

North
Middlesex



Municipality of North Middlesex
**Recreation & Facilities
Master Plan**

November 2023



mbpc

Monteith • Brown
planning consultants



Recreation & Facilities Master Plan

November 2023



Table of Contents

1.0	Introduction.....	3	5.5	Gymnasiums	43
1.1	Recreation & Facilities Master Plan.....	3	5.6	Community Meeting Spaces	44
1.2	Master Plan Approach.....	4	5.7	Dedicated Age Spaces.....	46
1.3	Alignment with Strategic Documents	4	5.8	Arts and Cultural Spaces.....	47
1.4	Benefits of Parks, Recreation, and Culture	6	5.9	Soccer Fields	51
2.0	Community Profile.....	7	5.10	Ball Diamonds	52
2.1	Local Context	8	5.11	Tennis and Pickleball Courts.....	55
2.2	Historical and Projected Population.....	9	5.12	Basketball and Ball Hockey Courts.....	56
2.3	Population by Age Group	10	5.13	Aquatics.....	57
2.4	Income and Education.....	11	5.14	Playgrounds.....	59
2.5	Immigration and Cultural Diversity.....	11	5.15	Skate Parks	61
3.0	Key Trends to Consider	12	5.16	Off-Leash Dog Park	62
3.1	General Participation Trends	13	5.17	Outdoor Skating Rinks	63
3.2	Facility Trends.....	13	5.18	Sand Volleyball Courts	64
3.3	Service Delivery Trends	14	5.19	Disc Golf Courses.....	65
3.4	Implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic.....	15	5.20	Community Gardens.....	66
4.0	Community Engagement.....	16	5.21	Water-Based Activities	67
4.1	Summary of Key Themes.....	18	5.22	Other Recreation Facility Requests.....	68
4.2	Initial Public Open Houses	19	6.0	Parkland	69
4.3	Community Survey.....	21	6.1	Parkland Classification System	70
4.4	Stakeholder Focus Groups	30	6.2	Parkland Supply	71
4.5	Staff Workshop.....	32	6.3	Parkland Needs.....	73
4.6	Key Informant Interviews.....	32	6.4	Recreational Trails.....	74
4.7	Final Community Engagement with the Public, Stakeholders and Council.....	34	6.5	Parkland Policy and Acquisition	78
5.0	Recreation Facilities	35	6.6	Strengthening Park Experiences	80
5.1	Summary of Municipal Recreation Facilities.....	36	7.0	Service Delivery System.....	83
5.2	Summary of Regional Recreation Facilities.....	38	7.1	Recreation & Facilities Department	84
5.3	Ice Pads	39	7.2	Recreation Advisory Committee	86
5.4	Fitness Spaces.....	42	7.4	Programming.....	87
			7.5	Special Events	89
			7.6	Child Services.....	90
			7.7	Youth Services	91
			7.8	Adult, Older Adult and Senior Services	93
			7.9	Effective Communication & Marketing	94
			7.10	Community Partnerships	95
			7.11	Volunteerism	97

7.12 Inclusion & Access..... 98

8.0 Implementation 101

8.1 Financial Considerations..... 102

8.2 Monitoring & Updating the Master Plan 104

8.3 Action Plan Summary 106

APPENDIX A: Community Survey Summary..... 116

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Recreation & Facilities Master Plan

The Municipality of North Middlesex is one of eight municipalities in Middlesex County. North Middlesex is a rural municipality with two urban settlements – Parkhill and Ailsa Craig – and a rich history with deep agricultural roots and quaint charm. North Middlesex residents enjoy a variety of parks, recreation, and culture facilities, programs, and services, as well as special events that are provided by the Municipality and community partners such as service groups, sports organizations, YMCA, volunteers, and others who contribute vital resources to make local opportunities a success.

North Middlesex’s parks, recreation, and culture system is highly valued in the community. The Municipality demonstrates its commitment to enhancing these opportunities through this Recreation & Facilities Master Plan (“Master Plan”) that identifies community priorities related to parks, recreation and culture and provides staff and Council with a decision making guide over the next 10 years.

Undertaking this Master Plan was a key initiative of the Municipality’s 2018 – 2028 Community & Corporate Strategic Plan. It provides the Municipality with a roadmap to address community needs and strategic priorities through a phased action plan that encourages continued collaboration with community partners and others who form the backbone of many parks, recreation and culture opportunities in North Middlesex. With limited public resources, working with community organizations and volunteers, as well as pursuing external funding opportunities, will be required to achieve full implementation of the Master Plan.

The scope of the Master Plan includes:

- Indoor and outdoor recreation and culture facilities;
- Parks, open space and trails; and
- Service delivery policies, programs and practices.

The Master Plan is a guiding document to inform municipal processes including, but not limited to, Council budgets, staff reports, grant applications, partnership discussions, and other corporate and departmental initiatives such as economic development as parks, recreation and community facilities are highly desirable amenities that boost quality of life and attract new residents and businesses. Regularly reviewing, revising, and updating this Master Plan will be required to ensure that recommendations continue to respond to the needs of residents. This may include, but not be limited to, reviewing new population data and emerging trends, subdivision/development activity, usage data, and public input.

The 2015 Framework for Recreation in Canada (FRC) is a guiding document for municipalities to provide meaningful and accessible parks, recreation and culture experiences to the public. The following is the FRC’s definition of recreation, which should be used by North Middlesex to guide the planning, development and delivery of local opportunities.

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

Source: Framework for Recreation in Canada

1.2 Master Plan Approach

The development of the Master Plan consisted of four phases. Initiated in Spring 2022, an analysis and review of key inputs was undertaken in the first phase, including background documents, socio-demographic data and trends. Consultation was held in the second phase, followed by the development of a draft master plan in phase three. Public feedback on the draft master plan occurred in phase four prior to finalization and Council approval.

Phase 1 Analysis & Review	1. Background Review 2. Community Profile, Trends and Inventory 3. Phase 1 Summary Report
Phase 2 Community Consultation	4. Engagement Strategy 5. Public Open Houses 6. Community Survey 7. Focus Groups, Workshops and Interviews 8. Phase 2 Consultation Summary Report
Phase 3 Key Findings & Strategic Directions	9. Parks, Facility and Services Assessment 10. Draft Master Plan and Implementation 11. Council Presentation
Phase 4 Finalize Master Plan	12. Community Feedback 13. Finalize Master Plan 14. Final Council Presentation

1.3 Alignment with Strategic Documents

Understanding other relevant guiding documents, findings and recommendations was critical to ensure that the Master Plan aligns with National, Provincial, County and Municipal priorities. Developing this Master Plan was a key initiative of the Municipality’s 2018 – 2028 Community & Corporate Strategic

Plan to achieve the North Middlesex’s objective to “maintain, create, and support active living opportunities” and its goal “to cultivate an active, healthy and livable community”. In particular, key strategies identified in the Community & Corporate Strategic Plan to achieve this goal include the following, which is reinforced throughout this Master Plan:

- Maintain, create and support active living opportunities.
- Promote healthy eating.
- Preserve and promote our architectural and cultural heritage.
- Enhance and increase the diversity of cultural experiences.
- Engage and retain youth and new young professionals.
- Protect our natural resources.
- Reduce the impacts of climate change.
- Promote a sustainable way of living.

The following strategic documents were reviewed to inform the Master Plan. These documents were reviewed together with other material, including usage data, departmental policies, staff reports and more. Relevant findings from these resources are embedded throughout the body of the Master Plan.

North Middlesex Strategic Documents

- Community & Corporate Strategic Plan
- Municipality of North Middlesex Official Plan
- Development Charges Background Study
- Community Improvement Plan
- Accessibility Plan 2016 – 2021 and status reports

Strategic Sector Documents

- Framework for Recreation in Canada
- Parks for All
- Provincial Policy Statement
- Planning Act
- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

Framework for Recreation in Canada

The Framework for Recreation in Canada (FRC) is a guiding document for municipalities to provide meaningful and accessible recreation experiences to the public. The FRC, which was developed through a collaborative process between the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, senior levels of government and the Provincial Recreation and Parks Associations, provides a renewed definition for recreation, highlights the benefits of recreation and parks (including the economic impacts) and identifies five evidence-based goals for communities to strive towards, including:

- Goal #1: Active Living
- Goal #2: Inclusion & Access
- Goal #3: Connecting People and Nature
- Goal #4: Supportive Environments
- Goal #5: Recreation Capacity

Recommendations contained in this Master Plan align with these five goals.

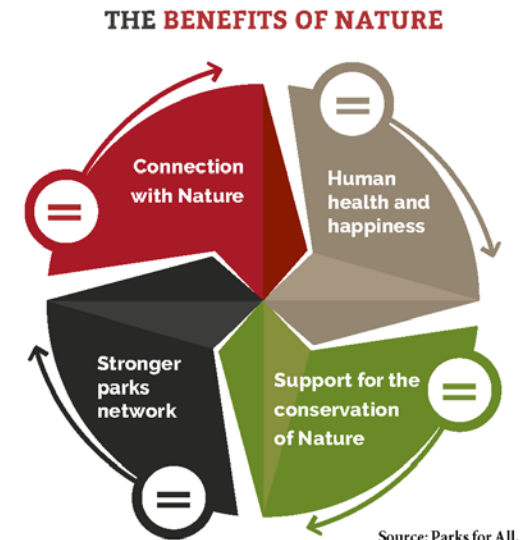


Parks for All

Parks for All is recognized as an “Action Plan for Canada’s Parks Community”. Published in 2017 through a collaboration between the Canadian Parks Council and the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, it aligns with and supports the Framework for Recreation in Canada, particularly the FRC’s third goal of “Connecting People and Nature”.

This guiding document defines parks as “any land and water that exists on the parks continuum, which could be located on public or privately held lands. As outdoor spaces, parks provide an important connection to nature, which is required for our survival as well as personal, community and social enrichment.”

The vision for Canada’s parks is described as “Connected Canadian park lands and water that support healthy nature and healthy people in harmony for generations to come, backed by an active, diverse parks community that cultivates shared goals, mutual respect, and collective action.” The plan is guided by four strategic directions: **Collaborate, Connect, Conserve, and Lead**. Each goal contains specific actions that will be considered in the development of this Master Plan.



Source: Parks for All. Parks Canada Agency, 2017

1.4 Benefits of Parks, Recreation, and Culture

The strength of North Middlesex's parks, recreation and culture system and relationships between the Municipality, community organizations and volunteers is important to local community success and wellbeing. They contribute in a significant way to social, economic, and environmental priorities by providing a variety of affordable spaces, services, and programs that benefit North Middlesex residents and support community building.

Universal access to affordable and high quality parks, recreation and culture opportunities that respond to local needs is vital to achieve individual and community health and prosperity. The Municipality recognizes these benefits and will advance them through the implementation of this Master Plan, which will require building upon and forming new relationships with its community organizations.

Parks, recreation and cultural opportunities can:

Enhance mental health and physical wellbeing: Research has found that there is a strong link between physical activity and improving mental and physical health. North Middlesex and its partners provide a variety of active and passive opportunities, including sports, fitness, arts and culture, open greenspaces, trails, and other amenities and programs that help residents lead healthier lifestyles, connect with others, and reduce the strain on health care services and costs.

Enhance social wellbeing: Participation in parks, recreation, and culture opportunities can create a sense of inclusive belonging for individuals. There are several ways for residents to get involved in the community in North Middlesex, including sports groups, volunteer associations, programming, and other opportunities to

ensure the healthy development of personal relationships and fosters overall social wellbeing.

Help build strong families and communities: Parks, recreation and culture opportunities play an important role in strengthening family bonds and community connectedness. Special events put on by community organizations with the support of the Municipality such as Canada Day, Gala Days, Parkhill Fall Fair, Concert Series, and others make North Middlesex unique, create strong neighbourhoods, contributes to strong civic pride, and makes the community an attractive place to live.

Help people connect with nature: Studies have shown that exposure to nature can have positive impacts on mental health and personal wellbeing, including lower blood pressure, reduced stress, and cognitive development. Ailsa Craig Lions Park is one local example of connecting residents with nature, which complements natural spaces provided by non-municipal providers such as the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority.

Provide economic benefits: Parks, recreation and culture opportunities contribute to local economic development through tourism and job creation, creating unique places for people to live, work, play, and visit. North Middlesex's parks, facilities, programs and events all play a role in bolstering local economic development.



2.0 Community Profile

Understanding who, how, and where population growth will occur during the next 10 years is important to ensure that parks, recreation and culture opportunities provided by North Middlesex and its partners adapt to evolving needs. This section highlights the Municipality's local context, historical and projected population, age profile, and related statistics, focusing on those that may have implications on parks, recreation and cultural needs.

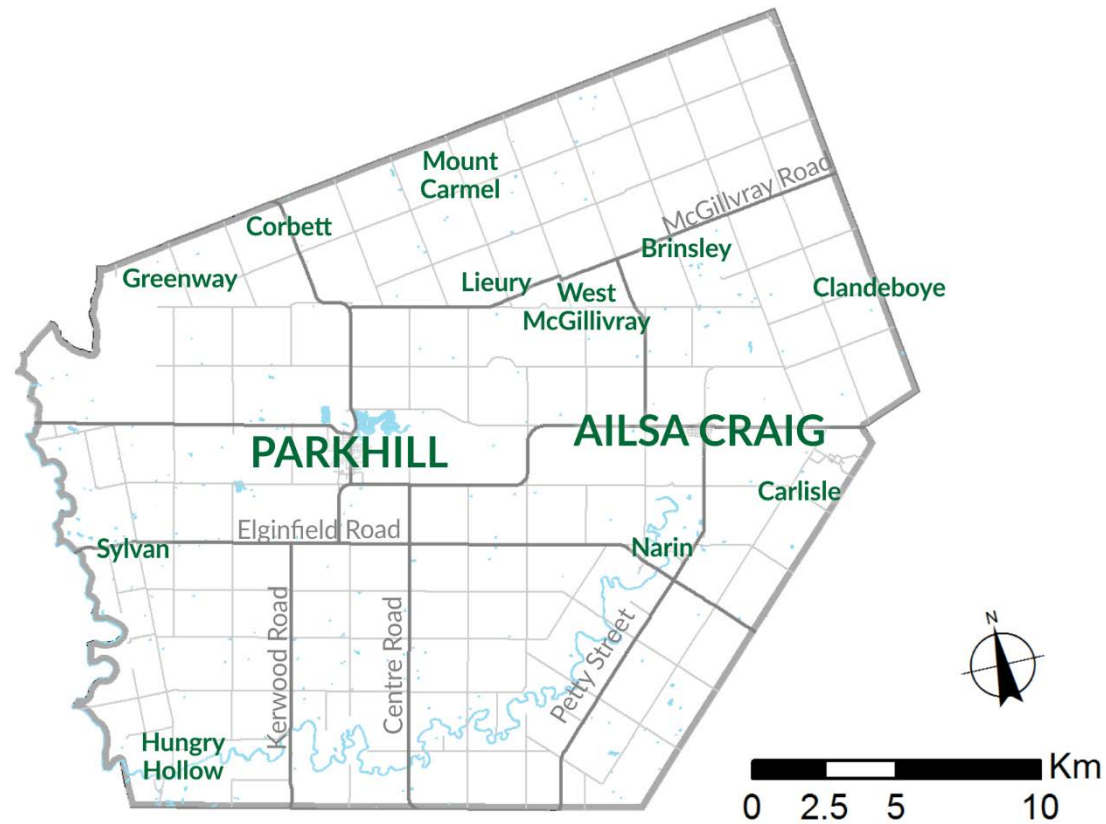
The review of North Middlesex's community profile was based on available data and information at the time of preparing this Master Plan. External factors have recently occurred that may have impacted future population projections that will require the Municipality to regularly monitoring total population and age group growth, community make-up, and other socio-demographic factors to ensure that recommendations contained in this Master Plan continue to respond to the needs of residents. Adjustments to recommendations or the timing of implementation may be required should new population data deviate significantly from current projections.

2.1 Local Context

North Middlesex is an amalgamation of five communities of the former town of Parkhill, village of Ailsa Craig, and the townships of East Williams, West Williams and McGillivray, as well as other smaller settlements (Figure 1). While the Municipality's roots are grounded in a rich history of agriculture, it offers a variety of community amenities that attracts and encourages residents to lead active, vibrant and healthy lifestyles, while stimulating economic development and population growth.

Residents are fortunate to have access to a broad range of parks, recreation and culture opportunities which are provided by the Municipality and others such as the YMCA of Southwestern Ontario, Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority, community groups, school boards, private sector, and more. Building upon these amenities and relationships will play a key role to ensure that the parks, recreation and culture needs are met over the next 10 years.

Figure 1: Local Context Map



2.2 Historical and Projected Population

North Middlesex has been experiencing a reduction in population over the past 10 years, declining by 5% between the 2011 and 2021 Census to 6,300 residents (or 6,600 residents including the Census undercount).

