook a study to make the case for engagement in outdoor pursuits entitled “Connecting Canadians with Nature”. The research is compelling and is relevant in reducing the health risks of sedentary behaviours and too much time spent indoors. Key research findings on the impacts of inactivity / obesity and not being engaged in outdoor activity include (but are not limited to):

- There is a shift towards more self-centeredness, with declines in intimacy and empathy rates in children<sup>4</sup>;

---

<sup>4</sup> Guhn, M., Gadermann, A. and Zumbo, B. 2010. Canadian Index of Wellbeing. Report highlights: Education. Waterloo, ON: University of Waterloo, Applied Health Sciences. pp. 12.

- Obesity is an epidemic - 1 in 4 Canadians are obese and rates are climbing<sup>5</sup>;
- Millions of Canadians are at risk for serious long-term health problems due to Vitamin D deficiencies<sup>6</sup>;
- Due to obesity and other health issues, today's children may in fact have shorter and lower quality lives than their parents<sup>7</sup>;
- Behaviour-modifying drugs are increasingly commonplace, treating everything from attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) to depression<sup>8</sup>;
- Chronic stress and anxiety are costing millions in lost workplace productivity annually<sup>9</sup>;
- Canada continues to receive a near-failing grade for innovation, a black mark on our country's ability to be creative and take risks<sup>10</sup>; and
- Canadians spend 90 percent of their time indoors<sup>11</sup>.

### Special Events Strengthen Community Pride and Cohesion

Community input revealed high satisfaction levels with the special events that are organized by the City. The public recognized the benefits to the community in increasing community pride and cohesion and the economic spin-off to small businesses. There was an indication that the public would like to experience more special events throughout the year. The caveat was that the costs to provide these events would need to find alternate funding sources other than the tax base. While this is a challenging approach it could be accomplished if there is a demonstrated need and willing funding partner(s).

A suggested feasibility process would be to complete an inventory of the special events that are offered by all community groups to the general public in a given year in St. Thomas (building on the cultural mapping exercise) and to understand what they are setting about to achieve, approximate attendance numbers and funding mechanisms. A listing of all events in surrounding communities would augment the development of a fulsome inventory. A gap analysis should be undertaken to identify weeks/months where there are no special events and to develop a list of opportunities (local history, cultural events, Cultural Week, Youth Week, Parks and Recreation Month, Physical Activity

---

<sup>5</sup> Public Health Agency of Canada. 2011. Obesity in Canada. A joint report from the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Canadian Institute for Health Information. Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada. pp. 62.

<sup>6</sup> CBC News. 2010. Vitamin D deficiency in 1.1 million Canadians. 23 March 2010. Available at <https://www.cbc.ca/news/technology>

<sup>7</sup> National Wildlife Federation. 2012. Whole Child: Developing Mind, Body, and Spirit through Outdoor Play. Be Out There brochure. pp. 16.

<sup>8</sup> Centre for ADHD Awareness. 2012. Information on ADHD Fact Sheet. pp. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Conference Board of Canada. 2012. Canadian employers get temporary relief from rising benefit costs. News release 13-39. 23 October 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Conference Board of Canada. 2012. How Canada Performs — A Report Card on Canada. Available at: [www.conferenceboard.ca](http://www.conferenceboard.ca)

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). 1989. Report to Congress on Indoor Air Quality — Vol. II: Assessment and Control of Indoor Air Pollution. EPA/400/1-89/001C.



Day etc.). It will be important for the City to understand if there are any major gaps or if communications and promotions to a wider geography would increase attendance and participation.

Funding and resourcing are a concern in a climate of competing needs for funding. Often parks and facility staff are required to complete the set up and breakdown of events as well as maintaining waste collection and providing other supports at these events, which must be factored into the consideration. It is suggested that as a first step, a gap analysis regarding special events be developed for review and consideration by the Special Events Committee.

## Recommendations

1. Begin more formal and joint discussions with **non-municipal parks, recreation and culture providers** (e.g., YMCA, Talbot Teen Centre, Seniors Centre, Public Arts Centre, schools, etc.) in St. Thomas to reduce duplication, share resources and jointly focus on key community priorities.
2. Increase the frequency, intensity and duration of **physical activity** within all age groups through education, engagement and working with other community partners.
3. Review **program provision** annually to ensure that all age groups (e.g., seniors, youth, families) are receiving a wide range of opportunities and that registration and participation are maximized.
4. Promote **free and low-cost activity options** to ensure universal access across the community.
5. Support the recommendations of Southwestern Public Health's Access to Affordable Recreation Report. Begin with establishing an **Access to Affordable Recreation policy** in concert with community partners to demonstrate the belief that access to affordable recreation will assist in reducing poverty and increasing beneficial outcomes.
6. Work with all youth service providers in St. Thomas to ensure that the **Playworks Youth Friendly Criteria** are being met.
7. Consider development and implementation of **youth leadership programs** in St. Thomas.
8. Work with the Seniors Recreation Centre Board and other like partners to enhance **recreation program opportunities for older adults** across the City and integrate age-specific programs and services into future indoor recreation development.
9. Develop a **communication plan** and specific initiatives to increase access to nature and the outdoors in concert with all interested partners in St. Thomas.
10. Develop training opportunities, policies and intentional practices as outlined to better include residents who may be **marginalized** (including, but not limited to, residents from low income backgrounds, residents with disabilities and females).

## 4.3 Strengthening Municipal Supports and Building Internal Capacity

### 4.3.1 Current State

Recommendations to improve service provision require focus and the internal capacity to deliver on them. There is a public expectation that they will be acted upon and lead to improvements over time. Initiatives discussed in this section are inward-facing improvements that seek to engage staff in developing service levels, resource allocations, and working with the public and user groups in developing policies and strong partnership models.

The key focus areas for consideration include:

- a) Confirming service levels to determine the most effective resource allocation
- b) Basing rates and fees on the true cost of delivering programs and services
- c) Refining allocation policies
- d) Strengthening marketing and communications efforts
- e) Expanding partnership and sponsorship opportunities
- f) Employing demonstrated quality assurance mechanisms
- g) Organizational effectiveness
- h) Measuring departmental performance

A discussion of the aforementioned focus areas follows, including recommendations for the City's consideration. The first step is confirming service levels, after which an external audit should be completed to determine potential service improvements.

### 4.3.2 Confirming Service Levels to Determine the Most Effective Resource Allocation

The City of St. Thomas takes pride in the delivery of parks and recreation services, ensures that services are centred on the needs of residents, and are delivered considering safety and quality assurance. Setting levels of service will serve to ensure that public expectations are being met and rigorous standards are in place for how services are delivered. Once service levels are confirmed, determining potential service improvements will ensure services are being delivered in the most efficient manner. This supports how resources are allocated to expand programs and services to match growth of the community. The process to set levels of service involves engaging the public and stakeholder groups in determining how often services are offered and considers duration, legislative compliance, quality industry standards and the ideal target conditions that should exist. Setting service levels requires continual public input in terms of satisfaction levels and changing levels as the community changes and grows. Staff must continue to be nimble and change the levels and provision of services as community needs change.

Many levels of service are in place and it will be a matter of refining and documenting them. For instance, the outdoor pool operates in the summertime and provides a defined number of hours of lessons, open swim and other activities.

Once the levels of service and considerations are confirmed, the City will confirm the time that it takes to complete the scheduled and emergency actions on an annual basis. This analysis will determine how many FTEs and other resources it takes to provide these levels of service. As demand for services increase due community growth and increased participation, any requests for additional resources will be defensible and based on approved levels of service. This initiative is important now as increased growth will inevitably require additional services. Defining service levels allows the City to determine what resources will be needed in the future. This should be followed by an external audit to determine potential service improvements.

### **Actions Required in Developing and Refining Levels of Service**

Municipalities in Ontario typically provide a similar range of parks, recreation and cultural services to the public. Often this range of services is based on tradition, trends, public expectations, demographics and community partners. Staff serve to refine the range of services and levels of service based on public satisfaction levels and utilization; pent up demands will require an increase in the service and lower demands may require greater promotional efforts and / or eliminating the provision of that service. Levels of service are articulated to obtain public agreement and Council approval on the type of service and the way that it is provided. The following illustration provides a continuum on the development of levels of service, the identification of the resources needed to provide them and refining services based on utilization – always keeping services resident-centred. Staff's role is to continually determine the most effective and efficient method of providing these levels of service while maintaining high public satisfaction.

Figure 23 Developing and Refining Levels of Service



### 4.3.3 Basing Rates and Fees on the True Cost of Delivering Programs and Services

Many community, staff and Council members commented on user fees for parks and recreation programs and services and had an interest in understanding the true cost to deliver services. The current practice is to increase user fees by approximately 3% each year and comparing to the market. It is important for the City to know the true costs to deliver programs and service first before setting fair-minded recovery rates for program types and by age grouping.

The development of a user fee policy would serve to understand the costs to provide services as well as what percentage of the costs are recovered through revenues (user fees). A comparison to other and surrounding municipal recreation and parks fees should also be undertaken to ensure that St. Thomas does not lose residents to other providers. Many residents from surrounding municipalities are accessing programs and services provided by St. Thomas. Instead of charging a non-resident fee, suggestions centred on working with adjacent municipalities to discuss a reciprocal arrangement whereby fiscal contribution could help to offset the net expenditures for parks and recreation in St. Thomas. More exploration is needed regarding this concept.

Developing a fair and equitable User Fee Policy in a municipal recreation setting involves a comprehensive set of tasks that must engage the end users of the facility, program or service. The overall task must first look to understand the cost of the service and then recognize what is achievable in recovering the cost of the service. There must also be a consideration for lower income residents who face fiscal, equipment and transportation barriers in accessing the recreation programs and services.

A listing of steps to be taken in establishing a User Fee Process have been detailed in **Appendix C**.

### 4.3.4 Refining Allocation Policies

Public and staff suggestions were offered during the engagement process to review the allocation policies and processes. Comments noted that the current policies are partially based on how facilities have historically been allocated. For example; a hockey group would get the hours that they were allocated in the previous season subject to review of registrations. This may not allow for new groups to obtain time in public facilities. There are also standards developed by the varying federal and provincial sport organizations based on the level of play articulated in the Long-Term Athlete Development Program (LATD) that require discussion and inclusion in the policy. Another consideration is that the review includes a gender equity clause whereby female and males and those who identify as same receive equitable facility and field times, days and prime and non-prime hours. The allocation policy should have a clause built in to prompt a review every three years or as required.

### 4.3.5 Strengthening Marketing and Communications Efforts

Active Elgin and the City's website currently capture the program opportunities available to the general public. The online calendar is useful to residents as they plan their activities. The Master Plan's consultation program found that more communication efforts are needed to inform the public on a continued basis of the opportunities available to them. Suggested improvements include:

- Add registration dates and upcoming events and alerts to the online calendar so that residents can better plan their time;
- Place relevant policies such as allocation policies and the proposed recreation access subsidy policy online;
- Train facility leads to be able to post pictures and promote events in real time;
- Develop a community engagement platform to gather input on pending policy developments and other inputs required;
- Engage residents to a greater extent on social media to create a broader reach; and
- Use social media to communicate with the public (e.g., reasons for delays cutting grass, notice of public meetings, posting volunteer opportunities, promoting special events, summer staff hiring, program registration deadlines, facility closures, etc.).

### 4.3.6 Expanding Partnership and Sponsorship Opportunities

St. Thomas has been proactive in seeking out alternate revenues at the Joe Thornton Community Centre in the naming of rooms and rink board advertising. The parks system promotes the opportunity for commemorative/memorial benches. These are mechanisms that prove fruitful if there is the time and ability to develop sponsorship and partnership opportunities. More successful municipal programs articulate sponsorship opportunities first, and then develop a one-page overview and seek out potential partners and sponsors. This practice is more proactive and does not wait for a funding source to approach the City. The naming of gardens, increasing tree plantings, sponsoring programs and specific services can all be addressed to augment service provision in this manner. These funding opportunities are forwarded to service clubs and other likely funders can be posted in summary form on website. Presenting these opportunities to potential partners begins to form long lasting partners and sponsors.

### 4.3.7 Employing Demonstrated Quality Assurance Mechanisms

Most of Ontario's municipalities offer or enable parks, recreation and culture opportunities through direct and indirect programming models. Residents anticipate an emphasis on quality assurance in service delivery. Providing services to thousands of users requires standard policies and practices that not only ensure that legislative requirements are met, but also a level of assurance that customer service and quality standards are key service delivery drivers. There are two quality assurance frameworks that should be considered for recreation service delivery: Parks and Recreation Ontario – HIGHFIVE Healthy Child Development; and Lifesaving Society of Ontario Aquatic Safety Management accreditation.

## **HIGH FIVE – Principles of Healthy Child Development - Parks and Recreation Ontario**

The two key phases of the quality assurance framework in recreation centre on: HIGH FIVE Quest 1 (to train relevant staff and volunteers; test policies, procedures and communications; and adherence to practices); and Quest 2 (a program assessment and improvement tool). The HIGH FIVE quality assurance program ensures that children's programs are age-appropriate, meet safety and supervisory needs, are enjoyable and offer some skill mastery. The HIGH FIVE quality assurance program developed by Parks and Recreation Ontario has recently been extended to older adult programming (Active Aging). These two quality assurance frameworks require staff training and monitoring of compliance within the City's program offerings. City of St. Thomas recreation staff are currently trained in HIGH FIVE Quest 1 and it is recommended that the City continue with this training requirement. The City should also consider training staff in the HIGH FIVE Principles of Healthy Aging, should they proceed with expansion of older adult programming.

## **Aquatic Safety Management Accreditation – Lifesaving Society of Ontario**

The Aquatic Safety Management Program was developed by the Lifesaving Society (LSS) to ensure that pool operators and aquatic service providers comply with legislative requirements and industry standards. This is critical in aquatic settings due to the potential for water-related incidents. LSS offers an audit service to review all aspects of the pool operations. Facilities that successfully demonstrate compliance for pool operations may apply for accreditation.

The City of St. Thomas is already a registered affiliate of the Lifesaving Society. Through affiliation, the City is able to train and recruit LSS-certified lifeguards and swim instructors and provide LSS programming such as learn to swim and aquatic leadership courses. To build upon the existing affiliation, it is recommended that the City of St. Thomas seek accreditation for Jaycee's Pool through the Lifesaving Society's Aquatic Safety Management Program.

### **4.3.8 Organizational Effectiveness**

The development of the Master Plan required discussions with staff teams and individual staff members to better understand the strengths and challenges present in the current operations. These discussions revealed that there are some units that are highly engaged and well informed while others feel that there are improvements needed in these areas. The key areas of focus that have resulted from these discussions include equitable staff engagement, clarification of the levels of service and the resultant allocation staff and other resources. These elements of organizational effectiveness are important to ensure that all staff have input into the ongoing operations of the department, that levels of service reflect public expectations and Council direction, that productivity is measured, and a cycle of ongoing improvement is embraced. The key areas of focus are described further to set a standard of internal engagement and continued support.



## The Planning and Staff Engagement Continuum

The following illustration shows an annual methodology of planning and delivering on work by engaging staff in the process. It commits staff to regular communications, professional development, and builds and strengthens departmental values and behaviours as a collective. The result is a refreshed commitment to continually improving service delivery.

### Staff Engagement

Engaging staff is an important element of success in any line of work. Engagement efforts must not centre on management presenting their ideas but reversed to capture staff's issues and ideas. Discussions must be organized and centred on the values of the department if they have not been articulated corporately. In St. Thomas' Parks and Recreation Department there are mixed responses as to how well staff are engaged. This can be remedied by building an annual planning framework that seeks to gain agreement on priorities and the assignment of specific tasks. Recognition of contributions and great work also becomes part of the annual engagement effort. The approval of the Master Plan is an excellent starting point to demonstrate consistent engagement and distribution of varying tasks that will assist in meeting the recommended expectations of the Master Plan.

### Departmental Values and Behaviours

Initial discussions with the staff team should centre on the values and respective behaviours of the collective. This is a time when staff can speak to what is important in performing their work as all participants would have an equal voice. Further discussion would centre on what behaviours would support each value and a commitment by all staff to work by these positive values and behaviours. This would set the groundwork for a high performing and respected staff team to excel consistently.

Figure 24 The planning and Staff Engagement Continuum

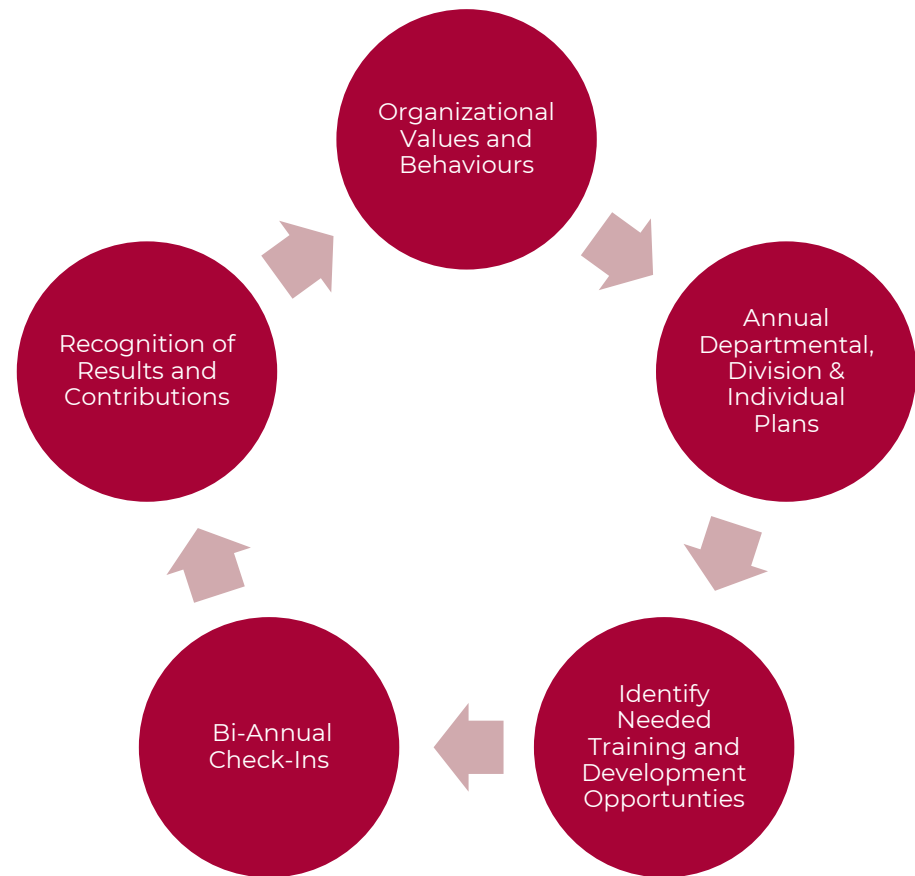


Table 5 Sample Values and Behaviours Statement

Our Departmental Values	Our Commitment to Positive Behaviours
<b>Public Satisfaction</b>	<p>Our work will always meet industry standards unless an emergency or the growing season affects operations</p> <p>We will seek to maintain a public satisfaction level of 80% in all services (at a minimum)</p> <p>We will upgrade our training and professional development to provide a high level of service within our resource base</p>
<b>Strong Communications</b>	<p>All staff's opinions will be sought out and respected</p> <p>Every supervisor will meet individually with their direct report once every two months at a minimum</p> <p>All staff will get together to plan and discuss priorities and results twice per year</p> <p>All staff will have continued opportunities to provide constructive suggestions that will strengthen the department and the annual plan priorities</p>
<b>Efficient Operations</b>	<p>The allocation of resources will be based on approved service levels and best practices in service provision</p> <p>All staff will engage by researching and suggesting the most efficient way of completing work</p> <p>Staff will be taught and assisted in building the case for improvements where there would be a return on the investment</p> <p>Costs per service (hour of ice for example) is understood and efforts to reduce costs is everyone's responsibility</p> <p>Safety is critical to our work and all efforts to be compliant with legislated requirements will be made</p>
<b>Happy Workplace</b>	<p>Laughter and continued internal support will be the measure of our strong work culture</p>

These values and behaviours are an example of what staff could develop as part of an effort to engage all staff in building a healthy, cohesive workplace culture and efficient operations. Not all values and behaviours will be in place at the outset and specific efforts will need to be made to achieve these internal standards over time.

## Departmental, Unit and Individual Plans

The Master Plan brings with it a host of recommendations and a thoughtful implementation plan. This will form the basis of the departmental workplan in concert with other community and corporate priorities. Ensuring that each of the staff units know the expectations assignments will assist in improving public satisfaction and addressing key community issues. Sharing the load is a way of building the strong collective. Developing individual work plans also serves to hold staff accountable for their work and service levels.

## Bi-Annual Check-Ins

Gathering staff twice per year to provide the status of major goals and objectives strengthens staff cohesion and communications. The sessions should also serve to garner staff input rather than just providing updates by staff leads or teams.

## Annual Results and Performance Measures

A summary of annual results that is available to the public is an important step in being accountable and also demonstrates where targets have been met as well as the priorities for the upcoming year.

## Recognition of Great Work

Recognizing staff teams or individuals can come in many ways and developing a recognition system by the staff team within the department will hold more weight. Recognition can be ongoing and should not wait until year-end. The approach should not feel exclusionary and should recognize staff who have responded well to certain circumstances, continuously met their service levels or received high public satisfaction levels.

One standard level of service is the response time that is promised to residents when there is a complaint. While a 24-hour response time is admirable from a public perspective, there are operational impacts. Staff are often trying to maintain levels of service regarding tree maintenance, groundskeeping, etc. The 24-hour response time can sometimes result in more complaints as levels of service cannot be

## Promising Practice

The Town of Ajax introduced an internal recognition system that prompts staff to send a quick note (pre-developed) of thanks to staff at any level of staff within any department. The note is copied to the staff person's supervisor and the office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). The CAO's office draws all or random names each month for a luncheon or coffee break with the CAO. This gives staff a chance to have some face time with the highest officer in the corporation and allows the CAO to hear from all levels of staff. Each participant is given a coffee mug that depicts "You Have Been Caught Doing Something Great!" to use and display in the workplace.



maintained if staff are pulled to do other work, regardless of the severity of the complaint. Often minor issues can wait. It is suggested that the corporation revisit response times based on the severity of the complaint.

#### 4.3.9 Measuring Departmental Performance

*“what gets measured gets done”*

Measuring performance allows an organization to quantify various elements of service delivery and to demonstrate if progress is being made toward intended outcomes and/or the setting of specific targets. In a municipal setting there is a need to demonstrate to the public that the investment of tax dollars is allocated toward worthwhile ends and that these investments are utilized efficiently and effectively. This data provides the information needed to complete an analysis and to ensure that program decisions are knowledge-based. At a higher level (department or program) performance is measured by collecting data on inputs, outputs, efficiencies and effectiveness. This data must also be utilized to compare levels of service year-to-year, allowing the ability to develop initiatives to demonstrate continued improvement.

A framework for measuring performance is suggested to reflect the full operations and goals of the St. Thomas Parks and Recreation Department. Data collection should be made simpler using technology while most information should be at hand. Annual reporting should also be a simple illustration that staff and the public can glean and determine if targets are being met or exceeded and if participation is increasing year over year. A typical performance measurement framework for parks and recreation departments includes capturing the inputs (resources approved to deliver service), outputs (what was achieved within the approved resources, such as number of participants, pool attendance, hectares of parkland, trees managed, square metres of gardens tended, etc.), efficiencies (the cost to deliver each service) and effectiveness (public and user satisfaction levels). Performance measures hold staff accountable for their work and provide valuable information to compare performance against intended targets.

It is suggested that the City take a proactive approach in evaluating programs and services through program evaluations and conducting surveys to identify strengths and gaps. Improving quality of service delivery continues to be required as the population changes. An annual review can place emphasis on areas where service improvements are needed.

Table 6 Municipal Program and Service Delivery Evaluation Considerations

Performance Measure Type	Answers These Questions	Suggested Performance Measures
<b>Inputs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What resources are allotted to the Parks and Recreation Department (human, fiscal and physical)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Full time equivalents in staff FTEs per service area</li> <li>Budget for key service areas</li> </ul>
<b>Outputs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What did the Department achieve with the resources provided?</li> <li>Were there increases in certain areas?</li> <li>How did these outputs compare to previous years?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service levels achieved</li> <li>Participation in recreation programs and drop-in opportunities, parks visits, etc.</li> <li>Results compared to the previous year or the average of the previous three years</li> </ul>
<b>Efficiencies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the unit costs and have any been reduced by increased participation or decreased costs?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact on unit costs (increased participation might result in a reduction of unit costs)</li> <li>Efficiencies achieved</li> </ul>
<b>Effectiveness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do the users and general public rate services?</li> <li>Have there been satisfaction level improvements in targeted areas?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Satisfaction levels per service type</li> <li>Comparison to previous year ratings or the average of the last three years</li> </ul>

## Recommendations

11. Review and summarize the **staffing and resourcing requirements** needed to implement the recommendations housed in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, currently and in the future.
12. Establish a process to confirm the **levels of service and staffing** for parks, recreation and cultural services. Based on these levels, determine work effort and required full-time equivalents for Council consideration.
13. Work with adjacent municipalities to discuss a **reciprocal and / or cost-sharing arrangement** for use of parks, recreation and culture services and facilities in St. Thomas. This may take the form of a fiscal contribution from participating municipalities to offset the net expenditures for provision in St. Thomas.
14. Develop a **Pricing and User Fee Policy** based on the true cost to deliver parks, recreation and cultural services and programs. Set realistic recovery rates when considering revenue generating opportunities. Consideration should be given to utilizing external services to assist with this work.

15. Develop and apply a **health equity lens** when planning for and providing parks, recreation and cultural services. Work with local agencies such as Southwestern Public Health and Active Elgin to better understand participation and interest in municipal program offerings.
16. Review the City's existing **sponsorship agreements** and develop a full list of sponsorship and partnership opportunities available. Once complete, begin to proactively seek partners and funders.
17. Revisit the City of St. Thomas' **response time standards** for public complaints based on the severity of the complaint and the impact on other work requirements.
18. Implement **Quality Assurance Frameworks** for all municipal parks, recreation and cultural programs and services (e.g., Aquatic Safety Management Accreditation, etc.).
19. Review all **allocation policies and processes** to ensure that they are mindful of national and provincial sport association guidelines, trends in sports and gender equity (at a minimum).
20. Adopt the **Organizational Effectiveness Framework** (as presented within this Master Plan) for full staff engagement and accountability in the delivery of service.
21. Review the **training and development requirements** needed to fully implement the Parks and Recreation Master Plan recommendations.
22. **Measure performance** and report to the public annually on the results of parks, recreation and cultural service delivery in St. Thomas.
23. Consider the merits of convening regular **information-sharing forums** involving Council, City staff and the community. Discussions should focus on gathering information and ideas on challenging subjects or specific topics that would benefit from public discourse, such as capital projects, trend-watching, communications and more.
24. Continue to explore ways to increase the **online presence** of parks, recreation and culture services. Use the City's website, online calendar and social media accounts to disseminate pertinent information (e.g., service interruptions, registration dates, employment opportunities) and enable service providers to promote local activities and events.





## 5 Indoor and Outdoor Recreation Analysis





## 5.1 Recreation Facilities

The City of St. Thomas provides a wide range of recreation facilities, both indoor and outdoor. Many of them are standard components of a municipal parks and recreation facility inventory such as playgrounds, sports fields and arenas; but the City's also prides itself on offering St. Thomas-specific facilities, programs and services. For example, St. Thomas is home to two municipal disc golf courses and recently invested in a renowned tennis and pickleball facility to support local demand for activities. The following sections evaluate the City's current provision rates and provide recommendations for future development and investment in recreation facilities for St. Thomas.

