



## Corporate Report

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**Report from** Parks, Recreation and Culture Services, Administration Services

**Date of Report:** February 24, 2015

**Date of Meeting:** March 9, 2015

**Report Number:** PRCS-063-2015

**File:** 68.32.2

**Subject:** Recreation Facilities and Programming Master Plan Approval

### Recommendation

That Council approve the Recreation Facilities and Programming Master Plan draft and the proposed amendments noted within this report as a guideline to staff in implementing strategic change within the department over the term of the plan.  
FORTHWITH

### Background

On February 24, 2014, Council included \$150,000 in the 2014 Operating Budget for the development of a new Recreation Facilities and Programming Master Plan (Plan) to provide strategic direction and guidance to service delivery for the next 5-10 years.

On February 9, 2015, Monteith Brown Planning Consultants presented highlights of the draft Plan to Council which was released the following day to Council and the public. Public feedback was received via [letstalkrec@stcatharines.ca](mailto:letstalkrec@stcatharines.ca) and at afternoon and evening public consultation sessions held on February 18, 2015, at the St. Catharines Kiwanis Aquatics Centre.

### Plan purpose and use

The purpose of the Plan is to evaluate the current provision of facilities and programming in St. Catharines and plan a future that reflects the values and needs of the community. It will provide a framework for the management and development of recreation facilities, programs, parks, infrastructure, resources, and investment over the next 10 years. Staff's role is to develop annual work plans aligned to the Plan, prepare project plans that define the required human and financial resources, and request approval as required prior to implementation.

As defined by the National Framework for Recreation, "Recreation is the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing". The focus of other departmental plans, such as the Museum Strategic Plan (in progress) and Culture Plan (in progress), fall within the definition of recreation and significantly contribute to the provision of recreation services. These three strategic documents should be viewed as

complementary to one another and together will guide decisions on the provision of recreation in the community.

## **Contract deliverables**

Staff have compared the draft Plan and the Request for Proposal Terms of Reference and confirm that substantial completion has been achieved. Identified gaps have been discussed with Monteith Brown Planning Consultants and major amendments are noted within this report to be included within the final deliverable.

## **Report**

### **Public feedback**

On February 18, 2015, two public information sessions were held where the public had the opportunity to review the draft Plan on concept boards or in full print and have discussions with the project consultants and staff. In addition to verbal discussions, written feedback was provided through dozens of comment sheets provided at the sessions, along with email submissions received after the draft Plan was posted on the City's website.

Broad themes arising through this feedback include:

- One of the most prevalent and recurring themes of the sessions was a desire for the City to invest in a broader range of recreational facilities and programs oriented to a wider set of ages, interests, incomes and abilities.
- Often, the above noted theme was prefaced with a statement that the City provides arenas with far more resources relative to other recreational interests. Many people expressed a sentiment that investments in the parks and recreation system must be more balanced, and reflect the priorities of a broader set of ages, interests, abilities and incomes. There were persons in attendance who supported further investments in the local arena system, but comments provided verbally and through comment sheets were more heavily weighted to reducing investments in the City's arenas, questioning whether the City requires the number of ice pads that it currently provides and making arena operations more cost-effective (e.g. reducing operating hours during low use times at most arenas and shift usage in those times to the Seymour Hannah Sports and Entertainment Centre four pad arena instead).
- Requests for more programs and facilities for older adults and seniors residing in St. Catharines, usually stated on the basis that the population is aging and that there are gaps (real or perceived) in funding for the 55+ market relative to many organized sports.
- A need to augment the City's trails systems, particularly through wayfinding and provision of on and off-road bicycle routes. Regular formal updates of the Parks Policy Plan were also requested since a comprehensive assessment of the parks and trails system was not included as part of the Plan's terms of reference.
- Requests were received for higher quality outdoor facilities in terms of design, maintenance and renewal. Sports fields and multi-use courts were specifically referenced examples of which included a request for a ball diamond complex (i.e. at least two diamonds on one site) designed for younger age divisions while

another comment was received regarding the antiquated state of many tennis and basketball courts.

- A need to explore ways to optimize meeting rooms in arenas, community centres and other facilities to accommodate a broader range of arts and cultural uses. A specific comment was to ensure proper acoustics through room designs and conversions (to stop sounds coming from outside the rooms as well as to make sure sound within the rooms is sufficiently audible).
- A desire for greater cooperation between the City and School Boards to gain affordable, convenient access to school gymnasiums. This could reduce the need for the City to build a new gym (recognizing that this would not serve daytime demands during the school year). Similarly, some responses suggested making use of surplus/closed schools for parks and recreational use.
- Greater accessibility for persons with disabilities within parks and trails (e.g. stone pathways), which facilitates greater movement and usage in these areas for persons with restricted mobility.
- General agreement that splash pads would be a cost-effective and modern way to meet outdoor aquatic demands in each ward, referencing the high level of use at the City's existing splash pads. There was support to retain some outdoor pools on the basis that these facilities provide a different experience than indoor pools.
- Involving residents more in planning and design processes when developing parks and recreation facilities and services at the neighbourhood/community level.