Population projections developed by the Municipality and Middlesex County suggests that North Middlesex can anticipate future growth over the planning period, reaching a population of about 7,000 residents by 2031 (rounded, including the Census undercount) (Figure 2).¹

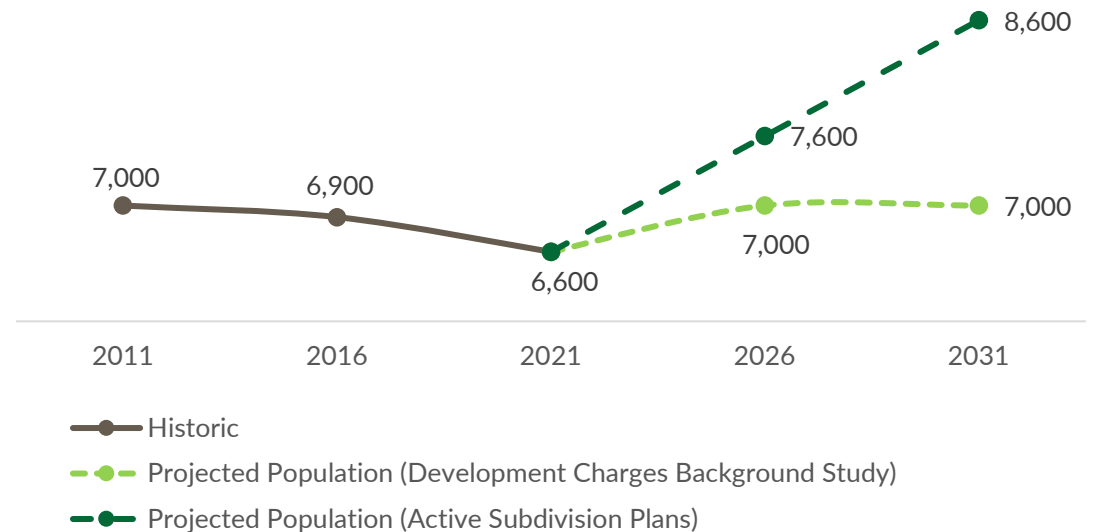
In recent years, North Middlesex has been managing a number of large-scale residential development opportunities primarily in Parkhill and Ailsa Craig. Based on active planning proposals, approximately 800 new residential units are proposed to be added to the Municipality’s housing supply. With an average household size of 2.6 persons, North Middlesex may exceed current projections to add approximately 2,000 new residents to the Municipality, reaching a population of 8,600 residents over the next 10 years.

A preliminary subdivision concept has been prepared in the Nairn area, although an expansion to the hamlet area would be required and timing for development is not undefined.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on population growth in communities across Ontario. During this period, people from larger urban centres (e.g., London or the communities in the Greater Toronto Area) sought alternative lifestyles that are more affordable for raising a family or retiring. The COVID-19 pandemic has also allowed people to work remotely and thus, smaller municipalities may have welcomed new residents and those who had once left for other communities.

North Middlesex experienced some of these trends as the Municipality has been a high strong demand for housing. This may suggest that the Municipality’s actual population size may outpace current projections given that they were developed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. There are, however, factors that may limit the Municipality’s ability to accommodate housing demand, which are driven by external factors such as the availability of housing materials and labour, strength of the overall economy, and rising interest rates. Monitoring population growth on a regular basis will be important to plan for appropriate recreation and facility opportunities.

Figure 2: Historical & Projected Population



Source: Statistics Canada 2011 to 2021 Census; Development Charges Background Study (2022); Population and Housing Projections for Middlesex County (2021). All figures are rounded and include a Census undercount of 3.5%. Projected population from active subdivision plans based on staff report to Council on August 11, 2021.

¹ Middlesex County. (2021). Population and Housing Projections for Middlesex County.

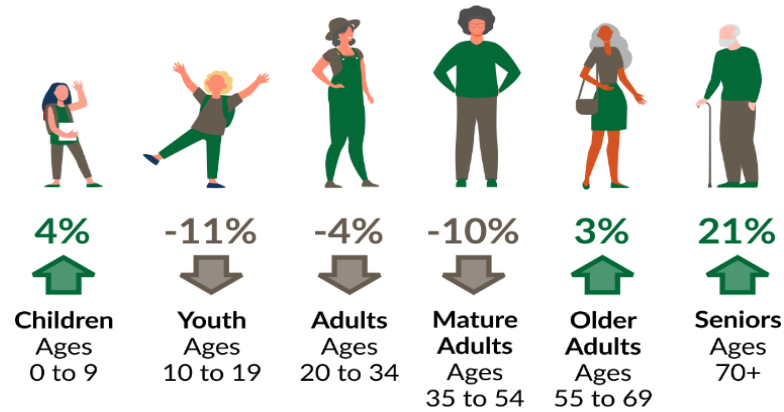
2.3 Population by Age Group

North Middlesex is an aging community. Between the 2016 and 2021 Census, the Municipality’s median age increased from 43 years to 44 years, which is considerably higher compared to Middlesex County (39.6 years) and the Province (41.3 years). This suggests that there are a greater number of older adults in North Middlesex compared to the rest of the Province, which is attributed to the Municipality’s retirees.

Additional evidence of an aging community is observed by examining population growth by age group. Between the 2016 and 2021 Census, the number of seniors (age 70+) and older adults (age 55 to 69) increased by 3% and 21%, respectively. Children (age 0 to 9) grew by 4%. By contrast, all other age groups declined by 4% to 11% (Figure 3).

While the Municipality’s aging population may suggest that there will be greater demands for older adult and senior services, growth among all age groups is expected to occur given that new subdivision development is likely to attract people of all ages. More recently, including during the COVID-19 pandemic, many small rural municipalities such as North Middlesex have experienced a growth in young people, including families with young children, seeking more affordable housing options. This Master Plan identifies recommendations to ensure that there is a broad spectrum of parks, recreation, and cultural facilities, programs and services to engage residents in all life stages.

Figure 3: Population Growth by Age Group, 2016 to 2021 Census



2.4 Income and Education

Research suggests that income and education levels influence (or are at least an indicator of) participation in recreation activities. Generally speaking, the greater a person's level of income and education, the more likely they are to participate in activities.

Statistics Canada reported that North Middlesex's median household after-tax income in 2020 was \$79,000, which was on par with the Province and higher compared to Middlesex County (\$71,000). Based solely on income, North Middlesex residents may be more likely to participate in recreation activities compared to their regional counterparts.

It is important to recognize a segment of the community may be experiencing low income. Statistics Canada reported that in 2020, 8% of residents lived below the low-income measure, after-tax, compared to Middlesex County (13%) and the Province (10%). This emphasizes the need to provide low-cost or no-cost recreation activities, particularly in locations that are geographically accessible for marginalized residents, as well as appropriate financial supports to minimize participation barriers.

With respect to education, North Middlesex has a marginally lower proportion of residents who have completed an apprenticeship or post-secondary degree (53%) compared to Middlesex County (55%) and the Province (55%). This suggests that North Middlesex residents may seek a different range of recreation activities compared to those outside of the Municipality.

2.5 Immigration and Cultural Diversity

The level of immigration and diversity in communities can also be a factor influencing the demand for recreation activities and facilities as some cultural groups may have a desire for non-traditional leisure pursuits.

The 2021 Census reported that approximately 9% of North Middlesex residents were immigrants, which is much lower compared to Middlesex County (22%) and the Province (30%). The 2021 Census also found that 3% of the population identified as a visible minority and one percent identified as part of the Indigenous population.

These findings suggest that immigration levels and cultural diversity does not have a significant impact on the activities and facilities that North Middlesex currently provides. This may evolve over the planning period as broader trends indicate that smaller, rural municipalities are becoming more diverse as newcomers and immigrants are increasingly drawn to these communities. This is being recognized in many rural communities and there are specific initiatives geared towards attracting newcomers and immigrants. For example, the Rural Ontario Municipal Association is working towards developing a strategy to welcome newcomers within rural areas. This trend highlights the need to ensure that a wide range of parks, recreation, and cultural opportunities are available that appeal to broad interests, particularly as North Middlesex continues to attract new residents over the next 10 years.



3.0 Key Trends to Consider

The way in which we design and provide parks, recreation and culture opportunities is constantly evolving in response to sector trends, which are explored in this section.

3.1 General Participation Trends

Community Health and Wellness

There is a growing emphasis being placed on community health and wellness as it is closely linked to living longer and healthier lives. The Healthy Communities movement recognizes that parks, recreation and culture opportunities are vital contributors to social and personal healthy, thereby improving overall quality of life and enhancing the attractiveness of communities to live in. This is recognized in the 2015 Framework for Recreation in Canada as active living is one of five key goals. North Middlesex demonstrates their commitment to community health and well-being of their residents through preparing this Master Plan.

High Levels of Physical Inactivity

ParticipACTION 2019 and 2020 report cards on physical activity has rated overall physical activity levels as “D+” for children and youth and “D” for adults, which are marginal improvements from previous years. Physical inactivity has been predominantly driven by factors such as the lack of free time, rise in sedentary activities, and reliance on the automobile. This Master Plan is one example of how North Middlesex can increase physical activity levels by highlighting current parks, recreation and culture opportunities and identifying strategies to respond to the needs of a growing and diversifying community.

Demand for Unstructured Activities

North Middlesex works with its community partners to provide a range of unstructured indoor and outdoor recreation and cultural activities, including special events, as well as parks for casual enjoyment. Participation is shifting away from structured and scheduled programs as there is a growing desire for 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 activities during the evening, a shift from traditional daytime (seniors programming) or late-evening provision (in the case of adult hockey). Participation in adult recreational sports is also growing and youth engagement is being embraced in many municipalities, although there is a need to ensure that there are unstructured opportunities available for all age groups.

Celebrating Local Arts and Culture

North Middlesex celebrates and promotes local heritage, history, and artists in various ways such through the Parkhill Carnegie Gallery, Ailsa Craig Arts Centre, and other program providers, as well as through Municipal and community-run special events. There is a growing shift from traditional organized sports (that continue to be important recreation activities) towards broader and meaningful experiences such as arts and cultural activities, including performing, and creative and fine arts, attractions, and special events that celebrate local traditions, heritage, and local experiences. Beyond simply supporting arts and culture for its own sake, support for North Middlesex’s arts and culture industry can be a means of achieving many community and social goals, including recognizing and celebrating local artisans and craftspeople, placemaking, strengthening ties, tourism, economic development, and more.

3.2 Facility Trends

Multi-use and Multi-generational Parks and Facilities

Modern community facilities are being designed to be multi-use to provide a convenient “one-stop-shop” experience for all residents. The community hub model has been applied to indoor facilities and parks to engage users of all ages, abilities and skill levels. The North Middlesex Arena & YMCA Fitness Centre, which combines an arena, fitness space and a community room all under one roof is

one example of a multi-use and multi-generational facility that serves as a destination for all members of the community. Viewing the Municipality's parks, recreation and cultural facilities with this lens will be important to ensure that everyone in the community can participate together.

Aging Infrastructure

The Municipality has a number of aging parks, recreation and culture facilities and reinvestment is needed to ensure that they continue to serve the community. Many municipalities in Ontario are faced with aging community infrastructure (e.g., arenas, sport courts, etc.) and are pursuing renewal and reinvestment projects, often using non-traditional funding approaches. These projects provide opportunities to incorporate new technologies to address growing sustainability concerns, rethink provision and consider facility conversion or adaptive re-use options that accommodate emerging activities.

Maximizing Existing Assets

Residents in North Middlesex enjoy access to a variety of parks, recreation, and culture facilities. Strategic programming and design are key factors in maximizing functionality and utilization of these facilities to ensure that they provide good value to the community. North Middlesex is actively exploring opportunities to maximize the use of its facilities such as promoting the use of available facility time, providing drop-in programs, and working with volunteers and organizations (e.g., schools, service clubs, conservation authority, etc.) to provide community-led programs, activities and events within public spaces. Designing facilities to be flexible and to accommodate multiple uses also helps maximize usage.

3.3 Service Delivery Trends

Partnerships

North Middlesex's partnerships are important relationships with the successful delivery of local parks, recreation and culture opportunities. The Municipality works collaboratively with community groups and service providers, volunteers, non-municipal entities such as schools and the conservation authority, private organizations, and others, to contribute to a higher quality of life in North Middlesex. Partnerships provide benefits in making efficient use of resources, gaining a competitive advantage in having programs and services provided by specialized groups, and sharing vital data and information such as emerging challenges and opportunities.

Volunteerism

There is a heavy reliance on volunteers and community partners in the Municipality to deliver success parks, recreation and culture programs services. Municipalities, including North Middlesex, are experiencing a shrinking pool of volunteers as older adults and seniors (who primarily make up this core group) will eventually move on and interest among young adults and youth is generally low. Engaging younger generations in volunteering will need to be a key strategy to ensuring lifelong community involvement, which should be complemented with strong volunteer and partnership opportunities.

Serving All Ages, Abilities and Backgrounds

Ensuring that parks, recreation and culture opportunities are inclusive and accessible for all, the following barriers should be considered: economic (e.g., costs associated with participation); information (e.g., knowledge and information sharing about available opportunities); geographic (e.g., equitable distribution of facilities and services), and inclusivity (e.g., ensuring all participants

feel welcomed and supported). The financial assistance program offered by the YMCA is one example of including everyone in participation, regardless of income.

Technology

Technology has changed the way people engage with others and access information, particularly with respect to understanding what parks, recreation and culture opportunities are available in the community. The Municipality and its partners (e.g., YMCA) utilize technology to reach residents and users through online facility bookings, offering virtual programming, providing audio/visual equipment, and more. North Middlesex is also actively engaged with over 2,400 connections across its social media platforms. The Municipality also recently launched a North Middlesex mobile application to further its reach to the public.

3.4 Implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the demand for, and delivery of, services and that change may be lasting; however, the ultimate scope and scale of change are unknown. While North Middlesex and its community partners have returned to offering in-person programs and services, the pandemic has highlighted the important role that parks, recreation and culture play in personal, social, economic recovery and revitalization. As a result, strategic investment and long-term planning is needed to ensure that residents continue to remain physically active.

The following are some potential impacts the pandemic may have on the sector in the short- to longer-term.

- Continued population growth and diversification in smaller urbanized areas;
- Emphasis on health equity and access to parks and trails;
- Growing interest in unstructured, individual, and small group activities;
- Desire for outdoor activities (including four seasons use), placing pressure on trails, parks, washrooms, etc.;
- A possible shift in prime-time demand as people work more flexible hours;
- Volatility in volunteers and events;
- Changes to operations (e.g., demand for touchless services, cleaning, visitor management, staff training, etc.), possibly requiring higher levels of subsidy;
- Impacts on building design (ventilation, spacing, access/egress, mid-door spaces, etc.);
- Constant engagement and communication – people need accurate and real-time information;
- Rethinking of some third-party partnerships; and
- Greater use of technology to help support changes (virtual programming, etc.).



4.0 Community Engagement

A variety of community engagement activities were undertaken to ensure residents and stakeholders had an opportunity to provide input to be considered in preparing the Master Plan. These techniques have proven to be an effective, accessible, and efficient means of communication and deliberation.

The Master Plan was promoted in several ways, including online on the Municipality's website and social media, in the Navigator (North Middlesex's community newsletter), in libraries and local businesses, word of mouth and more. Several community engagement sessions were held, including in-person public open houses, a community survey, stakeholder focus groups, staff workshop, interviews, final public feedback sessions, and Council presentations. In total, the Master Plan engaged over 650 participants. The input received through these activities were considered in the development of the Master Plan.

650+

Participants Engaged

Consultation with residents, stakeholders, staff and Council helped shape the Master Plan. Input was received through the following ways.



Public Awareness and Promotion



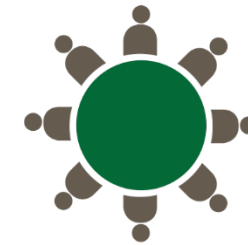
Initial Public Open Houses



Community Survey



Stakeholder Focus Groups
and Questionnaire



Staff Workshop



Key Informant Interviews



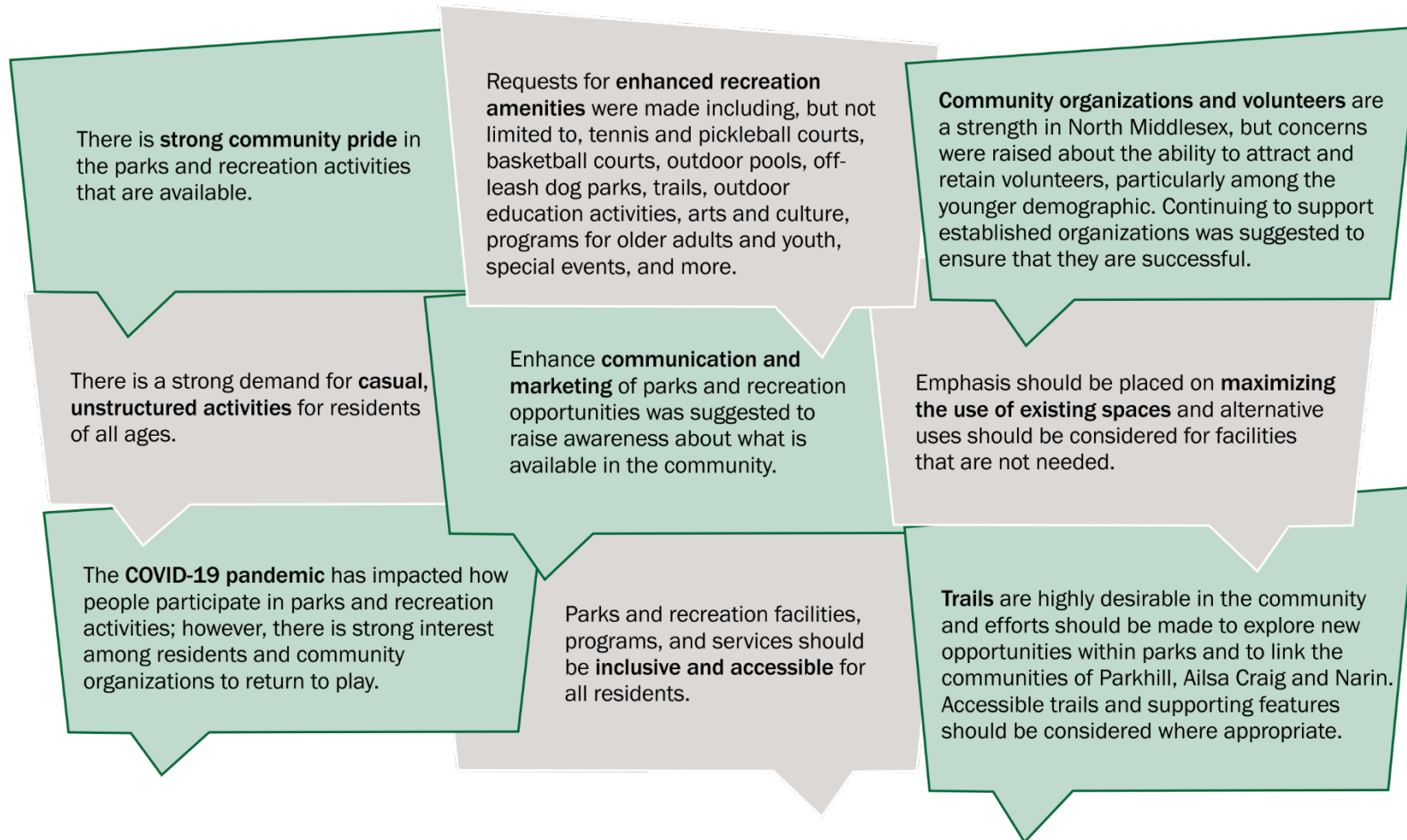
Written Submissions



Final Public Feedback Sessions
and Council Presentations

4.1 Summary of Key Themes

Each consultation method was designed to draw out meaningful input. Common themes from the opinions, preferences, and priorities expressed by residents, stakeholders, staff and Council are highlighted in this section. These themes are listed in no particular order of importance or priority and have been considered together with background research and data to inform the development of the Master Plan.