## 5.2 Outdoor Recreation Facilities

A range of active and passive outdoor recreation opportunities are offered throughout St. Thomas. These outdoor recreation facilities include major sports parks such as the IPassword Park and the Douglas J. Tarry Sports Complex, stand-alone facilities such as Jaycee's Pool, as well as smaller neighbourhood-based facilities such as playgrounds.

According to the community survey, 82% of households feel that outdoor recreation facilities such as sports fields, playgrounds and pools are important; while 75% of households are satisfied with these facilities in St. Thomas. This difference suggests that residents are very satisfied with the provision and maintenance of outdoor recreation facilities, although some shortfalls exist.

The following analysis focuses on the major recreational amenities within the City's parks and recreation system; amenities such as seating, shade, washrooms, etc. are not specifically addressed but form part of the park design recommendations contained in **Section 7**.

The following table provides a summary of existing outdoor facilities that are owned and / or maintained by the City of St. Thomas as of June 2019. Additional detail on municipal parks and outdoor recreation facilities is contained in **Appendix B**. A map illustrating the location of all municipal parks and major recreation amenities can be found in **Section 7.1**.



Table 7 City of St. Thomas Outdoor Recreation Facility Summary

Outdoor Facilities	Supply	Location(s)
<b>Ball Diamonds</b>	21 30 ULE*	Hardball (lit) Cardinal Field, New York Central, Emslie Field
		Softball (lit) Douglas J. Tarry Sports Complex (5), Gorman Rupp
		Softball (unlit) Burwell Road Park, Centennial Sports Club Diamonds (8), Lion's Park (2), Optimist Park
<b>Soccer and Multi-Use Fields</b>	50 52 ULE*	Multi-Use Turf (lit) 1Password Park
		Full (unlit) Athletic Park (2), Cowan Park (3), Douglas J. Tarry Sports Complex (1), Optimist Park (1)
		Intermediate 1Password Park (10), Athletic Park (4), Cowan Park (1)
		Mini 1Password Park (26), Athletic Park (1)
<b>Playgrounds (locations)</b>	22	1Password Park, Applewood Park, Athletic Park, Burwell Road Park, Centennial Sports Club, Cowan Park, Donker Park, Douglas J. Tarry Sports Complex, Gorman Rupp Park, Greenway Park, Homedale Park, Jonas Street Park, Kin Park, Lion's Park, Oldewood Park, Optimist Park, Peter Laing Park, Pinafore Park, Rosethorn Park, Waterworks Park, Wellington Street School, Woodhaven Park
<b>Outdoor Fitness Equipment</b>	1	Optimist Park
<b>Tennis and Pickleball Courts</b>	17	Tennis (lit) Pinafore Park (8)
		Tennis (unlit) Rosethorn Park
		Pickleball (lit) Pinafore Park (8)
<b>Basketball and Multi-Use Courts</b>	11	Basketball 1Password Park (2), Burwell Road Park, Horton Farmers Market (3) Lions Park, Optimist Park (2), Rosethorn Park
		Multi-Use Cowan Park
<b>Outdoor Ice Rinks</b>	N/A	Not currently provided by the City
<b>Action Sports Parks</b>	1	Railway City Skatepark
<b>Outdoor Pools</b>	1	Joanne Brooks Memorial Park (Jaycees Pool - rectangular swimming tank and diving well)
<b>Splash Pads</b>	3	1Password Park, Pinafore Park, Waterworks Park
<b>Off-Leash Dog Parks **</b>	1	Lions Club Dog Park
<b>Mountain Bike Courses</b>	N/A	Not currently provided by the City
<b>Disc Golf Courses</b>	2	V.A. Barrie Park, Waterworks Park
<b>Recreational Trails</b>	30 km	Includes hard-surface trails within the city
<b>Pavilions / Gazebos</b>	12	1Password Park, Cowan Park, Douglas J. Tarry Sports Complex, Jonas Street Park, Pinafore Park (6), Waterworks Park (2)

\* Unlit Equivalents (ULE) are counted as 3.0 for every lit turf soccer field or 2.0 for every lit ball diamond to account for extended periods of play

\*\* Note: the city is also served by a dog park at Kettle Creek Conservation Area

## 5.2.1 Ball Diamonds

### Current State

The City of St. Thomas currently supplies 21 ball diamonds (30 ULE)<sup>12</sup>. The Centennial Sports Club Diamonds are the largest ball complex in the city, with 8 unlit softball diamonds and one lit hardball diamond (Cardinal Field). Adjacent to this site is the Douglas J. Tarry Sports Complex, which is home to 5 lit softball diamonds. Lions Park provides 2 unlit softball diamonds while Burwell Park and Optimist Park contain one unlit softball diamond each. Additional lit diamonds include New York Central (hardball), Gorman Rupp (softball) and Emslie Field at Pinafore Park (hardball).

### Emerging Issues and Needs

As exemplified by local growth, popularity of baseball has increased throughout the province. Across Ontario, youth ball registration has steadily increased over the last few years (spiked in response to Blue Jays success) and participation in adult recreational leagues has also remained strong. Ball diamonds in St. Thomas are well-used by both youth and adult leagues as the city is well known for its successful programs and tournaments.

### Assessment

According to the online survey, 19% of households participated in baseball or softball within the last 12 months. These facilities received low levels of support for additional investment, ranking 22<sup>nd</sup> of 25 list facilities (50% support).

Ball organizations were invited to participate in stakeholder workshops to discuss participation trends, challenges, needs and opportunities to work together. The following table summarizes the feedback obtained during those consultation sessions.



---

<sup>12</sup> Unlit Equivalent (ULE) are counted as 2.0 for every lit ball diamond to account for extended periods of play.

Table 8 Summary of Ball Diamond Organization Feedback

Club / Organization	Membership (approximate)	Discussion Points
<b>St. Thomas Minor Baseball</b>	600	Players range in age from 4 to 21, “baseball like the Blue Jays Play”. House league, select, competitive, options to fit the needs of all players. Registration increased the last few years, now stabilizing. Host three large tournaments per year and just opened an indoor facility for year-round training. Difficulty finding enough practice time on the existing supply of diamonds.
<b>Optimist Youth Softball</b>	250	First established in the 1970’s, Optimist Youth Softball provides opportunities for players to have fun and learn the game. Participant ages range from 3 to 17 years old and participation numbers have been steadily increasing in recent years. Representatives indicated a desire for additional diamond time to accommodate growth and opportunities for practice.
<b>St. Thomas Tomcats</b>	24	The Tomcats are an elite Junior Intercounty Baseball Club that plays and trains at Emslie Field in Pinafore Park. They host home games on Friday evenings and play league games in the Southwest Senior Baseball league. Tomcats representatives did not provide input.
<b>St. Thomas Special Olympics</b>	N/A	Special Olympics Baseball offers drop-in participation at Lions Park throughout the summer months. The sessions are one hour long and available for a variety of age groups from children to teens and adults. No Special Olympics representatives were present.
<b>Ladies Slo-Pitch</b>	255	Representatives from Ladies Slo-Pitch indicated that they are satisfied with their current diamond allocation and are able to accommodate play for all teams. Registration has been slowly declining; but the league is hoping to maintain the current number of teams. Ladies slo-pitch uses two weekends at Tarry Complex for tournaments annually.
<b>Men’s Slo-Pitch</b>	440	Men’s slo-pitch has consistent access to diamonds on same nights annually and did not have any representatives present at the stakeholder consultation sessions.
<b>St. Thomas Co-Ed Slo-Pitch League</b>	48 teams 800 players (estimated)	Co-Ed Slo-Pitch has experienced a significant increase in number of teams registered in recent years. The league primarily plays at the Douglas J. Tarry Sports Complex but also uses Gorman Rupp & Burwell Park. The majority of players are adults generally between the ages of 25 and 45. They would like increased access to diamonds (the group indicated that the league could expand by 12 teams next year) but understand the need to balance with youth leagues. Two major tournaments are hosted each year.



The groups are generally satisfied with the facilities and appreciate the commitment and efforts of municipal staff and local sport organizations. Some general feedback that resonated with most participating groups included:

- **Diamond Improvements:** multiple groups indicated a desire for lights to be installed at Burwell Park to increase play at that facility. A few organizations would like hydro access to be added to at least one more diamond for use of pitching machines, and others identified drainage concerns and suggested that addressing these issues may help improve diamond recovery after heavy rain.
- **Support Amenities:** lack of washrooms was identified as an issue, particularly for leagues with young children. Groups that play at the Tarry Sports Complex and Centennial Ball Diamonds suggested that an umpire room would be beneficial, particularly during busy tournament weekends. They similarly identified concerns over congestion and insufficient parking at sports parks on tournament weekends.
- **Communication and Transparency:** multiple groups discussed a desire for increased communication with City staff. Stakeholder participants would like more information on rates and fees as well as policies regarding rainouts and field allocation processes.

A review of schedules at municipal diamonds shows that municipal diamonds are consistently booked on weeknights with flexibility for tournaments and rain-outs to be scheduled on weekends. Consultations with staff and stakeholders indicated that the diamonds are booked throughout the playing season on weekends to accommodate tournaments hosted by various local leagues.

The majority of lit diamonds (both hardball and softball) accommodate two recreational or house league games / practices or one competitive game per weekday evening. Lit softball diamonds are primarily used by adult slo-pitch leagues and additionally provide use for youth softball games. Unlit softball diamonds at Centennial Sports Park are primarily used by St. Thomas Minor Baseball for games and practices while other unlit ball diamonds are reserved for use by Optimist Softball. The local Special Olympics Baseball program also offers drop-in programming at Lions Park.





A market-specific provision target is the preferred method to evaluate the need for ball diamonds. In similar communities, a target of one diamond (unlit equivalent) per 80 – 100 registered players (both adult and youth) is an appropriate provision rate and allows flexibility for frequent weekend tournaments. Considering that ball diamond use in St. Thomas is fairly evenly distributed between both adult and youth users, a provision target of 1:90 is recommended.

With a current supply of 30 ULE and an estimated total of 2,350 registered players (residents and non-residents), St. Thomas is accommodating an average of 78 players per diamond. This figure indicates that the City's current supply of ball diamonds has capacity for additional use.

Using the combined participation of approximately 2,350 players (850 youth and 1500 adults) and considering growth forecasts for the City of St. Thomas, it is estimated that future growth of baseball / softball registrations could reach nearly 2,820 by the year 2041 if participation rates remain stable. Application of the 1:90 provision target indicates a present need for 26.0 diamonds (ULE), growing to 31.5 (ULE) by 2041. This represents a need for 1.5 additional diamonds (ULE) over the next twenty years (to be considered once the existing inventory reaches a minimum of 90% capacity).

In the short-term, the City of St. Thomas should focus on opportunities to improve user experience and playability at existing sites. Some examples of this include: adding lights to Burwell Park (which would also increase capacity by 1.0 ULE); and addressing parking issues at Centennial Sports Park / Douglas J. Tarry Sports Complex (possibly through repurposing of the soccer field).

The City of St. Thomas should remain apprised of registration trends in the community, particularly because of potential for significant fluctuation in adult team registration from year to year. All future planning for ball diamond facilities should be done in consultation with local stakeholders to verify community demand for diamonds.

## Recommendations

25. Continue to **consult with stakeholder organizations** to discuss **ball diamond** allocation, participation / registration, site maintenance, etc.
26. Improve **user experience** and **playability** at existing **ball diamond** sites (e.g., install lights at Burwell Park, address parking issues at Douglas J. Tarry Sports Complex, etc.).
27. Consider development of **1.5 additional ball diamonds (ULE)** over the long term (once existing diamonds reach a minimum of 90% capacity). This may be achieved by improving existing sites (e.g., installing lights), aligning diamond design with intended use, re-purposing existing open space sites and / or future parkland acquisition.

## 5.2.2 Soccer and Multi-Use Fields

### Current State

The City of St. Thomas currently provides 50 soccer fields (52 ULE)<sup>13</sup>. The recently completed 1Password Park is the premier sports park in St. Thomas and accounts for 37 of the City's rectangular fields. 1Password Park is home to 10 intermediate fields (9 vs. 9 and 7 vs. 7), 26 mini fields (5 vs. 5 and 3 vs. 3) and the City's only lit multi-use artificial turf field. These fields replace those at the former Central Elgin Soccer Complex and are also intended to address future growth and demand in St. Thomas. Athletic Park is another sports park in the City which includes 2 full fields, 4 intermediate fields and one mini field. Cowan Park provides 3 full fields and 1 intermediate field, while the Douglas J. Tarry Sports Complex and Optimist Park provide 1 full field each.



### Emerging Issues and Needs

Soccer is popular in Canada and throughout the world. The sport is appealing to many because it is easy to learn, supports cardiovascular fitness and has a relatively low participation cost. After years of increasing registration across Ontario, youth soccer participation is beginning to level off in many communities, particularly at house league levels. Increased demand is now being seen for higher-quality fields for competitive and adult play.

A recent trend in soccer is the introduction of the long-term athlete development model for clubs affiliated with the Ontario Soccer Association. This program focuses on training and physical literacy and introduces new field dimensions as well as new player ratios. This training model impacts the demand for field time and was a significant factor in the design of 1Password Park.

### Assessment

Just over half of survey respondents (53%) supported investment in soccer fields, ranking 20<sup>th</sup> out of 25 listed facilities – this likely reflects the City's recent investment in 1Password Park. Locally, just over one-quarter (27%) of survey respondents indicated that their households had participated in soccer within the last 12 months. St. Thomas Minor Soccer provided an estimate of 1,700 registered players (1,150 of those youth) in the 2019 season; this club is the primary provider in St. Thomas. Prior to the development of 1Password Park, most games and practices were held at Athletic Park and Cowan Park with supplementary use at Optimist Park and the Douglas J. Tarry Sports Complex.

---

<sup>13</sup> Unlit equivalents (ULE) are counted as 3.0 for every lit artificial turf field to account for extended periods of play.

The St. Thomas Hawks (American football) reported a player base of approximately 100 youths in the 2018 season. The football organization has previously played in the outfield of Gorman-Rupp ball diamond (due to availability and lighting) but is expected to shift to 1Password Park. The football season typically begins after peak soccer and baseball season and extends into the fall, therefore minimally conflicting with other sport schedules.

According to past bookings, the City's soccer fields are consistently used and accommodate play throughout the season. The City's municipal supply of soccer fields has changed dramatically (development of 1Password Park) since last season (summer 2018) and therefore analysis of past scheduling does not provide context for field availability. However, it is expected that the City's current inventory of soccer fields will be able to accommodate growth in the sport for the duration of the planning period.

A provision target of one field per 80 registered players was used in the 2008 Master Plan. Many municipalities use ratios of one field for 60 to 100 players, depending on the levels of play and popularity of the sport in the community. Using a combined market size of approximately 1,800 players (soccer and football); the City's current supply equates to one field per 35 registered players. It is important to note that more than half of the inventory are mini fields, which are not used by youth and adult users. There is sufficient capacity within the current inventory to meet needs into the future.

City staff should continue to liaise with stakeholder organizations to monitor change over time and help transition to new field locations and booking schedules as the City grows into the newly expanded inventory. There may also be opportunity to repurpose surplus soccer fields to other uses, with a focus on those sites with single fields (i.e., Douglas J. Tarry Sports Complex and Optimist Park).

Public consultation revealed some interest in development of an indoor soccer facility, either through a permanent facility or installation of a seasonal dome. 1Password Park may be a future candidate for such a development and is discussed further in Section 5.3.4 - Indoor Soccer.

## Recommendations

28. Focus efforts on maximizing use of **soccer fields** at the three core parks (1Password Park, Athletic Park and Cowan Park) and consider repurposing under-utilized stand-alone soccer fields to other in-demand uses, such as those at the Douglas J. Tarry Sports Complex and Optimist Park. No additional soccer or multi-use fields are recommended during the planning period.

### 5.2.3 Playgrounds

#### Current State

The City of St. Thomas provides playgrounds at 22 locations (see *Figure 25 for distribution mapping*). Playground equipment is available at the following park sites: 1Password Park, Applewood Park, Athletic Park, Burwell Road Park, Centennial Sports Complex, Cowan Park, Donker Park, Douglas J. Tarry Sports Complex, Gorman Rupp Park, Greenway Park, Homedale Park, Jonas Street Park, Kin Park, Lion's Park, Oldewood Park, Optimist Park, Peter Laing Park, Pinafore Park, Rosethorn Park, Waterworks Park, Wellington Street School and Woodhaven Park. In addition, many schools provide public access to playgrounds outside of school hours.

#### Emerging Issues and Needs

Playground equipment provides young children in St. Thomas with flexible and unstructured play opportunities. These are generally neighbourhood-level facilities and should be accessible within 800-metres of residential areas without crossing a major barrier (e.g., rail line, major intersection, water body, etc.).

Modern playground designs supplement traditional swings, slides and monkey bars with more adventurous or risky play elements. These may include climbing walls, balance or suspension lines and ninja-style obstacles. Creative play is also encouraged through designs that follow a theme (e.g., pirate adventure, woodland forest, locomotive, etc.) which helps to stimulate organic use of the site through imaginative play. Natural playgrounds have also been installed in many municipalities – these include simple natural features such as tree stumps, strategically placed logs or slides built into the park's natural slope. Although not suitable for all parks, these sites provide opportunities for children to interact directly with nature and use their own creativity to foster free play.

#### Assessment

According to the online survey, 47% of households had used playground equipment within the last 12 months, making this the third most popular activity among respondents. Three-quarters (75%) of respondent households indicated support for additional investment in playgrounds, ranking 9<sup>th</sup> out of 25 listed facilities. These results indicate that playgrounds are well-used and valued components of community parks and recreation.

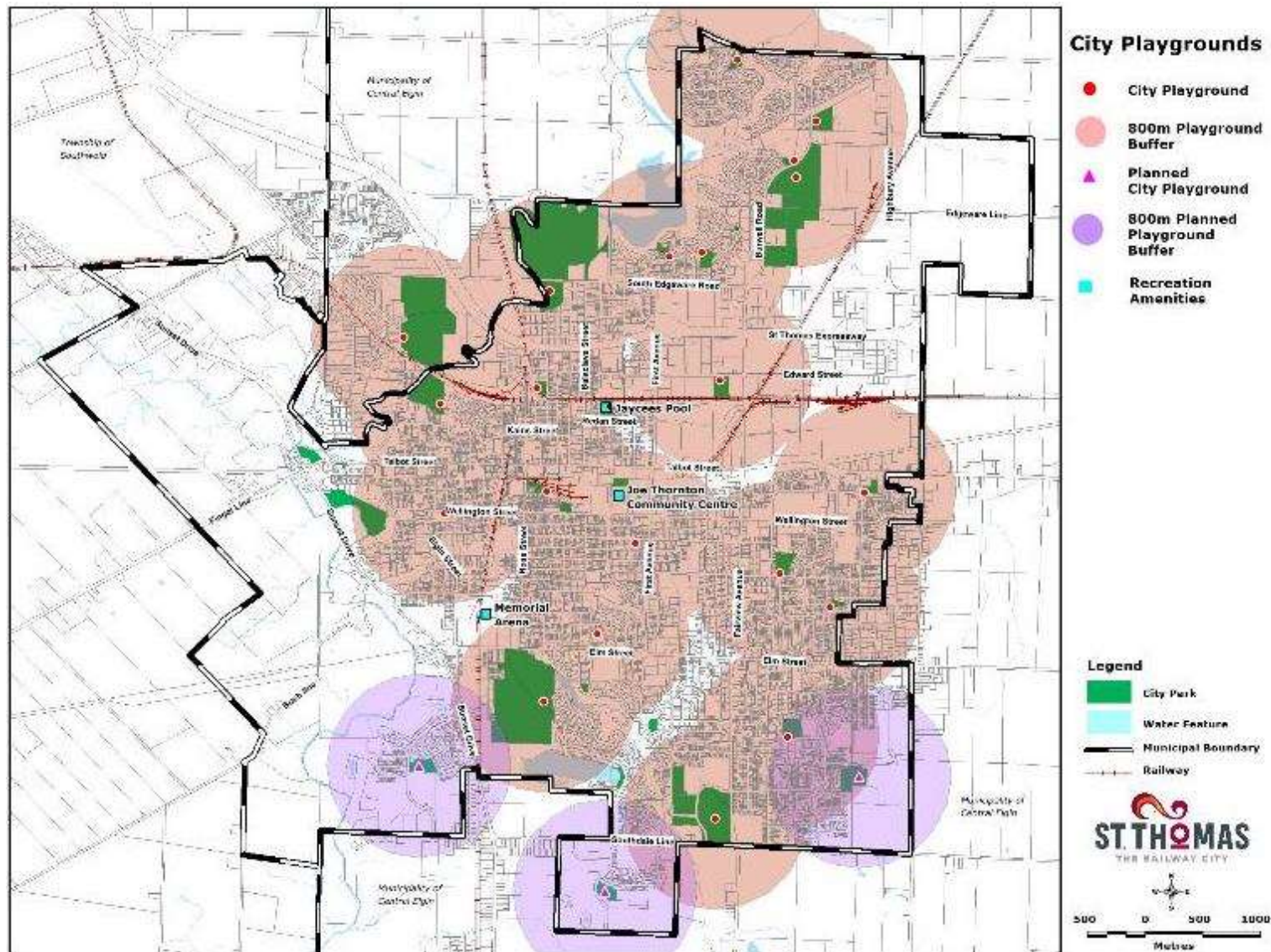
An 800-metre radius was used to evaluate playground accessibility. Established neighbourhoods in north, central and east areas of the city are well-supplied by existing playground locations. Geographic gaps in distribution are noted in newly-developed or growing areas of the municipality such as southwest, south-central and southeast subdivision





developments, as well as the proposed Settlement Area Expansion in the northwest. One other notable gap was identified in the vicinity of Elm Street and Fairview Avenue – an established neighbourhood.

Figure 25 City of St. Thomas current playground distribution (800m walkability buffer)





The City of St. Thomas is in the process of developing three new parks with playgrounds along the southern edges of the existing settlement area boundary. Shaw Valley Park (southwest), Parish Park (south-central) and Orchard Park (southeast) have all been assumed by the City and are going through the development process. All three are expected to be constructed and ready for play at some time in 2020, pending budget approval, design, consultation, construction, etc.

As part of the overarching Positioned for Growth Study the City is proposing to expand the Settlement Area Boundary to include “**Area 1**” as the preferred settlement area in the west. A park in the “Area 1” expansion should include playground equipment to provide accessible free play for children in the area.

The long-standing geographic gap in the vicinity of Elm Street and Fairview Avenue may be difficult to address because the surrounding residential neighbourhoods are well-established and do not offer available open space or green space. The City should monitor development activity in the area and consider opportunities for playground provision through redevelopment or intensification of an existing site.

## Recommendations

29. Proceed with park development and installation of **playground equipment** in Shaw Valley Park, Parish Park and Orchard Park in the short-term. Park designs should offer unique play experiences for each neighbourhood, particularly considering the relatively close proximity of all three newly-developed neighbourhood parks.
30. Plan for installation of **playground equipment** within a future park within the “**Area 1**” **expansion lands** in the medium-to long-term.
31. Consider opportunities to address the **playground gap** near **Elm Street and Fairview Avenue** through redevelopment or intensification in the area.

## 5.2.4 Outdoor Fitness Equipment

### Current State

The City of St. Thomas currently provides outdoor fitness equipment at Optimist Park; the only such site in the city.

### Emerging Issues and Needs

As the population ages, more adults are seeking opportunities to get outside and be physically active. Outdoor fitness equipment can be used by older youth and adults to support outdoor exercise. Popular in Europe and the United States, outdoor fitness equipment is now regaining popularity in Canadian parks (following the installation of ParticiParks in the 1970s). These pieces of modern equipment provide low-impact, bodyweight activities that focus on mobility, flexibility and strength training – great exercise options for older adults and seniors. Best practices suggest that these are best designed in a cluster of components to promote use, rather than spread out throughout a park or trail.

### Assessment

This type of facility is generally provided based on interest and demand, rather than a target provision rate or distribution. Considering the size of St. Thomas' population and use of these facilities in comparable municipalities, one outdoor fitness location for the entire city is recommended.

### Recommendations

32. Seek opportunities to increase use of existing **outdoor fitness** components through guided programs or community events that encourage active participation in outdoor physical activity. Additional outdoor fitness equipment is not recommended at this time.



## 5.2.5 Tennis and Pickleball Courts

### Current State

The City of St. Thomas currently supplies eight (8) lit outdoor tennis courts and eight (8) lit outdoor pickleball courts at Pinafore Park (the tennis courts were resurfaced and the pickleball courts were developed in 2017). The Pinafore Park facilities are available to the public but also support drop-in and league play organized by three separate clubs / organizations (1 tennis, 2 pickleball). One additional unlit tennis court is available at Rosethorn Park.

### Emerging Issues and Needs

Popularity of pickleball has grown exponentially over the last decade throughout the country. The game is described as a hybrid of other racquet sports (i.e., tennis and badminton) and is played on a court approximately one-quarter the size of a standard tennis court. The sport is favoured by older adults and seniors who wish to participate in physical activity with a relatively low impact, though younger groups are beginning to play the sport.

Tennis has also recently seen localized growth in the province with the success of Canadian players on the professional touring circuit. Demand for many racquet sport courts continues to grow, especially in municipalities with a growing population base of active older adults (such as St. Thomas).

### Assessment

Proponents of racquet sports in St. Thomas stated that there is a growing player base (particularly for pickleball) and that facilities to support play are well-used; they are often at capacity during peak periods of play. Results from the community survey found that 29% of households had participated in pickleball within the last 12 months, while 11% played tennis within the same timeframe. Just-over half (54%) of survey respondents indicated support for additional investment in pickleball facilities (ranking 17 of 25 listed facilities) and 44% of respondents supported investment in tennis courts (ranking 24 of 25 listed facility types). These results indicate strong participation in and support for pickleball facilities and slightly less demand and support for tennis. These figures were reflected in discussions with staff and stakeholders.

Three primary user groups were present at stakeholder consultations: Pinafore Tennis Club; St. Thomas Pickleball Club; and the Railway City Pickleball League. General comments from each of the racquet sport stakeholder groups are summarized in the table below.



Table 9 Summary of Racquet Sport Organization Feedback

Club / Organization	Membership (approximate)	Discussion Points
Pinafore Tennis Club	90	The local tennis club (St. Thomas Tennis Association) was originally formed in the 1970s and was successful until disbanding in the mid-1990s. Some of the original members saw an opportunity in the upgraded 8-court development and have resurrected the club (Ontario Tennis Association members). Club play is scheduled on six (6) of the Pinafore Park courts five (5) times weekly (Monday, Wednesday and Saturday mornings, and Monday and Wednesday evenings). The group is pleased with the new facility and hope that the courts will be well-maintained to support continued play in the future.
St. Thomas Pickleball Club	70	Originally formed in 2013, the St. Thomas Pickleball Club plays at both the Joe Thornton Community Centre (indoor) and Pinafore Park (outdoor). They offer drop-in play, lessons and league play throughout the year. They book three (3) weekly time slots (Monday morning, Wednesday evening and Saturday early morning) on the Pinafore Park courts.
Railway City Pickleball League	70	The Railway City Pickleball league was formed in response to capacity issues in the existing St. Thomas Pickleball Club. Membership growth has been strong and the league fills their allocated courts regularly. League play is scheduled on the Pinafore Park courts four (4) times weekly (Monday evening, Wednesday morning, Wednesday early evening and Saturday late morning).