The overall feedback received was positive and supportive of the themes identified in the draft Plan based on initial public consultation. There are no amendments recommended as a result of public feedback following the release of the draft Plan, except to include the above noted summary of comments within the final Plan.

## **Council and staff feedback**

Major amendments to the plan were brought forward from Council and staff's review. Staff recommends that the following amendments be made to the plan before the document is released in a final version:

- Add an executive summary to impart the Plan's foundation and intentions
- Include specific service levels within the recommendations (Appendix 1)
- Add a recommendation for the annual review and prioritization of requests for new initiatives that are not within the current year project plan
- Change the splash pad location criteria from one per ward to six splash pads, distributed in a manner that ensures each Ward has reasonable geographic access
- Provide examples of successful models in recommendations for staff to reference when developing work and project plans
- Add a partnership selection framework
- Add an overarching decision matrix to guide implementation

In addition to the above noted major amendments, minor wording changes and organization have been identified by staff. Staff will work with the consultants to reflect all amendments and the Plan will be released as a final version upon completion.

## **Implementation**

The Parks, Recreation and Culture Services department is currently reorganizing division portfolios to enhance the strategic focus. This change will position the department to successfully execute the implementation of this plan, including the prioritization of initiatives and allocation of resources across the department.

## **Financial Implications**

There is no financial impact at this time. Financial requests will be submitted to Council for approval through Council reports and the annual budget process. These requests will be supported by annual work plans developed by staff in alignment to the Plan, specifically in line with Guiding Principles 9 – efficient and effective service delivery and 10 – sustainable investments in recreation infrastructure:

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

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

As part of the development of annual work plans and related project plans, staff will provide accurate costs that reflect all variables, such as current market rates, location and land considerations, etc., to Council in requests for approval.

### **Prepared & Submitted by:**

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### **Approved by:**

David Oakes  
Director of PRCS

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

Indoor Facility (number of facilities)	Standard Recommended in the Plan	Service Level Achieved in 2015	Additional Facilities Required by 2026	Comments and Qualifications
<b>Arenas / Ice Rinks (10 total, 8.9 equivalents)</b>	1 : 500 Registered Youth Participants	1 : 390 Registered Youth Participants	<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equivalent supply assumes Meridian Centre as 0.25 ice pads, Merritton Arena as 0.65 ice pads, and includes Haig Bowl</li> <li>• Number of registered participants reflects 2014 data</li> <li>• Standard is within a generally accepted level of service across Ontario of ice pads youth registrants, depending upon age composition, allocation priorities, rural vs. urban settings, etc.</li> <li>• Application of service level standard must be considered in tandem with prime time utilization rates (optimally 90%-95%)</li> <li>• Future facilities required contingent upon two phased implementation approach (see Recommendations #1 and #2)</li> </ul>
<b>Indoor Aquatic Centres (1 municipal, 3 non- municipal)</b>	1 : 140,000 Population (excluding quasi- public pools)	1 : 140,660 (1 : 35,165 if including quasi- public pools)	<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally accepted service levels across Ontario are 1 indoor aquatics centre per 35,000 to 60,000 population, factoring access to access to quasi-public facilities such as the YMCA, Brock University and Ridley College pools</li> <li>• Refer to Recommendation #4</li> </ul>
<b>Indoor Sports Fields (0)</b>	Contingent on business planning	n/a	<b>n/a</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In line with municipal best practices, indoor turf is preferably pursued where an appropriate partnership is negotiated with a third party (see Recommendation #5)</li> </ul>

Indoor Facility (number of facilities)	Standard Recommended in the Plan	Service Level Achieved in 2015	Additional Facilities Required by 2026	Comments and Qualifications
<b>Gymnasiums (2)</b>	Not Applicable	1 : 70,330 Population	<b>1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although service levels typically range from 1 gymnasium per 35,000 to 60,000 population in Ontario, there are no generally accepted service standards as provision depends on a variety of factors including agreements with school boards and ability basis to complement other indoor facility components to act as community hubs or multi-use/multi-generational facilities</li> <li>Refer to Recommendations #6 to #8</li> </ul>
<b>Equipment-Based Fitness Centres (0)</b>	Not Applicable	n/a	<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are no generally accepted service standards as provision depends on municipal service philosophies (notably whether to compete directly with the private sector)</li> <li>Refer to Recommendation #9</li> </ul>
<b>Dedicated Older Adult Centres (3) and Youth Centres (2 private)</b>	Not Applicable	1 : 46,889 Population for older adult space and n/a for youth space	<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are no generally accepted service standards as provision depends on municipal service philosophies and availability of community-based facilities</li> <li>Instead of new dedicated facilities, age priority-based space integrated within an existing or future facility is preferred</li> <li>Refer to Recommendations #10 to #13</li> </ul>