4.2 Initial Public Open Houses

Two drop-in Public Open Houses were held to launch the Master Plan process to the public and to encourage residents to contribute their ideas and opinions related to inform the Master Plan. The first Public Open House was held at the North Middlesex Community Centre in Parkhill on November 8, 2022 and the second session was held at the Ailsa Craig Community Centre on November 10, 2022. Information panels were displayed at each Public Open House that highlighted background information about North Middlesex and the Master Plan project. Attendees were asked to provide their input on how local parks and recreation opportunities can be enhanced. The community survey was also promoted at the Public Open Houses. Common themes heard from the public open house are highlighted in this section.

Enhancing Indoor Recreation Opportunities

Comments were offered about how indoor recreation facilities could be enhanced to better meet the needs of residents. It was suggested that there was a need for an indoor walking track, particularly at the arena in Parkhill to provide residents with a place to walk indoors and a place for arena users to warm up. Suggestions were made for refreshing the fitness equipment at the North Middlesex Arena & YMCA Fitness Centre; it was identified that the equipment should be replaced on a regular basis. The desire for expanding the fitness centre was also suggested to provide a larger fitness studio. Questions were also raised about the future of the West Williams Community Centre given its age, lack of accessibility and low utilization. Attendees felt that this facility, and the abutting Ken Vernon Park, could be sold and the proceeds could be used to enhance parks and recreation opportunities in other areas of the Municipality.

Enhancing Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

A variety of suggestions were put forward with respect to enhancing the Municipality's outdoor recreation facilities. Suggestions included considering inclusive playground equipment, outdoor swimming pool, basketball court and other sport courts, enhancing the splash pad at Coronation Park with supporting amenities such as shade, and updating the bathroom at Lieury Park. It was suggested that Diamond B at the Parkhill Sports Park should be updated to ensure that the plate lines up with the pitching mound. Additionally, requests were made to expand Nairn Park towards Nairn Road to enhance outdoor amenities at the park including, but not limited to, walking and cycling pathways that could be used for a skating trail during the winter, and outdoor fitness. Exploring opportunities to strengthen access to the Ausable River was also suggested to establish opportunities to launch personal watercrafts such as canoeing and kayaking.

Enhancing Parks and Trails

Participants recognized that there are a number of trails in North Middlesex, some of which are not widely known in the community and, as a result, it was suggested that greater efforts should be put towards raising awareness about where trails are located to encourage use. Enhancing trail opportunities was suggested for walking, biking and ATV use, such as establishing linkages between Parkhill, Ailsa Craig and Nairn. Attendees highlighted potential connections that could be considered, including along the former rail line and along the Ausable River.

Attendees also recognized that there are some trails that are provided by non-municipal providers such as the Conservation Authority. It was noted that some of these trails may become overgrown over time; however, it was suggested that opportunities may exist to reintroduce trails in the conservation area through a collaborative process potentially between the Municipality, Conservation Authority and volunteers.

Enhancing Programs and Services

A number suggestions were identified to strengthen programs and services that are provided in North Middlesex. There is a desire for expanded childcare services to support existing and future families in the Municipality. More program opportunities were suggested to ensure that there are activities for all interests, as well as to ensure that indoor and outdoor parks and facilities are well utilized; specific mention of more leisure opportunities at the Nairn pavilion was identified. The importance of having the YMCA in the Municipality was identified, as well as the need to work together with all community groups to ensure that there is coordination of programs and services across the Municipality with less emphasis on Parkhill. To support this, it was suggested that the Municipality establish a community directory that identifies programs and activities that are offered by all clubs and organizations so the public is aware of the opportunities that are available. The need to provide programs and services that are affordable was emphasized to minimize financial barriers to participation.

It was recognized that engaging key age groups is an important consideration, particularly for youth. It was suggested that a Youth Hub be established to provide a safe and convenient location where youth can gather, socialize, and participate in activities.



4.3 Community Survey

A Community Survey was conducted between October 31 and December 16, 2022, to collect input about local parks and recreation needs and priorities in North Middlesex. The survey gathered information regarding participation and barriers, facility usage, suggested improvements, priorities for investment and opinions on various statements.

The community survey was available online and hardcopies were available at North Middlesex community centres, Middlesex County Library branches, grocery stores and more. A total of 227 responses were received, representing over 600 residents of all ages, including children, youth, adults, older adults, and seniors. As a voluntary, self-directed survey, respondents were not required to answer every question. The survey was promoted through the Municipality's website, posters, social media, newsletters, word of mouth, at the public open houses, and more. This section provides a high-level summary of the survey and additional details can be found in Appendix A.

Summary of Respondents

The following is a high-level summary of the demographic profile of responding households.

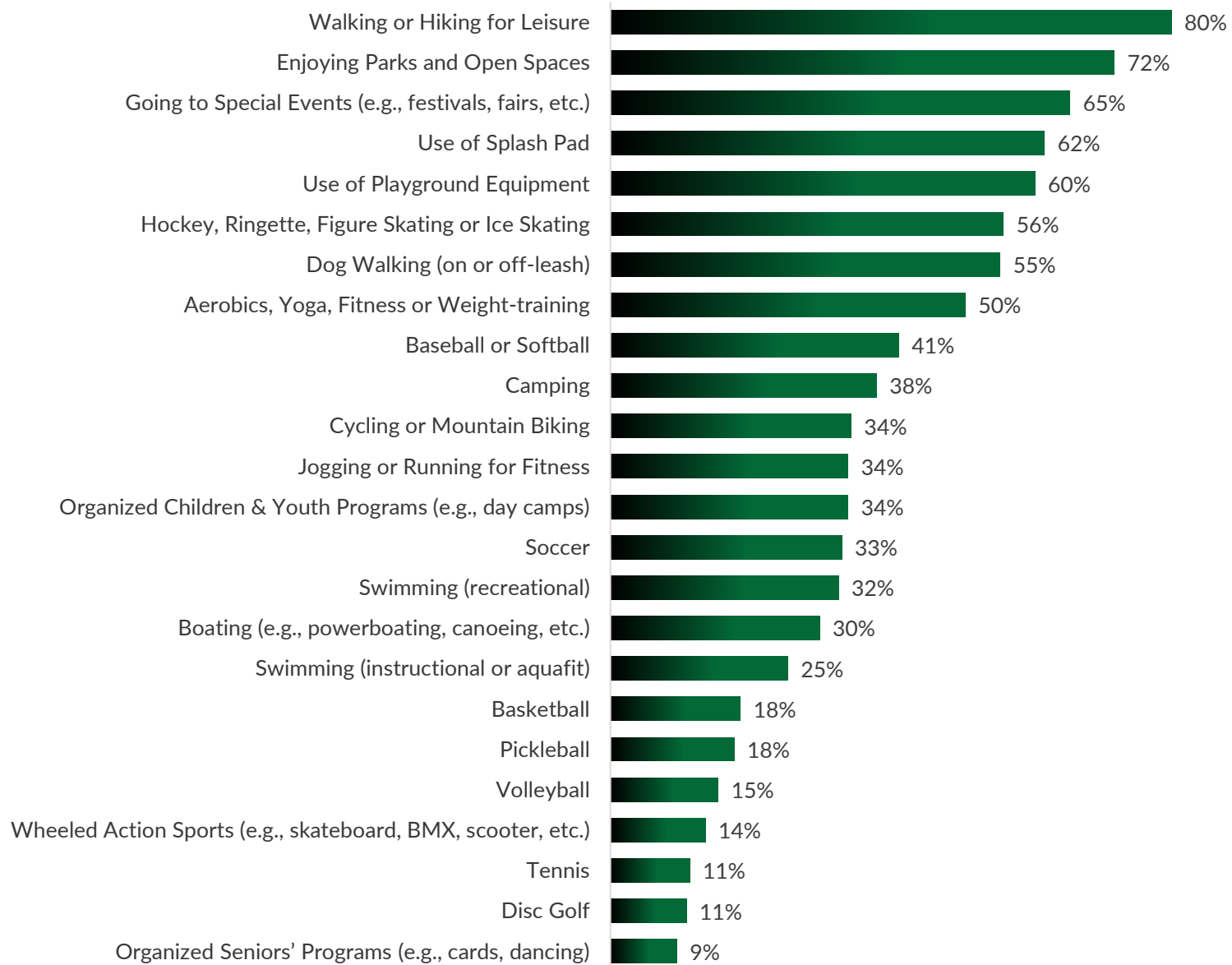
- The median age of the respondents was 48 years, which is higher compared to the 2021 Census (44 years).
- Households with children and youth were more likely to complete the survey.
- One-third (33%) of responding households lived in Parkhill and 17% lived in Ailsa Craig; 28% of respondents lived in the rural area.

Participation in Parks and Recreation Activities

Four-out-of-five (80%) of respondents identified that walking or hiking for leisure was the most popular activity their household participates in. Other top parks and recreation activities that were identified included enjoying parks and open spaces (72%), going to special events (65%), using a splash pad (62%) and using a playground (60%). Figure 4 summarizes participation in parks and recreation activities.

A commonality among the top five activities is that they are all unstructured and self-scheduled, which is consistent with broad participation trends. These types of activities tend to rank highest as they can be undertaken through all ages and stages of life. Organized sports such as hockey, soccer and baseball ranked lower and tend to be played by a subset of the community. Specialized or age-specific activities such as skateboarding, disc golf and organized programs for seniors ranked lowest.

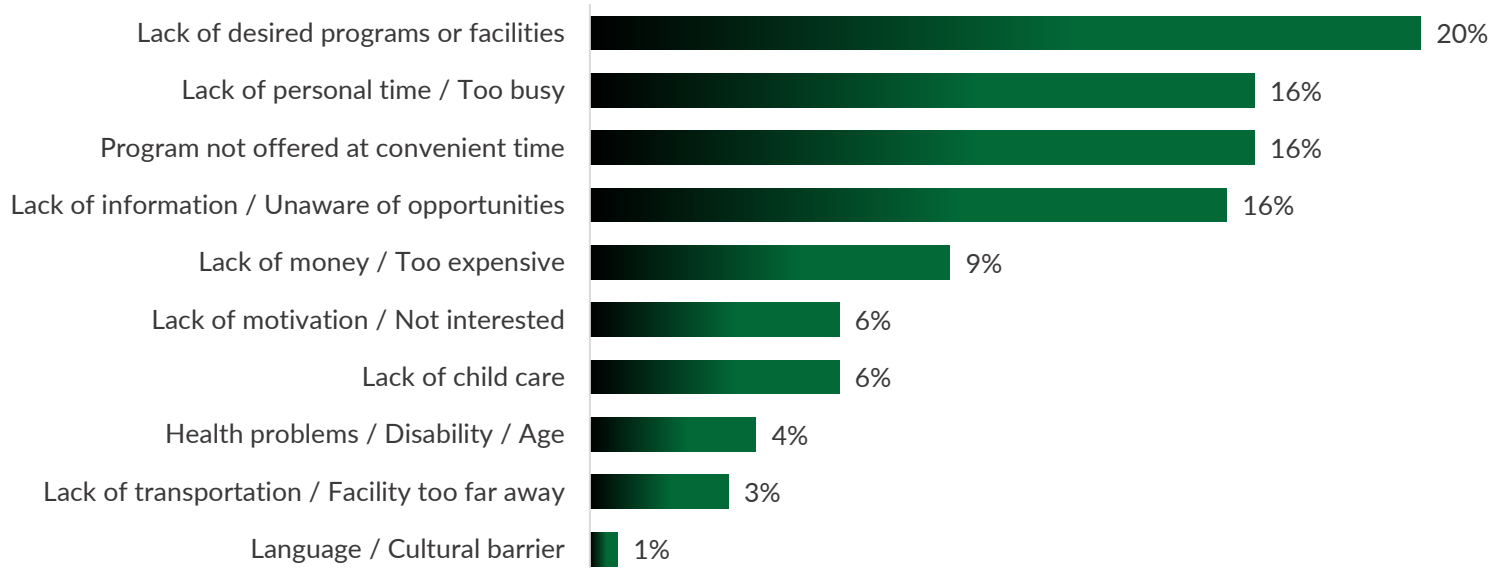
Figure 4: Participation in Parks and Recreation Activities (n=222)



Barriers to Participation in Parks and Recreation Activities

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, one-in-five (19%) respondents identified that they were not able to participate in parks and recreation activities as often as they would like. Among this group, the lack of desired programs or facilities (20%) was the most common participation barrier to parks and recreation activities. Other common barriers included a lack of personal time (16%), the program not being offered at a convenient time (16%), and the lack of information or being unaware of the opportunities that are available. A summary of participation barriers identified by respondents is contained in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Participation Barriers to Parks and Recreation Activities



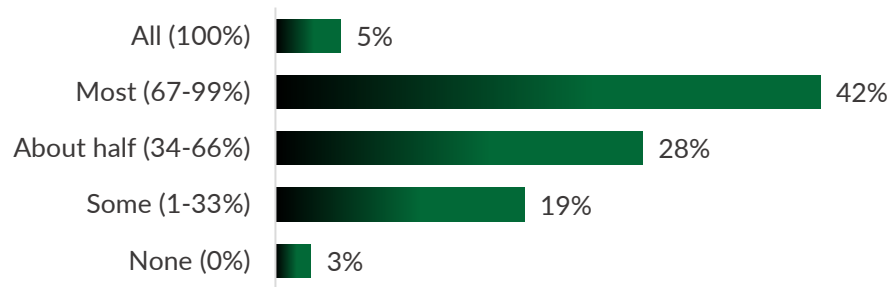
Neutral and Don't Know responses not shown.

Communication is vital. I think that events and requests for participation are sometimes not advertised to the maximum benefit of all residents.

Survey respondent comment

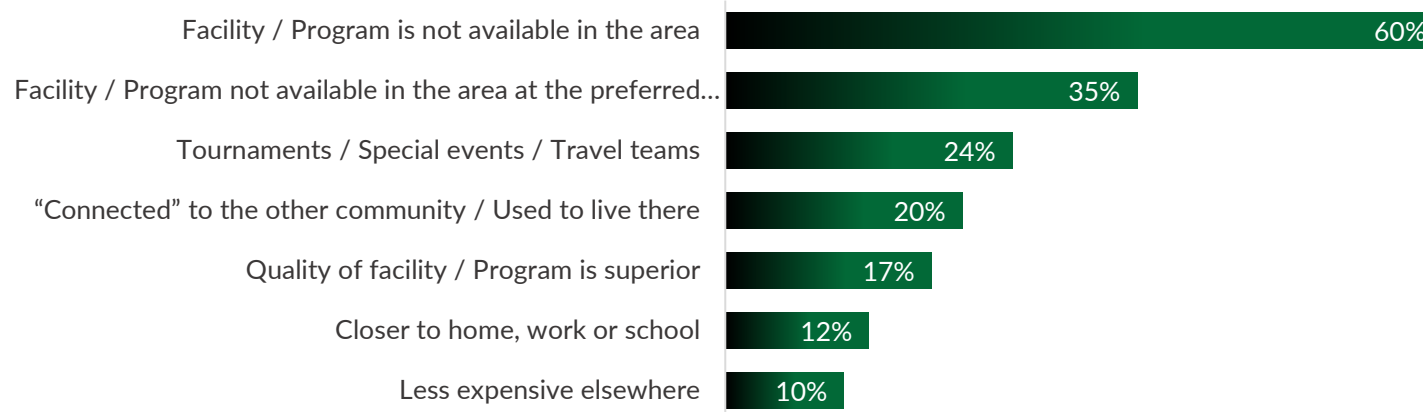
Only 5% of survey respondents identified that all the park and recreation activities they participate in take place within North Middlesex (Figure 6). This suggests that most respondents travel outside of the Municipality to meet some or all of their parks and recreation needs. The most common reason respondents participate in parks and recreation activities outside of North Middlesex is because the facility or program they are interested in is not available in the Municipality (60%). Other factors include the facility or program is not available at a convenient time (35%), tournaments or special events (24%), or being connected to the other community or they use to live there (20%) (Figure 7).

Figure 6: Participation in Parks and Recreation Activities in North Middlesex (n=220)



Neutral and Don't Know responses not shown.

Figure 7: Factors for Participation in Parks and Recreation Activities Outside of North Middlesex (n=191)



Neutral and Don't Know responses not shown.