The City of St. Thomas currently supplies one tennis court per 4,323 residents, indicating there is some capacity at the current facilities. The provision target for **tennis courts** should be adjusted to one (1) court per 5,000 residents to reflect recent investment in these facilities and local participation in the sport. Application of a 1:5,000 provision target equates to future demand of 9.75 tennis courts, which indicates long-term need for one additional court by 2041.

St. Thomas has been at the forefront of pickleball growth and development in the province, as one of the first municipalities to invest in a dedicated pickleball complex. Municipal provision of dedicated **pickleball courts** was not considered in the original 2008 Master Plan as it emerged after this time. However, given the tremendous growth of the sport in St. Thomas, a community and sport-specific provision target is now recommended. St. Thomas' population is growing, particularly in the older adult age cohort (a common age group for pickleball participation) and popularity of the sport continues to expand. To reflect the unique demands of the pickleball community in St. Thomas, a provision target of one pickleball court per 4,000 residents is recommended. This target should be reassessed regularly due to evolving participation patterns.

The City currently supplies one (1) outdoor pickleball court per 4,864 residents, suggesting that the current courts are at capacity and demand for additional facilities exists. Application of a 1:4,000 provision target equates to future demand for 12.0 outdoor pickleball courts and indicates long-term need for four (4) additional pickleball courts by 2041.

Local pickleball enthusiasts have demonstrated sufficient demand to warrant provision of additional indoor (discussed in Section 5.3.2) and outdoor play opportunities. Development of future outdoor court facilities should be considered for the north end of St. Thomas; this was identified as a distribution gap and geographic barrier by stakeholders. Additionally, future court facilities should be developed in a minimum of 2-court pairings (both tennis and pickleball), preferably as 4-court complexes (for pickleball only) to accommodate league play, drop-in opportunities and social interaction among players. Single-court developments are not recommended; although a single tennis court may be installed on a site paired with multiple pickleball courts.

### Recommendations

33. Develop four (4) additional **pickleball courts** (short-to-medium term) and one (1) additional **tennis court** (long-term). Development should be designed in multiple court complexes (and / or multi-sport designs), preferably in the north end of the City.

## 5.2.6 Basketball and Multi-Use Courts

### Current State

The City of St. Thomas currently supplies eleven (11) basketball and multi-use courts. 1Password Park and Optimist Park each include two full basketball courts, while Burwell Road Park, Lions Park and Rosethorn Park supply one basketball court each. Three basketball courts were also recently installed at the Horton Farmers Market. Cowan Park is home to the City's only multi-use court; this facility functions as a basketball court but also accommodates ball hockey and other hard-surface sports. The supply is supplemented by non-municipal providers, such as schools.

### Emerging Issues and Needs

Basketball is popular among youth and young adult demographics and it is anticipated that public interest in the sport will surge in response to the Toronto Raptors' historic NBA championship win in 2019. The sport is accessible to many because there are few equipment requirements and basic skills and rules can be learned easily. One consideration of basketball court installation is the noise generated by the ball bouncing. Therefore, location is an important consideration in the provision of basketball courts as they may not be suitable for all park locations.

Multi-purpose courts can be designed to accommodate use by a variety of age groups and support multiple activities. Using a basic basketball court template, these hard surface courts can be painted with multi-colour lines to identify a basketball key, a ball hockey crease, or even host community events / gatherings (e.g., movie nights, farmers markets,



etc.). Multi-use designs are preferred because they can offer recreation opportunities to a wider user base throughout the year.

### Assessment

According to the online survey, 18% of households had participated in basketball within the last 12 months. Additional investment in basketball courts was supported by 54% of respondents (ranking 19<sup>th</sup> of 25 listed facility types). Despite relatively low participation and moderate support for investment, basketball and multi-use courts in St. Thomas were recognized as important facilities for youth participation in casual physical activity and social interaction.

The original 2008 Master Plan provision target of one full court per 750 youth (ages 10 to 19) remains an appropriate ratio. The City's current supply of 11 courts equates to one court per 410 youth, indicating that the current supply is able to accommodate local needs at a city-wide level.

One additional consideration in the development of basketball and multi-use courts is geographic distribution. These are generally considered walk-to facilities and should be distributed equitably (within 2.0 km) across urban settlement areas in the municipality to encourage casual use. Spatial analysis of the existing supply reveals that a geographic gap exists in south St. Thomas (particularly in the areas of new park development (Orchard, Parish and Shaw Valley Parks) and another gap is anticipated in the **Area 1 Settlement Area Boundary Expansion** (northwest). Future development should seek to fill geographic distribution gaps (in the south end) and ensure equitable provision of basketball and multi-use court facilities throughout St. Thomas.

### Recommendations

34. Develop a **single basketball / multi-use court** at one of the new park developments in the south end of St. Thomas (e.g., Orchard Park, Parish Park or Shaw Valley Park) and through future park development within the "Area 1" expansion lands to improve accessibility.



### 5.2.7 Outdoor Ice Rinks

The City of St. Thomas does not currently provide any municipally-operated outdoor ice rinks. One natural ice rink is available seasonally (weather permitting) at the Northside Neighbourhood Hub and was originally developed as part of the Doable Neighbourhood Project (a working group of Elgin Children's Network). The Northside rink was made possible and continues to be supported by dedicated volunteers and local fundraising efforts.

Historically, Canadians have had an affinity for outdoor skating rinks and they help to improve access for residents seeking low to no-cost winter activities. While natural outdoor ice rinks are unreliable due to changing weather conditions, artificial / refrigerated rinks are much more costly to build and operate. Experience in other communities suggests that provision does not alleviate demand for indoor ice surfaces.

Feedback received through the public engagement process identified interest in outdoor ice facilities; either through an artificial ice rink, dedicated skating trail, or simply flooding an existing surface to create natural ice. Three-in-five (59%) survey respondents indicated support for additional investment in outdoor ice rinks, ranking 15<sup>th</sup> of 25 listed facilities.

It is recommended that the City continue to support interested service clubs and / or community volunteer groups that wish to take responsibility for the maintenance and monitoring of natural ice surfaces. To assist in meeting community rink demands, the City may also consider designing new basketball and tennis courts as 'multi-use courts' so that they may be used as ice surfaces in the winter months. The viability of establishing a municipal artificial rink / trail may be evaluated through a business plan in the longer-term.

Some factors to consider in the development of public outdoor ice surfaces include: proximity to available water sources and / or complementary facilities (efficiencies in shared maintenance and equipment), acceptable use (skating only, or allow for sticks and pucks), and opportunities for future use (e.g., if successful, boards could be installed to accommodate shinny in the winter and ball hockey in the summer).

#### Recommendation

35. Continue to support proposals from service clubs or community volunteer groups wishing to assist with fundraising, maintenance, programming and monitoring of **outdoor natural ice rinks**. The viability of establishing a municipal artificial rink / trail may be evaluated through a business plan in the longer-term.



## 5.2.8 Action Sports Parks

### Current State

Railway City Skatepark is the only municipal action sports park in St. Thomas. It was originally developed in 2016 and is well used by the local community.

### Emerging Issues and Needs

Skate and bike parks are now a standard level of service in most municipalities, large and small. They respond to increasing interest in unstructured, low-cost activities and support physical activity. Participation in these sports has a broad appeal to both youth and young adults, as well as an emerging family market as adult action sport enthusiasts draw their children to the sport.

The term “action sports” describes modern freestyle, individual sports that involve self-propelled vehicle maneuvering over a course or obstacle – in St. Thomas this would describe activities such as skateboarding, in-line skating, scooter riding and BMX riding.

### Assessment

According to the only survey, 9% of households participated in wheeled action sports (skateboarding, BMX biking, etc.) within the last 12 months. Just-over half (54%) of survey respondents indicated support for additional investment in skateparks, ranking 18<sup>th</sup> out of 25 listed options. Despite low-levels of self-reported participation, discussions with staff at the site confirm that the park is well-used and a valuable asset in the community.

The local skateboarding community is well-served by the existing Railway City Skatepark and users appreciate the support they receive from staff when they request to move mobile components. However, consultations with staff and users revealed a desire for more challenging obstacles for the advanced and more adventurous riders, as well as support amenities such as shade and washrooms.

It is common for action sports parks to be built in phases, and in consultation with the local skateboard and BMX community. The addition of new components (e.g., bowl, etc.) would expand the park to meet the needs of all levels of skaters. The City should establish a long-term plan for the second phase of Railway City Skatepark development.

### Recommendations

36. Proceed with the second phase of **skatepark** development (as was planned during the initial build) in the medium-to-long term. Expansion should focus on more challenging obstacles for advanced skaters and riders (e.g., bowl, etc.) and support amenities (e.g., shade, etc.).



## 5.2.9 Outdoor Pools

### Current State

The City of St. Thomas currently operates Jaycees Pool, the City's only municipal swimming pool facility. The facility includes one 25 metre, 6-lane rectangular swimming pool and one deep-water diving well; both tanks are non-heated.

Jaycees Pool supports recreational, fitness and instructional swimming in St. Thomas. The City recently invested approximately \$700,000 at the site for renovations such as an all new pool deck, improved drainage and filtration, increased accessibility in the changerooms and installation of fixed lifeguard stands. The City also invested in teaching platforms ("tot docks") for preschool lesson instruction and removable entry stairs to increase accessibility into and out of the lane pool. It is estimated that, following these upgrades, the facility will remain in a good state of repair for the next 20 years or longer.



The pool offers public swimming from Canada Day weekend through to the week before Labour Day (weather permitting), for approximately 10 hours per weekday and 3 hours per day on weekends (registered programs, special events and rentals would increase this number). The pool hosts public swims, adult swims, swimming lessons, lane swimming and aquatic leadership courses. Jaycees Pool is also available to rent for birthday parties and other functions and is used by area day camps as well.

### Emerging Issues and Needs

Municipalities deliver aquatic services because of the value they bring to residents from a variety of perspectives including: safety and life skills; accessibility and inclusion; health and wellness; sports and competition; and a sense of community. Although private and backyard pools are gaining popularity, aquatics would be inaccessible for many people if not provided by the municipal sector.

Swimming and aquatic programming provide the public with valuable water safety programs and offer services to teach interested persons swimming skills. Using a health and wellness lens, swimming and other aquatic activities are excellent low-impact exercise opportunities to develop mobility, endurance and strength training.

Swimming pools are popular facilities, offering a variety of options for all ages and abilities. Swimming has low-barriers to participation in that little equipment is required, it is low cost for drop-in activities (higher fees are usually associated with scheduled or registered programs) and anyone can participate in some capacity.

## Assessment

According to survey respondents, 39% of households had participated in recreational swimming within the last 12 months and 23% had participated in instructional or fitness swimming within the same timeframe (although did not specify whether participation was indoor or outdoor). Outdoor swimming pools ranked 12<sup>th</sup> out of 25 listed facility types, receiving support for additional investment from 70% of survey respondents. These responses, as well as a number of comments from the public and stakeholders support the continued provision of community aquatic facilities in St. Thomas.

Provision of one municipal outdoor pool per capita is common in comparable municipalities and throughout Elgin County. No new or additional outdoor pools are recommended for the City of St. Thomas at this time.

Both staff and stakeholders indicated that there is capacity and desire to increase use of Jaycees Pool. The facility is well-maintained and a valuable asset for the municipality, but the pool experiences variable participation rates, particularly during summers with less than ideal weather conditions. Public consultation contributors suggested some opportunities may increase use of the facility, including:

- A **pavilion or shelter** on site could be used to provide shade and seating for user groups (e.g., day camps) and / or spectators / guardians.
- **Interactive water features** such as ground-spray, sprinklers, or an on-deck slide may encourage use and make the facility more appealing to younger swimmers.
- **Green space or a seating area** within an expanded fenced deck enclosure as a dedicated space for picnics or lounging may encourage pool patrons to increase the length of their stay.
- **Resurfacing the parking lot** adjacent to the pool would help to improve safety and overall aesthetics.

It should be noted that any future investment in the pool should consider and be done in alignment with the neighbouring **Joanne Brooks Memorial Park**.

Some opportunities to encourage greater use of the facility through programming include: special events (e.g., family days, etc.), theme days (e.g., pirate day), sponsored free swims, or “learn-to” programs / events such as water polo or synchronized swimming. The City may also wish to further promote the pool and water safety through social media campaigns (e.g., share water safety tips during Water Smart week in July), newsletters and word-of-mouth.

## Recommendations

- 37.** Seek opportunities to improve the **user experience** (e.g., installation of pavilion, appropriate water features, seating area and resurfaced parking lot) and **maximize use** (e.g., special events, theme days, free swims, promotion, etc.) of **Jaycees Pool**.



## 5.2.10 Splash Pads

### Current State

The City of St. Thomas currently supplies splash pads at three park locations: Pinafore Park (southwest St. Thomas), Waterworks Park (northwest St. Thomas), and IPassword Park (northeast St. Thomas). All of the existing splash pads operate daily from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm from June until September (weather permitting) and are well used by the public.

### Emerging Issues and Needs

Splash pads are highly sought-after amenities for young families as they provide affordable and accessible opportunities to seek relief from summer heat and humidity. They are often considered walk-to amenities and are located in destination parks within walking distance of residential areas. To promote accessibility, splash pads are typically distributed throughout residential areas (walkable within approximately a 2.0 km radius). They can be designed with a wide-variety of apparatuses to provide enhanced aquatic experiences for residents and visitors of all ages.



### Assessment

According to the community survey, 35% of households had visited a splash pad within the last 12 months and 72% support additional investment in these facilities (ranking 11<sup>th</sup> out of 25 listed facility types). Survey participants identified demand for a splash pad in southeast St. Thomas and many suggested including one through development of a future park site. Consultations with staff and stakeholders further supported strong use of and support for City splash pads.

Splash pads can be integrated into most park systems, do not require staffing (unsupervised by lifeguards), and have a longer operating season than outdoor pools. From a financial perspective, splash pads require smaller upfront capital investment and have lower ongoing operating and maintenance costs than outdoor pools.

### Recommendations

- 38.** Install one additional **splash pad** site in southeast St. Thomas to enhance geographic distribution throughout the municipality and address community demand. Potential sites for a splash pad may include: Parish Park or Orchard Park. Further consultation with staff and investigation into development costs and design capabilities (e.g., shade, parking, etc.) is required to inform this decision.

## 5.2.11 Off-Leash Dog Parks

### Current State

The City of St. Thomas currently provides one municipal off-leash dog park; Lions Club Park. The facility was recommended for development in the 2008 Recreation, Leisure and Parks Master Plan and was officially opened in 2009.

Residents of St. Thomas are also served by the Kettle Creek Conservation Area Dog Park, located northeast of the city and operated in partnership with the City of St. Thomas, Municipality of Central Elgin and Conservation Authority.

### Emerging Issues and Needs

Dog walking is not only beneficial for pets, the activity also provides owners with an opportunity to get outside and socialize; this is particularly true for older adults and seniors who often find pet ownership helps prevent social isolation and encourages outdoor activity. Sidewalks, trails and pathways are commonly used for walking dogs on-leash, but in many municipalities (such as St. Thomas) municipal by-laws prohibit off-leash dog walking on public property.

### Assessment

According to the online survey, 45% of households had participated in dog walking within the last 12 months. Despite participation by nearly half of respondents, dog parks were the lowest ranked facility (25<sup>th</sup> out of 25 listed facilities) with only 43% support for additional investment. Staff and stakeholder consultations similarly reflected that additional dog parks are no longer a high priority in St. Thomas. Local residents are fairly well served by two existing dog parks that are well-distributed across the city and surrounding area.

Concerns over accessibility and seasonal maintenance of the existing sites were identified by both City staff and online survey respondents. Comments focused on demand for additional waste receptacles and winter access to the sites. Residents with limited mobility specifically expressed concern over the steep slope at the entry to Lions Club Dog Park.

### Recommendations

39. In lieu of developing additional **dog parks**, continue to work with stewardship groups to improve year-round maintenance and signage at the Lions Club Dog Park to support safe access and use by area residents.



## 5.2.12 Mountain Biking

### Current State

The City of St. Thomas does not currently provide any dedicated off-road mountain biking courses. Mountain bikers seeking more specialized facilities have begun to create their own facilities throughout the area, visiting conservation areas (where permitted) or travelling to destination facilities outside of Elgin County.

### Emerging Issues and Needs

Mountain biking and BMX riding are generally considered to be growth sports due to their relative affordability (depending upon the type / quality of bike used), their ability to be pursued easily in unstructured formats and the fact that a wide range of municipal infrastructure can accommodate them (e.g. trails, parkland, roads, skate parks, etc.). The core market for most bike sports are youth and younger adults.

### Assessment

The shifting trend towards various self-propelled activities (i.e., action sports) has increased the number of participants using the same facilities, namely trails and natural spaces. Biking opportunities exist in urban areas, but are generally geared towards commuting or leisure biking, such as the separated cycle lanes on Centre Street. According to the online community survey, 45% of households participated in cycling within the last 12 months (the 4<sup>th</sup> most popular outdoor activity), suggesting that cycling in its various forms is prevalent in the city.

In response to this mounting interest and demand, stakeholders within the cycling community are seeking a site to establish trails suitable for off-road riding in St. Thomas. Representatives indicated that their organization is willing to assist with design, development and maintenance of off-road trails and are working to create a course in the northeast area of the city. The group has presented their concept through a deputation to the City regarding an undeveloped / naturalized portion of Waterworks Park.

The City and Conservation Authority are open to working with the mountain biking community to realize this project and are evaluating options for future development. Considering that the group would like to develop a bike park with a tiered multi-use trail geared to mountain biking, it has been estimated that a 7-10-kilometre trail would be required to ensure safe and enjoyable experience for trail users. Other factors to consider include signage, alternate uses (e.g., for walking, hiking, etc. when not is use by cyclists), redevelopment as trails erode over time, and management of users.

According to members of the cycling community, it is expected that an off-road cycling course could be a popular destination for local cyclists and visitors, particularly on weekends. They also discussed shared use of the site and believe





that with appropriate management, signage and planning, a mountain bike park could provide riders with a convenient means to enjoy the sport and improve their skills and also enable other outdoor enthusiasts with an extended trail network for walking and hiking. Considering the demonstrated demand and willingness to assist with development of a site, it is recommended that the City of St. Thomas continue to explore options for development of an off-road mounting biking facility in the city.

## Recommendation

40. Continue to work with local cycling community and Conservation Authority to select an appropriate location and management model for development of an **off-road mountain biking course**, possibly within the undeveloped portion of Waterworks Park and / or adjacent conservation authority lands. Trail development would be the responsibility of the sponsoring organization, under agreement with the City.

### 5.2.13 Disc Golf Courses

The City of St. Thomas currently provides two dedicated Disc Golf courses: one at V.A. Barrie Park and one at Waterworks Park. The courses can be used casually by members of the public, or for organized games and tournaments facilitated by the St. Thomas Disc Golf Club. The club is sanctioned by the Ontario Disc Sports Association and offers singles and doubles league as well as special events and tournaments throughout all four seasons.

According to the community online survey, 5% of households have participated in disc golf within the last 12 months. Despite relatively low representation in the online survey; staff and stakeholder attest to the popularity of disc sports in the community.

As a special-interest sport, disc golf facilities do not traditionally fall within municipal provision models. However, unique accommodations are often made when sufficient community interest and support is present; as has been the case in St. Thomas.

The City's two existing disc golf courses are adequate to meet long-term needs. Additional disc golf courses are not recommended at this time.



## 5.2.14 Recreational Trails

### Current State

The City of St. Thomas currently provides approximately 30 kilometres of recreational trails throughout the city which includes looped trails within parks, dedicated multi-use trails, as well as signed on-road routes. Major trail systems such as the Whistlestop Trail and Angus McKenzie Trail are well-used by visitors and residents alike. Area residents are also supported by trails provided by local conservation authorities (e.g., Dalewood and Kettle Creek Conservation Areas). The City has prioritized investment in trails (30 km developed in the last 5 years) and are working on completing a city-wide loop as well as a connecting rail trail from St. Thomas to London (London to Port Stanley Rail Trail).

Trail planning, design and management in St. Thomas and throughout Elgin County is guided by existing background documents and reports such as: City of St. Thomas Official Plan; Elgin County Trail Study (2018); Elgin-St. Thomas Cycling Master Plan (2014); St. Thomas Cycling and Trails Master Plan Network Map (2017); Design Guidelines Manual (2018); Elgin-St. Thomas Age Friendly Community Plan (2017); and Lake Margaret Environmental Management Plan (2010); among others. Each of these documents work in coordination with one another and should be referred to when planning recreational trails in St. Thomas.

### Emerging Issues and Needs

Market and trends research consistently indicate that interest and participation in unstructured, self-scheduled activities for all ages is rising and that, as a result, trails are in high demand and should be a priority. Trails provide opportunities for physical activity, utilitarian purposes, stress reduction, social interaction and environmental sustainability. Furthermore, cycling is a growing market in the area and the on- and off-road transportation network is foundational in addressing the needs of these users. On- and off-road trails also provide critical infrastructure for improving public health and are consistently promoted by Southwestern Public Health.





## Assessment

According to survey respondents, the most popular recreational pursuit in St. Thomas is trail walking or hiking, with 76% of households participating in this activity within the last 12 months. Recreational trails were also the highest-ranked facility (1<sup>st</sup> out of 25 listed options) with support for additional investment from 90% of survey respondents. These facilities are highly valued and appreciated by local users; 82% of survey respondents indicated that recreational trails were important to them and 75% indicated that they are satisfied with these facilities – a high bar, but with room for further improvement. Trail connectivity, active transportation and non-motorized geographic accessibility were also frequently discussed during stakeholder consultations, the online mapping tool contributions and through long-form comment submissions.

The overwhelming response across all consultation forums was that recreational trails are in high demand and appreciated by residents. All forms of engagement yielded suggestions relating to trails, such as wayfinding, signage, connectivity, lighting, maintenance and support amenities. Contributors recognized the value of the City's unique parks, recreation and cultural assets and expressed a desire to better link destination facilities through the active transportation network.

It is recommended that the City continue to work in partnership with others to provide a comprehensive trails network. The City should further enhance the existing trails network by placing an emphasis on connectivity within and between parks, open spaces and local destinations.

Specific recreational trail investments that were identified through the public engagement program, previous studies (e.g., St. Thomas Official Plan, Elgin County Trail Study Report, Positioned for Growth, etc.) and recent analysis include:

- Establishing an **east-west connection** parallel to the downtown railway corridor (suggested location is the proposed terminus of the Whistlestop Trail from Station Street to Flora Street).
- Establishing a **north-south connection** to link Pinafore Park and Waterworks Park through a combination of multi-use trails and signed routes.
- Extension of the **Whistlestop Trail** to immediately south of the downtown railway corridor.



- The **Great Trail** (formerly Trans-Canada Trail) was recently rerouted to connect with the **Elevated Park**, from King Street in the east to the municipal boundary in the west (linking through Centre Street to connect users with downtown).
- Development of trails within **existing and future parks** (both looped paths and connections to external networks); some examples include Orchard Park, Parish Park and Shaw Valley Parks in the south and 1Password Park in the north.
- Connecting settlement expansion **Area 1** into the core area through a multi-use trail along the abandoned rail corridor that borders the northern boundary of the area.
- Connectivity of trails to various **destinations** throughout St. Thomas, Elgin County and to **regional networks**. This may be achieved through trail development, signage and promotion.
- Improved **signage and wayfinding** are desired. This would help encourage greater use, link users to destinations and promote active transportation in the city and county.
- Demand for **comfort, safety and support amenities** along trails were commonly identified. Some examples of desired investments include benches, washrooms, shade and lighting.

Signage, wayfinding and branding are key components of a successful trail network. The City should continue to prioritize provision of additional signage that can be used to indicate linkages and destinations throughout the city and county. Clear and consistent signage can enable users to confidently travel along trails to their destination and connect to other existing systems. Other examples include: signs and maps to identify the nearest public washroom; provide direction to nearby City parks and points of interest; or offer educational information on plant and animal species or points of cultural significance in the area.

Reference should continue to be made to existing documents such as the Design Guidelines Manual (2018) when planning and developing additional trail linkages in the St. Thomas. Some of the considerations listed in the manual include: minimum widths, pedestrian access, preservation of sightlines, preferred tree plantings, as well as connectivity and looped walkway concept designs.

## Recommendations

41. Continue to work in partnership with others to provide a **comprehensive trails network**. The City should further enhance the existing trails network by placing emphasis on connectivity within and between trails (i.e., addressing gaps), parks, open spaces, and local and regional destinations.



### 5.2.15 Pavilions and Gazebos

The City of St. Thomas currently provides 12 pavilion / gazebo facilities at six locations within its parks system. They are distributed throughout the city at the following locations: 1Password Park, Cowan Park, Douglas J. Tarry Sports Complex, Pinafore Park (6) and Waterworks Park (2). Some are available for rent, while others allow for casual use and event support.

Online survey respondents strongly supported these facilities, with 80% of households indicating support for additional investment (ranking 6<sup>th</sup> of 25 listed facilities). Pavilions and gazebos were also discussed by stakeholders and staff during the consultation period. Many user groups requested additional hydro support to increase capacity for hosting events, particularly during major festivals and community gatherings in the City's premier parks.



#### Recommendation

42. Develop a strategy to invest in upgrades and improvements in the City's existing **gazebos and pavilions**. This may include increasing electrical capacity, installing additional seating (temporary or fixed), upgrades to the dance pavilion and bandshell in Pinafore Park, etc.

### 5.2.16 Community Gardens

Community gardens are small plots of land that are collectively maintained by a group of people or stewardship organization. They are accessible by the public and often produce fruit, vegetables and / or flowers. Community gardens not only provide aesthetically pleasing park spaces, they also support community improvement, improve physical and mental well-being and encourage social interaction among gardeners and visitors.

The City of St. Thomas currently provides two community gardens and a third is provided by Destination Church; all are located on municipal property. The City has developed policies in the Official Plan to support development of these features and have demonstrated a willingness to assist interested groups. To respond to localized demand, it is recommended that the City continue to explore suitable locations to develop community gardens on municipal lands. The City may seek proposals of support from local community groups or service clubs to assist with oversight and management of any future gardens.



Some factors to consider through the site selection and planning process include: availability of a water source, nearby parking, amount of direct sunlight, urban wildlife, restricted access (if necessary). Priority locations for community gardens should be in close proximity to senior-lifestyle developments and higher-density residential areas.

## Recommendation

43. Continue to encourage establishment of **community gardens** in new developments and work with partners to evaluate opportunities to establish additional garden plots on municipal lands, where appropriate.

## 5.3 Indoor Recreation Facilities

The City of St. Thomas provides several indoor community facilities, including the Joe Thornton Community Centre (twin-pad arena, multi-use rooms, walking track, small gymnasium), St. Thomas Elgin Memorial Centre (single-pad arena, auditorium, meeting room) and smaller facilities such as the St. Thomas Seniors Centre.

St. Thomas residents also benefit from amenities provided in nearby municipalities (e.g., London, Port Stanley, Belmont, Aylmer, etc.), many of which are highly accessible due to their location. Private operators (e.g., Family YMCA of St. Thomas Elgin), schools and not-for-profit organizations also support community recreation in the city.

According to the online survey, 82% of households feel that indoor recreation facilities such as arenas and community spaces are important; however, only 60% of households are satisfied with these facilities in St. Thomas. The difference suggests that residents' expectations with respect to indoor recreation facilities are not being met.