Outdoor Facility (number of facilities)	Standard Recommended in the Plan	Service Level Achieved in 2015	Additional Facilities Required by 2026	Comments and Qualifications
<b>Rectangular Fields (31 total, 37.0 equivalents)</b>	1 : 90 Registered Participants	1 : 144 Registered Participants	<b>24.8</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equivalent supply assumes Kiwanis Field is equal to 2.0 unlit natural fields, and lit fields equal 1.5 unlit natural fields</li> <li>• Number of registered participants reflects 2014 data</li> <li>• Application of service level standard must be considered in tandem with prime time utilization rates (optimally 65%-85% for Class A and B fields) as well as age range of players to understand field sizes required</li> <li>• Provision should also consider access to non-municipal fields at schools, universities or other privately owned lands</li> <li>• Refer to Recommendations #14 to #16</li> </ul>
<b>Ball Diamonds (22 total, 27.5 equivalents)</b>	1 : 100 Registered Participants	1 : 72 Registered Participants	<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equivalent supply assumes lit diamonds are equal to 1.5 unlit diamonds</li> <li>• Number of registered participants reflects 2014 data</li> <li>• Application of service level standard must be considered in tandem with prime time utilization rates (optimally 65%-85% for Class A and B diamonds)</li> <li>• Provision should also consider access to non-municipal diamonds at schools, universities or other privately owned lands (e.g. Grantham Optimist Club)</li> <li>• Refer to Recommendations #15, #17 and #18</li> </ul>
<b>Splash Pads (2)</b>	1 splash pad per City ward	1 splash in two City wards (or 1 : 70,330 pop.)	<b>4</b> (exception may be where already served by an outdoor pool)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally accepted service levels across Ontario are 1 splash pad per 3,000 to 5,000 children (ages 0 to 9) or based upon geographic distribution</li> <li>• Application of service level standard must be considered in tandem with the ultimate strategy for outdoor pools and other aquatic opportunities</li> <li>• Refer to Recommendation #19 and #20</li> </ul>

Outdoor Facility (number of facilities)	Standard Recommended in the Plan	Service Level Achieved in 2015	Additional Facilities Required by 2026	Comments and Qualifications
<b>Outdoor Pools (10 at six locations)</b>	1 : 71,400 to 1 : 140,000 Population (number of locations)	1 : 23,443 Population (locations) or 1 : 14,066 Population (pool tanks)	<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are no generally accepted service standards as provision depends on municipal service philosophies and presence of other aquatic facilities (e.g. indoor aquatic centres, splash pads, beaches)</li> <li>Future provision must be considered in tandem with remediation/modernization costs, with the ultimate strategy for splash pads, considering the location of other aquatic opportunities (e.g. St. Catharines Kiwanis Aquatic Centre) whether to service marginalized areas of the community and/or other strategic locations</li> <li>Refer to Recommendations #21 to #23</li> </ul>
<b>Tennis Courts (28)</b>	1 : 5,000 Population	1 : 5,025 Population	<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generally accepted service levels across Ontario are 1 tennis court per 4,000 to 5,000 population</li> <li>Provision of courts may also be warranted where required to service a geographic gap</li> <li>Refer to Recommendations #24 and #25</li> </ul>
<b>Multi-Use Courts (22)</b>	1 : 700 Youth	1 : 685 Youth	<b>2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generally accepted service levels across Ontario are 1 multi-use court per 600 to 800 youth (ages 10 to 19), while considering the geographic distribution of courts to serve the population</li> <li>Refer to Recommendation #26</li> </ul>
<b>Skateboard Parks (1)</b>	1 : 7,500 Youth	1 : 15,112 Youth	<b>1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generally accepted service levels across Ontario are 1 skateboard park per 5,000 to 8,000 youth (ages 10 to 19)</li> <li>Provision of smaller-scale skateboarding amenities may also be warranted where required to service a geographic gap</li> <li>Refer to Recommendations #28 and #29</li> </ul>
<b>Playgrounds (90 at 52 locations)</b>	1 Playground within 800 metres of Residential Areas	1 : 2,705 Population (locations)	As required by new growth or gap areas (existing distribution is strong)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generally accepted service levels across Ontario are 1 playground per 1,500 or within 500 to 800 metres of residential areas without requiring crossing of major pedestrian barriers (e.g. highways, waterways, rail lines, etc.)</li> <li>Refer to Recommendations #30 to #32</li> </ul>



Outdoor Facility (number of facilities)	Standard Recommended in the Plan	Service Level Achieved in 2015	Additional Facilities Required by 2026	Comments and Qualifications
<b>Golf Courses (2)</b>	Not Applicable	1 : 70,330 Population	<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are no generally accepted service standards as provision depends on municipal service philosophies (notably whether to compete directly with the private sector)</li> </ul>
<b>Leash Free Dog Parks (1)</b>	Not Applicable	1 : 140,660 Population	<b>1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are no generally accepted service standards as provision depends on municipal service philosophies and presence of third parties who are willing to partner with a municipality</li> </ul>