Requests for Parks and Recreation Activities

Table 1 highlights the top 10 parks and recreation opportunities that respondents would like to see offered in North Middlesex that are not currently available. A broad range of suggestions were received, including a swimming pool, trails, off-leash dog park, older adult programs, and indoor walking track. These requests are consistent with leisure trends that point towards a high demand for casual, unstructured, and social activities.

Table 1: Top 10 Requested Parks and Recreation Opportunities

Top 10 Requested Parks and Recreation Opportunities	
1. Swimming pool	6. Volleyball
2. Trails	7. Pickleball courts
3. Off-leash dog park	8. Basketball
4. Older adult programming	9. Special events and festivals
5. Indoor walking track	10. Splash pad

An indoor walking track would be amazing and something that could be used by residents of all ages. More outdoor walking trails would also be a benefit to the community.

There should be better accessibility to activities and programs for people with physical and intellectual disabilities.

I would love a facility with an indoor pool for swimming lessons for youth, recreational swims for families, and aquafit classes.

It would be nice to have an outdoor court for tennis and pickleball in Ailsa Craig. The courts in Parkhill are nice but there have been times I've driven over to find them in use. I would prefer to have courts in Ailsa Craig that I can walk or bike to and it would be good for the local kids too.

More support for arts and cultural opportunities in North Middlesex are needed.

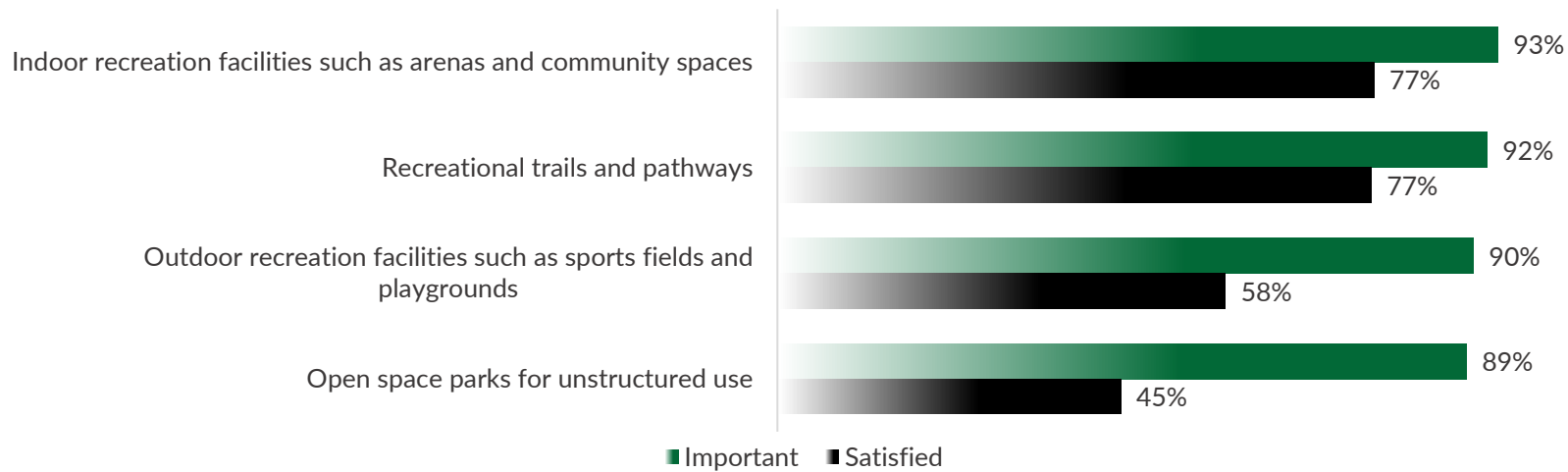
Consideration needs to be given to non-sport recreation activities like dog walking, special events, outdoor artistic activities, outdoor education, etc.

Select comments from survey respondents

Importance and Satisfaction Levels

Respondents were asked to rate their level of importance and satisfaction with respect to parks and recreation facilities, including indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, parks and trails, and open spaces. Generally speaking, high levels of importance paired with high levels of satisfaction suggests that expectations are being met. With this in mind, expectations are not being met in all areas, with the largest discrepancy in open space parks for unstructured use (Figure 8). These findings suggest that there is room for improvement in all areas noted below.

Figure 8: Importance and Satisfaction with Parks and Recreation Amenities (n=145 to 202)



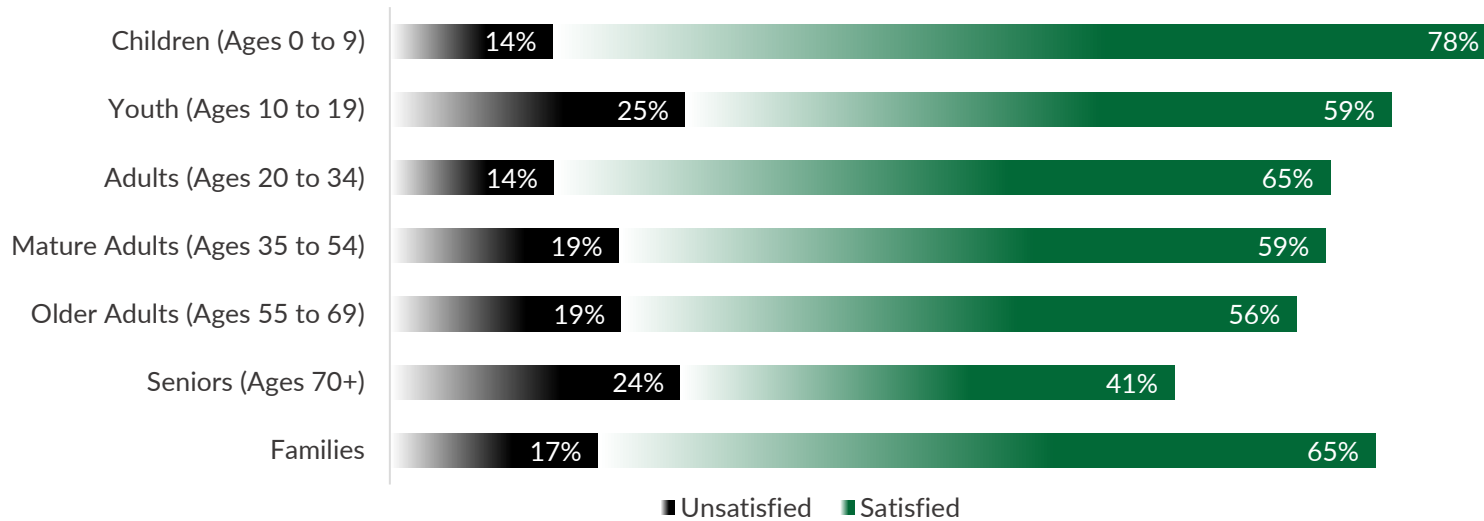
Neutral and Don't Know responses not shown.

For mental and physical health, I would love to see trails connecting communities such as Parkhill, Ailsa Craig, Nain, and rural hamlets, as well as other amenities such as the conservation area.

Survey respondent comment

Figure 9 illustrates respondents' satisfaction levels with parks and recreation opportunities by age group. Respondents were most satisfied with parks and recreation opportunities for children (ages 0 to 9), followed by adults (ages 20 to 34) and families. The lowest satisfaction levels recorded were for seniors (ages 70+), although these findings suggest that there are opportunities to improve satisfaction levels among all age groups.

Figure 9: Satisfaction Levels for Parks and Recreation Opportunities by Age Group (n=95 to 150)

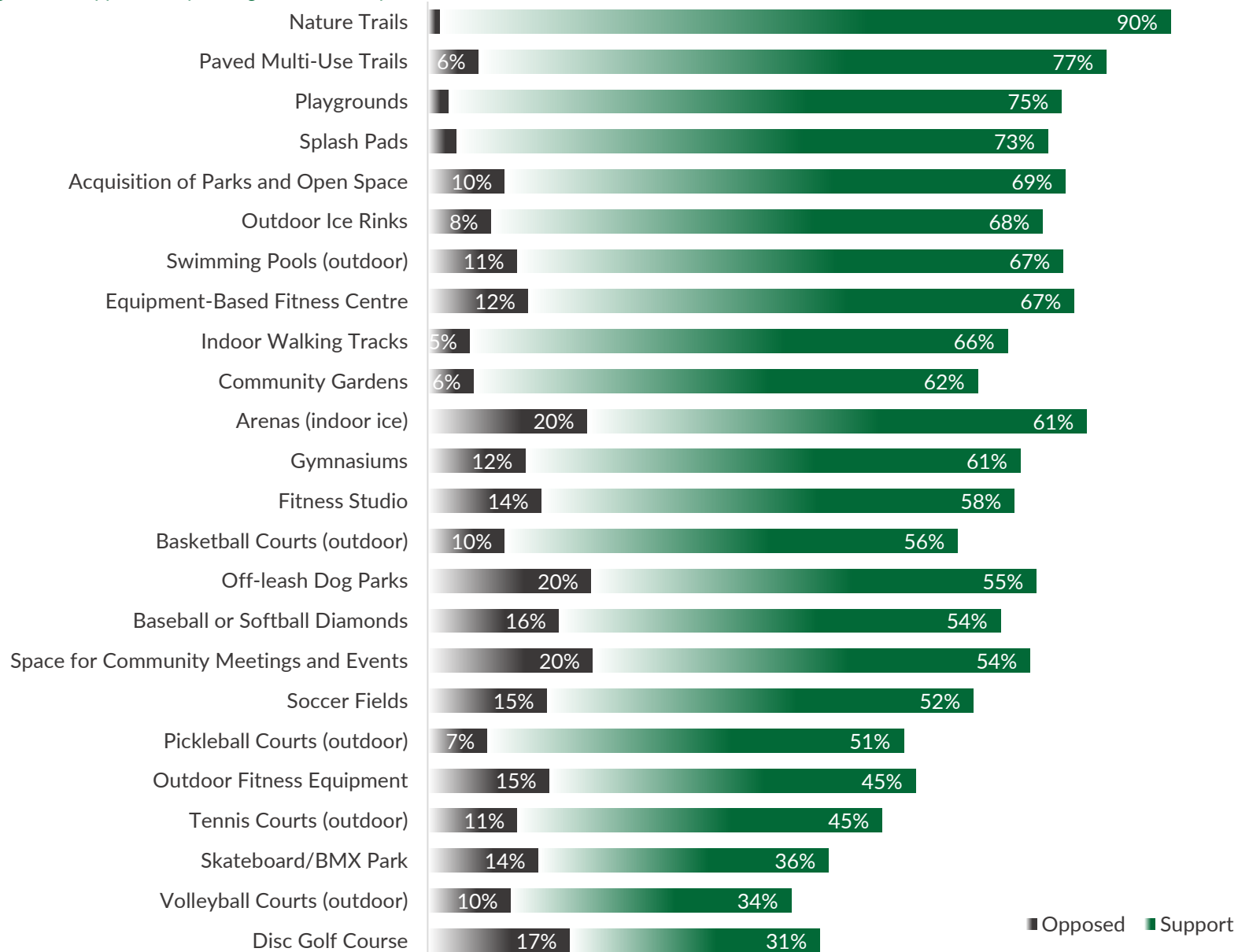


Neutral and Don't Know responses not shown.

Priorities for Investment and Expectations

Figure 10 illustrates respondents' level of support for spending additional public funds on improving existing or developing new parks and recreation facilities. Consistent with trends in the sector, facilities that support unstructured and self-scheduled activities were most commonly supported for additional spending. The top supported facilities were nature trails (90%), paved multi-use trails (77%), playgrounds (75%), splash pads (73%), and acquiring parks and open space (69%).

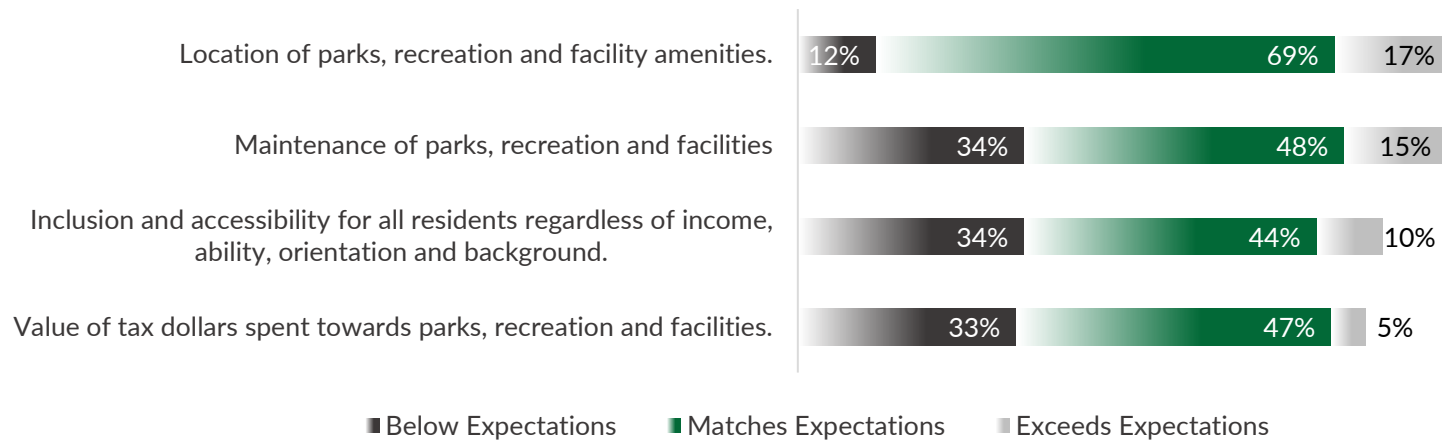
Figure 10: Support for Spending on New or Improved Parks and Recreation Facilities (n=186 to 194)



Neutral and Don't Know responses not shown.

Figure 11 summarizes respondents' level of expectation for parks and recreation opportunities in North Middlesex. Generally speaking, the location of the Municipality's parks, recreation and facilities meet or exceeds respondents' expectations. One-third (34%) of respondents identified that maintenance of North Middlesex's parks and facilities were not meeting their expectations. Similarly, one-third (34%) of respondents felt that the Municipality's parks and recreation opportunities were not meeting expectations with respect to being inclusive and accessible for all. Approximately half (52%) of respondents felt that the value of tax dollars spent towards park and recreation was meeting or exceeding expectations. These findings reveal that enhancements are needed to these areas of the parks and recreation system to meet the expectations of residents.

Figure 11: Respondents' Expectations for Parks and Recreation in North Middlesex (n=194 to 195)



Neutral and Don't Know responses not shown.

4.4 Stakeholder Focus Groups

Two focus groups were held on November 9, 2022, with community stakeholders to participate in discussions on a range of topics related to enhancing parks, recreation and culture opportunities in North Middlesex. Invitations were distributed to 19 community stakeholders to participate in the focus groups, including indoor and outdoor sports organizations, service clubs and community groups. The sessions were attended by 14 individuals representing 13 groups. Following the focus groups, a Stakeholder Survey was made available to all groups to submit input, including groups that were unable to attend the sessions and four submissions were received. The following is a summary of key themes from the input that was received.

The following community organizations participated in one of the two Stakeholder Focus Group or completed a Stakeholder Survey:

- Ailsa Craig & District Co-op Playschool
- Ailsa Craig Lions Club
- Ailsa Craig Village Association
- East Williams Optimists
- Friends of Parkhill Carnegie Gallery
- Friends of Parkhill Leisure Club
- Friends of Ye Olde Towne Hall
- Grace Bible Chapel (Five Fun Days)
- North Middlesex Minor Baseball
- North Middlesex Minor Hockey
- North Middlesex Minor Soccer
- Parkhill Horticultural Society
- Parkhill Lions Club
- Parkhill Optimist Club

Key Strengths

Stakeholders felt that the sports opportunities are well served in North Middlesex by the Municipality and its community providers for hockey, baseball, and soccer. The Municipality's indoor recreation facilities are also viewed as a strength, as well as other civic and community assets, including the library. The Municipality's volunteers are also viewed as a strength in the community as they provide community programs and services and, in some cases, some groups operate public facilities or support the operation and maintenance of municipal amenities.

Returning to Play

Many groups were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as groups were not able to operate due to provincial restrictions placed on social gatherings and the use of indoor public facilities. As the Municipality and its community groups have re-opened to the public, organizations reported that there has been strong interest in getting back into being active in recreation and community activities.

Connecting with Nature

Stakeholders recognized the importance of connecting residents with nature as there are many community, environmental, economic, social, mental and developmental benefits associated with access to parks and trails. There was a desire for trail connections between Parkhill, Ailsa Craig and Nairn, leveraging the use of the former rail line. A trail system within Nairn was also suggested, with reference being made to the trail concept identified in the Municipality of North Middlesex Official Plan.

Enhancing Indoor and Outdoor Recreation Facilities

The range of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities was seen as a strength in North Middlesex. Suggestions were made to enhance the use of existing spaces that may be underutilized such as

community halls and sports fields, which may involve enhanced promotion and awareness. Suggestions were made for a rugby field, new junior playground equipment at Ailsa Craig Community Park, access to gymnasium space or indoor space to support sports training, ball diamond enhancements, off-leash dog parks, outdoor fitness equipment, outdoor skating and more.

It was suggested that underutilized spaces should be re-purposed to accommodate new facilities, or they could be accommodated by future park development or expansion. Strategies should also be explored to enhance the use of these underutilized amenities. For example, it was noted that the Municipality has some facilities that could benefit from more usage or be re-purposed to serve other needs including, but not limited to, Lieury Park, West Williams Community Centre, Ken Vernon Park, and multi-use spaces across North Middlesex. Converting an underutilized sports field for football and/or rugby was also suggested.