The following table provides a summary of existing indoor facilities that are owned and / or maintained by the City of St. Thomas as of June 2019. Additional detail on municipal parks and outdoor recreation facilities is contained in **Appendix B**.

Table 10 City of St. Thomas Indoor Recreation and Culture Facility Inventory

Indoor Facilities	Supply	Location(s)
<b>Arenas (Ice Pads)</b>	3	Joe Thornton Community Centre (2), St. Thomas-Elgin Memorial Centre (1)
<b>Halls and Multi-Purpose Space</b>	7	Joe Thornton Community Centre (2 – Ohi Ontario Room & Doug Tarry Room) St. Thomas-Elgin Memorial Centre (2 – Auditorium & PJ Lynch Meeting Room) St. Thomas Seniors Centre (3 – Board Room, Kinsmen Hall, Joanne Brooks Room) – Board operated
<b>Seniors Centres</b>	1	St. Thomas Seniors Centre
<b>Walking Track</b>	1	Joe Thornton Community Centre (200-metre track)



### 5.3.1 Arenas (ice pads)

#### **Current State**

The City of St. Thomas currently supplies three ice pads; two at the Joe Thornton Community Centre (Rink A, St. Thomas Minor Hockey & Rink B, Presstran-Formet) and one at St. Thomas-Elgin Memorial Centre (Memorial Arena). Facility maintenance and improvement continues to be a high priority for the City of St. Thomas. Some examples of recent and continued investment in arenas include the installation of permanent seating and in-ground heating on 'B' pad and accommodations for sledge hockey at JTCC as well as HVAC repairs, new paint and flooring at Memorial Arena.

Built in 2005, Rink A at the Joe Thornton Community Centre (JTCC) is a full NHL-size rink (200' by 85') with fixed seating for 2,200 fans surrounding the rink and standing room for an additional 300 spectators. Rink B at JTCC is also a full NHL-size rink with bleacher seating for approximately 100 people. In addition to the twin ice pads, the Joe Thornton Community Centre provides a well-used walking track (Reith Fitness Track around Rink A), multi-purpose community spaces (Doug Tarry Room and Oh!Ontario Room), 6 office spaces, 12 dressing rooms, two referee rooms and is home of the City's Parks and Recreation Department customer service desk.

Memorial Arena is an older facility (built in 1954), but is still viable and well-used by the community. User Groups at this facility indicated challenges with accessibility (limited barrier-free access to the ice surface and upper-level) and an insufficient supply of change rooms. This is a particularly challenging issue for female players using this facility.

All of the non-ice spaces at the Joe Thornton Community Centre and Memorial Arena are discussed in greater detail in the next section (Gymnasiums, Halls & Multi-Purpose Spaces). Curing ice is provided by the St. Thomas Curling Club which is not affiliated with the City of St. Thomas.

#### **Emerging Issues and Needs**

Popularity of ice sports in the province appears to have reached a stable level, and is even declining in some communities, although this has been partially offset by increases in female participation. Many of the reasons commonly cited for this trend include increasing participation fees, significant commitment of time and travel, as well as rising popularity of other activities. Additionally, many minor hockey organizations have adopted the Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model as outlined by Canadian Sport 4 Life (St. Thomas Minor Hockey is a local example). LTAD provides recommended practice structures, required ice times and dry-land training programs; off of which have resulted in an ice allocation shift (fewer players seeking more ice and training time).

Another factor to consider in hockey and ice-sport participation is the regional nature of the leagues. Hockey clubs with rep teams or specialized programs are often willing to travel and play in competitive leagues. As a result, they require additional practices for skill development, camps and off-ice training. A local example of this is the St. Thomas Stars Junior B Hockey Club which competes in the Greater Ontario Junior Hockey League and trains out of the Joe Thornton Community Centre.



## Assessment

According to online survey respondents, 36% of St. Thomas residents had participated in ice sports within the last twelve months. When asked to indicate support for additional investment in recreation facilities, arenas ranked 14<sup>th</sup> of 25 listed facility types, garnering support from 62% of respondents. These results indicate interest in and support for indoor ice facilities in St. Thomas. The survey results were further supported by consultations with stakeholder groups; their feedback has been summarized in the assessment section below.

Table 11 Typical weekly usage rates at City of St. Thomas arenas  
(consultant-defined prime-time using 2018 / 2019 data)

Organization Type	Prime Time hours per pad (53)	Non-Prime Time hours per pad (66)
<b>JTCC 'A'</b>		
Minor	50	5.5
Rental / Adult	2	2.5
City	0	16
% of total hours	98%	36%
<b>JTCC 'B'</b>		
Minor	48	4
Rental / Adult	1.5	0
City	1.5	16
% of total hours	96%	30%
<b>Memorial Arena</b>		
Minor	33.5	2
Rental / Adult	14	2
City	0	0
% of total hours	90%	6%
<b>Average (all rinks)</b>	95%	24%

**Notes:** For the purposes of this analysis, prime time hours are defined as 5:00 pm to 10:00 pm on weekday evenings (Monday through Friday) and 8:00 am to 10:00 pm on weekends (Saturday and Sunday)

**Source:** 2018/2019 City of St. Thomas arena facility bookings

The dominant user of prime-time ice in St. Thomas is minor hockey (i.e., St. Thomas Minor Hockey Association and St. Thomas Panthers). A limited amount of prime-time ice is also reserved for public skating and municipal programs while some adult bookings fill late-night ice.

As outlined in the adjacent table, the JTCC 'A' pad is booked to 98% of capacity for prime-time ice and 36% capacity for non-prime hours. The JTCC 'B' pad sees slightly less use, with 96% of prime-time ice and 30% of non-prime ice booked on a regular basis. Usage at Memorial Arena is lower again with 90% of prime-time ice booked and only 6% of non-prime ice consistently being used. These rates are indicative of an arena system that is running at or near capacity.

All user groups listed were invited to participate in stakeholder workshops to discuss the role of their organization, participation trends, challenges, needs and opportunities to work together. The following table summarizes the feedback obtained during those consultation sessions.

Table 12 Summary of Ice Pad Stakeholder Feedback

Club / Organization	Membership (approximate)	Discussion Points
<b>St. Thomas Minor Hockey Association</b>	543	St. Thomas Minor Hockey is the largest ice-sport organization in the city and is celebrating their 65 <sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Players range in age from 4 years old to 16 years old. They offer house-league, local and travel teams and host annual tournaments at city facilities. They noted that registration declined slightly in the past year and attribute the shift to shared ice-times for practices. To provide sufficient ice time to their members, the group also rents arenas outside St. Thomas.
<b>St. Thomas Panthers Girls Hockey</b>	284	The Panthers are a girls' hockey organization with players ranging from 4 years old to Senior 'A' ladies' hockey. Their teams travel across Western Ontario for league and tournament play. The Panthers host two annual tournaments and noted strong and consistent growth in women's hockey. To provide sufficient ice time to their members, the group also rents arenas outside St. Thomas.
<b>St. Thomas Stars</b>	24	The Stars Junior 'B' Hockey Club (Greater Ontario Junior Hockey League) is the highest level of hockey in the city. The club's home ice is Rink 'A' at the JTCC and includes the required team spaces and administrative offices for an organization of this calibre. Representatives discussed issues with parking and accessibility during home games and limited coaching staff availability during their current non-prime ice booking. The group is interested in additional (prime-time) ice for training.
<b>St. Thomas Skating Club</b>	117	The Skating Club has been serving the St. Thomas area for over 50 years and is a sanctioned skating club through Skate Canada. Skaters range in age from 3 years old to adult competitive and recreational skating. The St. Thomas Skating Club offers Learn to Skate, Can Skate, Star Skate, Power Skating and Synchronized Skating.
<b>St. Thomas Ringette</b>	120	St. Thomas Ringette is governed by the Ontario Ringette Association and belongs to the Western Ontario Region League. Membership ranges from youth (under 9) to adult. The club has been providing instruction and the opportunity to participate for over 40 years. They noted that registration in the club recently started rebounding after a period of decline.
<b>Adult Hockey Leagues</b>	250	Two primary adult hockey leagues (Sunday Night League and 45+ Men's League) book ice at Memorial Arena, but were not present to discuss any specific issues, concerns or opportunities.

The groups are generally satisfied with the facilities and appreciate the commitment and efforts of municipal staff and local sport organizations. Some general feedback that resonated with all participating groups included:

- **Shoulder-Season Ice:** competitive programs would like the opportunity to host try-outs, training camps, tournaments, etc. in the weeks before and after the regular season. It is understood that the arena staff also work in the parks and that balancing indoor and outdoor facilities is required.
- **Dry-Land Training Space:** many groups discussed a desire for multi-purpose training space in one of the arenas to support off-ice development and wellness sessions for the players.
- **Tournament / Event Support:** local sport organizations discussed a desire to improve tournament-hosting capacity by offering a flat rate to use the entire facility (JTCC) for the duration of the day or weekend. Participants suggested that the ability to use all spaces in the facility (e.g., Doug Tarry Room, meeting rooms, atrium space, etc.) and provide a location for vendors would help ease congestion in the facility, provide a gathering space for players and spectators and provide cost-savings for groups.
- **Accessibility and Storage:** workshop participants discussed issues with space allocation / design in the City's indoor ice facilities. Groups are seeking additional storage space and would like the locker room configuration to be reconsidered or improved (i.e., room number duplication at JTCC, locker room sizes at Memorial Arena).
- **Security:** multiple organizations also discussed concerns with theft and loitering at the Joe Thornton Community Centre. The City is working with local law enforcement and have recently installed closed-circuit television cameras to help address this matter.

The use of a youth-based market-driven provision target is the preferred approach to assess current and future arena needs. This approach is able to account for generally accepted standards of play, arena usage patterns, demographic and arena trends, and other key factors.

A provision target of one ice pad per 400 to 450 youth participants is commonly applied in communities with a similar profile. Depending on player age, level of play, roster size and amount of out of town league play, this means that each team would receive a requisite number of hours for games and practices. This equates to fewer hours required for younger groups, house league-based programs or CanSkate and more hours for older groups and programs with rep teams or StarSkate.

With approximately 1,088 youth participants, the City is currently providing a service level of one ice pad per 363 registered youth participants. This is higher than the typical provision rate, suggesting that some capacity exists within the current supply. Considering the current usage rates of the City's three ice pads and the high calibre of sport opportunities, a provision target of **one ice pad per 400 youth participants** is recommended for the City of St. Thomas.



This target is consistent with the standards of play that are in effect for local youth hockey (house league and rep) and figure skating, and is also sufficient to accommodate typical tournament offerings, adult play and municipal programs.

Using current participation rates and age-cohort growth forecasts for the City of St. Thomas, it is estimated that youth ice sport registrations could reach 1,160 by the year 2041 (7% growth). Application of the 1:400 provision target equates to future demand of 2.9 ice pads, which does not justify provision of an additional ice pad, but does indicate growing pressure. Arena needs should be re-evaluated through the next Master Plan Update, with consideration of the regional arena supply and ice participation trends.

The table below outlines the current supply of ice pads in Elgin County. Although St. Thomas' provision of one pad per 13,000 residents is lower than the regional average, this also suggests that other area facilities are able to accommodate additional use from outside organizations. Many of the groups present at the stakeholder workshops indicated that their competitive teams do rent ice (approximately 10 hours in total) from the facilities listed below, when necessary.

**Table 13 Arena Supply in Elgin County**

Municipality	Local Arena(s)	Number of Ice Pads	Estimated Pop. (2016)	Population per Ice Pad
Town of Aylmer / Township of Malahide	East Elgin Community Complex	2	7,500 / 9,300	8,400
Municipality of Central Elgin	Port Stanley Arena & Belmont Arena	2	12,600	6,300
Municipality of West Elgin	West Elgin Arena (West Lorne)	1	5,000	5,000
City of St. Thomas	Joe Thornton Community Centre & Memorial Arena	3	40,500	13,500

## Recommendations

44. An additional **ice pad** in St. Thomas is not recommended at this time. To ensure supply and demand are in equilibrium, the City should remain apprised of the regional usage and supply as populations and participation rates evolve over time.
45. Continue to seek opportunities to improve **user experience, functionality and equitable access** at existing indoor ice facilities.

### 5.3.2 Gymnasiums, Halls and Multi-Purpose Spaces

#### Current State

The City of St. Thomas currently has seven (7) **halls and multi-purpose spaces** within its inventory. The Joe Thornton Community Centre includes the OhiOntario Room (meeting room) as well as the Doug Tarry Room (small gymnasium / multi-use space with seating, storage and kitchenette) and the St. Thomas-Elgin Memorial Centre includes the PJ Lynch room (meeting room) and Memorial Auditorium (multi-purpose event space with stage and server). The Broad-run St. Thomas Seniors Centre also provides three multi-purpose spaces (Kinsmen Hall, Joanne Brooks meeting Room and Board Room). There are also several non-profit and private clubs that offer halls, meeting rooms and rental spaces for community activities.

The City of St. Thomas does not currently provide any direct access to full-size **gymnasiums**. The City of St. Thomas and local school boards have facilitated community-use agreements in the past, however, community access to schools is currently coordinated directly by the school boards. Many residents and local organizations also make use of the gymnasium located at the Family YMCA of St. Thomas-Elgin.

#### Emerging Issues and Needs

The co-location of gymnasiums, multi-use rooms and other community spaces has become the norm in the provision in modern recreational facilities. The development of stand-alone or single-purpose spaces is generally discouraged to avoid operational inefficiencies and limited appeal. Multi-purpose spaces can enhance cross-programming opportunities for public and private functions, and achieve economies of scale relating to facility construction, maintenance and management. Across the province, gymnasiums are in demand as they provide flexible space within which a variety of activities can be scheduled. Most often, gymnasiums are used for active sports such as basketball, volleyball, badminton, ball hockey and pickleball, but can also be used for other forms of active programming, as well as community events.

A local example of a multi-use programming space is the Joe Thornton Community Centre. While the twin ice pads draw the majority of use, the JTCC accommodates pickleball and some other court sports in the Doug Tarry Room, provides a public access walking track, provides administrative space for local ice sport organizations and serves as an emergency response centre for the City.

#### Assessment

The community online survey revealed that residents participated in the following activities that use indoor flexible indoor spaces over the last twelve months: adult fitness (49%); indoor walking (46%); volleyball (29%); pickleball (29% - both indoor and outdoor); child and youth programs (22%); basketball (18%); and seniors' programs (4%).



Survey respondents also indicated program and activity gaps for both volleyball and pickleball due to a lack of facilities. Those supporting development of a municipal gymnasium further indicated that the facility would support use by multiple indoor court sports including volleyball, pickleball, basketball, badminton and more.

Gymnasiums were highly-supported by survey respondents, ranking 8<sup>th</sup> out of 25 listed facilities with support for additional investment from 79% of contributors. Investment in community meeting / event space was supported by 64% of survey respondents, ranking 13<sup>th</sup> of the 25 listed facilities. These results indicate interest in and support for indoor recreation facilities in St. Thomas. The survey results were further supported by consultations with stakeholder groups, particularly regarding investment in a municipal gymnasium.

Court sports were well represented during stakeholder consultations. Representatives from local pickleball, volleyball and basketball organizations were present to discuss demand for an appropriately-sized gymnasium facility in the City. Each of the organizations represented discussed growth in their sport accompanied by difficulty accessing suitable and consistent facilities. Many discussed sport-specific design requirements, such as regulation ceiling heights, setback distances between court perimeters and surrounding stanchions / walls, and multi-court / competition ready facilities. Concerns were expressed over the current lack of access to gymnasiums, and inconsistent access to external providers. This gap hampers usage and program function for active indoor recreational pursuits. It is expected that projected population growth for St. Thomas will further increase demand for multi-use recreational facilities.

A common provision rate in comparable municipalities across Ontario is one municipal gymnasium per 50,000 residents. Considering population projections for St. Thomas (increasing to 52,700 by 2041), it is recommended that the City initiate a feasibility study and site selection process in the medium-to-long term to assess options and viability of a multi-use recreation facility.

Timing and priority may be influenced by future planning for an indoor aquatic facility and / or new private recreation (i.e., YMCA of Southwestern Ontario) development. It is important to consider external service providers to avoid duplication of services and market-saturation.

## Recommendations

46. In the short-term, prepare a feasibility study and site selection to assess options and viability of a **multi-use recreation facility** containing flexible spaces capable of supporting multiple sports and activities (e.g., gymnasium, meeting rooms / multi-use spaces, etc.).

### 5.3.3 Indoor Aquatics

#### **Current State**

The City of St. Thomas does not provide any indoor aquatic facilities, but does offer seasonal outdoor aquatic experiences at Jaycees Pool and three (3) municipal splash pads. Additionally, residents have membership-based access to an indoor aquatic facility at the Family YMCA of St. Thomas-Elgin. Specific details on St. Thomas' aquatic provision and public experiences are described in greater detail in the Outdoor Pools section.

#### **Emerging Issues and Needs**

Small to mid-sized communities typically lack the population and tax-base to offset the substantial financial pressures generated by the cost to construct, operate and maintain indoor aquatic centres. As a mid-size municipality, St. Thomas benefits from the existence of a non-municipal indoor aquatic facility at the local YMCA. A population threshold of 40,000 residents is a preferred marker for consideration of a single indoor aquatic facility. St. Thomas has reached this threshold, but population forecasts do not justify investment in a second facility for at least the next ten years. As such, St. Thomas' population – both now and into the foreseeable future – is insufficient to support two indoor aquatic facilities and offset the substantial associated costs. It is also noteworthy that the number of children (the core market for swim lessons, which represent a key revenue stream for pools) in St. Thomas is expected to remain relatively stable (4% increase from 2021 to 2041) over the coming years.

#### **Assessment**

Investment in indoor aquatics was strongly supported by survey respondents (79%), ranking 7<sup>th</sup> of 25 listed facilities. When asked about participation in recreation activities within the last twelve months, 39% of respondents had participated in recreational swimming and 23% had participated in instructional or fitness swimming (although did not specify whether these activities were indoor or outdoor). These results indicate that residents in St. Thomas are interested in indoor aquatic facilities and have demonstrated a willingness to participate.

Despite resident interest and participation, the provision of a second indoor pool in St. Thomas is not recommended. Municipal provision of indoor aquatic facilities in Elgin County is limited; many municipal neighbours encourage use of non-profit / private facilities or travel to larger centres to participate. Municipal indoor pools require annual subsidies typically ranging from \$400,000 to \$700,000, depending on the type of pool and the market they serve. Other considerations include the site (location and proximity to complementary use), pool design and construction costs; which are likely to exceed \$10 million.

One option for the City of St. Thomas to consider is a public-private partnership with an existing provider. The YMCA of Southwestern Ontario Association (of which the Family YMCA of St. Thomas-Elgin is a part) has benefitted from recent success in various types of partnership models. Some recent examples include the Bostwick and Stoney Creek YMCAs

in London (both of which include indoor aquatics); the Middlesex Centre YMCA in Komoka (includes an arena, fitness centre and library); and other partnership models throughout Southwestern Ontario.

**Table 14 Public-Private Partnership Considerations**

<b>Facility Design</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Key users:</b> consideration of demographics, participation rates and programming</li> <li>- <b>Number of tanks / lanes:</b> multiple tanks could accommodate use by a variety of groups for different purposes and lane dimensions (width, length, entry depth, etc.) may be considered for ability to host competitions</li> <li>- <b>Additional features:</b> consideration of features such as zero-depth entry, number of lanes, etc.</li> <li>- <b>Therapy pool:</b> primarily used by older adults and those seeking rehabilitation</li> <li>- <b>Family pool:</b> to be programmed for swimming lessons and recreational swimming</li> <li>- <b>Lane pool:</b> to be used for leisure and fitness swimming, could accommodate fitness classes such as water walking / running and aquafit</li> <li>- <b>Programs:</b> swimming lessons, lane swimming, recreational swimming, leadership programs, swim team, rentals (birthday parties, adult recreation leagues), specialized aquatic sports (diving, water polo, synchro), etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Financial Commitment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Capital, operating and maintenance costs</li> <li>- Responsibilities for staffing and supervision</li> <li>- Capital replacement reserve</li> </ul>
<b>Access &amp; Use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public access versus member access</li> <li>- Member vs. non-member fees for drop-in and registered use</li> <li>- Spaces allocated for non-members in swimming lessons and registered programs (i.e., leadership courses) and responsibility for registration and fee collection</li> <li>- Timelines for setting schedules, registration, publication and promotion</li> <li>- Responsibilities for staffing, capital investment</li> <li>- Facility spaces that are public versus private (i.e., does the admission fee allow entry to the entire facility? Pool only? Etc.)</li> </ul>

Stakeholder consultations and survey responses revealed that residents and user groups are well served by the existing YMCA facility, but would like **increased public access to indoor aquatics** on a non-membership basis. For example, local swim teams would like to expand their training times and have an ability to host competitions, while residents are interested in non-member pool access. Representatives from the YMCA indicated that the current facility is well-used, but is aging and the size has limited opportunities for membership and program growth / expansion. Although concrete plans for relocation or expansion have not been developed, representatives from the YMCA are receptive to the concept of exploring public-private partnership options. The City and YMCA are encouraged to explore aquatic and

recreation facility needs and options further, including programming and access for all age groups, long-term needs, capital planning, potential management models, etc.

## Recommendations

47. Discuss partnership opportunities with the Family YMCA and adjacent municipalities to maximize long-term public access to **indoor aquatic facilities**. This may involve an agreement for enhanced access to the existing YMCA pool or a partnership involving the development of a multi-tank replacement facility, possibly in connection with a future multi-use recreation facility.

### 5.3.4 Indoor Artificial Turf

The City of St. Thomas does not currently provide any indoor artificial turf sport fields. However, it is expected that popularity of soccer in the city may grow in response to the 1Password Park complex and that demand for an indoor training facility for this and other sports may increase over time.

Many organized sports (e.g., soccer, football, baseball, etc.) have transitioned to year-round player development models which has resulted in greater demand for multi-use and all-season facilities. Outdoor artificial turf fields expand operating use and capacity for play as they allow for use earlier in the season (may open as early as March or April) and remain in use until later in the season as well (practices and games may be hosted as late as October or November). Although it was not designed as such, the FIFA regulation-sized pitch at 1Password Park presents a unique opportunity for development of a domed (i.e., bubble) seasonal facility should a perimeter grade beam and support structure be installed. 1Password Park is a preferred location for future development of an indoor artificial turf facility as it benefits from existing amenities on site (e.g., parking, field house, water, etc.) and is setback away from residential use.

It is recommended that the City of St. Thomas work with local soccer (and other field sport) organizations to monitor demand for an indoor turf playing surface. Should the soccer community demonstrate sufficient demand and capacity to warrant consideration of an indoor facility, the City should conduct a **feasibility study** at the appropriate time to examine development options including costs, operating and funding models associated with installation of a seasonal dome and / or year-round venue.

## Recommendation

48. Work with local soccer organizations to monitor demand for an **indoor artificial turf facility**. Should an external group approach with a proposal for an indoor soccer facility, a feasibility study may be prepared to examine development options (e.g., seasonal dome and / or year-round venue), costs, as well as operating and funding models.

### 5.3.5 Age-Specific Facilities

#### **Current State**

The St. Thomas Seniors' Centre is the primary venue for older adult and senior activities in the community while youth in St. Thomas are served by Northside Neighbourhood Hub, Talbot Teen Centre and Family YMCA of St. Thomas Elgin.

#### **Emerging Issues and Needs**

Seniors: Healthy, physically-active and social adults wishing to remain active as they age (exemplified by growth in pickleball participation) have shifted demand for municipal recreation programs and activities. Many municipalities are diversifying services to offer options to persons of all ages and abilities including those managing chronic illness, disease and / or old age that are seeking low-impact, therapeutic and rehabilitative programs. Additionally, there is a growing interest in non-traditional arts, culture and experiential activities for older adults and seniors.

Youth: Youth are traditionally a very challenging market for municipal recreation departments to serve due to their range of needs, competing interests and lack of transportation options. Trends suggest that the number of youths engaged in unstructured, drop-in activities is increasing, while the percentage of youth participating in organized sports is generally declining. Activities that are spontaneous social, and/or encourage personal expression are very popular among teens, including music, arts, basketball, fitness, special events, etc.

Facilities: Multi-purpose rooms in community centres are increasingly being used as multi-generational spaces for free play rather than by specific age-groups. Different demographic groups often require facility access at different times, so a shared model can be effective in many instances. As a result, stand-alone or dedicated age-specific facilities and spaces are not recommended.

#### **Assessment**

Although only 4% of survey respondents indicated participation in seniors' programs in the last twelve months, programs and services for older adults and seniors remains a high priority in the city. Space for seniors received strong public support for additional investment, ranking 10<sup>th</sup> of 25 listed facility types (73% support). Further, the city's population forecast projects significant growth in the older adult and seniors' age cohorts, suggesting that demand for programs and services will continue to grow. This increased participation further supports the demand for a municipal gymnasium / multi-use recreation facility.

As demand for older adult and seniors' programs increases, it is recommended that the City work with the Board and staff members at the St. Thomas Seniors' Centre to balance and distribute program offerings. For example, the Seniors' Centre may focus on provision of low-impact physical activities or social outings / interactions, while the City could introduce higher-impact fitness programs for older adults and seniors seeking more intense physical activities.



Nearly one-quarter (22%) of survey respondents had participated in child and youth programs within the last twelve months; these programs may have been provided by the City or through external service providers. Based on an environmental scan of available programs and services, feedback from the public consultation program and discussions with staff, it is believed that “at risk” youth are well-supported in the community and a variety of programs and facilities meet their needs. Stakeholders indicated that many activity-based programs are offered, but that many youth participants are simply seeking a safe space to hang out alone or with friends. It is not recommended that the City provide any dedicated youth-specific spaces, but should support existing service providers and create safe spaces for children and youth to participate within municipal facilities.

**Recommendations** See Section 4: Service Delivery, Programming and Policies.

## 5.4 Other Facilities

Addressed above are the facility types commonly provided in the City of St. Thomas. However, there may be other recreational facilities that are desired by the community which are not considered to be core services of the City. Some may be addressed by other sectors, such as curling and fitness clubs, while others might be emerging facility types.

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

The City’s response to unsolicited proposals will depend on its capacity to participate in such projects (e.g., development of an indoor aquatic facility, as discussed previously), the focus on wide community benefits (versus individual benefits) and the specific aspects of the proposal. If the City were approached by a community partner for the development of a facility, the organization should provide the following (at a minimum) to assist the City in its evaluation of the proposal: justification of needs and business plan; statement of the organization’s capacity; a demonstration of project sustainability; evidence of community benefits; and risk analysis.

### Recommendation

49. Evaluate **unsolicited requests for facilities** that are not part of the City’s core mandate. Proponent-led business plans should be developed to determine demand, alignment with Master Plan goals, the net benefit to the City of St. Thomas, and the degree of municipal involvement (if any).



## 6 Arts and Culture





## 6.1 Arts and Culture in St. Thomas

Arts and culture are powerful contributors to the city's economic prosperity and quality of life. The unique people, cherished stories, sacred spaces and celebrated heritage of St. Thomas are what defines the city.

St. Thomas has an incredible connection to railway heritage and has successfully promoted the "Railway City" theme through branding, events and celebrations. The local arts and cultural scenes have flourished in response to this and the city has attracted a wealth of new talent including business professionals, creative individuals and inspiring entrepreneurs.

Although the city is known for railway heritage, culture exists throughout St. Thomas, not just at the Elgin County Railway Museum, the CASO Railway Station, along the rail lines, and at the famous Jumbo monument that welcomes residents and visitors into the city. Culture is experienced through art on murals and banners in the downtown core, in performances at the Princess Playhouse, and through galleries, programs and exhibits in the St. Thomas Public Art Centre. Culture is shared through the St. Thomas Public Library, at local schools and churches, and anywhere that people gather to collectively experience all of the wonders that St. Thomas has to offer.

Given the very broad scope and impact of arts and culture in the city, it is recognized that there are many key stakeholders responsible – directly or indirectly – for its care. This includes community groups such as the naturalist club and horticultural society, learning institutions such as schools and libraries, the many volunteers that organize local activities and events, the hospitality industry that serves and accommodates locals and visitors, the City of St. Thomas and Kettle Creek Conservation Authority, the St. Thomas Downtown Development Board, Elgin Tourism, Railway City Tourism, Southwestern Public Health, local businesses and other agencies.

The public consultation program made it clear that arts and culture are valued by the residents of St. Thomas, but that more can be done to promote local opportunities. Additional investment in arts and cultural facilities was not a high priority among survey respondents; although cultural performance spaces did receive support for additional investment from 58% of survey respondents, ranking 16<sup>th</sup> out of 25 listed facilities. Museums and art galleries were among the lowest-ranked facilities, receiving 53% and 49% support for additional investment, respectively (ranked 21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> out of 25 listed facilities). This suggests that St. Thomas has the spaces and venues to meet arts and cultural needs, but required additional support to animate, program and market these facilities.

## 6.2 Arts and Culture Facilities and Spaces

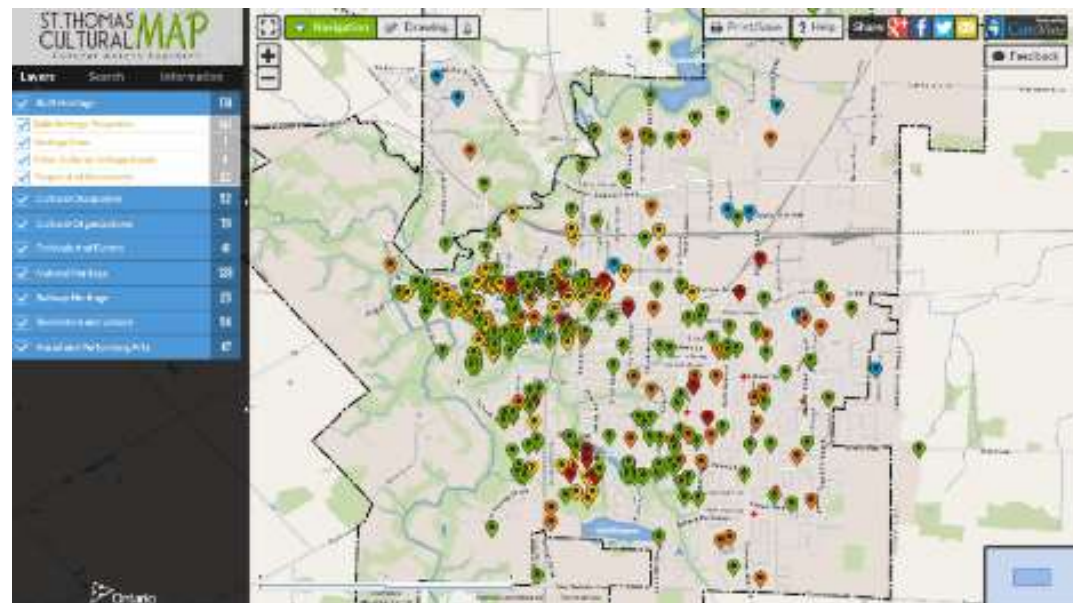
People are seeking value-added, high-quality and unique cultural opportunities that can fit into busy lifestyles. The City of St. Thomas is home to a wide variety of assets that serve the arts and cultural sector. Although the City does not directly own or operate many of these spaces, they do support local arts and culture through grants, promotion and in-kind use of municipal spaces.

Some examples of these arts and cultural assets are: the Jumbo Monument, Pinafore Park Bandshell, Elgin County Railway Museum, CASO Railway Station, St. Thomas Elgin Public Art Centre, St. Thomas Public Library, hanging baskets and floral planters, as well as sculptures, fountains and murals throughout the city. It is critical that the City work with others to maximize use and appreciation of these valuable assets.

### 6.2.1 Cultural Mapping

In response to a recommendation from the 2008 Master Plan, the City of St. Thomas (with funding assistance from the Province of Ontario) undertook a Cultural Mapping project. The purpose of the project was to identify and document the community's cultural assets and resources through a web-based interactive map ([www.stthomasculture.ca](http://www.stthomasculture.ca)). The map webpage remains active and encourages site visitors to contribute by adding cultural assets allowing the map to continually evolve.

It was noted though consultations that the database established through the cultural mapping program now hosts more than 800 unique points of interest. The points are categorized into eight unique themes: built heritage; cultural occupation; cultural organizations; festivals and events; natural heritage; railway heritage; recreation and leisure; and visual and performing arts. While the sheer number of points can be overwhelming, the interface allows users to turn layers on and off to suit their interests. However, as the St. Thomas Cultural Map does not currently have a single department or individual responsible for maintenance, it will quickly become outdated.



It is recommended that the City (in partnership with Railway City Tourism) undertake a review and update of the map and database to improve the user experience. Responsibility for ongoing monitoring and updates should be assigned. It may be best for Railway City Tourism to take ownership of the St. Thomas Cultural Map with a mandate to review update the contents every two years. This may include verification and validation of submissions and deleting duplicate entries.

### 6.2.2 Maximizing Existing Infrastructure

As a best practice, the City should assess any under-utilized or vacant municipal buildings / spaces for their potential to be repurposed for arts and cultural activities. Many stakeholders and public participants identified demand for more artist spaces while others discussed a need to repurpose some of the vacant buildings downtown (most of which are in private ownership). Conversion of strategic sites into program spaces, business incubators, artists studios, pop-up galleries or exhibition / performance spaces would provide highly sought-after spaces for local artists, artisans and vendors to work and promote their trade.

#### Recommendations

50. Undertake a review and update of the **St. Thomas Cultural Map** with the goal of leveraging opportunities for a renewed map interface using new technologies. Work with **Railway City Tourism** to review and update the map every two years at a minimum.
51. Review opportunities for **repurposing surplus municipal buildings** for arts / cultural uses prior to disposal.

## 6.3 Supporting Local Arts and Culture

In order to foster growth and promotion of local arts and culture, efforts must be managed by thoughtful planning. Many groups that participated in stakeholder sessions and community survey participants identified a need for a more coordinated approach to offering arts and culture in St. Thomas. Representatives indicated willingness to work in concert with the City to streamline processes (e.g., better understanding of applications, policies, procedures, fees, schedules, responsibilities, etc.), coordinate schedules and benefit from efficiencies of coordinated planning among community providers.



### 6.3.1 Governance

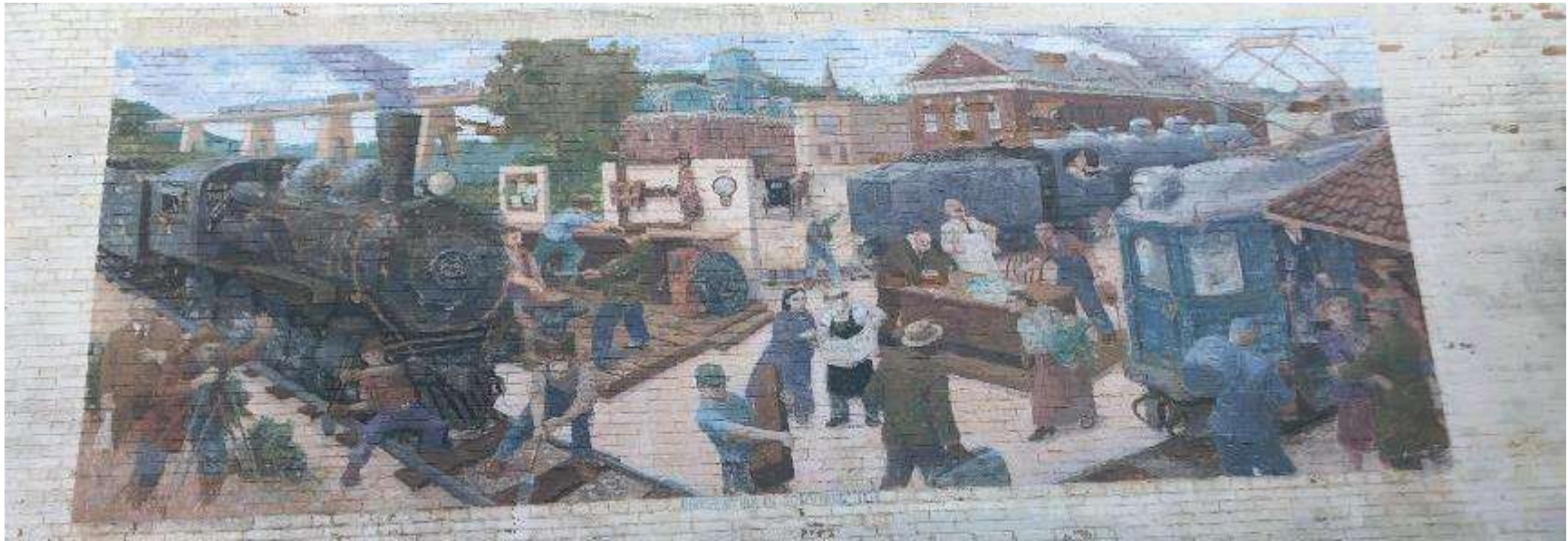
St. Thomas is home to many impressive artists and the City / partners should continue to promote their work. Public art installations (e.g., sculptures, murals, walkways, fountains, street furniture and other works – both permanent and temporary) not only enhance aesthetics of the public realm, they also encourage participation in and appreciation for the arts and promote the city's rich heritage and are a source of civic pride.

Public art promotion was recommended in the 2008 Master Plan and in 2017, the City of St. Thomas formed a Public Art Committee. On an as-needed basis, it is recommended that the City work with the Public Art Committee and representatives from the arts community to recruit artists, select preferred sites for public art installations, establish standards for appearance, structural durability, safety and conditions for removal (where applicable).



As noted earlier, a cohesive and coordinated approach to arts and cultural tourism, events, programs and promotion is needed to leverage existing resources and maximize benefit for all. The City of St. Thomas benefits from a wide variety of active and engaged service, clubs, volunteer organizations, community groups and private agencies that support arts and culture in the city. To help maximize efficiencies and opportunities to offer arts and cultural experiences in St. Thomas, stakeholders are looking to the City to provide additional leadership, coordination and resourcing.

It is recommended that the City of St. Thomas review the Public Art Committee mandate and consider expanding the scope of the Committee's responsibilities to include greater interaction and coordination with arts and culture service providers in the City. Expanding the breadth and depth of the Public Art Committee responsibilities should be accompanied with development of action plans to guide future projects.



### 6.3.2 St. Thomas-Elgin Public Art Centre

The St. Thomas-Elgin Public Art Centre is a not-for-profit, volunteer-based operation with a small paid staff complement. The Public Art Centre estimates that approximately 20,000 people come through their doors annually to participate in arts and culture through galleries, exhibits and museum collections. The Public Art Centre takes pride in their programming which offers options for all ages and artistic abilities throughout the entire year.

The St. Thomas Elgin Public Art Centre does not currently have a formal relationship with the City of St. Thomas, but has been asked to provide guidance and assistance in municipal arts and cultural matters in the past and houses the City's art collection. The Public Art Centre is primarily funded by internal fundraising and donations amounting to approximately 65% of their annual operating budget. The remaining portion is comprised of a combination of Elgin County contributions (where the Public Art Centre is a line item in the budget) and City of St. Thomas contributions (where the Public Art Centre applies for funding through its annual grant program).

To foster collaboration and boost availability of and participation in arts and culture, it is recommended that the City establish a more formal relationship with the St. Thomas-Elgin Public Art Centre. A stronger partnership would help ensure a coordinated approach to programming (e.g., avoid duplication, increase accessibility, provide consistency). In doing so, greater accountability would be required. For example, the City and Public Art Centre should be required provide more robust annual reporting, establish performance measures, coordinate program planning, etc. Additionally, it is recommended that the City provide stable annual funding to the Public Art Centre (possibly as an annual line item in the municipal budget) or consider entering into a purchase of service agreement.

### 6.3.3 Marketing and Promotion

Local walking tours and points of interest draw visitors to destinations throughout the city, particularly when they are well-promoted and easily identified. An integrated marketing and promotion plan is recommended to help boost interest and participation in local arts and cultural offerings. City Communications staff should employ all available methods of interaction with the public. This may include hard copy posters, rack cards and newspaper advertisements or digital opportunities such as roadside signs, e-newsletters, social media posts (e.g., Twitter, Facebook).

Stakeholders identified a desire to support one another and a willingness to cross-promote, particularly if guided by the City. For example, the City could generate a social media post promoting weekend events and activities; that post could then be shared and distributed through networks among other service providers to expand the reach.



### Recommendations

52. Review and update the **Public Art Committee mandate** to expand the scope of Committee responsibilities to include greater interaction and coordination with arts and culture service providers.
53. Establish a more formal relationship with the **St. Thomas-Elgin Public Art Centre**. Partnership terms should outline requirements for annual reporting, performance measures, program planning, etc. Evaluate options for providing annual **stable funding** to the Public Art Centre.
54. Develop an **integrated marketing and promotion plan** to help boost interest and participation in local arts and cultural offerings. This should include hard copy, digital and word-of-mouth promotion of local opportunities.



## 6.4 Arts and Culture Programs, Festivals and Events

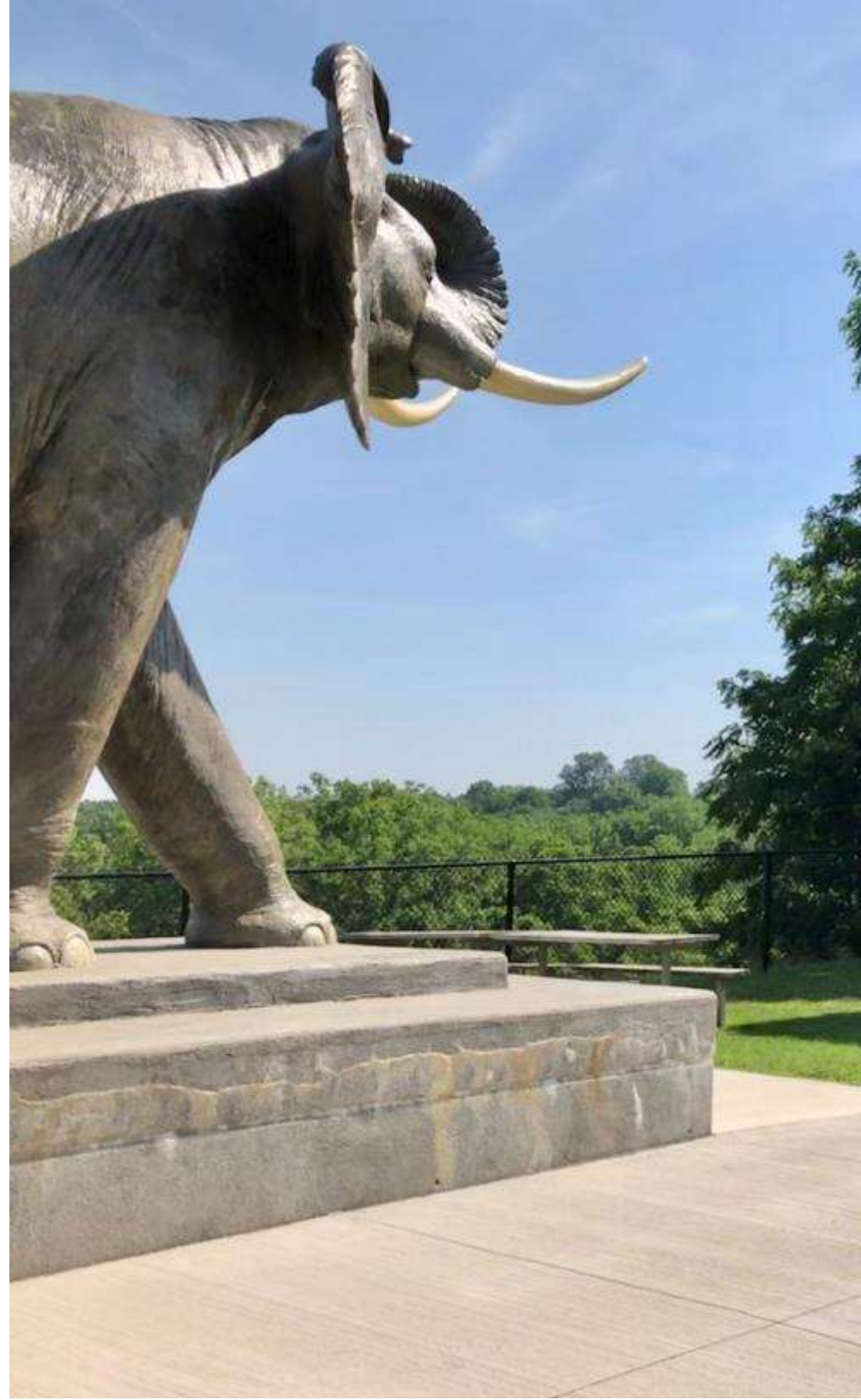
The City of St. Thomas encourages visitation and use of parks and facilities through events like movie nights in the park, but it is believed that more could be done to support community gatherings throughout the city. Some examples suggested by stakeholders and the public include: additional programming of the bandshell in Pinafore Park, neighbourhood BBQs in local parks, and working with service clubs to offer in-kind space or support for events.

### 6.4.1 Arts and Cultural Programming

Although the City of St. Thomas offers a sample of arts and cultural programming (children's art classes, dance lessons, painting, clay and sculpture, etc.), duplication of programs and services should be avoided. It is recommended that the City regularly confer with local providers of arts and cultural services (e.g., St. Thomas Elgin Public Art Centre, St. Thomas Public Library and others) to coordinate timing and availability of offerings to maximize public participation and access to opportunities available in St. Thomas. Where appropriate, the City should continue to pursue arts and cultural-related program and activity ideas that leverage municipal and community resources (e.g., reinstate kids in the kitchen at the Joe Thornton Community Centre).

### 6.4.2 Community Events

The City of St. Thomas and community partners host multiple well-known and established community events such as the Canada Day celebrations in Pinafore Park, Iron Horse Festival, Fire Muster, Day Out with Thomas, Nostalgia Nights Car Show and the Railway City Arts Crawl, to name a few.



Festival organizers and service clubs expressed an interest in a consistent and preferably central location for community events. It was suggested that a dedicated event site would help facilitate smooth transitions and ease operations / maintenance of existing festivals and also encourage traveling fairs and festivals (e.g., RibFest, midway, etc.) in St. Thomas. Considerations for development of a dedicated event site include: a convenient / central location, sufficient off-street parking, availability of ample hydro-electric connections to support vendors, and an unobstructed landscape to allow pedestrian flow throughout the site.

Stakeholders also requested that the City play a stronger role in coordinating and facilitating events to provide efficiencies for the fair, festival and event organizers. For example, assisting with the applications process to ensure all policies and procedures are adhered to, working with groups to manage set-up and take-down of equipment and amenities, and providing a forum for stakeholder organizations to consult and coordinate with one another. This may be achieved through the recommended review and update of the Public Art.



### 6.4.3 Railway Lands

The railway lands located south of Talbot Street between Ross Street (west boundary) and Caso Crossing (east boundary) were frequently discussed throughout the public consultation period. The site benefits from a central location in the downtown core surrounded by other parks, recreation, arts and cultural assets such as the CASO Railway Station along the northern edge of the site, the Joe Thornton Community Centre and Railway City Skatepark to the east, Barnes Park and the NYC Ball Diamond to the south, Jonas Street Park in the mid-west, and the Elgin County Railway Museum in the centre.

The railway lands offer a large space in the downtown core that has been identified as an area of interest by members of the public and stakeholder organizations. A Master Plan was developed for the property a few years ago by the Elgin County Railway Museum with the intention to develop the site into a festival venue / park to draw people into the downtown core. It is understood that the highly-desired railway lands are classified as industrial lands and have been designated as a brownfield site and will require significant investment and remediation prior to development or programming. This Master Plan supports the original proposal in principle, with the understanding that any future





development on the site should be undertaken as part of a public-private partnership, assuming that environmental, ownership and public access concerns are adequately addressed.

If a suitable funding source becomes available, the City of St. Thomas may work with the Elgin County Railway Museum, CASO Station, Downtown Development Board, Economic Development Commission, local tourism agencies and others to develop a phased plan for the railway lands. The park would serve to enhance the city's railway theme, provide a venue for festivals and events, and support local vendors in the downtown through increased pedestrian activity.

### Recommendations

55. Continue to pursue **arts and cultural-related programs** and activities that leverage municipal and community resources in a coordinated manner.
56. Work with community partners toward the development of a **dedicated festival / event site** in St. Thomas, possibly on the **railway lands** (pending the satisfactory resolution of environmental concerns and a viable cost-sharing and site operational agreement). A **Site Master Plan** endorsed by the City may be prepared to confirm the project vision, program, costs and phased development plan (See also – recommendation in Section 7).







## **7 Park Policy, Planning and Design**





## 7.1 Parkland Supply, Needs and Policies

To ensure that the City keeps pace with land-based demands, this section examines the City of St. Thomas's parks and open space system, along with future requirements and policy considerations. A park classification system and policies supporting parkland acquisition are essential tools to guide the planning and approvals process.

Public parkland is the land base required for many leisure activities and outdoor facilities. Among other benefits, parks and open space also contribute to the preservation and conservation of natural features, provide opportunities for passive recreational activities, provide physical linkages for the movement of humans and wildlife, build a sense of community and contribute to the City's aesthetic value.

Within St. Thomas, developed parks are primarily provided by the City, while undeveloped open space is owned by the City as well as public agencies and private individuals. These spaces are highly rated by residents. The City's destination parks are particularly well used by residents and visitors alike for everyday activities, as well as special events and tournaments. The City also has ravine lands which add to the quality of life.

As identified in the Official Plan (OPA 90), Council has adopted the following as goals for parks and recreation facilities in St. Thomas:

- i. to provide recreational opportunities for all residents in St. Thomas through the provision of both active and passive parkland and indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities;
- ii. to blend parkland and recreation facilities in a manner consistent with the natural environment;
- iii. to provide municipal programs for the effective utilization of park and recreation facilities;
- iv. to achieve the coordinated use of all public facilities that can be used for recreational purposes.

### 7.1.1 Parkland Classification and Supply

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

The City of St. Thomas Official Plan (amended by OPA 90 in 2018) identifies a parkland classification system that includes the categories similar to the ones defined in the following table. The proposed classification system is recommended for the ongoing planning and development of the City's parks and open space system and should be reflected in the City's Official Plan update.

Table 15 City of St. Thomas Parks and Open Space Classification Hierarchy

Classification	General Description / Standards	Amenities	Current Provision Level	Provision Target	Target Size
<b>ACTIVE PARK TYPES</b>					
<b>Regional Park</b>	Regional Parks are major active recreational parks that serve the entire City and beyond. They are heavily used by large groups of residents and tourists for sports and events.  <i>Includes: 1 Password Park, Douglas J. Tarry Sports Complex (ED/REC complex)</i>	May include uses permitted in community parks, with a focus on multiple high-level sports fields.	4.1 hectares per 1,000 population	1.0 hectare per 1,000 population	Variable
<b>Community Park</b>	Community Parks serve multiple neighbourhoods and are designed to a higher standard and support more intensified use than neighbourhood parks. They are rectangular shaped and relatively level and free of obstructions to maximize usable lands and development of facilities.  <i>Example: Pinafore Park</i>	May include major playgrounds, tennis courts, senior level softball diamonds and soccer fields, washrooms and concession area, picnic facilities, walkways and parking			Minimum size of 4ha to 6ha; Preferred size of 8ha to 12ha
<b>Neighbourhood Park</b>	Neighbourhood Parks primarily support children's play activities and are often situated within subdivisions to promote walkability. Some may be coordinated with school sites and have a localized service area. They are rectangularly shaped and relatively level and free of obstructions to maximize usable lands and development of facilities.  <i>Example: Applewood Park</i>	May include playgrounds, tennis courts, outdoor ice rink, junior level softball diamonds and soccer fields, walkways and parking.	1.0 hectares per 1,000 population	0.8 hectares per 1,000 population	Minimum size of 1.5ha to 2ha; preferred size of 3ha to 3.9ha
<b>Sub-Neighbourhood Park / Parkette</b>	Sub-Neighbourhood Parks and Parkettes serve a localized population in built-up areas that have restricted access to neighbourhood parks. These parks will be established through a municipal land acquisition program. They should be located in highly visible and accessible locations, typically in gateways or higher density urban areas.  <i>Example: Wellington Street School (sub-neighbourhood park), Jumbo Monument (parkette)</i>	May include floral gardens, historic/cultural features; hardscaped areas for events and gatherings, public art, seating areas, related civic uses, etc. Active recreation facilities are limited.			0.1ha to 0.5ha

Classification	General Description / Standards	Amenities	Current Provision Level	Provision Target	Target Size
<b>OPEN SPACE SYSTEM</b>					
<b>Open Space</b>	Open space land are largely undeveloped properties serving passive recreation uses. Areas may include natural heritage, cultural/built heritage or other special purpose areas/facilities. Open space lands may be owned by the City and other public agencies, such as conservation authorities. Site-specific standards are applied based on natural heritage, cultural heritage or other key environmental feature(s) that are unique to the site.  <i>Example: Burwell Road Woodlot</i>	May include facilities such as beach and picnic facilities, boating facilities, walkways, boardwalks and observation decks, bandshell, visitors service centre, natural interpretation exhibits, seasonal campgrounds, parking, etc.	Not available (includes City and non-municipal sites)	No set target (opportunity-based)	Variable – based on the site conditions and features

Note: In planning the development and redevelopment of parks, reference should be made to the specific policies in the City's Official Plan.

As of June 2019, the City of St. Thomas provides **43 active parks** which have been listed in the table below and illustrated in Figure 26. This inventory includes active parks that have recently been dedicated to the City but remain undeveloped, such as Orchard, Parish and Shaw Valley Parks. These properties total approximately **207 hectares**, equating to a current provision level of **5.1 hectares per 1,000 residents**. In addition to these municipal lands, residents also benefit from a number of parks and open spaces provided at schools, conservation areas (e.g., Dalewood Conservation Area) and private parks (e.g., Elevated Park, etc.).

Since the 2008 Master Plan was developed, the City has added several new parks, most notably 1Password Park, an off-leash dog park, a skateboard park and several neighbourhood parks in new subdivisions. While the method of calculating park areas has changed since the last Master Plan (accompanied by improved accuracy), it is estimated that the net change in total parkland since 2008 is approximately 17 hectares.