Communication, Marketing and Awareness

Groups expressed that a greater emphasis should be placed on raising awareness about the parks, recreation and culture opportunities that are available to ensure that programs and services are successful. The importance of promoting opportunities through a variety of digital and print sources was expressed, including enhanced use of the Municipality's website for groups to promote their programs, services, and events. Getting people involved through volunteerism also plays an important role in delivering community programs and services.

Community Programs and Services

Organizations identified that there is a need to provide a broad range of leisure interests in the community beyond sports (e.g., hockey, baseball, and soccer) which highlights the importance of having a variety of facilities, programs, services and special events in North Middlesex, the majority of which are provided by volunteer organizations. Providing groups with necessary supports

is vital and working to reduce or eliminate duplication of services is important to ensure that organizations are successful. Some organizations also felt that there was an over emphasis of providing community programs and services (and facilities) in Parkhill, and the importance of recognizing that there are needs across North Middlesex, including activities beyond sports that appeal to all age groups. Providing activities in other areas of the Municipality ensures that all facilities are well utilized.

Municipal Support

While organizations expressed that community groups and volunteers play a large role in providing services in North Middlesex, greater municipal support was requested to provide functional public space, including infrastructure renewal, accessibility and asset management. Coordination with the Municipality and community groups was suggested to assist with connecting organizations with others where there may be opportunities for partnership was also suggested. Working in collaboration with the Municipality and community organizations was viewed as an important step to ensure that there is a well-rounded supply of recreation and community services offered across North Middlesex. To achieve this, it was suggested that the Municipality should meet regularly with groups to discuss needs, challenges, and opportunities to work better together.

There were also requests for greater financial support from the Municipality. It is recognized that the Municipality does provide grant funding to groups through the Community Vibrancy Fund program, which is funded by the amenity fee from Bornish Wind GP; however, under the current terms of how the funds are distributed, it may not be sufficient to achieve the vision that some organizations may have with respect to providing quality facilities, programs, services, and events. At present, many organizations must rely on local fund raising and securing external grants, as well as volunteers.

4.5 Staff Workshop

A workshop was held on January 11th, 2023, with Municipality staff to capture their valuable knowledge, insights, and experiences to be considered as a part of the Master Plan. The workshop was attended by six Municipal staff representing various positions, including facility operators, custodian, and recreation administrator. Discussion topics were wide-ranging and key themes are highlighted in this section.

Summary of Key Themes from the Staff Workshop.

- North Middlesex is proud to offer a range of parks and recreation opportunities, including programs, services, and facilities. The quality of facilities and upkeep of the Municipality's parks and outdoor spaces were mentioned.
- There are increased public expectations for a high-quality parks and recreation system, including expectations for quality customer service.
- Affordability of renting the public park spaces and recreation facilities is a public concern.
- Consideration needs to be given to ensuring that there is a variety of year-round programming to keep people active and to use the parks and facilities. Suggested activities included golf, virtual simulators, arts, and programs that are beyond hockey, soccer, and baseball.
- Opportunities exist to enhance existing park spaces, including renewing or replacing the gazebo at Coronation Park, renewing the skateboard park at Ailsa Craig Park, ensuring that all playgrounds are accessible and ball diamond fencing is safe, and updating and modernizing washroom buildings.
- Enhancements to indoor recreation spaces included updating and modernizing the spectator seating at the arena, ensuring that public spaces are accessible, and providing technology amenities that are typically found in modern recreation facilities (e.g., WIFI, audio/visual equipment, etc.).
- There is a desire for an enhanced trail network for walking, as well as all-terrain vehicles and dirt bikes that connects users between communities, as well as to other amenities such as the campground and conservation area.
- The Municipality's approach to raising awareness about parks and recreation activities, including the availability of facility space, could be strengthened through providing up to date information online to improve user friendliness, as well as to include photography and virtual tours of the Municipality's parks and facilities to showcase the public spaces that are available.
- A review of staff resources should be undertaken to ensure that service levels are maintained, particularly if new or existing services are added. From an efficiency perspective, suggestions were made to reduce grass cutting areas at strategic locations to focus on other priority areas and responsibilities.

4.6 Key Informant Interviews

Individual interviews with key informants were undertaken with members of Council and select staff including the Interim CAO/Treasurer, former CAO, Manager of Recreation and Facilities, and the YMCA to understand their perspectives on parks, recreation and culture in North Middlesex, priorities, and how these features can be enhanced to strengthen the quality of life for current and future residents.

Summary of Key Themes from the Key Informant Interviews

- There is support for enhancing parks, recreation and culture in North Middlesex as it supports the growth of the Municipality, particularly as future growth is expected over the next 10 years and beyond. It is important to note that there is a broad variety of active and passive recreation interests, including arts and culture.
- The Municipality has a good variety of indoor recreation facilities. An emphasis should be placed on optimizing what's currently available to increase facility usage and program participation. Promoting parks, recreation and culture opportunities to the public was suggested as one strategy to increase facility use.
- Opportunities to enhance trails should be explored within existing parks, as well as to ensure that neighbourhoods are connected to open spaces, as well as to other settlement areas such as between Parkhill, Ailsa Craig, and Nairn, as well as outdoor space such as conservation lands. This could be achieved through establishing walking routes along roadway shoulders or off-road recreational routes, which may require working with the conservation authority and private landowners, recognizing that not all landowners may be in support of public trail access.
- There is a desire for more indoor recreation space, including a gymnasium, enlarged fitness studio and multi-purpose space suitable for activities, including general programs. Suggestions were also made for an outdoor basketball court in Ailsa Craig.
- The North Middlesex Arena is aging, and a long-term capital plan should be considered for reinvestment, renewal, or replacement.
- Local organizations and service providers in North Middlesex are highly valued as they provide important

community programs and services, as well as to operate key facilities. The YMCA was identified as a key partner of the Municipality who provides programs and services, and it was felt that this relationship, as well as others, should continue as the Municipality would not have the capacity to take on the role of the service provider. Ensuring that volunteers and qualified instructors are available is necessary to achieve a successful service delivery. It was also identified that new partnerships should be explored such as with local schools and other groups that may require support to become more established.

- There is a desire to ensure that parks, recreation and culture opportunities are inclusive and accessible for all residents to ensure that everyone feels welcome. Enhancements were mentioned in this regard, including ensuring that programs are available for all age groups, accessibility enhancements to indoor facilities and outdoor parks, working with community groups to minimize financial participation barriers and to ensure opportunities are affordable, and offering online and print resources.
- It was mentioned that some parks, recreation and culture facilities may be underutilized (or they may be surplus to the Municipality's needs). Strategies should be explored to increase use of these amenities. Where appropriate, consideration may be given to re-purposing or divesting amenities in order to maximize the use of resources and direct efforts to where it is needed most.

4.7 Final Community Engagement with the Public, Stakeholders and Council

A number of community engagement activities were undertaken to test the preliminary recommendations of the draft Master Plan with the public, stakeholders, and Council. The draft Master Plan was published on the Municipality's website from late May to late June and an online feedback link was made available to collect public comments. Written submissions were also submitted to the Municipality from residents and community stakeholders. A draft Master Plan booth was also set up at the Municipality's Discover North Middlesex event on June 10th, 2023 to provide the public an opportunity review the preliminary recommendations in person, speak with the Consultant, and provide feedback.

The Municipality met with a number of community stakeholders on June 15th, 2023 to receive feedback on the draft Master Plan. Additionally, Municipal Staff met with Council on July 19th, 2023 to provide an opportunity for Council members to ask questions and seek clarification about the preliminary recommendations.

A broad range of comments were received from the feedback activities that were undertaken, which resulted in revisions to the Master Plan prior to being finalized. Feedback included, but were not limited to the following:

- There is support for many recommendations including investing in parkland and park amenities, recreation trails, skate parks, splash pads, hard surface courts, outdoor fitness, off-leash dog park, establishing a long-term plan for the future of the arena, creating a Youth Advisory Committee, revisiting the Municipality's Community Development Fund, and more.
- Recognizing that the COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on population growth, there will be a need to regularly monitor data and review the Master Plan's

recommendations to ensure that they reflect local needs. As part of reviewing and updating the Master Plan, developing and tracking performance indicators should be explored.

- There is a need to ensure that the Master Plan recognizes local arts and culture industry, including facilities, services, programs and special events, and continuing to support these opportunities is important to ensure that activities are available for residents who have a range of interests.
- There is a desire to maintain the Parkhill Carnegie Library, West Williams Community Centre and Ken Vernon Park and to encourage the community to use these spaces, although there was also support for divesting these assets from the Municipality.
- Community partners, non-municipal agencies and volunteers are viewed as a strength in the community who are responsible for providing many parks, recreation and culture activities and events, including operating facilities. Greater collaboration, awareness and promotion is encouraged to ensure that the public are aware of their facilities, program and services, as well as to develop new opportunities and partnerships to enhance the use of community space.
- There is support for and opposition to expand the Municipality's staffing complement within the Recreation & Facilities Department.



5.0 Recreation and Culture Facilities

There are a variety of community, recreation and arts and cultural facilities in North Middlesex that play an important role in the daily lives of residents as they provide positive, public spaces that support physical activity, healthy lifestyles, artistic and creative expression, educational and intellectual opportunities for learning, skill development, community building and economic growth.

This section reviews the current state of North Middlesex's supply of indoor and outdoor facilities and assesses needs to address current and future residents over the next 10 years.

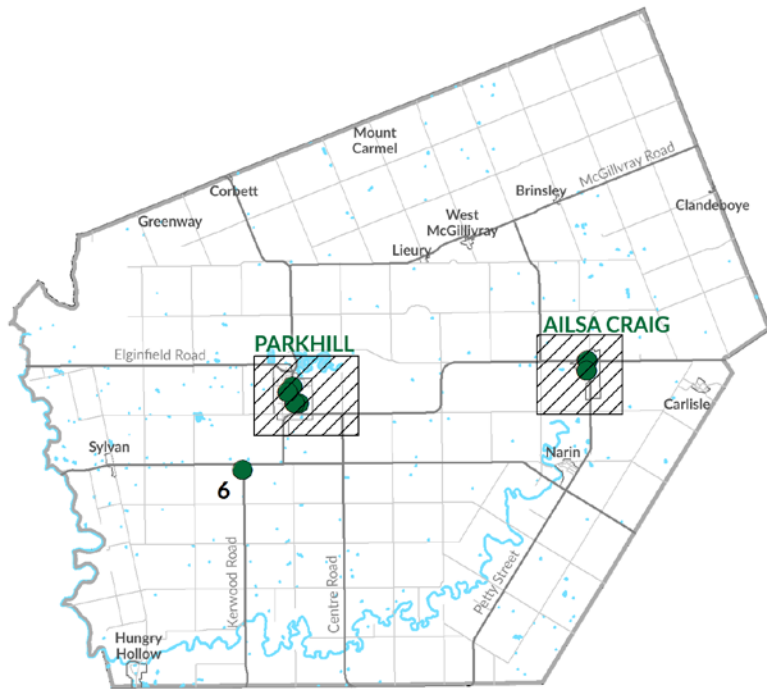
5.1 Summary of Municipal Recreation and Culture Facilities

Table 2 summarizes the recreation facilities that are provided by the Municipality. These spaces are complementary to the facilities that are available from non-municipal organizations and private providers found in North Middlesex.

Table 2: Summary of Recreation Facilities

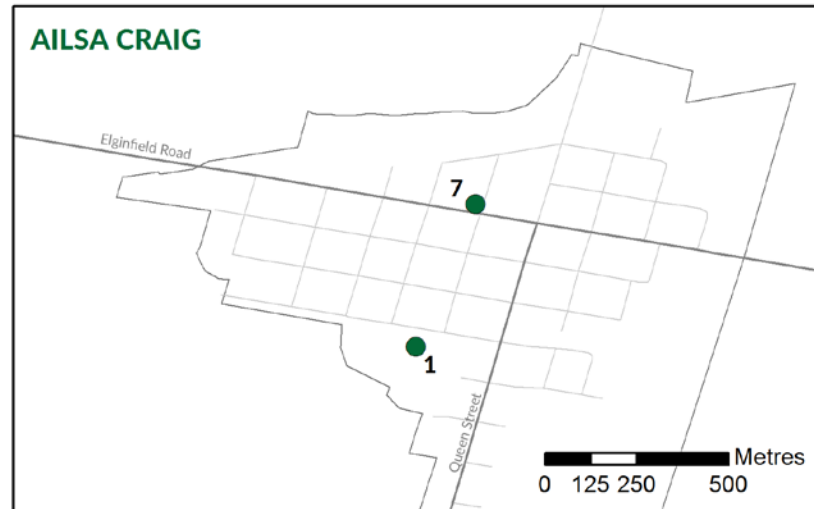
Facility	Supply	Location
Ice Pads	1	North Middlesex Arena & YMCA Fitness Centre
Fitness Spaces	1	North Middlesex Arena & YMCA Fitness Centre
Community Halls and Meeting Spaces	8	Ailsa Craig Recreation Centre (2), North Middlesex Arena & YMCA Fitness Centre, North Middlesex Community Centre, Parkhill Carnegie Gallery*, Parkhill Leisure Club*, West Williams Community Centre, Ye Olde Towne Hall* *Municipally-owned and operated by a third party
Dedicated Age Spaces	1	Parkhill Leisure Club
Soccer Fields	6	East Williams Optimist Park (2), Ken Vernon Park (3), Lions Community Park
Ball Diamonds (Lit)	5	Ailsa Craig Community Park, East Williams Optimist Park, Lieury Park, Parkhill Sports Park (2)
Tennis and Pickleball Courts	2	Parkhill Sports Park
Basketball and Ball Hockey Courts	1	Parkhill Sports Park
Aquatics	2	Ailsa Craig Community Park (splash pad), Parkhill Sports Park (splash pad)
Playgrounds	5	Ailsa Craig Community Park, Coronation Park, East Williams Optimist Park, Lieury Park, Parkhill Sports Park
Skate Parks	2	Ailsa Craig Community Park, Parkhill Sports Park
Outdoor Skating Rinks	1	East Williams Optimist Park
Sand Volleyball Courts	1	Parkhill Sports Park
Disc Golf Courses	1	Coronation Park
Community Gardens	1	North Middlesex Community Centre

Figure 12: Municipality of North Middlesex Recreation and Community Facilities



Recreation & Community Facilities

1. Ailsa Craig Recreation Centre
 2. North Middlesex Arena & YMCA Fitness Centre
 3. North Middlesex Community Centre
 4. Parkhill Carnegie Gallery *
 5. Parkhill Leisure Club *
 6. West Williams Community Centre
 7. Ye Olde Towne Hall *
- * Operated by a third-party organization



5.2 Summary of Regional Recreation Facilities

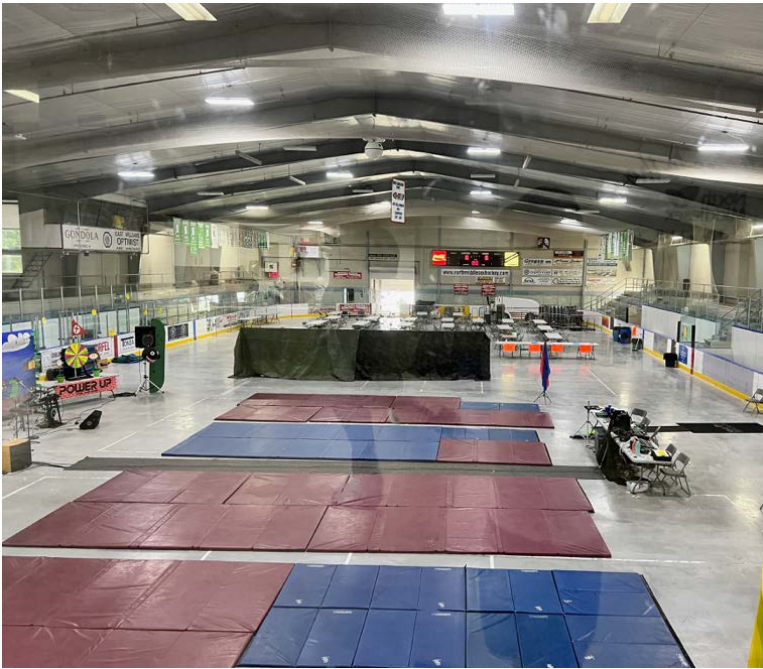
It is common for residents in urban / rural municipalities such as North Middlesex to use recreation facilities in adjacent municipalities as it may be more convenient for them travel to these communities due to proximity or to access services that are not provided in the Municipality. This section provides a high-level overview of the indoor and outdoor recreation facilities available in Adelaide Metcalfe, Lambton Shores, Lucan Biddulph, Middlesex Centre and Warwick (Table 3). The availability of the facilities in these communities was considered as a part of the needs assessment process.

Table 3: Summary of Regional Recreation Facilities

	North Middlesex	Adelaide Metcalfe	Lambton Shores	Lucan Biddulph	Middlesex Centre	Warwick
Ice Pads	1		2	1	3	1
Gymnasiums			2		3	1
Fitness Centres	1		1		1	
Indoor Walking Tracks			1		1	1
Multi-Purpose Spaces	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dedicated Age Spaces	1			1	1	
Outdoor Pools				1		
Splash Pads	2		4	1	3	1
Soccer Fields	6		8	6	12	4
Ball Diamonds	5	2	6	5	12	3
Playgrounds	5	1	18	4	12	3
Tennis/Pickleball Courts	2	1	6	2	11	2
Basketball Courts	1	1	1	1	5	1
Skate Parks/BMX Parks	2		3	1	2	1
Sand Volleyball Courts	1		1		2	
Outdoor Tracks						1
Outdoor Skating Rinks	1	1				
Beaches			1			
Marinas			2			
Community Gardens	1			1		
Off-Leash Dog Parks				1	2	
Ball Hockey Rinks					1	
Disc Golf Courses	1					

5.3 Ice Pads

The Municipality provides one ice pad (180' by 80') at the North Middlesex Arena & YMCA Fitness Centre in Parkhill. Originally constructed in 1972, the arena has undergone various enhancements in the 1990s and 2000s. The ice pad is supported by seating for more than 600 spectators, five change rooms, one referee room, pro shop and concession.



North Middlesex's arena is used by a number of organizations, including the North Middlesex & District Minor Hockey Association, Parkhill Silver Blades Skating Club, North Middlesex Stars (Junior C Team), Senior Girls Hockey, and men's league, which collectively have 410 players; 280 participants are youth players.

Ice sports such as hockey and figure skating have long been considered a cornerstone of Canadian pastime activity. Recent data from Hockey Canada, however, indicates that participation is steadily declining. The organization reported that there were nearly 210,000 affiliated minor players in Ontario for the 2019/20 season, which was a 16% decline from the peak during the 2008/09 season.² This can be linked to several factors such as the high cost of participation, safety concerns, competing interests, aging populations, and competition from leagues/organizations that are not sanctioned by Hockey Canada. Skate Canada reports that participation rates increased marginally by 2% between 2014 and 2020.³

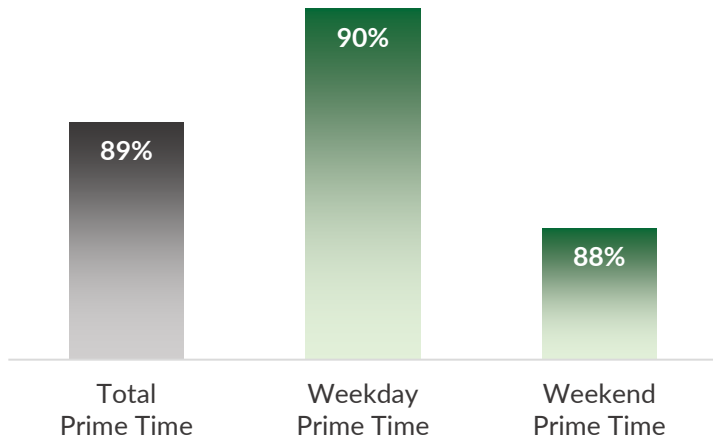
During the 2020/2021 ice season, many organizations were negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and in some cases, were not able to offer regular programming. As a result, participation levels are generally lower compared to historical trends, which is expected to continue over the short term. There is also a concern that some participants will not continue as regular league play resumes. Discussions with local arena users identified that some participants have left to join other organizations in larger communities that may be more competitive. Groups also identified that they have been able to attract some new participants by keeping their registration rates affordable.

² Hockey Canada Annual General Meeting Reports.

³ Skate Canada Annual General Meeting Reports.

The arena is well used during a typical ice season. Schedule data provided by Municipality staff identified that the arena is used throughout the week and is achieving an overall usage rate of 89% (90% during the weekday and 88% during the weekend) (Figure 13). This is indicative of an arena system that is operating nearly full capacity. The majority of unused ice time is available during the late evenings after 10:00 pm or early on the weekends at 7:00 am.

Figure 13: Weekly Prime Time Arena Utilization, 2019



Note: Prime time hours are defined as 5:00 pm to 11:00 pm during the weekday and 7:00 am to 11:00 pm during the weekend.

During the non-ice season, the arena floor pad has limited use, including summer programming delivered by community partners such as the YMCA and Grace Bible Chapel, Parkhill Fall Fair, and other rentals. The Municipality and its partners have previously explored enhancing the use of the arena floor pad, such as offering pickleball activities, although participants generally preferred to play outside during the warmer weather.

North Middlesex’s aging population, along with declining ice sport participation trends being experienced across the Province, may reduce pressures being placed on the Municipality’s arena. While the Municipality’s population is expected to increase during the planning period, including attracting new young families, the level of growth anticipated is not expected to warrant the need for a second ice pad, particularly given that trends have illustrated that there is a strong demand for a variety of recreation interests that are less focused on ice activities.

The recommended strategy going forward is to focus on strategies to optimize the use of the existing arena to fill available ice time such as encouraging the use of morning weekday periods that are generally underutilized. Engaging schools to utilize daytime ice is also encouraged. Additionally, consideration should be given to displaying arena usage schedules online for residents to view available ice time in real time to bring awareness to the availability of last-minute ice.

As a long-term strategy, the Municipality will need to evaluate the future of the arena. Arena enhancements were undertaken in the 1990s and 2000s and over the next ten years, the Municipality’s long-range capital forecast identifies approximately \$1,700,000 in arena-related upgrades to replace aging mechanical equipment and rink boards. The arena structure remains original and is approximately 50 years old. Pre-engineered shell structures such as the arena generally has a lifecycle of 70 years. The Municipality recently explored undertaking additional enhancements to the arena to increase the number of change rooms and undertake accessibility enhancements, although this has not yet occurred. Consultation with arena users would welcome these enhancements together with other improvements that were mentioned, including upgrading spectator areas and access to dry-land training space for warmups. It was mentioned that groups may use the Goal Post Hall, although it is not always available.

While the Municipality may continue to reinvest in the existing arena, there is merit to begin long-term planning for its replacement, either through a major redevelopment in its existing location or at another site. Although redevelopment or replacement is not expected to be required until beyond the planning period (2031+), initiating the process now will prepare the Municipality to respond accordingly and minimize unforeseen circumstances.

Careful consideration will need to be given to decisions related to redeveloping the arena (and potentially other facility components) at the existing site as the Municipality has explored in the past or new construction at an alternative site. For example, the existing ice pad is undersized compared to modern standards, which would not be enlarged through redevelopment due to existing building and site constraints; the current size of the site may also limit opportunities to add multi-purpose space to address community program needs.

By contrast, the development of an arena at a new site would provide an opportunity to co-locate an ice pad as part of a multi-use recreation facility that achieves efficiencies and benefits in construction, operations and programming, and would create a recreation hub for residents and visitors. An arena at a new location would allow the Municipality to design an arena with an appropriately sized ice pad with modern amenities such as large change rooms, and dry-land training space. A new facility would also provide an opportunity to incorporate other spaces such as multi-purpose program rooms for community, recreation, and arts and cultural activities, as well as a gymnasium and indoor walking track, which were requested facilities heard through the consultation process.

At the present time, it is recommended that the Municipality continue to contribute to its facility reserve fund (or establish a dedicated fund for arena replacement/new facility development), evaluate potential opportunities for site acquisition, explore external funding and partnerships, and appropriate business and financial planning. Implementing an arena surcharge to generate additional funding towards future arena enhancements (or arena development) should also be considered. Decisions to redevelop or relocate the Municipality's arena should be revisited during the next Master Plan period (e.g., beyond 2031) and include opportunities to enhance other facility areas or other community space needs.

Recommendations – Ice Pads

1. Explore strategies to bolster ice use such as increasing morning usage, engaging schools to utilize daytime rentals, promoting available ice time on the Municipality's website, and encouraging use of the arena floor for community rentals and programming during the spring/summer season.
2. Begin long-term planning for the eventual redevelopment or replacement of the arena, with consideration given to continuing to contribute to its facility reserve fund (or establish a dedicated fund for arena replacement/new facility development), establishing an arena surcharge, evaluating potential opportunities for site acquisition, exploring external funding and partnerships, appropriate business and financial planning; and other facility enhancements or community space needs. These considerations may be explored through a detailed feasibility study prior to further decision making.

5.4 Fitness Spaces

Fitness Centres and Active Living

The Municipality's primary fitness space is located at the North Middlesex Arena & YMCA Fitness Centre in Parkhill. This space includes amenities, including free weights, cardio equipment, spin bikes, exercise machines and more, as well as a studio for group fitness classes. Fitness activities may also be held in other areas of the facility such as a walk fit class that is held in the arena. Group fitness classes such as pickleball and yoga are also offered at the Ailsa Craig Recreation Centre.

Site visits to the North Middlesex Arena & YMCA Fitness Centre found that the fitness space is hidden from view as users visit the facility given that it is located on the second floor and accessible by a stairway or elevator. The group fitness space is also undersized to accommodate large classes. The Municipality had explored opportunities to expand the group fitness space as part of exploring expansion of the arena, although this has not yet been undertaken.

Physical fitness and wellness are top of mind issues among many Canadians, resulting in a greater emphasis being placed on personal health. This has translated into increasing demand for fitness services, particularly active living programming centred on general health and wellness, weight-training, cardiovascular training and stretching activities.

While indoor fitness activities were disrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it has fostered a renewed interest and excitement on physical activity, although it is recognized that not everyone may be ready to participate in indoor fitness activities. The community survey found that half (50%) of the responding households have participated in fitness activities such as aerobics,

yoga, fitness or weight-training. Requests were made for enhanced access to active living studio space for group fitness activities as well as updating fitness centre equipment. More than two-thirds (67%) of respondents also supported investment in equipment-based fitness centres. 58% of respondents also supported investment in fitness studios.

The fitness space is a core component of the YMCA's service delivery model and as this partnership is expected to continue over the planning period, coupled with the fact that there are no other fitness centres in North Middlesex, the Municipality should continue to implement its current fitness provision model. While no new fitness centres are recommended, the Municipality should continue to encourage the use of its existing multi-purpose spaces to accommodate active living activities in Parkhill and Ailsa Craig, including the use of outdoor space.



Outdoor Fitness Equipment

Outdoor fitness equipment is a trend that has been gaining traction across Ontario to provide no-cost physical activity. The desire for outdoor, low-impact fitness activities has also been further heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic when indoor fitness services were temporarily closed. Requests for outdoor fitness opportunities were received through the consultation process; 45% of community survey respondents supported investment in these types of amenities.

Approaches for providing outdoor fitness equipment varies. Outdoor fitness equipment can be located along trails or consolidated at a single location at major parks, which allows for potential program opportunities and training. The use of natural terrain and landscaping can also be used for outdoor fitness.

While the Municipality does not provide any outdoor fitness equipment, there are opportunities to introduce these amenities in North Middlesex. Emphasis should be given to installations in high traffic areas such as at main parks, including Parkhill Sports Park and Ailsa Craig Lions Park. Subject to monitoring demand, other locations could also be considered at the discretion of staff including, but not limited to, Ailsa Craig Community Park, Coronation Park, East Williams Optimist Park, and Lieury Park.

Recommendations – Fitness Spaces

- Investigate strategic locations for outdoor fitness equipment at Parkhill Sports Park and Ailsa Craig Lions Park. Subject to demand, other locations may also be considered at the discretion of staff including, but not limited to, Ailsa Craig Community Park, Coronation Park, East Williams Optimist Park, and Lieury Park.

5.5 Gymnasiums

While the Municipality does not currently provide a gymnasium, active indoor programs and sports activities are held within existing community spaces such as the Ailsa Craig Recreation Centre. Activities may also be held on the arena floor at the North Middlesex Arena & YMCA Fitness Centre during the spring and summer, as well as the North Middlesex Community Centre, although access to the latter space for active recreation activities is limited given that the space was not designed for this purpose.

Gymnasiums facilitate a variety of indoor sport and recreation opportunities that require a hard-surface and large open space. Given the broad range of activities that can take place within gymnasiums, they are highly desirable community amenities. The consultation process yielded requests for gymnasium space. 61% of community survey respondents supported investment in this type of facility.

Gymnasiums are typically incorporated into the development of new community facilities as complemented spaces that can accommodate cross-programming opportunities. However, the development of municipal gymnasiums can be influenced by the degree of access to school space. The Municipality is currently in the process of exploring a Shared Use Agreement with the Municipality's local school boards to access school spaces in Parkhill, including gymnasiums. This approach is common in many municipalities and is particularly beneficial in communities that do not provide gymnasium space, such as North Middlesex.

Continuing to pursuing to formalize this agreement is the recommended approach to secure access to gymnasium space and other school spaces. Securing gymnasium access in Parkhill would complement the existing active indoor space at the Ailsa Craig Recreation Centre. Once implemented, the Municipality

should monitor its level of access to the gymnasium for community programs and rentals to inform future decisions to provide a municipally owned and operated gymnasium.

Recommendations – Gymnasiums

- Once a Shared Use Agreement with local school boards is in place, monitor the level of access to school gymnasiums to inform future decisions to provide a municipally owned and operated gymnasium.

5.6 Community Meeting Spaces

North Middlesex provides a number of community and arts spaces across the Municipality that are used for a variety of public uses. Four community halls are located at the Ailsa Craig Recreation Centre, North Middlesex Arena & YMCA Fitness Centre, North Middlesex Community Centre, and West Williams Community Centre. These spaces offer tables and chairs, audio and visual equipment, kitchen, and a bar, although the availability of amenities may vary by location. A meeting room is also available at the Ailsa Craig Recreation Centre. These spaces provide the public with flexible spaces that accommodate a range of uses, including weddings, banquets, family gatherings, birthday parties, meetings, programming, and more. The Municipality’s community meeting spaces are generally well used, particularly at the North Middlesex Arena & YMCA Fitness Centre, North Middlesex Community Centre and Ailsa Craig Recreation Centre.

The Municipality also owns three spaces that are operated by community organizations through lease agreements, including the Parkhill Leisure Club, Parkhill Carnegie Gallery, and the Ye Olde

Towne Hall. Each of these organizations provide a variety of community, recreation, and arts and cultural programs, activities and events within the spaces that they operate. The Parkhill Carnegie Gallery and Ye Olde Towne Hall is discussed further in 5.8. The types of uses for each of the Municipality’s spaces is highlighted in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of Community Halls and Meeting Spaces

Park Name	Types of Uses
Ailsa Craig Recreation Centre	Community events and programs, banquets and weddings, general rentals
North Middlesex Arena & YMCA Fitness Centre	Community events and programs, general rentals
North Middlesex Community Centre	Community events and programs, banquets and weddings, general rentals
West Williams Community Centre	General rentals, dance program
Parkhill Carnegie Gallery*	Arts exhibitions and classes, live performances
Parkhill Leisure Club*	Seniors’ activities
Ye Olde Towne Hall*	Dance classes, youth programs and camps, older adult and seniors’ activities, banquets, arts classes, general rentals, live performances

*Third-party operated.



The building is at an advanced stage of its life and no renovations or updates to the building are currently planned. It is expected that a substantial reinvestment would be required to update and modernize the West Williams Community Centre. Enhancements to this facility would not guarantee an increase in use given that the Municipality already has a number of indoor facilities that it currently operates or are operated by community groups.

Consultation with the community found that support for continuing to maintain the West Williams Community Centre is mixed. Some residents expressed the desire to continue to maintain this facility as residents feel that the facility can be used for a variety of rentals and events. It was noted that it is the location for the Canada Day celebration and that it provides the community with an affordable venue (compared to the Municipality's other facilities) in the rural area that can function as a community hub that has indoor and outdoor space, and ample parking. Other residents felt that it should not be kept within the Municipality's supply if it is underutilized and if the cost required to maintain or update this facility would be significant.

To determine if there is demonstrated demand to continue maintaining the West Williams Community Centre and justify future reinvestment, the Municipality should raise awareness and promote the availability of this facility to bolster use. Working with the community is encouraged to explore opportunities to improve the use of the facility, such as encouraging general rentals, hosting more special events, and other activities. Monitoring and tracking annual utilization is recommended to inform future decisions related to this facility, which may be re-visited through a mid-cycle review of this Master Plan (2027/2028). The Municipality is also encouraged to evaluate the cost required to update and modernize the West Williams Community Centre to guide decision making. Exploring potential community partnerships with an organization to assume operating responsibilities of this facility is also encouraged.

Site visits to the Municipality's community spaces found that the Ailsa Craig Recreation Centre, North Middlesex Arena & YMCA Fitness Centre and North Middlesex Community Centre are generally in good condition. The Municipality's other facilities are older and as a result, various facility constraints were observed.

The West Williams Community Centre was originally constructed in 1959 as a school before the Municipality acquired the site in 1975. A building condition assessment undertaken in 2021 rated the building as 'fair' condition, meaning that it is showing signs of deterioration and significant wear and tear. The building also does not meet current accessibility standards, particularly with respect to the kitchen and washrooms. The building receives limited use, including a dance program, general rentals such as family gatherings, and other uses by Parkhill Scouts. The site is also the location for the Municipality's annual Canada Day event.

Recommendations –Community Meeting Spaces

5. Promote the availability of community meeting spaces that can support a wide range of community recreational, cultural, and social activities.
6. To determine if there is demonstrated demand to maintain the West Williams Community Centre, raise awareness and promote this facility to bolster utilization, and work with the community to improve use of the facility, such as encouraging general rentals, hosting more special events, and other activities. Monitor and track annual usage of the facility and associated outdoor space and re-visit the decision to maintain this property during a mid-cycle review of this Master Plan. As part of this process, evaluate the cost require to update and modernize this facility to inform future decision making. The Municipality may also seek a community partner to operate this facility.

5.7 Dedicated Age Spaces

The Parkhill Leisure Club is the Municipality’s dedicated space for older adults and seniors. This facility is located at Coronation Park and features a large multi-purpose space, kitchen and washrooms, which can also be accessed from the outside to support park activities such as the splash pads. The building is owned by the Municipality and operated by the Friends of Leisure Club through a lease agreement. The group generally meets about two to three times a week and provides a range of traditional activities such as card games, dancing, bingo, darts, and social events, including hosting activities for the Ontario Senior Games. The Parkhill Leisure Club can also be rented for small meetings and social gatherings. The Ye Olde Towne Hall provides a range of activities for older adults and seniors.



There are no dedicated youth spaces in North Middlesex, although there are several other youth-serving organizations in the community that use municipal facilities and other public spaces such as schools to deliver recreation and cultural programs and events such as the YMCA, Ye Olde Towne Hall, Youth Unlimited, Grace Bible Church, Optimist Clubs, Scouts, and more. Many local service organizations also fundraise towards children and youth-oriented amenities found in the Municipality.