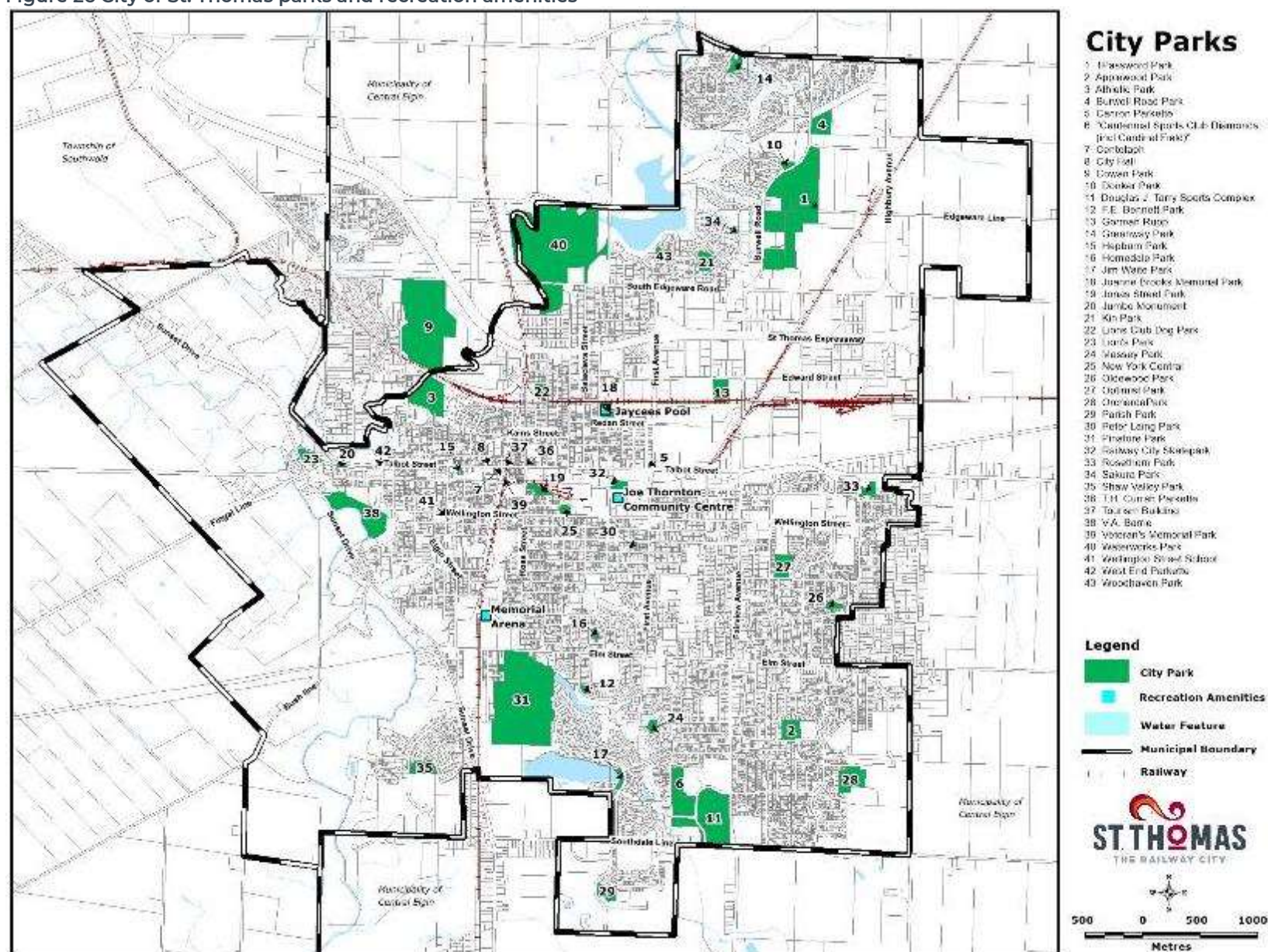
Table 16 City of St. Thomas Parks and Open Space Inventory

Municipal Parks and Open Space	Area (ha)	Proposed Classification
1Password Park	26.3	Regional Park
Applewood Park	1.34	Neighbourhood Park
Athletic Park	14.16	Community Park
Burwell Road Park	2.95	Neighbourhood Park
Canron Parkette	0.01	Parkette
Centennial Sports Club Diamonds	2.51	Neighbourhood Park
Cenotaph	0.02	Parkette
City Hall	0.05	Parkette
Cowan Park	25.9	Community Park
Donker Park	0.53	Sub-neighbourhood Park
Douglas J. Tarry Sports Complex	6.07	Regional Park
F.E. Bennett Park	1.21	Sub-neighbourhood Park
Gorman Rupp Park	1.01	Sub-neighbourhood Park
Greenway Park	0.93	Neighbourhood Park
Hepburn Park	0.10	Parkette
Homedale Park	0.49	Sub-neighbourhood Park
Joanne Brooks Memorial Park	1.65	Neighbourhood Park
Jonas Street Park	1.62	Neighbourhood Park
Jumbo Monument	0.19	Parkette
Kin Park	2.83	Neighbourhood Park
Jim Waite Park	0.69	Sub-neighbourhood Park
Lions Club Dog Park	1.78	Community Park
Lion's Park	1.62	Neighbourhood Park
Massey Park	1.62	Neighbourhood Park
New York Central	1.01	Sub-neighbourhood Park
Oldewood Park	1.21	Sub-neighbourhood Park
Optimist Park	2.71	Neighbourhood Park
Orchard Park	4.05	Neighbourhood Park
Parish Park	2.43	Neighbourhood Park
Peter Laing Park	0.20	Sub-neighbourhood Park
Pinafore Park	44.52	Community Park
Railway City Skatepark	1.37	Community Park
Rosethorn Park	1.34	Sub-neighbourhood Park

Municipal Parks and Open Space	Area (ha)	Proposed Classification
Sakura Park	0.01	Neighbourhood Park
Shaw Valley Park	4.05	Neighbourhood Park
Tourism Building	0.02	Parkette
T.H. Currah Parkette	0.02	Parkette
V.A. Barrie Park	11.29	Community Park
Veteran's Memorial Park	0.11	Community Park
Waterworks Park	36.42	Community Park
Wellington Street School	0.01	Sub-neighbourhood Park
West End Parkette	0.04	Parkette
Woodhaven Park	0.61	Sub-neighbourhood Park
<b>Total Parks and Open Space</b>	<b>206.99 ha</b>	<b>5.11 ha / 1,000 residents</b>

Source: City of St. Thomas, 2019

Figure 26 City of St. Thomas parks and recreation amenities



## 7.1.2 Parkland Needs

An adequate quantity and quality of parkland is required to support resident needs and broader community objectives. The value that residents place on parks was noted through the online survey, which found that 84% supported additional acquisition of parks and open space.

St. Thomas has a provision rate of 5.1 hectares of municipally-owned parkland per 1000 population. This supply has recently been increased through the acquisition and development of 1Password Park (a large regional level athletic park) and other properties. The City's supply of parkland is well above that targeted by comparable municipalities, many of which strive to achieve provision rates in the range of 2.2 to 3.0 hectares per 1,000 residents to meet their active recreational needs.

Over the ten-year horizon of this Master Plan, it is anticipated that the existing supply of parks will be sufficient to meet the large majority of recommended facility and amenity requirements. This is supported by Section 3.7.1 of the City's Official Plan, which states "St. Thomas has an adequate numerical supply of larger parks such as regional and community parks." Furthermore, three-fifths (61%) of survey respondents were satisfied (and only 9% dissatisfied) with open space parks for unstructured use, suggesting that the City is meeting the majority of expectations in this area.

Although the City's current parkland supply is sufficient, the City must continue to strive to provide parkland in populated areas that do not have adequate access to parks, including neighbourhood parks in new subdivisions and sub-neighbourhood parks or parkettes in areas of intensification. Through the Master Plan's community consultation program, numerous comments were received to secure and develop neighbourhood parks in new subdivisions, particularly the Shaw and Tarry subdivisions in the southwest and southeast portions of St. Thomas. Both of these areas contain parkland that was recently dedicated to the City, but for which development has not yet been initiated. Orchard, Parish and Shaw Valley Parks will be developed shortly, helping to provide local service to these growing areas.

As equity and accessibility are key elements of any parks system, it is recommended that the City continue to strive to provide parkland in populated areas that are void of park facilities. The City's parks system provides good geographic coverage, although gaps currently exist in the following areas based on a 500-metre service area:

- **Fairview Avenue and Elm Street area:** Although parcels with park potential will be limited in this established neighbourhood, residential infill projects are possible. Opportunities to secure parkland or public access to private amenities in this area through the land development approvals process should be a priority.
- **Northside of Downtown, near Jaycees Pool:** The area east of Lion's Park and north of Talbot Street is an established neighbourhood with residential infill potential. Opportunities to enhance the Jaycees Pool site or the adjacent Joanne Brooks Memorial Park (undeveloped open space; former brownfield site) should be supported to improve service to this community.

Additional opportunities may also be presented in the future that assist the City in achieving its goal of a comprehensive and connected active transportation network, such as a more formal relationship with the Elevated Park (currently maintained by a not-for-profit association).

By 2031, the City's population is forecasted to be 48,800 persons which – if additional parkland is not acquired – will translate into a provision level of 4.2 hectares of parkland per 1,000 residents. In addition to addressing potential gaps, additional parkland will be required to address growth in the proposed settlement area expansion lands (a Neighbourhood Park in **Area 1**) in northwest St. Thomas. Establishing a minimum provision target of 4.0 hectares of active parkland per 1,000 residents should continue to enable the City to meeting resident needs, while reflecting the existence of several large and unique park sites.

### Recommendation

- 57.** Maintain a minimum **parkland provision level of 4.0 hectares per 1,000**. Additional parkland may be secured to:
- a) meet growth-related needs and ensure accessibility to growing areas (including neighbourhood parks in the Area 1 settlement area expansion);
  - b) address gaps in park distribution within established and intensifying areas through development of sub-neighbourhood parks or parkettes or enhancement of existing parks (e.g., Fairview Avenue and Elm Street area; northside of Downtown, near Jaycees Pool);
  - c) establish linear/trail connections vital to creating a comprehensive active transportation network; and/or
  - d) expand regional and community parks where necessary to install additional recreational amenities, based on demonstrated needs.

### 7.1.3 Parkland Acquisition Policies

There are several provincial and municipal regulations, policies and guidelines governing the acquisition and location of parkland. The Ontario Planning Act establishes a framework for the dedication of parkland and the City's Official Plan sets out policies for securing and developing parkland. There have been several changes to Planning Act that have affected parkland supplies in recent times. These changes have resulted in reduced amounts of land and/or funding available for parkland dedication, leading to a decline in parkland provision levels across the province.

In growing areas, the dedication of parkland from development should continue to be the City's primary method of parkland acquisition. Presently, the St. Thomas Official Plan allows the City to require the conveyance of up to 5% of land proposed for residential development or redevelopment (or up to 1 hectare per 300 units). Alternatively, the City may accept cash-in-lieu of the conveyance or a combination of the two approaches. The recently introduced Bill 108 proposes to repeal the alternate rate of 1 hectare per 300 units (or 1 hectare per 500 units if accepting cash-in-lieu)



allowed by the Planning Act and Official Plans; once proclaimed, the City's Official Plan should be amended to reflect these changes.

Parks opportunities identified through the planning approvals process should be evaluated using the City's Official Plan and the tools contained in this Master Plan. In cases where a proposed development is too small to result in a meaningful park parcel or where the immediate area already has suitable and unimpeded access to sufficient parkland, the City may consider accepting cash-in-lieu to put towards future acquisition or development. It should be acknowledged that appropriately sized, located and configured properties ensure that municipal resources are utilized effectively and efficiently, while accommodating a range of recreational activities.

In gap areas, alternate strategies for securing parkland beyond dedication may be required, such as shared use agreements, long-term leases, covenants, land exchanges and outright acquisition (supplemented by cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication reserves). Opportunities for the dedication of meaningful park parcels (or cash-in-lieu) should continue to be maximized.

Open space properties (e.g., valley lands, hazard lands, natural areas, woodlots, etc.) and stormwater management (SWM) facilities will not be accepted as part of the required parkland dedication but rather protected through land use policy or voluntary dedication. However, as noted in the City's Design Guidelines Manual, the integration of SWM facilities into the open space system is encouraged, as are pedestrian connections within or adjacent to natural areas. The Official Plan is also supportive of trail development and active transportation strategies must continue to be prioritized to allow the City to capitalize on opportunities that are presented over time.

The City should also consider maximizing parkland dedication opportunities by allowing for the conveyance of up to 2% of commercial and industrial development lands, an option which is permitted under the Planning Act. Although not enacting this provision may be seen to be an incentive toward encouraging industrial and commercial growth in the City, it is a valuable tool that can be used to improve funding of parkland and park development in under-served areas of the City. A similar provision could also be applied to mixed-use developments.

The Planning Act allows for cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication to be used towards not only parkland acquisition, but also "the erection, improvement or repair of buildings and the acquisition of machinery for park or other public recreational purposes." Given the City's considerable supply of parkland, the potential use of cash-in-lieu for park improvements – particularly when applied to parks in the vicinity of the contributing development – may be supported. In conjunction with the development of a Community Benefits Charge strategy, a policy should be prepared to guide the use of cash-in-lieu for park acquisition and park improvements for residential, commercial and industrial developments and redevelopments (as per Section 42 of the Planning Act).

Although St. Thomas has a higher than average supply of parkland, population growth and new opportunities may help to maximize parks over time. Should the City consider declaring any park parcels surplus and disposing of them (in whole or in part), any revenue generated from the sale of surplus parkland should be kept in reserve and reinvested in priority parks and recreation projects. The evaluation of surplus lands should follow a prescribed process and be evaluated using a set list of criteria, which may include:

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

## Recommendations

58. Update the **parkland policies** within the City's Official Plan to reflect the changes imposed by **Bill 108 and this Master Plan** (e.g., parkland classification). Seek to **maximize parkland dedication and cash-in-lieu** for residential development and redevelopment through a Community Benefits Charge strategy (Bill 108) and the provisions of the City's Official Plan and Ontario's Planning Act.
59. In areas where the supply of parkland is adequate, prioritize the use of **cash-in-lieu for parkland improvements**, preferably in the vicinity of the development that generated the contribution. Develop a **cash-in-lieu policy** to direct the collection and use of parkland reserves (Section 42 of the Planning Act).
60. In growing areas, support **front-end dedication** of park blocks and funding mechanisms to minimize the lag between subdivision development and park development. Employ alternative parkland acquisition tools where applicable.
61. Establish **criteria and a process** for identifying, evaluating and disposing **surplus park properties** that are no longer required to meet current or long-term community needs. Redirect proceeds and operational savings from the sale or disposition of parkland to other high priority projects within the parks system.

## 7.2 Parkland Design and Maintenance

To ensure that parks are functional and responsive to current and emerging needs, there are several factors that the City should consider as it develops and redevelops parkland. Below are some key considerations that arose through the master plan consultation phase; this is not intended to be an exhaustive list:

Informal and Unstructured Uses: Effective parks are destinations where residents and visitors can engage in a variety of individual and community activities of an active or passive nature. Increasingly, people and families are seeking parks that they can enjoy at their own convenience, thus an emphasis should be placed on flexible and informal park spaces that can be used for unstructured activities and quiet reflection. This has been a unique and successful trait of St. Thomas' community parks for some time and should be maintained and supported.

Growing Variety of Interests: Parks in the City of St. Thomas contain a growing variety of features that are indicative of evolving interests, such as splash pads, off leash dog parks and pickleball courts. Maintaining a parks system not only takes time and resources, but also thoughtful design and programming that includes age-friendly and accessible amenities, organized and non-programmed uses, and best practices in beautification, environmental management and stewardship.

Rethinking Neighbourhood Parks: Neighbourhood parks are the most common park type in the city and are a critical resource for building a sense of community and social belonging. However, many are underused because they may not contain the amenities sought by residents of all ages – 26% of survey respondents indicated that neighbourhood parks are not meeting their expectations. A renewed focus on design is recommended, with consideration of upgraded amenities, comfort features (seating, shade, etc.) and outdoor programming to help people connect with the parks.

Park Animation: Traditional park uses include organized activities (such as sports) and unorganized pursuits (such as informal play; e.g., playground use). Increasingly, park spaces are being animated through programming and new forms of community engagement. Some examples include (but are not limited to) fitness in the park, food trucks and cultural events such as music, concerts and theatre. Viewing parks as “outdoor living rooms” helps to expand the scope of use and engages a broader range of residents and visitors, leading to experiential learning, participation and community mobilization.

Aging Population: Like most communities, the City's population is aging and the number of older adult residents is rising. In general, the “new older adult” is more physically active than past generations and is interested in non-traditional activities, such as pickleball. This is leading to increased use of parks, trails and recreation facilities at all times of the day, including daytime.

Accessibility: It is essential that parks – both existing and future – be inclusive and barrier-free, as guided by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and contemporary design guidelines. To ensure that the parks system is able to serve people from all segments of the community, accessible seating, washrooms, shade (structures and trees), bike racks, parking, connections to key destinations and safety must be considered within

appropriate park types. Accessibility audits should be incorporated into the City's asset management planning to identify a multi-year strategy for addressing barrier-free compliance.

Naturalization and Environmental Stewardship: The importance of environmental protection is being increasingly recognized and demand for passive settings that connect people to nature is on the rise. Many communities are placing a greater emphasis on the provision of passive park space (e.g., woodlots, prairie grasslands, flower gardens, pollinator habitats, etc.), often ensuring that portions of new or redeveloped parks remain in a natural state. Naturalization typically involves reduced grass cutting, planting of native species and public education to create awareness in the community (e.g., interpretative signage). To be successful, these initiatives should be supported by civic engagement through volunteer programs, as well as focused communications to residents and businesses. The City should continue to seek innovative and engaging initiatives that encourage naturalization, beautification and environmental stewardship.

Awareness, Branding and Signage: Signage is also an important element that contributes to wayfinding, awareness and community pride. The City has recently adopted a new visual identity based on the railroad theme. This brand should be carried forward into parks, trails and facilities. Regulatory signs within parks and trails should also be reviewed and updated where necessary.



Technology: Because technology is readily available in so many forms, it has also become an integral part of the public realm. Many public parks and facilities across Ontario support and even encourage use of technology. Some municipalities now provide public access to Wi-Fi in parks and public facilities, encourage technology-focused participation and use tech to monitor usage levels. For example, some children's playgrounds include smart phone app technology that can be used to enhance the play experience, and other parks use GPS devices to support geo-caching experiences. The City of St. Thomas should also explore the use of technology, such as digital signs at major facilities or parks that serve to advertise local events, installing Wi-Fi within major parks, and using solar lighting at key sites along trails.

Parks in Unconventional Spaces: Local and provincial policies support healthy, active communities and the balanced distribution of parks. With residential infill projects becoming more common, non-traditional public spaces are playing a greater role in ensuring continued public access to green spaces and park-like places. Examples across Ontario include multi-functional civic spaces, privately-owned publicly accessible spaces, underutilized properties, linear parks, strata parks, shaded/flex streets and more. St. Thomas has several vacant brownfield sites (e.g., Joanne Brooks Memorial Park, railway lands, etc.) that are well located and have great potential to address parks, recreation and cultural needs of the immediate neighbourhood and city as a whole. Long-term strategies endorsed by the City (including potential funding sources and partnerships) are needed to move these initiatives forward.



## Recommendations

62. Undertake **park condition assessments** on a regular basis to inform the City's asset management plan and long-term capital plan. Identify and plan for park renewal and redevelopment projects that address aging infrastructure and capital improvements.
63. Maintain a commitment to **universal accessibility, safety and comfort** within the City's parks system through compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) – including consultation with the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee – and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles. It is acknowledged that some parks may include areas of natural terrain that are more difficult to access.
64. Emphasize the provision of **age-friendly amenities** such as washrooms, shade (e.g., tree planting in new parks, shade structures, etc.), benches/seating areas, pathways and bike racks in appropriate park types and along trails.
65. Provide an appropriate balance of **active and passive spaces** within the parks system that can support recreation and sports, casual use, special events and cultural activities. Flexible park designs should be encouraged.
66. Identify a long-term plan to renew and improve **neighbourhood parks**, including (but not limited to) Applewood, Greenway, Kin, Homedale and Optimist Parks. Engage stakeholders and the public when designing new and redeveloped parks.
67. Undertake a review of **signage for parks and trails** to ensure consistency with City branding, design guidelines and regulatory requirements.
68. Seek opportunities for **expanded park programming, outdoor education and stewardship**, such as nature-based programming, tree planting, use of native species, naturalization initiatives, and butterfly/pollinator parks in conjunction with community partners.
69. Seek partnerships to facilitate the provision of **Wi-Fi** at key park sites.
70. Develop long-term strategies for the development and / or improvement of **Joanne Brooks Memorial Park and the CASO railway lands**, including potential funding sources and partnerships.





## 8 Implementation Framework



## 8.1 Reviewing and Updating the Plan

The City accomplished much of what was set out in the 2008 Master Plan. By setting priorities, creating a phased plan for implementation, and working with community stakeholders to achieve more, we can ensure that the intent of this Master Plan and its key recommendations are achieved over the next ten years.

In doing so, the City should regularly review and assess – and periodically revise – the recommendations of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. This will ensure that the directions remain reflective of current realities and responsive to the changing community needs. This will require monitoring of activity patterns, conducting annual reviews of the Plan’s achievements, determining which recommendations have or have not been implemented, tracking satisfaction levels of residents and undertaking a detailed ten-year update to the Plan.

Additional tasks are required to enable active implementation of the Plan, including the monitoring of participation levels and regular dialogue with the community. Through these mechanisms – or as a result of other internal and external factors – adjustment of resource allocations and priorities identified in this Plan may be required.

Reviewing the Plan requires a commitment from all staff involved in the delivery of parks, recreation and cultural services, Council and the public. An appropriate time for this is prior to the annual budgeting process. The following steps may be used to conduct an **annual review** of the Master Plan:

- Review of the past year (recommendations implemented, capital projects undertaken, success/failure of new and existing initiatives, changes in participation levels, issues arising from the public and community groups, etc.);
- Issues impacting the coming year (anticipated financial and operational constraints, related civic initiatives, etc.);
- Review of the Plan for direction regarding its recommendations;
- Preparation of a staff report to indicate prioritization of short-term projects and which projects should be implemented in the coming year based upon criteria established by staff (e.g., financial limitations, community input, partnership/funding potential, etc.);
- Communication to staff and Council regarding the status of projects, criteria used to prioritize projects and projects to be implemented in the coming year; and
- Budget requests/revisions as necessary.



## Recommendations

71. Post the Master Plan on the **City's website** as a resource for the community, Council and staff.
72. Develop **annual work plans** to guide strategic implementation of the Master Plan, with key priorities identified on a year-to-year basis.
73. Develop and implement a system for **regular monitoring and reporting** on the progress of the Master Plan, such as the collection of participation/registration data and annual reports to Council and/or the community.
74. Conduct **feasibility studies and business plans** (with input from the public) prior to developing or expanding major park sites and recreation facilities to ensure that projects are aligned with community needs, partnership opportunities and financial capacities.
75. Undertake a **full update of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan** in five to ten years (2024-2029).

## 8.2 Potential Funding Sources

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

### 8.2.1 Development Charges / Community Benefit Charges

*Note: In June 2019, the Province passed Bill 108 which – among other items - seeks to remove parks and recreation services from the Development Charges Act. These will be considered under a new Community Benefits Charge By-law (as will be set out in proclamation) should the City wish to impose one. It is proposed that the legislative provisions related to community benefits charges would come into force on January 1, 2020. Implications of Bill 108 are under review by the City.*

Development charges are fees that are collected through the building process in order to address the growth-related infrastructure needs of a community. Up to 90% of eligible capital projects may be funded through development charges, with the remaining 10% financed by the municipality through other sources. Funding limitations (pre-Bill 108) include replacement portions of facilities, arts and cultural facilities, historical service level deficiencies, or excess capacity as a result of the pre-emplacement of facilities. Many of the items identified in this Master Plan are partially or fully growth-related, thus will be eligible for Development Charge / Community Benefit Charge funding.

### 8.2.2 Parkland Cash-in-Lieu

*Note: In June 2019, the Province passed Bill 108 which – among other items – seeks to amend the Planning Act and provisions related to the alternate parkland rate (upon proclamation). Implications of Bill 108 are under review by the City.*

The Planning Act establishes a framework for the dedication of parkland and possible alternatives, with implementation policies identified through official plans. One such alternative to land dedication is the conveyance of cash-in-lieu of parkland generated by development or redevelopment. At the City's discretion, cash-in-lieu may be used to purchase parkland, to acquire associated machinery or equipment and/or for parkland development. Bill 108 proposes to remove the alternative parkland dedication rate (1 hectare per 300 units or 1 hectare per 500 units if accepting cash-in-lieu), as well as make broad changes to Section 37 (Community Benefits).

### 8.2.3 Municipal Reserves

On occasion, municipalities may decide to set aside monies accrued from tax dollars or other revenue sources for special projects, such as the development or expansion of a specific community facility or park. In addition, annual lifecycle reserves that are earmarked to fund the maintenance and state-of-good-repair of existing facilities are becoming more common.

### 8.2.4 Fundraising, Donations and Sponsorships

The capital and ongoing operational costs of constructing parks and facilities are substantial and will inherently place pressures on the municipal budget. Seeking assistance from the community and service clubs to contribute resources towards the construction and/or operation of parks and facilities can be an effective way to provide services and spaces that are truly desired by residents. In the past, many local user groups have collected donations and/or participated in fundraising for new facilities and this practice is expected to continue. The City's Policy on Granting Funds to Community Organizations provides guidance in this regard. Naming rights should give consideration to sunset clauses.

### 8.2.5 User Fees and Surcharges

User and rental fees vary considerably based on the type of activity/facility in question. For example, ice rentals comprise the bulk of the revenue stream for an arena but are less consequential for lower use spaces such as a meeting room. Nevertheless, increases in user fees – often achieved through a project-specific surcharge – can be used to offset the costs associated with capital upgrades.

### **8.2.6 Debenture Financing**

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

### **8.2.7 Ongoing Government Programs**

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

### **8.2.8 One-Time Grants**

Municipalities often seek financial support from senior levels of government for major municipal capital projects. In 2017, the Federal budget made commitments towards infrastructure investments in the recreation sector through the "Investing in Canada" Plan and, in partnership with the Provincial Government, the Community, Culture and Recreation Infrastructure funding stream opened in 2019 (amounting to over \$700 million across Ontario over 10 years, with up to 73.33% support for eligible municipal projects). Another opportunity may be the Canadian Experiences Fund, a two-year \$58.5-million national program to help Canada's tourism sector innovate and grow. While the presence of an approved Master Plan is often a requirement to securing grant funding, additional staff resources may be required to assist with monitoring and applying for grants.

### **8.2.9 Partnerships**

To maximize benefits to the community, the City may consider engaging in collaborations or partnerships with the private sector, non-profit sector, or other levels of government to develop and/or operate various facilities and services. Detailed feasibility studies and the development of agreements will be required to ensure that these arrangements yield the desired results.

### **8.2.10 Cooperation between Municipal Neighbours**

Cooperation between municipalities is essential to the effective delivery of parks and recreation services. Residents are not concerned about municipal boundaries if their access to and enjoyment of a recreational experience is unencumbered by local politics. Throughout Ontario, municipalities benefit from various types of cooperation, including joint services agreements that allow cost-efficient access to facilities by residents in another municipality.