Dedicated space for key age groups such as youth, older adults and seniors provides a location that creates a sense of belonging where individuals can gather, participate in activities, share interest and socialize. Research has shown that these spaces function as safe places that offer positive reinforcement, while combating concerns surrounding mental and physical health, as well as social isolation.

The consultation process found that there was a desire for more recreational opportunities for youth, including the development of a youth hub that would provide local residents with a safe place to gather, as well as the desire for older adult programming. With the presence of the Parkhill Leisure Club and Friends of the Ye Olde Towne Hall, the older adult and senior community is well served with organized service providers, working to promote the programs and services that these organizations provide is recommended to ensure that residents are aware of their contributions to the community. Ensuring the long term success of these important organizations are vital given the important role and services they provide in the community.

There are currently limited opportunities to establish a dedicated youth space and recognizing the Municipality's large geography, it would be a challenge to identify a suitable location that would be equitable for youth as they are limited in their travel patterns. The recommended approach is to continue to accommodate youth through existing community spaces during key periods such as

during prime time periods (e.g., after school). Working in collaboration with the YMCA and other community service providers to expand youth-oriented activities (both drop-in and structured) is encouraged. Together with the development of new outdoor recreation opportunities geared towards youth that are identified in this Master Plan will address needs for this key age group during the planning period.

Recommendations – Dedicated Age Spaces

7. Promote the availability of recreation opportunities provided by the Parkhill Leisure Club and Ye Olde Towne Hall, YMCA, and other community service providers to meet the needs of youth, older adults, and seniors. Supporting these groups in providing and expanding drop-in and structured activities within community spaces is encouraged.

5.8 Arts and Cultural Spaces

North Middlesex residents have a wide variety of interests, including a heightened need for meaningful arts and cultural experiences. There is a desire from the community to raise the profile of arts and culture in the community to provide a greater awareness to interests beyond traditional sports and recreation. The Municipality plays a key role in supporting arts and cultural organizations in North Middlesex and ensuring that appropriate space is available to allow groups to grow and be successful.

North Middlesex residents benefit from existing local arts and cultural spaces in the Municipality, as well as in adjacent municipalities. Local and regional arts and cultural spaces include art centres and galleries, theatres, farmers' markets, historical

landmarks, libraries, private sector artisans and craftspeople, and more, many of which are within driving distance of the Municipality. Preserving and promoting architectural and cultural heritage is a key strategy in the Municipality's Community & Corporate Strategic Plan. With this in mind, the Municipality should continue to work with local groups to ensure long term success by raising community awareness to ensure the public is aware of what spaces, programs and services they offer, help plan and develop future opportunities, and provide other needed supports.

The following highlights some of the Municipality's key arts and cultural spaces and the activities available at each location. Recommendations related to programming, special events, and collaboration with community groups in Section 7.0. In addition to the spaces provided below, there are also private arts and cultural operators in the Municipality such as artisan businesses and music instructors.

Parkhill and McGillivray Cenotaph

There are two cenotaphs in North Middlesex. The Parkhill Cenotaph was constructed at Coronation Park in 1928 to memorialize residents from World War I and II, as well as the Korean Wars. The McGillivray Cenotaph is located at Lieury Park dedicated to local residents from World War I. The Municipality and Ailsa Craig and Parkhill Legions celebrate these veterans annually on Remembrance Day with a wreath laying at both cenotaph locations and ceremonies are held at Ailsa Craig Legion Hall and the North Middlesex High School in Parkhill.

Parkhill Carnegie Gallery

The Parkhill Carnegie Gallery was one of the 125 Carnegie public libraries that was constructed in Ontario in the early 1900s. Owned by the Municipality, the facility is operated by Friends of Parkhill Carnegie Library under an agreement until 2028. The space is used as an arts and cultural space for concerts, art gallery displays and shows, and arts and crafts programs.



Similar to the West Williams Community Centre, the Parkhill Carnegie Gallery is at an advanced stage of its life. The 2021 building condition assessment reported that the Parkhill Carnegie Gallery is in 'fair' condition and reinvestment is needed to maintain the facility, including accessibility enhancements and short-term capital needs for electrical, HVAC, plumbing, and interior finishing.

The Municipality recently worked with Friends of Parkhill Carnegie Library to apply for grant funding to undertake accessible washroom renovations through the Ontario Trillium Foundation. While a decision on the application is currently pending, the

Municipality is encouraged to monitor the condition of the facility and evaluate the cost required to update and modernize the Parkhill Carnegie Gallery to guide future decisions.

Ye Olde Towne Hall

The Ye Olde Towne Hall was constructed in the early 1900s as a replacement to Ailsa Craig’s original town hall. The building is operated by a third-party organization that is responsible for operations, events, and program delivery. The organization has found success in operating its programs and events, as well as seeking grants and fundraising to support facility improvements.



The Municipality’s 2021 building condition assessment reported that the Ye Olde Towne Hall is in ‘good’ condition with reinvestment needs for the exterior, electrical, and HVAC. Renovations that have been completed include an elevator, replacing mechanical equipment and cosmetic repairs. The Municipality recently worked with the group to apply for grant funding for accessible washroom renovations through the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Creating a capital reinvestment plan is recommended to understand the cost required to continue to maintain this facility to guide future decisions.

Public Art and Heritage Features

Incorporating public art and heritage features in parks and facilities is a growing trend to recognize artist and craftspeople, Indigenous Peoples, and organizations that are dedicated to promoting and preserving local history. This includes identifying prominent or meaningful locations for public art installations, educational signage recognizing cultural heritage features, and the provision of permanent or temporary infrastructure to support special events, festivals and farmers’ markets such as stages, servicing (electricity, water, etc.), fencing, and more.

Examples of arts and cultural features are found within the Municipality, including the quilt blocks at Lions Community Park in Ailsa Craig. As part of Canada’s Barn Quilt Trail, each barn quilt block represents a logo of a country featured from the Ailsa Craig Quilt and Fibre Arts Festival. Historical murals, photographs, and arts and crafts are found elsewhere throughout the Municipality, including at the Parkhill Carnegie Gallery, Ye Olde Towne Hall, West Williams Community Centre, and the main streets of Parkhill and Ailsa Craig.

Continuing to explore strategic locations to incorporate and display public art within the Municipality’s parks and facilities is recommended to recognize North Middlesex’s rich history and talented residents. To guide this process, there may be value in establishing a Public Art Policy to provide guidance on evaluating and approving public art installations in the community, with direction given to developing, acquiring, maintaining, and funding public art. The creation of a Public Art Reserve to support this initiative is also encouraged, as well as working with the arts and cultural community and other stakeholders to help guide this process.



Middlesex County Library

The Middlesex County Library operates two library branches in North Middlesex. Each location offers a selection of reading material for all ages, as well as computers, meeting spaces, and in-person and online community resources. The Parkhill library branch also has a community room that can be booked by the public. The Middlesex County Library provides a variety of community programs at the Parkhill and Ailsa Craig location including, story time, readapalooza, arts and crafts, and more. Services include research resources, local history and genealogy, family and health support, and other outreach programs. In addition, there is a free little library at the Ailsa Craig Lions Park.

North Middlesex Historical Society

The North Middlesex Historical Society is a group of volunteers who are dedicated to preserving the local history and heritage for future generations. The organization owns and operates two locations in Ailsa Craig which are known as the Donald Hughes Annex Museum and the Marg & Leroy Walker Research Room. Both locations were former churches that now house the group’s archives, including historical documents, pictures, scrapbooks, and other resources about the Municipality’s past. Artifacts are on display at the Donald Hughes Annex Museum location and are changed on a regular basis so visitors are encouraged to visit often.

Recommendations – Arts and Cultural Spaces

8. Engage local arts and cultural groups to ensure long-term success by raising community awareness to ensure the public is aware of what spaces, programs and services they offer, help plan and develop future opportunities, and provide other needed supports.

Recommendations – Arts and Cultural Spaces

9. Monitor the condition of the Parkhill Gallery and the Ye Olde Towne Hall and create a capital reinvestment plan to understand the costs required to maintain these facilities to guide future decisions. Working with groups to secure a range of funding sources (e.g., grants, fundraising, etc.) for facility enhancements is encouraged.
10. Work with the arts and culture community to examine opportunities to incorporate public art and local history within the Municipality's parks and facilities. A Public Art Policy should be created to establish an evaluation and approval process, as well as direction on developing, acquiring, maintaining and funding public art. Establishing a Public Art Reserve should also be created.

Williams Optimist Park by the North Middlesex Minor Soccer Association. The group books three hours a week at this location on Saturday mornings from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm. All other soccer fields in North Middlesex are not used for organized play by the soccer group and are available for casual use such as pickup games or other outdoor recreation activities that require a large open space.

As a best practice, natural grass sports fields typically have the capacity to support use up to six nights per week, with one day allocated to field resting to support grass regeneration. Locally, the Municipality's soccer organization uses the East Williams Optimist Park one morning per week, which suggest that there is ample capacity within the field supply to accommodate additional usage. This current level of use suggests that the supply is adequate to accommodate increased participation, which is expected to occur to a certain degree over the next 10 years given that future population growth is expected to draw young families with children and youth.

With this in mind, no additional soccer fields are recommended over the planning period. The recommended strategy is to ensure that the Municipality's existing field supply is maintained at a level that meet the needs of users, which may include but not be limited to, enhancing field condition, reconfiguring fields that may require removal of the surplus ball diamond, and other strategies to be determined by the Municipality. Exploring opportunities to increase field utilization is also encouraged, including seeking new field users and sports such as rugby or non-sports related community uses (which was noted during the consultation phase). Discussions with field users and community organizations users should be involved as part of this process.

5.9 Soccer Fields

North Middlesex provides six soccer fields at Ken Vernon Park (3), East Williams Optimist Park (2), and Lions Community Park (1), which can be partitioned into smaller fields. Soccer fields are also located at school sites. Recognizing that soccer fields can be partitioned into half and quarter fields to accommodate programming needs, the actual field supply is greater.

Soccer experienced enormous growth in participation and popularity in the 1990s when it overtook baseball and hockey as the most popular organized sport among Canadian youth. Combined with its worldwide appeal, high fitness quotient and relatively low-cost to participate.

The Municipality's soccer fields generally have low to no utilization. All organized soccer activities are played at the East

Recommendations – Soccer Fields

11. In consultation with field users and community organizations, identify and prioritize opportunities to enhance the use of soccer fields at East Williams Optimist Park, which may include but not be limited to, field condition, field reconfiguration (may require removal of the surplus ball diamond) and other strategies to be determined by the Municipality.
12. Explore opportunities to increase field utilization such as seeking new field users and sports such as rugby or non-sports related community uses.



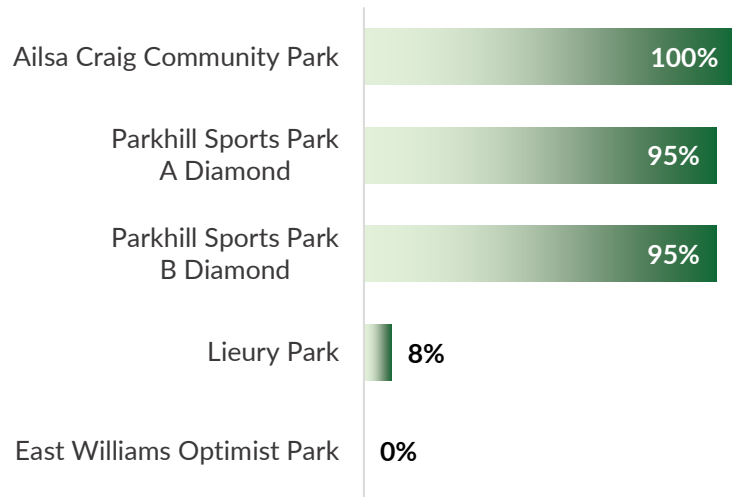
5.10 Ball Diamonds

There are five lit ball diamonds in North Middlesex. Two ball diamonds are located at Parkhill Sports Park and one diamond is located at each of the following: Ailsa Craig Community Park, East Williams Optimist Park and Lieury Park. To account for the fact that lit diamonds can accommodate extended play periods in the evening, an equivalency factor of 1.5 diamonds is applied to each location. With five lit diamonds in Municipality, North Middlesex is providing an adjusted supply of 7.5 unlit diamond equivalents. In addition, ball diamonds are also located at schools.

After a period of declining participation, interest in organized minor baseball (and its variations) has been experiencing a resurgence in recent years. While growth in the sport has been interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, Baseball Canada reported that the growing popularity of the sport is attributed to a greater focus on grassroots programs to encourage children and youth at a young age to participate in the sport, and a greater focus on skill development. The popularity of the Toronto Blue Jays is also a factor.

The Municipality's ball diamonds are used by the North Middlesex Minor Baseball Association and adult baseball, which have a combined membership of 472 players. Three of the Municipality's five ball diamonds are used regularly during the evenings between Monday and Friday. The ball diamond at Ailsa Craig Community Park is the most popular location, which is fully booked during the weekday evenings. The two ball diamonds at the Parkhill Sports Park are also nearly at full capacity during this time, while Lieury Park is used one evening per week. The diamond at East Williams Optimist Park is not used, although it is available to support casual play and open space uses (Figure 14). The Municipality's ball diamonds are only used during the week between Monday and Friday.

Figure 14: Ball Diamond Utilization, Prime Weekday Hours, 2019



A market-based service target of one ball diamond per 100 players is typically used to evaluate ball diamond needs as it takes into account demand factors, registration rates, population growth, playing standards, diamond utilization, trends. Applying this target to the Municipality’s membership rate suggests that there is ample capacity within the existing ball diamond system. This is confirmed based on the fact that the ball diamonds at Lieury Park and East Williams Optimist Park are generally not used regularly by the Municipality’s user groups.

While no net additions to the ball diamond supply are recommended during the planning period, opportunities exist to enhance existing locations while also alleviating pressures experienced in Ailsa Craig and Parkhill. Consultation with user groups and Municipality staff identified that there is a desire to enlarge the ball diamond at Ailsa Craig Community Park as it is generally sized for minor ball activities. As it is used by adult groups, it is common for balls to be hit beyond the playing boundaries that tends to disrupt the flow of play and create safety concerns for other park users. Expanding the ball diamond at the existing location is limited given that the park is heavily programmed.

There are also no current options to relocate the ball diamond to another park in Ailsa Craig, recognizing that Lions Community Park primarily functions as a passive park. An opportunity may exist to relocate the ball diamond to a future park in Ailsa Craig. While no new parkland is expected to be received as part of current subdivision development, the Municipality should explore new park opportunities as a long-term goal, to replace the existing Ailsa Craig diamond with an adult-size diamond. This would also present an opportunity to construct a second diamond at the future site. This strategy would achieve the benefits of multi-diamond sites with respect to enhanced programming and usage opportunities, tournaments, operations and maintenance, and grow local organizations, while alleviating ball diamond pressure at Ailsa Craig



Community Park to accommodate other outdoor recreation needs that are in demand. Should a second ball diamond be constructed, the Municipality should evaluate opportunities to decommission or re-purpose one of its surplus diamonds to ensure that there is no net increase in the ball diamond supply.

During this planning period, the Municipality should explore potential opportunities to acquire a site in Ailsa Craig large enough to accommodate two adult-size ball diamonds with supporting amenities such as parking, pavilion, seating and lighting. Potential landowners and the development community may be engaged as part of this process. As an alternative option, Ken Vernon Park is an underutilized park in the rural area and this Master Plan recommends working with the community to enhance the use of the park and indoor facility. This site may be suitable for accommodating a new ball diamond with supporting amenities with room to add a second diamond if needed, although removal of West Williams Community Centre would likely be required. While it is recognized that this park does not immediately serve the Ailsa Craig community as it is located within a 10 minute drive on the west side of North Middlesex, it is a property that the Municipality already owns and thus it is worth considering further in consultation with ball diamond users and the broader public.

The Municipality should continue to work with ball diamond organizations to manage the use of Ailsa Craig Community Park in the interim, which may include investigating the use of safety netting and directing use to the Lieury Park ball diamond. Ball diamond use during the weekends should also be encouraged to accommodate future demand.

The ball diamond at East Williams Optimist Park is primarily available for casual, neighbourhood-level play. There may be opportunities to direct future usage to this location although it may not be conducive to regular use by user groups. Historically, this diamond was used by one group but they have since relocated

to the Ailsa Craig diamond, which offers a better playing experience. East Williams Optimist Park lacks amenities that are offered at other location. For example, it does not have outfield fencing as the outfield is shared with the soccer fields, which is the primary location for local organized play in the Municipality. This diamond may be suitable for organized play for younger age groups, although if the demand does not exist, this location could be a potential candidate for repurposing to support other park uses, such as a small scale splash pad, or tennis and pickleball courts, skate zone, or accommodating future soccer field needs.

The ball diamonds at the Parkhill Sports Park are very well used throughout the week with limited capacity to accommodate additional use. Similar to the ball diamond at Ailsa Craig Community Park, available capacity exists to accommodate additional demand during the weekends.

Emphasis should be placed on enhancing the user experience at the Parkhill Sports Park. Through the consultation process, suggested enhancements expressed by sports groups and staff include, but are not limited to, renewal of the washrooms and pavilion (to be combined to one structure and paved pathways). It is also recognized that the Municipality has identified backstop fencing renewal in its long-range capital forecast. Regular discussions with ball diamond users is recommended to identify, prioritize, and reconfirm opportunities for ball diamond enhancement.

Recommendations – Ball Diamonds

13. Explore opportunities to establish a new park in Ailsa Craig to relocate the ball diamond at Ailsa Craig Community Park, potentially with landowners and the development community. The preferred site should be large enough to accommodate two lit, adult-size ball diamonds with

Recommendations – Ball Diamonds

supporting features, including parking, pavilion, and other outdoor recreation amenities. Ken Vernon Park may be an alternative option. Consultation with ball user groups and the broader public is recommended to guide decision making.