## Recommendations

76. Where appropriate and consistent with municipal policies and priorities, consider **alternative funding and cost-sharing approaches** such as (but not limited to) surcharges, fundraising, grants, sponsorships and naming rights, parkland cash-in-lieu (CIL) reserves, and various forms of collaboration to provide the best value to residents.
77. Assess operating **budget implications and partnership options** prior to approving major capital projects.
78. Continue to contribute toward **annual lifecycle reserves** to offset the repair and replacement costs associated with parks, recreation and cultural infrastructure. Annual funding amounts should be increased over time to achieve fully funded status.
79. Use this **Master Plan as a resource** in developing the City's annual budget documents, Development Charges and Community Benefits Charges studies, secondary plans and related studies.

### 8.3 Timing and Priority of Recommendations

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

The recommendations identified in this Master Plan are not intended to be a definitive list, as additional capital repairs, operating expenditures and other initiatives outside the scope of this Plan may be identified and prioritized on a case-specific basis. By approving this Plan, the City is not bound to implementing every action or providing facilities/services in the order, amount or timing indicated; rather, this Plan provides guidance on community priorities and sets a general course for meeting the needs as they are presently defined.

The City has limited resources and cannot afford to do everything that the community desires; this is one of the primary reasons for undertaking a Master Plan in the first place. Although the City of St. Thomas may experience challenges in providing the appropriate financial and human resources to achieve the Master Plan's recommendations, the City should make every reasonable effort to implement these strategies through appropriate and acceptable means. The full implementation of this Plan will require the use of municipal taxation, development charges and/or community benefits charges, grants, fundraising and/or collaborations with community partners.



Determining priorities is an exercise that should be revisited each year prior to the City's budget development exercise. **It is expected that the City will make decisions on individual projects and funding sources annually through the budget process.** In addition to funding availability, factors that might affect priorities year to year may include:

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

Priority is often, but not always, synonymous with timing – the higher the priority, the sooner the action should be implemented. Priority has been determined based on an assessment of need, as identified throughout the planning process and with consideration of public input, trend and demographic analysis, capacity and demand, etc. Generally, municipalities seek to make efficient use of resources through initiatives that have the broadest community benefit and serve the widest range of needs.

Within the tables that follow, the priority and timing of recommendations are organized into the following categories, with key considerations and potential cost impacts identified for selected actions:

### **Priority**

High Priority: Immediate attention is recommended during the proposed timeframe.

Medium Priority: Attention is required when high priority recommendations have been initiated or completed, or when suitable partners have been identified for funding.

Lower Priority: Attention is required when high and medium priority recommendations have been initiated/completed.

### **Timing** (generally aligned with Council terms)

Short-term (1-4 years): 2020 to 2022

Medium-term (5 to 8 years): 2023 to 2026

Longer-term (9 years and beyond): 2027 and beyond

Ongoing: Continuous directions that should be implemented throughout the course of the entire planning period

**Considerations** (cost impacts, ongoing best practice, responsible party, etc.)

Potential Cost Impacts (all cost estimates to be confirmed through future study)

Minor (\$): estimated at \$100,000 or less

Moderate (\$\$): estimated to be between \$100,000 and \$500,000

Major (\$\$\$): estimated at \$500,000 or more

Note: In the following tables, the recommendations are numbered according to the order in which they are presented in the body of the Master Plan. They are not listed in priority order.

Table 17 Implementation Strategy:

Recommendations	Priority	Timing			Key Considerations
		2020 - 2022	2023 - 2026	2027+	
The Role of the City’s Parks and Recreation Department (Section 4.1)					
1. Begin more formal and joint discussions with <b>non-municipal parks, recreation and culture providers</b> (e.g., YMCA, Talbot Teen Centre, Seniors Centre, Public Arts Centre, schools, etc.) in St. Thomas to reduce duplication, share resources and jointly focus on key community priorities.	High	●	●	●	Ongoing practice and long-term commitment
2. Increase the frequency, intensity and duration of <b>physical activity</b> within all age groups through education, engagement and working with other community partners.	High	●	●	●	Ongoing practice and long-term commitment
3. Review <b>program provision</b> annually to ensure that all age groups (e.g., seniors, youth, families) are receiving a wide range of opportunities and that registration and participation are maximized.	High	●	●	●	Ongoing practice
4. Promote <b>free and low-cost activity options</b> to ensure universal access across the community.	High	●	●	●	Ongoing practice
5. Support the recommendations of Southwestern Public Health’s Access to Affordable Recreation Report. Begin with establishing an <b>Access to Affordable Recreation policy</b> in concert with community partners to demonstrate the belief that access to affordable recreation will assist in reducing poverty and increasing beneficial outcomes.	High	●	●		--
6. Work with all youth service providers in St. Thomas to ensure that the <b>Playworks Youth Friendly Criteria</b> are being met.	High	●	●		--
7. Consider development and implementation of <b>youth leadership programs</b> in St. Thomas.	High	●	●		Operating Cost: \$

Recommendations	Priority	Timing			Key Considerations
		2020 - 2022	2023 - 2026	2027+	
8. Work with the Seniors Recreation Centre Board and other like partners to enhance <b>recreation program opportunities for older adults</b> across the City and integrate age-specific programs and services into future indoor recreation development.	High	●	●		--
9. Develop a <b>communication plan</b> and specific initiatives to increase access to nature and the outdoors in concert with all interested partners in St. Thomas.	Medium	●	●		--
10. Develop training opportunities, policies and intentional practices as outlined to better include residents who may be <b>marginalized</b> (including, but not limited to, residents from low income backgrounds, residents with disabilities and females).	High	●	●	●	Ongoing practice and long-term commitment
<b>Strengthening the Municipal Supports and Building Internal Capacity (Section 4.3)</b>					
11. Review and summarize the <b>staffing and resourcing requirements</b> needed to implement the recommendations housed in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, currently and in the future.	High	●			Operating Cost: to be determined
12. Establish a process to confirm the <b>levels of service and staffing</b> for parks, recreation and cultural services. Based on these levels, determine work effort and required full-time equivalents for Council consideration.	Medium	●	●		Operating Cost: to be determined
13. Work with adjacent municipalities to discuss a <b>reciprocal and / or cost-sharing arrangement</b> for use of parks, recreation and culture services and facilities in St. Thomas. This may take the form of a fiscal contribution from participating municipalities to offset the net expenditures for provision in St. Thomas.	High	●	●		--



Recommendations	Priority	Timing			Key Considerations
		2020 - 2022	2023 - 2026	2027+	
14. Develop a <b>Pricing and User Fee Policy</b> based on the true cost to deliver parks, recreation and cultural services and programs. Set realistic recovery rates when considering revenue generating opportunities. Consideration should be given to utilizing external services to assist with this work.	High	●	●		Operating Cost: \$
15. Develop and apply a <b>health equity lens</b> when planning for and providing parks, recreation and cultural services. Work with local agencies such as Southwestern Public Health and Active Elgin to better understand participation and interest in municipal program offerings.	High	●	●		--
16. Review the City's existing <b>sponsorship agreements</b> and develop a full list of sponsorship and partnership opportunities available. Once complete, begin to proactively seek partners and funders.	Medium	●	●		--
17. Revisit the City of St. Thomas' <b>response time standards</b> for public complaints based on the severity of the complaint and the impact on other work requirements.	High	●			--
18. Implement <b>Quality Assurance Frameworks</b> for all municipal parks, recreation and cultural programs and services (e.g., Aquatic Safety Management Accreditation, etc.).	High	●	●		Operating Cost: \$
19. Review all <b>allocation policies and processes</b> to ensure that they are mindful of national and provincial sport association guidelines, trends in sports and gender equity (at a minimum).	Medium	●	●		--
20. Adopt the <b>Organizational Effectiveness Framework</b> (as presented within this Master Plan) for full staff engagement and accountability in the delivery of service.	High	●	●	●	Ongoing practice

Recommendations	Priority	Timing			Key Considerations
		2020 - 2022	2023 - 2026	2027+	
21. Review the <b>training and development requirements</b> needed to fully implement the Parks and Recreation Master Plan recommendations.	High	●			Operating Cost: \$
22. <b>Measure performance</b> and report to the public annually on the results of parks, recreation and cultural service delivery in St. Thomas.	High	●	●	●	Ongoing practice
23. Consider the merits of convening regular <b>information-sharing forums</b> involving Council, City staff and the community. Discussions should focus on gathering information and ideas on challenging subjects or specific topics that would benefit from public discourse, such as capital projects, trend-watching, communications and more.	Medium	●	●		--
24. Continue to explore ways to increase the <b>online presence</b> of parks, recreation and culture services. Use the City's website, online calendar and social media accounts to disseminate pertinent information (e.g., service interruptions, registration dates, employment opportunities) and enable service providers to promote local activities and events.	Medium	●	●		Ongoing practice
<b>Outdoor Recreation Facilities (Section 5.2)</b>					
25. Continue to <b>consult with stakeholder organizations</b> to discuss <b>ball diamond</b> allocation, participation / registration, site maintenance, etc.	Medium	●	●	●	Ongoing practice
26. Improve <b>user experience</b> and <b>playability</b> at existing <b>ball diamond</b> sites (e.g., install lights at Burwell Park, address parking issues at Douglas J. Tarry Sports Complex, etc.).	High	●			Capital Cost: \$\$

Recommendations	Priority	Timing			Key Considerations
		2020 - 2022	2023 - 2026	2027+	
<b>27.</b> Consider development of <b>1.5 additional ball diamonds (ULE)</b> over the long term (once existing diamonds reach a minimum of 90% capacity). This may be achieved by improving existing sites (e.g., installing lights), aligning diamond design with intended use, re-purposing existing open space sites and / or future parkland acquisition.	Low			●	Capital Cost: \$\$\$
<b>28.</b> Focus efforts on maximizing use of <b>soccer fields</b> at the three core parks (IPassword Park, Athletic Park and Cowan Park) and consider repurposing under-utilized stand-alone soccer fields to other in-demand uses, such as those at the Douglas J. Tarry Sports Complex and Optimist Park. No additional soccer or multi-use fields are recommended during the planning period.	Medium	●	●		Repurposing will require additional investigation
<b>29.</b> Proceed with park development and installation of <b>playground equipment</b> in Shaw Valley Park, Parish Park and Orchard Park in the short-term. Park designs should offer unique play experiences for each neighbourhood, particularly considering the relatively close proximity of all three newly-developed neighbourhood parks.	High	●			Capital Cost: \$\$
<b>30.</b> Plan for installation of <b>playground equipment</b> within a future park within the <b>“Area 1” expansion lands</b> in the medium-to long-term.	High		●	●	Capital Cost: \$
<b>31.</b> Consider opportunities to address the <b>playground gap</b> near <b>Elm Street and Fairview Avenue</b> through redevelopment or intensification in the area.	Medium	●	●	●	Timing will be dependent upon opportunity
<b>32.</b> Seek opportunities to increase use of existing <b>outdoor fitness</b> components through guided programs or community events that encourage active participation in outdoor physical activity. Additional outdoor fitness equipment is not recommended at this time.	High	●			Potential partnership opportunity

Recommendations	Priority	Timing			Key Considerations
		2020 - 2022	2023 - 2026	2027+	
<b>33.</b> Develop four (4) additional <b>pickleball courts</b> (short-to-medium term) and one (1) additional <b>tennis court</b> (long-term). Development should be designed in multiple court complexes (and / or multi-sport designs), preferably in the north end of the City.	Medium	● (pickleball)	● (pickleball)	● (tennis)	Site selection required Capital Cost: \$\$
<b>34.</b> Develop a <b>single basketball / multi-use court</b> at one of the new park developments in the south end of St. Thomas (e.g., Orchard Park, Parish Park or Shaw Valley Park) and through future park development within the “Area 1” expansion lands to improve accessibility.	High	● South end		● Area 1	Site selection required Capital Cost: \$\$
<b>35.</b> Continue to support proposals from service clubs or community volunteer groups wishing to assist with fundraising, maintenance, programming and monitoring of <b>outdoor natural ice rinks</b> . The viability of establishing a municipal artificial rink / trail may be evaluated through a business plan in the longer-term.	Low	●	●	● business plan	Ongoing practice (natural rinks)
<b>36.</b> Proceed with the second phase of <b>skatepark</b> development (as was planned during the initial build) in the medium-to-long term. Expansion should focus on more challenging obstacles for advanced skaters and riders (e.g., bowl, etc.) and support amenities (e.g., shade, etc.).	Medium		●	●	Capital Cost: \$\$
<b>37.</b> Seek opportunities to improve the <b>user experience</b> (e.g., installation of pavilion, appropriate water features, seating area and resurfaced parking lot) and <b>maximize use</b> (e.g., special events, theme days, free swims, promotion, etc.) of <b>Jaycees Pool</b> .	High	●	●		Capital Cost: \$\$ to \$\$\$



Recommendations	Priority	Timing			Key Considerations
		2020 - 2022	2023 - 2026	2027+	
<b>38.</b> Install one additional <b>splash pad</b> site in southeast St. Thomas to enhance geographic distribution throughout the municipality and address community demand. Potential sites for a splash pad may include: Parish Park or Orchard Park. Further consultation with staff and investigation into development costs and design capabilities (e.g., shade, parking, etc.) is required to inform this decision.	High	●	●		Site selection required Capital Cost: \$\$
<b>39.</b> In lieu of developing additional <b>dog parks</b> , continue to work with stewardship groups to improve year-round maintenance and signage at the Lions Club Dog Park to support safe access and use by area residents.	Medium	●	●	●	Ongoing practice
<b>40.</b> Continue to work with local cycling community and Conservation Authority to select an appropriate location and management model for development of an <b>off-road mountain biking course</b> , possibly within the undeveloped portion of Waterworks Park and / or adjacent conservation authority lands. Trail development would be the responsibility of the sponsoring organization, under agreement with the City.	Medium	●	●		Location and costs are dependent upon partnership
<b>41.</b> Continue to work in partnership with others to provide a <b>comprehensive trails network</b> . The City should further enhance the existing trails network by placing emphasis on connectivity within and between trails (i.e., addressing gaps), parks, open spaces, and local and regional destinations.	High	●	●	●	Costs to be determined on a project-specific basis
<b>42.</b> Develop a strategy to invest in upgrades and improvements in the City's existing <b>gazebos and pavilions</b> . This may include increasing electrical capacity, installing additional seating (temporary or fixed), upgrades to the dance pavilion and bandshell in Pinafore Park, etc.	Medium	●			Costs to be determined on a project-specific basis

Recommendations	Priority	Timing			Key Considerations
		2020 - 2022	2023 - 2026	2027+	
<b>43.</b> Continue to encourage establishment of <b>community gardens</b> in new developments and work with partners to evaluate opportunities to establish additional garden plots on municipal lands, where appropriate.	Medium	●	●	●	Ongoing practice
<b>Indoor Recreation Facilities (Section 5.3)</b>					
<b>44.</b> An additional <b>ice pad</b> in St. Thomas is <u>not</u> recommended at this time. To ensure supply and demand are in equilibrium, the City should remain apprised of the regional usage and supply as populations and participation rates evolve over time.	Low	●	●	●	--
<b>45.</b> Continue to seek opportunities to improve <b>user experience, functionality and equitable access</b> at existing <b>indoor ice facilities</b> .	High	●	●	●	Ongoing practice
<b>46.</b> In the short-term, prepare a feasibility study and site selection to assess options and viability of a <b>multi-use recreation facility</b> containing flexible spaces capable of supporting multiple sports and activities (e.g., gymnasium, meeting rooms / multi-use spaces, etc.).	High	●			Capital cost (study): \$
<b>47.</b> Discuss partnership opportunities with the Family YMCA and adjacent municipalities to maximize long-term public access to <b>indoor aquatic facilities</b> . This may involve an agreement for enhanced access to the existing YMCA pool or a partnership involving the development of a multi-tank replacement facility, possibly in connection with a future multi-use recreation facility.	Medium	●	●	●	Costs and partnership (if applicable) to be determined
<b>48.</b> Work with local soccer organizations to monitor demand for an <b>indoor artificial turf facility</b> . Should an external group approach with a proposal for an indoor soccer facility, a feasibility study may be prepared to examine development options (e.g., seasonal dome and / or year-round venue), costs, as well as operating and funding models.	Low	●	●	●	Costs and partnership (if applicable) to be determined

Recommendations	Priority	Timing			Key Considerations
		2020 - 2022	2023 - 2026	2027+	
Other Facilities (Section 5.4)					
49. Evaluate <b>unsolicited requests for facilities</b> that are not part of the City's core mandate. Proponent-led business plans should be developed to determine demand, alignment with Master Plan goals, the net benefit to the City of St. Thomas, and the degree of municipal involvement (if any).	Low	●	●	●	Ongoing practice
Arts and Culture Facilities and Spaces (Section 6.2)					
50. Undertake a review and update of the <b>St. Thomas Cultural Map</b> with the goal of leveraging opportunities for a renewed map interface using new technologies. Work with <b>Railway City Tourism</b> to review and update the map every two years at a minimum.	High	●			--
51. Review opportunities for <b>repurposing surplus municipal buildings</b> for arts / cultural uses prior to disposal.	Medium	●	●	●	Ongoing practice
Supporting Local Arts and Culture (Section 6.3)					
52. Review and update the <b>Public Art Committee mandate</b> to expand the scope of Committee responsibilities to include greater interaction and coordination with arts and culture service providers.	High	●			Impact on internal resources to be assessed
53. Establish a more formal relationship with the <b>St. Thomas-Elgin Public Art Centre</b> . Partnership terms should outline requirements for annual reporting, performance measures, program planning, etc. Evaluate options for providing annual <b>stable funding</b> to the Public Art Centre.	Medium	●	●		--

Recommendations	Priority	Timing			Key Considerations
		2020 - 2022	2023 - 2026	2027+	
<b>54.</b> Develop an <b>integrated marketing and promotion plan</b> to help boost interest and participation in local arts and cultural offerings. This should include hard copy, digital and word-of-mouth promotion of local opportunities.	Medium		●		Seek partnerships
<b>Arts and Culture Programs, Festivals and Events (Section 6.4)</b>					
<b>55.</b> Continue to pursue <b>arts and cultural-related programs</b> and activities that leverage municipal and community resources in a coordinated manner.	High	●	●	●	Ongoing practice
<b>56.</b> Work with community partners toward the development of a <b>dedicated festival / event site</b> in St. Thomas, possibly on the <b>railway lands</b> (pending the satisfactory resolution of environmental concerns and a viable cost-sharing and site operational agreement). A <b>Site Master Plan</b> endorsed by the City may be prepared to confirm the project vision, program, costs and phased development plan (See also – recommendation in Section 7).	High		●	●	Costs and partnership (if applicable) to be determined

Recommendations	Priority	Timing			Key Considerations
		2020 - 2022	2023 - 2026	2027+	
Parkland Supply, Needs and Policies (Section 7.1)					
<b>57.</b> Maintain a minimum <b>parkland provision level of 4.0 hectares per 1,000</b> . Additional parkland may be secured to: a) meet growth-related needs and ensure accessibility to growing areas (including neighbourhood parks in the Area 1 settlement area expansion); b) address gaps in park distribution within established and intensifying areas through development of sub-neighbourhood parks or parkettes or enhancement of existing parks (e.g., Fairview Avenue and Elm Street area; northside of Downtown, near Jaycees Pool); c) establish linear/trail connections vital to creating a comprehensive active transportation network; and/or d) expand regional and community parks where necessary to install additional recreational amenities, based on demonstrated needs.	High	●	●	●	Capital costs funded largely from parkland dedication and community benefits charges
<b>58.</b> Update the <b>parkland policies</b> within the City's Official Plan to reflect the changes imposed by <b>Bill 108 and this Master Plan</b> (e.g., parkland classification). Seek to <b>maximize parkland dedication and cash-in-lieu</b> for residential development and redevelopment through a Community Benefits Charge strategy (Bill 108) and the provisions of the City's Official Plan and Ontario's Planning Act.	High	●			To be considered through Official Plan update



Recommendations	Priority	Timing			Key Considerations
		2020 - 2022	2023 - 2026	2027+	
<b>59.</b> In areas where the supply of parkland is adequate, prioritize the use of <b>cash-in-lieu for parkland improvements</b> , preferably in the vicinity of the development that generated the contribution. Develop a <b>cash-in-lieu policy</b> to direct the collection and use of parkland reserves (Section 42 of the Planning Act).	High	●			May be considered in conjunction with previous recommendation
<b>60.</b> In growing areas, support <b>front-end dedication</b> of park blocks and funding mechanisms to minimize the lag between subdivision development and park development. Employ alternative parkland acquisition tools where applicable.	Medium	●	●	●	Ongoing practice
<b>61.</b> Establish <b>criteria and a process</b> for identifying, evaluating and disposing <b>surplus park properties</b> that are no longer required to meet current or long-term community needs. Redirect proceeds and operational savings from the sale or disposition of parkland to other high priority projects within the parks system.	High	●	●	●	Ongoing practice
<b>Parkland Design and Maintenance (Section 7.2)</b>					
<b>62.</b> Undertake <b>park condition assessments</b> on a regular basis to inform the City's asset management plan and long-term capital plan. Identify and plan for park renewal and redevelopment projects that address aging infrastructure and capital improvements.	High	●	●	●	Ongoing practice Capital costs: to be determined
<b>63.</b> Maintain a commitment to <b>universal accessibility, safety and comfort</b> within the City's parks system through compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) – including consultation with the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee – and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles. It is acknowledged that some parks may include areas of natural terrain that are more difficult to access.	High	●	●	●	Ongoing practice

Recommendations	Priority	Timing			Key Considerations
		2020 - 2022	2023 - 2026	2027+	
<b>64.</b> Emphasize the provision of <b>age-friendly amenities</b> such as washrooms, shade (e.g., tree planting in new parks, shade structures, etc.), benches/seating areas, pathways and bike racks in appropriate park types and along trails.	High	●	●	●	Ongoing practice Capital costs: to be determined
<b>65.</b> Provide an appropriate balance of <b>active and passive spaces</b> within the parks system that can support recreation and sports, casual use, special events and cultural activities. Flexible park designs should be encouraged.	High	●	●	●	Ongoing practice
<b>66.</b> Identify a long-term plan to renew and improve <b>neighbourhood parks</b> , including (but not limited to) Applewood, Greenway, Kin, Homedale and Optimist Parks. Engage stakeholders and the public when designing new and redeveloped parks.	Medium	●	●		Capital costs: \$ to \$\$ per park
<b>67.</b> Undertake a review of <b>signage for parks and trails</b> to ensure consistency with City branding, design guidelines and regulatory requirements.	Medium	●			--
<b>68.</b> Seek opportunities for <b>expanded park programming, outdoor education and stewardship</b> , such as nature-based programming, tree planting, use of native species, naturalization initiatives, and butterfly/pollinator parks in conjunction with community partners.	Medium	●	●	●	Ongoing practice
<b>69.</b> Seek partnerships to facilitate the provision of <b>Wi-Fi</b> at key park sites.	Medium	●			--
<b>70.</b> Develop long-term strategies for the development and / or improvement of <b>Joanne Brooks Memorial Park and the CASO railway lands</b> , including potential funding sources and partnerships.	High		●	●	Capital costs: to be determined

Recommendations	Priority	Timing			Key Considerations
		2020 - 2022	2023 - 2026	2027+	
Reviewing and Updating the Master Plan (Section 8.1)					
71. Post the Master Plan on the <b>City's website</b> as a resource for the community, Council and staff.	High	●	●	●	Ongoing practice
72. Develop <b>annual work plans</b> to guide strategic implementation of the Master Plan, with key priorities identified on a year-to-year basis.	High	●	●	●	Ongoing practice
73. Develop and implement a system for <b>regular monitoring and reporting</b> on the progress of the Master Plan, such as the collection of participation/registration data and annual reports to Council and/or the community.	High	●	●	●	Ongoing practice
74. Conduct <b>feasibility studies and business plans</b> (with input from the public) prior to developing or expanding major park sites and recreation facilities to ensure that projects are aligned with community needs, partnership opportunities and financial capacities.	High	●	●	●	Ongoing practice
75. Undertake a <b>full update of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan</b> in five to ten years (2024-2029).	High		●	●	Capital cost: \$
Potential Funding Sources (Section 8.2)					
76. Where appropriate and consistent with municipal policies and priorities, consider <b>alternative funding and cost-sharing approaches</b> such as (but not limited to) surcharges, fundraising, grants, sponsorships and naming rights, parkland cash-in-lieu (CIL) reserves, and various forms of collaboration to provide the best value to residents.	High	●	●	●	Ongoing practice
77. Assess operating <b>budget implications and partnership options</b> prior to approving major capital projects.	High	●	●	●	Ongoing practice

Recommendations	Priority	Timing			Key Considerations
		2020 - 2022	2023 - 2026	2027+	
<b>78.</b> Continue to contribute toward <b>annual lifecycle reserves</b> to offset the repair and replacement costs associated with parks, recreation and cultural infrastructure. Annual funding amounts should be increased over time to achieve fully funded status.	High	●	●	●	Ongoing practice
<b>79.</b> Use this <b>Master Plan as a resource</b> in developing the City's annual budget documents, Development Charges and Community Benefits Charges studies, secondary plans and related studies.	High	●	●	●	Ongoing practice



## **APPENDIX A: Community Survey – Detailed Data Tables**



**Q1 In the past 12 months, have you or anyone in your household participated in any of the following activities? By participation, we mean situations where you or a member of your household actively participated, either at home or in public. Please select all that apply.**

	#	%	<i>other</i>	#
trail walking or hiking	330	77%	<i>badminton</i>	2
aerobics, yoga, fitness or weight training	212	49%	<i>dance</i>	1
use of playground equipment	204	47%	<i>fishing</i>	1
indoor walking (track or elsewhere)	196	46%	<i>futsal</i>	1
dog walking (on or off leash)	191	44%	<i>geocaching</i>	1
cycling	193	45%	<i>parent and child programs</i>	1
swimming (recreational)	165	38%	<i>roller skating</i>	1
ice sports (e.g., hockey, ringette, figure skating or ice skating)	156	36%	<i>squash</i>	1
use of splash pad	149	35%	<i>wrestling</i>	1
jogging or running	142	33%	<i>yoga</i>	1
volleyball	124	29%		11
pickleball	118	27%		
soccer	117	27%		
golf	114	27%		
swimming (instructional or aquafit)	99	23%		
organized child & youth programs (e.g., day camps)	95	22%		
baseball or softball	81	19%		
basketball	78	18%		
tennis	49	11%		
wheeled action sports (e.g., mountain biking, BMX, skateboarding)	35	8%		
curling	29	7%		
disc golf	21	5%		
organized seniors' programs (e.g., cards, dancing)	17	4%		
cricket	2	0%		
other (please specify)	11	3%		
answered question	430			
skipped question	0			

**Q2 Are you and members of your household able to participate in parks and recreation activities (e.g. sports, fitness, outdoor play, etc.) as often as you would like?**

	#	%
yes	272	63%
no	142	33%
don't know	16	4%
answered question	430	100%
skipped question	0	

**Q3 Why are you and members of your household NOT able to participate in parks and recreation activities as often as you would like? Please select up to three (3).**

	#	%	<i>other</i>	#
lack of desired programs or facilities	91	59%	<i>safety</i>	2
program not offered at a convenient time	63	41%	<i>regulations</i>	2
lack of personal time / too busy	51	33%	<i>accessibility</i>	2
lack of information / unaware of opportunities	46	30%	<i>programs</i>	1
lack of money / too expensive	29	19%	<i>social</i>	1
lack of motivation	16	10%		8
health problems / disability / age	15	10%		
lack of transportation / facility too far away	14	9%		
lack of child care	6	4%		
don't know	2	1%		
language / cultural barrier	1	1%		
other (please specify)	8	5%		
answered question	153			
skipped question	277			

**Q4 What parks and recreation activities do you or members of your household regularly participate in outside of St. Thomas, if any? Select all that apply.**

	#	%	<i>other</i>	#
trail walking or hiking	166	42%	boating	4
golf	84	21%	specialty aquatics	3
swimming (recreational)	77	20%	other racquet sports	3
dog walking (on or off leash)	71	18%	fishing	3
pickleball	69	18%	indoor recreation / play	3
cycling	65	17%	dancing	2
none	64	16%	disc golf	2
ice sports (e.g., hockey, ringette, figure skating or ice skating)	62	16%	variety of choices	2
aerobics, yoga, fitness or weight training	61	16%	roller skating	2
use of playground equipment	59	15%	birding	1
volleyball	58	15%	bowling	1
baseball or softball	43	11%	camping	1
soccer	42	11%	cheerleading	1
jogging or running	40	10%	futsal	1
use of splash pad	38	10%	<u>inclusion programs</u>	1
swimming (instructional or aquafit)	34	9%		30
organized child & youth programs (e.g., day camps)	28	7%		
wheeled action sports (e.g., mountain biking, BMX, skateboarding)	23	6%		
basketball	23	6%		
organized seniors' programs (e.g., cards, dancing)	16	4%		
curling	12	3%		
tennis	7	2%		
<u>other (please specify)</u>	30	8%		
answered question	392			
skipped question	38			

**Q5 Why do you (and your household) participate in these parks and recreation activities outside of St. Thomas? Please select up to two (2).**

	#	%	<i>other</i>	#
facility / program is not available in the area	125	40%	variety / change of scenery	17
tournaments / special events / travel teams	68	22%	travel	10
quality of facility / program is superior	69	22%	social interaction	5
facility / program is not available at the preferred time	61	19%	convenience	4
"connected" to other community / used to live there	43	14%	competition	3
less expensive elsewhere	32	10%	regulations	2
closer to home, work or school	32	10%	safety	1
don't know	9	3%		42
<u>other (please specify)</u>	42	13%		
answered question	315			
not applicable - do not participate in parks and recreation outside St. Thomas	89			
skipped question	26			

**Q6 Which arts and cultural events / activities, listed below, have you (or members of your household) participated in or attended within the last 12 months? Please select all that apply.**

	#	%	<i>other</i>	#
special events (e.g., fairs, festivals, movie nights, etc.)	268	68%	library	3
going to theatres	263	67%	markets	1
going to outdoor concerts	131	33%	<u>lessons</u>	1
going to museums	110	28%		5
going to art galleries	110	28%		
arts/crafts activities	108	27%		
child and youth programs/activities (i.e., painting, drawing, sculpture, etc.)	73	19%		
dancing (recreational or classes)	50	13%		
music classes	48	12%		
visual art classes (e.g., painting, drawing, pottery, etc.)	47	12%		
none	38	10%		
performing arts classes	18	5%		
<u>other (please specify)</u>	5	1%		
answered question	394			
skipped question	36			

**Q7 Are you and members of your household able to participate in arts and cultural events / activities as often as you would like?**

	#	%
yes	242	61%
no	116	29%
don't know	42	11%
answered question	400	100%
skipped question	30	

**Q8 Why are you and members of your household NOT able to participate in arts and cultural activities as often as you would like? Please select up to three (3).**

	#	%	<i>other</i>	#
lack of personal time / too busy	72	46%	<i>preference</i>	4
lack of desired programs or facilities	69	44%	<i>availability</i>	2
lack of information / unaware of opportunities	49	31%	<i>inclusion</i>	1
lack of money / too expensive	35	22%	<i>social</i>	1
program not offered at a convenient time	32	21%		8
lack of transportation / facility too far away	14	9%		
don't know	13	8%		
lack of child care	7	4%		
health problems / disability / age	7	4%		
language / cultural barrier	1	1%		
<i>other (please specify)</i>	8	5%		
answered question	156			
skipped question	274			

**Q9 What arts and cultural events / activities do you or members of your household regularly participate in outside of St. Thomas, if any? Select all that apply.**

	#	%	<i>other</i>	#
going to theatres	238	63%	<i>concerts</i>	1
special events (e.g., fairs, festivals, movie nights, etc.)	180	47%	<i>libraries</i>	1
going to outdoor concerts	141	37%		2
going to museums	90	24%		
going to art galleries	67	18%		
none	67	18%		
arts/crafts activities	48	13%		
child and youth programs/activities (i.e., painting, drawing, sculpture, etc.)	21	6%		
dancing (recreational or classes)	20	5%		
visual art classes (e.g., painting, drawing, pottery, etc.)	16	4%		
music classes	9	2%		
performing arts classes	3	1%		
<i>other (please specify)</i>	2	1%		
answered question	379			
skipped question	51			

**Q10 Why does your household participate in these arts and cultural events / activities outside of St. Thomas? Please select up to two (2).**

	#	%	<i>other</i>	#
facility / program is not available in the area	125	40%	<i>travel</i>	10
special events / exhibitions / festivals / fairs	116	37%	<i>entertainment</i>	8
quality of facility / program is superior	71	23%	<i>personal interest</i>	6
facility / program is not available at the preferred time	42	14%	<i>social interaction</i>	3
"connected" to other community / used to live there	40	13%	<i>convenience</i>	3
less expensive elsewhere	14	5%		30
don't know	13	4%		
closer to home, work or school	12	4%		
<i>other (please specify)</i>	30	10%		
answered question	311			
not applicable - do not participate in arts and culture outside St. Thomas	74			
skipped question	45			

**Q11 Please list up to four (4) parks, recreation, arts or cultural events / activities that you (or members of your household) would like to see provided in St. Thomas that are NOT currently available.**

Below are the most commonly requested parks, recreation, arts and cultural programs requested by survey respondents:

Note: any events / activities listed fewer than 10 times are not summarized here but have been considered in the Master Plan.

parks and recreation	#	arts and culture	#
aquatics	56	events	58
volleyball	44	concerts	51
trails	37	performing arts	24
pickleball	35	art classes	17
adult fitness programs	20	childrens programs	16
gymnasium sports (basketball, volleyball, pickleball, etc.)	12	culinary festivals and experiences	15
outdoor ice rinks / skating trails	11		
new parks	10		
	225		181
answered question	233		
skipped question	197		

**Q12 In general, how important are the following items to your household?**

	5		4		3		2		1					
	very important		somewhat important		neither important nor unimportant		somewhat unimportant		very unimportant		don't know / don't use	Answered Question	Skipped Question	Weighted Average
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#			
indoor recreation facilities such as arenas and community spaces	218	59%	85	23%	11	3%	14	4%	38	10%	3	369	61	4.14
outdoor recreation facilities such as sports fields, playgrounds and courts	249	68%	48	13%	15	4%	19	5%	36	10%	1	368	62	4.23
recreational trails and pathways	234	64%	67	18%	15	4%	13	4%	32	9%	5	366	64	4.21
arts and cultural facilities such as museums and event spaces	103	28%	138	38%	58	16%	35	10%	22	6%	9	365	65	3.65
open space parks for unstructured use	139	38%	124	34%	47	13%	27	7%	20	5%	8	365	65	3.85

**Q13 What is your level of satisfaction with the following parks, recreation arts and cultural facilities in St. Thomas?**

	5		4		3		2		1						
	very satisfied		somewhat satisfied		neither satisfied nor unsatisfied		somewhat unsatisfied		very unsatisfied		don't know / don't use	Answered Question	Skipped Question	Weighted Average	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%			
indoor recreation facilities such as arenas and community spaces	66	18%	153	42%	38	10%	64	17%	33	9%	12	3%	366	64	3.33
outdoor recreation facilities such as sports fields, playgrounds and courts	115	31%	154	42%	31	8%	43	12%	13	4%	10	3%	366	64	3.78
recreational trails and pathways	122	34%	148	41%	35	10%	35	10%	8	2%	13	4%	361	69	3.84
arts and cultural facilities such as museums and event spaces	37	10%	103	29%	109	30%	48	13%	16	4%	48	13%	361	69	2.87
open space parks for unstructured use	84	23%	135	37%	83	23%	24	7%	9	2%	26	7%	361	69	3.51

**Q14 For each age group listed below, what is your level of satisfaction with the parks, recreation, arts and cultural opportunities available in St. Thomas?**

	5		4		3		2		1						
	very satisfied		somewhat satisfied		neither satisfied nor unsatisfied		somewhat unsatisfied		very unsatisfied		don't know / don't use	Answered Question	Skipped Question	Weighted Average	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#				
preschool children (0 – 4 years)	53	16%	45	14%	35	11%	23	7%	8	2%	168	51%	332	98	1.82
school-age children (5 – 12 years)	60	18%	84	25%	28	8%	33	10%	8	2%	119	36%	332	98	2.39
teens (13 – 18 years)	18	5%	54	16%	33	10%	49	15%	22	7%	156	47%	332	98	1.58
young adults (19 – 39 years)	17	5%	74	23%	55	17%	42	13%	17	5%	120	37%	325	105	1.99
adults (40 – 59 years)	42	13%	85	26%	49	15%	38	12%	15	5%	99	30%	328	102	2.40
older adults (60 + years)	38	11%	85	24%	43	12%	31	9%	12	3%	138	40%	347	83	2.11

**Q15 For the indoor amenities and facilities listed below, to what degree do you support/oppose ADDITIONAL public spending towards their improvement, maintenance and/or additions?**

	5		4		3		2		1						
	strongly support		somewhat support		neither support nor oppose		somewhat oppose		strongly oppose		don't know / don't use	Answered Question	Skipped Question	Weighted Average	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#				
cultural performance spaces	103	30%	98	28%	92	27%	22	6%	9	3%	22	6%	346	84	3.57
museums	79	23%	103	30%	102	29%	28	8%	11	3%	23	7%	346	84	3.41
art galleries	76	22%	94	27%	101	29%	35	10%	12	3%	27	8%	345	85	3.31
arenas (indoor ice)	127	37%	87	25%	60	17%	34	10%	15	4%	23	7%	346	84	3.60
walking tracks	178	51%	108	31%	40	11%	9	3%	4	1%	12	3%	351	79	4.17
space for community meetings and events	99	29%	121	35%	85	25%	15	4%	8	2%	18	5%	346	84	3.68
gymnasiums	179	52%	96	28%	47	14%	8	2%	1	0%	16	5%	347	83	4.14
swimming pools (indoor)	198	57%	77	22%	38	11%	9	3%	3	1%	22	6%	347	83	4.13
space for seniors' activities	181	52%	72	21%	50	14%	4	1%	6	2%	35	10%	348	82	3.90

**Q16 For the outdoor amenities and facilities listed below, to what degree do you support/oppose ADDITIONAL public spending towards their improvement, maintenance and/or additions?**

	5		4		3		2		1					
	strongly support		somewhat support		neither support nor oppose		somewhat oppose		strongly oppose		don't know / don't use	Answered Question	Skipped Question	Weighted Average
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#			
acquisition of parks and open space	193	57%	91	27%	37	11%	6	2%	1	0%	10	338	92	4.30
parkland beautification and horticulture gardens	165	48%	115	34%	46	13%	9	3%	3	1%	5	343	87	4.21
baseball or softball diamonds	88	26%	82	24%	88	26%	36	11%	7	2%	36	337	93	3.30
soccer fields	96	28%	85	25%	78	23%	34	10%	12	4%	34	339	91	3.35
basketball courts (outdoor)	72	21%	109	32%	89	26%	26	8%	4	1%	38	338	92	3.31
recreational trails	223	65%	86	25%	23	7%	2	1%	3	1%	8	345	85	4.45
off-leash dog parks	73	22%	73	22%	89	26%	25	7%	26	8%	51	337	93	2.97
outdoor ice rinks / ball hockey	114	34%	84	25%	74	22%	20	6%	6	2%	38	336	94	3.49
pickleball courts (outdoor)	127	37%	58	17%	90	26%	17	5%	12	3%	40	344	86	3.44
tennis courts (outdoor)	64	19%	85	25%	106	32%	18	5%	10	3%	53	336	94	3.05
playgrounds	174	51%	80	24%	49	14%	6	2%	5	1%	24	338	92	4.01
park washrooms	237	69%	71	21%	23	7%	8	2%	2	1%	4	345	85	4.51
park pavilions	145	43%	126	37%	46	14%	11	3%	5	1%	6	339	91	4.11
splash pads	161	47%	86	25%	52	15%	12	4%	3	1%	27	341	89	3.91
swimming pools (outdoor)	152	45%	85	25%	53	16%	13	4%	5	1%	29	337	93	3.83
action sports parks (skateboarding, BMX biking)	72	21%	109	32%	81	24%	15	4%	13	4%	48	338	92	3.20

**Q17 For the statements listed below, please indicate your level of satisfaction with the City's current ability to provide adequate parks, recreation, arts and culture services.**

	5		4		3		2		1					
	well exceeds expectations		exceeds expectations		meet expectations		below expectations		well below expectations		don't know / don't use	Answered Question	Skipped Question	Weighted Average
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#			
Affordability of parks, recreation arts and cultural programs	29	9%	44	13%	192	57%	46	14%	4	1%	22	337	93	2.95
Maintenance of St. Thomas' parks, recreation, arts and cultural amenities	35	10%	83	24%	176	52%	32	9%	3	1%	11	340	90	3.24
Value of tax dollars spent towards parks, recreation, arts and cultural amenities	23	7%	47	14%	154	46%	71	21%	7	2%	32	334	96	2.74
Provision of new parks, recreation, arts and cultural amenities	18	5%	38	11%	153	46%	90	27%	10	3%	26	335	95	2.66
Quality of neighbourhood parks nearest your home	25	7%	68	20%	140	42%	66	20%	20	6%	18	337	93	2.88
Inclusion and accessibility for residents with low income backgrounds and persons with disabilities	18	5%	23	7%	126	38%	64	19%	17	5%	85	333	97	2.12

**Q18 Please provide any additional comments you may have regarding parks, recreation, arts and cultural opportunities in St. Thomas. Please limit your response to a maximum of 100 words.**

Detailed comments are not published but have been considered in the Master Plan.

**Q19 What is the total number of persons within your household that fall into the following age categories?**

	2019 Survey			2016 Census
	#	#	%	%
	households	persons		persons
under 10 years	101	167	15%	12%
10 - 19 years	126	211	19%	12%
20 - 39 years	133	211	19%	23%
40 - 59 years	189	321	29%	28%
60 - 74 years	109	174	16%	18%
75 years and over	18	22	2%	8%
Total		1,106	100%	100%
answered question	338			
skipped question	92			
average household size	3.27			2.35

**Q20 In what year were you born?**

	#	Age
2019		
Mean	1970	49
Median	1973	46
answered question	324	
skipped question	106	



**Q21 Are you a resident of the City of St. Thomas?**

	#	%
yes	299	87%
no	40	12%
unsure	3	1%
answered question	342	100%
skipped question	88	

**Q22 FOR RESIDENTS: What are the first three digits of your postal code?**

	Survey (2019)		Canada Post (2019)	
	#	%		%
N5P (north)	75	25%		38%
N5R (south)	217	73%		62%
N0L (rural)	3	1%		
don't know / no response	4	1%		
answered question	299	100%		
skipped question	131			

**Q23 FOR NON-RESIDENTS: What municipality do you live in?**

	#
Aylmer	2
Central Elgin	25
Dutton-Dunwich	2
Elgin County (undefined)	2
London	2
Malahide	1
Southwold	5
West Elgin	2
answered question	41
skipped question	389



## **APPENDIX B: Parks Inventory – Detailed Data Tables**

Park Name	Address	Area (ha)	Classification	Use / Type	Playground	Outdoor Fitness Equipment	Hardball Diamonds (lit)	Softball Diamonds (lit)	Softball Diamonds (unlit)
1Password Park	355 Burwell Road	26.30	Community Park	Active	1				
Applewood Park	65 Raven Street	1.34	Neighbourhood Park	Active	1				
Athletic Park	95 St. George Street	14.16	Community Park	Active	1				
Burwell Road Park	465 Burwell Road	2.95	Neighbourhood Park	Active/Passive	1				1
Canron Parkette	1015 Talbot Street	0.01	Parkette	Passive					
Centennial Sports Club Diamonds (incl Cardinal Field)	51 Sauve Ave	2.51	Neighbourhood Park	Active	1		1		8
Centotaph	588 Talbot Street	0.02	Parkette	Passive					
City Hall	545 Talbot Street	0.05	Parkette	Passive					
Cowan Park	125 St. George Street	25.90	Community Park	Active	1				
Donker Park	1 Donker Drive	0.53	Sub-neighbourhood Park	Active	1				
Douglas J. Tarry Sports Complex	275 Bill Martyn Parkway	6.07	Community Park	Active	1			5	
F.E. Bennett Park	40 Mandeville Road	1.21	Sub-neighbourhood Park	Passive					
Gorman Rupp	145 Edward Street	1.01	Sub-neighbourhood Park	Active	1			1	
Greenway Park	7 Pine Valley Drive	0.93	Neighbourhood Park	Active	1				
Hepburn Park	446 Talbot Street	0.10	Parkette	Passive					
Homedale Park	53 Churchill Crescent	0.49	Sub-neighbourhood Park	Active	1				
Joanne Brooks Memorial Park	93 Inkerman Street	1.65	Neighbourhood Park	Active					
Jonas Street Park	24 Jonas Street	1.62	Neighbourhood Park	Active	1				
Jumbo Monument	65 Talbot Street	0.19	Parkette	Passive					
Kin Park	31 Confederation Drive	2.83	Neighbourhood Park	Active/Passive	1				
Jim Waite Park	100 Lake Margaret Trail	0.69	Sub-neighbourhood Park	Passive					
Lions Club Dog Park	25 Talbot Street	1.78	Community Park	Active					
Lion's Park	90 Hughes Street	1.62	Neighbourhood Park	Active	1				2
Massey Park	15 Massey Drive	1.62	Neighbourhood Park	Passive					
New York Central	47 Jonas Street	1.01	Sub-neighbourhood Park	Active			1		
Oldewood Park	617 Highview Drive	1.21	Sub-neighbourhood Park	Active	1				
Optimist Park	330 Chestnut Street	2.71	Neighbourhood Park	Active	1	1			1
Orchard Park	50 Empire Parkway	4.05	Neighbourhood Park	Active					
Parish Park	Benjamin Parkway	2.43	Neighbourhood Park	Active					
Peter Laing Park	167 Forest Avenue	0.20	Sub-neighbourhood Park	Active	1				
Pinafore Park	95 Elm Street	44.52	Community Park	Active/Passive	1		1		
Railway City Skatepark	65 Caso Crossing	1.37	Community Park	Active					
Rosethorn Park	394 Highview Drive	1.34	Sub-neighbourhood Park	Active	1				
Sakura Park	72 Confederation Drive	0.01	Neighbourhood Park	Passive					
Shaw Valley Park	Shaw Valley Drive	4.05	Neighbourhood Park	Active					
Tourism Building	605 Talbot Street	0.02	Parkette	Passive					
T.H. Currah Parkette	675 Talbot Street	0.02	Parkette	Passive					
V.A. Barrie	68 Sunset Drive	11.29	Community Park	Active/Passive					
Veteran's Memorial Park	20 Moore Street	0.11	Community Park	Passive					
Waterworks Park	2 South Edgeware Road	36.42	Community Park	Active	1				
Wellington Street School	50 Wellington Street	0.01	Parkette	Active	1				
West End Parkette	145 Talbot Street	0.04	Parkette	Passive					
Woodhaven Park	46 Locke Avenue	0.61	Sub-neighbourhood Park	Active	1				
		206.99			22	1	3	6	12

Park Name	Full Soccer Fields (11v11)	Intermediate Soccer Fields (9v9 & 7v7)	Mini Soccer Fields (5v5 & 3v3)	Soccer / Football Field (lit, turf)	Tennis Courts (lit)	Tennis Courts (unlit)	Pickleball Courts	Basketball Courts	Multi-Purpose Court	Disc Golf Course	Skate Park
1Password Park		10	26	1				2			
Applewood Park											
Athletic Park	2	4	1								
Burwell Road Park								1			
Canron Parkette											
Centennial Sports Club Diamonds (incl Cardinal Field)											
Centotaph											
City Hall											
Cowan Park	3	1							1		
Donker Park											
Douglas J. Tarry Sports Complex	1										
F.E. Bennett Park											
Gorman Rupp											
Greenway Park											
Hepburn Park											
Homedale Park											
Joanne Brooks Memorial Park											
Jonas Street Park											
Jumbo Monument											
Kin Park											
Jim Waite Park											
Lions Club Dog Park											
Lion's Park								1			
Massey Park											
New York Central											
Oldewood Park											
Optimist Park	1							2			
Orchard Park											
Parish Park											
Peter Laing Park											
Pinafore Park					8		8				
Railway City Skatepark											1
Rosethorn Park						1		1			
Sakura Park											
Shaw Valley Park											
Tourism Building											
T.H. Currah Parkette											
V.A. Barrie										1	
Veteran's Memorial Park											
Waterworks Park										1	
Wellington Street School											
West End Parkette											
Woodhaven Park											
	7	15	27	1	8	1	8	7	1	2	1

Park Name	Splash Pad	Pool or Beach	Dog Park	Pathway / Trail	Picnic Shelter / Pavilion	Open Space	Monument / Statue / Floral / Plaque etc.	Parking Lot
1Password Park	1			Y	1			Y
Applewood Park						Y		
Athletic Park				Y		Y		Y
Burwell Road Park								Y
Canron Parkette								
Centennial Sports Club Diamonds (incl Cardinal Field)								
Centotaph							Y	
City Hall							Y	Y
Cowan Park				Y	1	Y		Y
Donker Park						Y		
Douglas J. Tarry Sports Complex					1			Y
F.E. Bennett Park						Y		
Gorman Rupp								Y
Greenway Park								Y
Hepburn Park								
Homedale Park						Y		
Joanne Brooks Memorial Park		1						Y
Jonas Street Park				Y	1	Y		
Jumbo Monument							Y	Y
Kin Park						Y		Y
Jim Waite Park				Y				
Lions Club Dog Park			1					Y
Lion's Park						Y		Y
Massey Park				Y		Y		
New York Central								
Oldewood Park						Y		
Optimist Park						Y		Y
Orchard Park				Y		Y		Y
Parish Park								
Peter Laing Park						Y		
Pinafore Park	1			Y	6	Y		Y
Railway City Skatepark								
Rosethorn Park						Y		Y
Sakura Park								
Shaw Valley Park								
Tourism Building								
T.H. Currah Parkette							Y	
V.A. Barrie				Y		Y		Y
Veteran's Memorial Park								
Waterworks Park	1			Y	2	Y		Y
Wellington Street School								Y
West End Parkette								
Woodhaven Park						Y		
	3	1	1	10	12	19	4	20





## **APPENDIX C: User Fee Process**

## **Basing Rates and Fees on the True Cost of Delivering Programs and Services**

Many community, staff and Council members commented on user fees for parks and recreation programs and services and had an interest in understanding the true cost to deliver services. The current practice is to increase user fees by approximately 3% each year and comparing to the market. It is important for the City to know the true costs to deliver programs and service first before setting fair-minded recovery rates for program types and by age grouping.

The development of a user fee policy would serve to understand the costs to provide services as well as what percentage of the costs are recovered through revenues (user fees). A comparison to other and surrounding municipal recreation and parks fees should also be undertaken to ensure that St. Thomas does not lose residents to other providers. Many residents from surrounding municipalities are accessing programs and services provided by St. Thomas. Instead of charging a non-resident fee, suggestions centred on working with adjacent municipalities to discuss a reciprocal arrangement whereby fiscal contribution could help to offset the net expenditures for parks and recreation in St. Thomas. More exploration is needed regarding this concept.

Developing a fair and equitable User Fee Policy in a municipal recreation setting involves a comprehensive set of tasks that must engage the end users of the facility, program or service. The overall task must first look to understand the cost of the service and then recognize what is achievable in recovering the cost of the service. There must also be a consideration for lower income residents who face fiscal, equipment and transportation barriers in accessing the recreation programs and services.

In an ideal setting the following steps would be taken:

### **1. Approval of the Process and Establishment of a Steering Committee**

- a) Ensure that the steering committee is representative of the community and has the skills and competencies needed to develop a fulsome user fee policy
- b) Develop a terms of reference that sets out the process, timing and the role of the various parties
- c) Ensure that the community is consulted on the principles of a fair and equitable user fee policy – once at the beginning of the process and once the draft policy and implications have been developed

### **2. Costing of all Programs and Services Under Study**

Municipalities have varying processes and accountable staff in place to cost services and therefore it is typically the role of the municipality to provide both the direct and indirect costs of services. Further it is difficult to cost the services of one department in isolation as some municipalities chose to allocate all internal central and shared services costs to the various services provided by all revenue generating departments. Direct costs would typically include the staffing, materials and supplies to provide the service as well as an assignment for the hourly facility cost. Indirect costs would include staffing, registration, promotion and all in-house costs assigned to the

delivery of the service (often shared). Understanding the cost to provide the service is paramount in setting fair and equitable user fees.

A unit cost would describe the cost to provide:

- an hour of ice
- a set of swimming lessons
- a program
- an hour of sport field use both lit and unlit
- a summer camp session, etc.

### **3. Current Cost Recovery Levels**

Baseline data must include a reflection of the current levels of cost recovery with the fee structure that is place. More recently there is a requirement to defend the pricing of services based on recovering a percentage of the actual cost to provide them.

#### **a) Current and Desired Cost Recovery Levels**

A delineation of the current cost recovery levels of the services under study will provide the baseline data that is required to determine reasonable cost recovery levels for the future.

#### **b) Comparison to the Market**

Before an achievable draft pricing structure can be formulated, a look to other fees levied for similar services in surrounding municipalities and other service providers must be undertaken. This will allow staff, the steering committee and Council the ability to better understand the potential impacts of the set of proposed fees.

#### **c) Consideration of Phasing**

Often municipalities will consider phasing in user fees over several years to lower any negative impacts to participation in recreation programs and services. This is especially useful if the current cost recovery rates are low. Many municipalities include an inflationary increase to accommodate annual increases in costs to provide programs and services.

### **4. Policy Goal, Principles, Policy Statements and Low-Income Access**

The development of the draft policy will involve stating the general philosophy of the community around user fees and cost recovery. There are varying municipal perspectives from one end of the spectrum to the other; some municipalities pride themselves in collecting a high percentage of the cost of the program in user fees while others place more emphasis on lower fees to reflect maximizing participation.

#### **a) Guiding principles typically centre around:**

- Maximizing participation;

- Access for all;
- Including all ages and abilities; and
- Lower cost recovery rates for target populations such as children, youth and older adults.

b) Lower Income Access

Emphasizing access for lower income populations is an important element of a User Fee Policy. The process to understand costs and set rates around a cost recovery percentage is defensible and fair to all residents who can afford to register for recreation and sport programs. The policy speaks to the majority of the population. Ensuring that the User Fee Policy is equitable means that specific considerations must be given to include lower income families. The policy must include statements around providing universal access programs for everyone to ensure that there are no barriers (free/ low fee programs). Many municipalities provide free opportunities and sponsored opportunities for all. Further, the development of an Access Policy to Affordable Recreation must be included or be an adjunct to the User Fee Policy.

## **5. Evaluation of the User Fee Policy**

A recommendation must be built into the User Fee Policy regarding a cycle (number of years) that the policy should be evaluated to ensure that the policy is up to date and reflects current trends, demographics and socio-economic conditions in the municipality