14. Regularly engage ball diamond organizations to identify, prioritize enhancements to the existing supply of diamonds, including but not limited to, encouraging weekend usage and use of the Lieury ball diamond, safety netting, pathway development, redevelopment of the pavilion and washrooms at the Parkhill Sports Park, and more.

5.11 Tennis and Pickleball Courts

Parkhill Sports Park contains two lit hard surface courts that are lined for tennis and pickleball activities. Visual observations revealed that these courts appeared to be in good condition given that the playing surface was resurfaced in 2020.

Across the Province, recreation trends point towards a resurgence in the popularity of tennis as a result the international success of Canadian professionals, a growing segment of baby boomers that are returning or taking up the sport, and a greater emphasis on grassroots programming to attract younger players.

A growing segment of older adults seeking low impact leisure activities are also generating strong interest in pickleball. Recognized as one of the fastest growing sports in Canada, pickleball is a low-intensity sport that can be played on a modified tennis court (pickleball courts are smaller in size with a lower net

height). The popularity of pickleball continues to spread across Ontario and its prominence is further bolstered by being played at the Ontario Senior Games. Through the Master Plan consultation process, requests have been made for more opportunities to play outdoor pickleball, as well as tennis, particularly in Ailsa Craig.

The Municipality’s two tennis courts achieves a service level of one per 3,300 residents, which is higher compared to industry standards that range between one court per 4,000 to 5,000 residents. However, the Municipality’s large geography must also be considered. While tennis court needs are met in Parkhill, Ailsa Craig is a gap where there are currently no tennis courts.



Establishing tennis courts in Ailsa Craig should be pursued. Ailsa Craig Community Park would be an ideal location given the presence of other active outdoor recreation amenities, although there is currently insufficient space to accommodate tennis courts. This Master Plan recommends the relocation of the ball

diamond at this park as a long-term goal, which may alleviate space to accommodate new tennis courts. Similar to the courts at the Parkhill Sports Park, pickleball playing lines should also be included in the design of new tennis courts to ensure that they are multi-use to maximize use.

Additional locations may also be considered to strengthen the geographic distribution of tennis and pickleball courts and playing opportunities, particularly in the rural area. Lieury Park and East Williams Optimist Park are both suitable locations for tennis and pickleball courts, although there is currently no evidence to suggest that there is a demand for these types of amenities at each location. The Municipality should confirm these needs through targeted consultation over the course of the Master Plan with the community surrounding each park.

Recommendations – Tennis and Pickleball Courts

15. Construct two courts for tennis and pickleball at Ailsa Craig Community Park, contingent upon re-locating the existing ball diamond to another location.
16. Undertake targeted consultation with residents within proximity to Lieury Park and East Williams Optimist Park to evaluate the demand for outdoor tennis and pickleball courts.

Basketball and Ball Hockey Courts

There is one court lined for basketball and ball hockey activities at the Parkhill Sports Park. Basketball courts can also be found at schools.

While these courts are primarily used for basketball – and ball hockey to a lesser extent – they are multi-purpose pads that can accommodate a variety of other informal and unstructured activities such as outdoor skating and basic wheeled action sports practise.

Generally speaking, basketball continues to be a popular pastime activity for youth and young adults in many communities due to its national appeal and the popularity of the Toronto Raptors. As a result, these courts tend to be desirable among this age group. Basketball is relatively affordable compared to other sports, easy to learn, and can be played individually or in small groups. Requests for basketball courts were received through the Master Plan consultation process. More than half (56%) of community survey respondents also supported the public investment in constructing new or enhancing existing basketball courts.

Municipalities target a service level of one basketball court per 800 youth between the ages of 10 and 19. Providing a higher level of service is the preferred in North Middlesex given its large spatial geography and the fact that basketball courts are neighbourhood-level amenities and its primary user base (youth) is limited in the distance that they can travel. The consultation process also found that satisfaction in youth recreation opportunities is low.

To strengthen public access and the geographic distribution, a basketball court should be located at Ailsa Craig Community Park. Site observations suggests that there may be sufficient space adjacent to the skateboard park, which is a complementary facility

that is used by the same target market, although alternative locations may also be considered subject to relocating the existing ball diamond. Outdoor basketball courts currently exist at schools in the rural area, which are expected to satisfy needs.

Enhancements to the existing outdoor basketball court at the Parkhill Sports Park are also recommended. Site visits found that while the court surface was in good condition (the surface was replaced in 2020), the basketball nets were in poor condition. It is recommended that the Municipality install higher quality basketball nets and posts that are more robust to withstand community use. New and redeveloped basketball courts should be designed to be multi-use to accommodate other hard surface sports and activities such as ball hockey.

Recommendations – Basketball and Ball Hockey Courts

17. Undertake enhancements to the Parkhill Sports Park basketball court to renew the basketball hoops and posts with more robust fixtures to withstand community use. Consideration should be given to posts with ball hockey nets to support multi-use activities.
18. Construct a multi-use court for basketball and ball hockey at Ailsa Craig Community Park, potentially adjacent to the skateboard park. Alternative locations within the park may also be considered subject to relocating the existing ball diamond to another site.

5.12 Aquatics

Indoor and Outdoor Swimming Pools

While the Municipality does not offer an indoor or outdoor pool, they are popular amenities that can be used by people at all life stages. There are lifelong benefits associated with swimming and as a result, they tend to be highly sought-after public amenities. Through the consultation process, public requests were made for a swimming pool in North Middlesex; two-thirds (67%) of community survey respondents supported investment in an outdoor swimming pool, which was the seventh highest priority.

Pools are commonly found in communities with larger populations to support community programming and the financial investment associated with these types of amenities. Provincially, indoor pools are provided at a rate of one per 30,000 to 50,000 residents. Smaller municipalities may also provide indoor swimming pools, but they must rely on both primary (resident) and secondary (non-resident) markets.

Outdoor pools may be seen as a more viable option compared to indoor pools to address requests for swimming, particularly in smaller municipalities, although annual operating deficits may reach up to \$200,000 or more. Outdoor pools were generally constructed during the 1950s and 1980s and as they have reached the end of their lifecycle, some municipalities have reinvested in these amenities. Other municipalities have decommissioned their outdoor pools or re-purposed them to splash pads, which are more cost-effective and operationally efficient to provide.

A regional scan revealed that residents are located within driving distance of existing outdoors, including the Lucan Community Pool (15-to-20-minute drive) and the Fairgrounds Aquatic Park in

Strathroy (25-minute drive). Residents are also within a 30-minute drive to Grand Bend Beach.

It is also worth noting that many municipalities that provide indoor and outdoor pools are challenged with finding and retaining qualified staff, particularly in smaller communities, as individuals must make continued efforts and investment in aquatic training. There are examples of municipalities that have been required to pause programming due to the absence of available or sufficient aquatic staff, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic and some people have not kept up with training and may not return.

Due to the above considerations, the provision of an outdoor pool as a new level of service is not recommended. The Municipality should continue to promote the use of its local splash pads and regional outdoor pools.

Splash Pads

There are two splash pads in North Middlesex at Ailsa Craig Community Park and Coronation Park (Parkhill), which feature an array of spray features and are supported by washroom buildings, shade and seating. Both locations recently underwent upgrades in 2019 (Ailsa Craig) and 2021 (Parkhill).

Splash pads are popular among young families seeking affordable and accessible opportunities to cool down on a hot summer day. They have been proven to be more cost effective than outdoor pools and wading pools as they are less expensive to construct and do not require regular staffing (although monitoring filtration equipment may be required). Splash pads also offer flexibility in design as they can be provided in a range of stimulating features to enhance the aquatic experience for users of all ages.



The popularity of splash pads is felt locally in North Middlesex as the Municipality’s two locations are well used during the warmer season. The Master Plan community survey found that 62% of respondents have used the splash pads, which was identified as the fourth most popular activity. Requested for new splash pads were also made and 73% of survey respondents supported investment in building new or enhancing existing locations.

It is common for small urban and rural municipalities such as North Middlesex to provide one splash pad in each of its primary settlement areas, which is currently the case in Parkhill and Ailsa Craig. An opportunity may also exist to establish a smaller-scale splash pad at East Williams Optimist Park in Nairn to provide community-based aquatic activities in this area of the Municipality. East Williams Optimist Park is viewed as a community-level park and is the primary outdoor gathering space in Nain. Based on high level site observations, there is space at this park to accommodate a splash pad; the park also features on-site washrooms, pavilion,

water access and parking, which are key amenities to consider when developing splash pads. A splash pad would also complement the playground at this park, which is aging and due for replacement, creating an excellent opportunity for a joint development project. Opportunities may exist to engage the community and local organizations to fundraise, design and construct a splash pad at East Williams Optimist Park.

Enhancing the use of the Municipality’s existing splash pad locations is also encouraged. This may include greater promotion to raise awareness of where they are located and ensuring that safe linkages are available to encourage walking, particularly to connect people from the future residential area in the southeast corner of Ailsa Craig to the splash pad at Ailsa Craig Community Park. Adding a shade structure to Coronation Park is also recommended (See Recommendation 37).

Recommendations – Aquatics

- 19. Construct a smaller scale splash pad East Williams Optimist Park. Consultation with the community and stakeholders is encouraged to fundraise, design and construct the splash pad. Timing may be coordinated with renewal of the playground at this park.
- 20. Enhance the use of splash pads through strategies including, but not limited to, promotion to raise awareness, establishing safe walking linkages, and providing supporting amenities such as a shade structure at Coronation Park.



5.13 Playgrounds

North Middlesex provides five playgrounds at Ailsa Craig Community Park, Coronation Park, East Williams Optimist Park, Lieury Park, and Parkhill Sports Park. The Municipality’s playgrounds come in a variety of designs, colours and themes that range from community-level play structures, including at Parkhill Sports Park to basic installations such as at Lieury Park.

Playgrounds are neighbourhood-level amenities that benefit early childhood development, foster cognitive development and social skills, and encourage physical activity. While traditional playground equipment generally consists of swings, slides and an array of climbing structures, modern play structures are designed to offer more creative and unique play experiences and often integrates accessible features.



Playgrounds are highly desirable amenities among families and they tend to be well used. The community survey reported that 60% of respondents have used a playground and three-quarters (75%) support public investment in playground renewal and development. Requests were also made throughout the consultation process for enhanced playground equipment, including updating equipment with inclusive features.

As a best practice, playgrounds should be provided within 800 metres of residential areas within settlement areas, without crossing major barrier such as County roads. Applying this service area to the Municipality's playgrounds revealed gap areas in Ailsa Craig, east of Queen Street and north of Elginfield Road. Minor gap areas are also found in Parkhill. Portions of these gaps in Parkhill are served by school playground, although it is recognized that these amenities do not offer the same level of access as municipally-owned playgrounds such as during school hours.

Future park development within these gap areas should consider new playground locations to serve new residents, particularly if it is the Municipality's goal to attract and/or retain young families with children, many of whom will be seeking walkable amenities such as playgrounds. While gap areas also exist in the Municipality's rural hamlets, population growth in these areas are limited and there are no viable locations for a playground due to the absence of parkland, although they should be considered if park acquisition and development opportunities become available.

Continuing to ensure that the Municipality's playgrounds meet the needs of users is encouraged. This will be achieved through regular inspections to ensure safety and to undertake timely replacement to renew aging play components. Play structures are inspected regularly on a weekly and annual basis and the Municipality targets regular lifecycle renewal after a 15 to 20-year period.

Site visits to the Municipality's parks suggests that the play structure at East Williams Optimist Park is due for replacement during this planning period. A community-level playground is recommended at this location to reflect the level of use that East Williams Optimist Park draws. Replacement of the playground at Coronation Park is also recommended. Additionally, the basic playground at Lieury Park may also benefit from replacement to provide an enhanced user experience.

In accordance with provincial legislation, all new playgrounds must incorporate inclusive features such as barrier-free play components, accessible or adult swings, and a firm and stable surface. The Municipality's playgrounds are partially accessible as they feature engineered woodchip surfaces. New and redevelopment playgrounds should offer barrier-free components such as ramps and lower play features. Higher order playgrounds at Community Park locations (e.g., such as at East Williams Optimist Park) should consider unique features to create an enhanced playing experience and regional draw, such as the use of

musical instruments, games using a mobile application, rubberized surface, etc.). Natural and adventure play elements could also be considered to create more daring opportunities and include the use of ropes, boulders, rocks, and logs. Ensuring that designated pathways that connect users to playgrounds is also encouraged.

Recommendations – Playgrounds

- 21. Provide playgrounds within 800 metres of residents within settlement areas, unobstructed by physical barriers. On this basis, address playground gaps on the east side and north side of Ailsa Craig through future park development, as opportunities become available.
- 22. Replace the East Williams Optimist Park playground with a community-level playground.
- 23. Replace the Coronation Park playground with a community-level playground.
- 24. Replace the basic playground at Lieury Park.
- 25. New and redeveloped playgrounds should be designed to address accessibility requirements and such as firm and stable surfaces, barrier-free play components, accessible and/or adult swing, and pathways. Other unique features should be considered including, but not limited to musical instruments, mobile gaming applications, natural and adventure play components, etc. Thematic playground designs and unique features should also be considered to create enhanced play experiences.



5.14 Skate Parks

The Municipality provides two skate parks at Ailsa Craig Community Park and Parkhill Sports Park. Both locations feature a concrete pad with a variety of ramps and rails. The skate park at the Parkhill Sports Park is the more popular location given its proximity to schools and other amenities at this park that appeal to the same age group. While the Ailsa Craig Community Park location is also well used, its location abutting the ball diamond outfield can cause compatibility issues particularly when the ball diamond is in use by adult groups.

Research has found that skate activities such as skateboarding, scootering, roller blading and BMX biking and other wheeled action sports have been increasing in popularity as more youth and young adults gravitate towards more unstructured, self-scheduled,

Recommendations – Skate Parks

- 26. Construct a small-scale skate zone at East Williams Optimist Park.
- 27. Undertake renewal of the skateboard park at Ailsa Craig Community Park, including resurfacing (or repairs), and adding skate components and amenities (e.g., seating), at a minimum.

5.15 Off-Leash Dog Park

With the support of grant funding, the Municipality is currently in the process of establishing an off-leash dog park, which is planned to be located at the Lions Community Park in Ailsa Craig. In honor of a longstanding Lions Club member who played a key role in assisting with park maintenance for over a decade, the site will be known as the Dennett Dog Park. General operations of the dog park are planned to be undertaken by the Ailsa Craig Village Association, which also played a key role in fundraising for the project. The proposed dog park is planned to have three sections, including individual areas for large and small dogs and a general area, as well as supporting amenities such as water and seating, in addition to mature trees that are already available to provide shade.

While municipal by-laws regulate the use of leashes, off-leash dog parks provide pet owners with the opportunity to exercise and socialize their dogs in a controlled area. Dog parks are also beneficial for residents in the community as they encourage gatherings between residents and help those living in isolation.

and low-cost activities. Skate parks have been found to function as a positive space for users to gather and socialize with others who share common interests, while having a safe location to engage in physical activity. In particular, the popularity of skateboarding was further bolstered as a mainstream activity on an internationally level following its introduction in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

It is important to recognize the Municipality’s spatial geography and the fact that youth and young adults are limited in the distance that they can travel. While Parkhill and Ailsa Craig is served with a skateboard park, Nairn is viewed as a gap area. An opportunity exists to incorporate a small-scale skate zone (e.g., comparably sized to the Ailsa Craig location or smaller) to serve local youth and young adults in an introductory manner. Providing introductory-level skate zones appeal to younger audiences and novice-level users to practice fundamental skills prior to transitioning to larger locations.

Enhancing existing skateboard parks is also recommended. Site visits to the location at Ailsa Craig Community Park suggests that it could benefit from resurfacing (or repairs) and adding skate components and amenities (e.g., seating), at a minimum.



Municipal staff identified that there was public support for an off-leash dog park through a community survey conducted in 2021 had 159 respondents. Key findings included (but are not limited to):

- 60% owned one dog, 20% owned two dogs, 2% owned three or more dogs, and 18% were not dog owners.
- 87% of respondents supported the idea for a dog park.
- 60% of respondents walk, socialize or exercise their dogs on local streets, 17 use parks, 17% use trails and 6% use a dog park outside of the Municipality.
- 60% of respondents were willing to drive up to 10 kilometres to access a dog park.

The Master Plan community survey found that there is strong support for a municipal off-leash dog park, which is consistent with the input received through the Municipality’s off-leash dog park survey. The community survey reported that more than half (55%) of respondents have participated in dog walking and 55% of respondents supported public investment in an off-leash dog park.

This Master Plan recommends that the Municipality monitor the demand of its off-leash dog park pilot project in Ailsa Craig. Should the pilot project prove to be successful, the program should be implemented on a permanent basis, with the Ailsa Craig Village Association continuing to provide day-to-day operations and maintenance.

Continuing to monitor requests for an off-leash dog park in Parkhill is also recommended to inform long-term decisions, although the provision of a second location in Parkhill should be contingent upon working with a willing community partner to assist with daily operations, consistent with the Municipality’s current approach in

Ailsa Craig. As a long-term consideration, the Municipality should also be open to exploring a potential location in Narin to ensure that there is a good distribution of off-leash park locations, which should be subject to local community engagement.

Recommendations – Off-Leash Dog Park

28. Monitor use of the Ailsa Craig off-leash dog park and evaluate future opportunities to establish additional locations, potentially in Parkhill and Narin, only if there is a viable community partner to assist with daily operations. Community engagement should be undertaken to inform potential locations and future decisions.

5.16 Outdoor Skating Rinks

North Middlesex offers a refrigerated outdoor skating under the pavilion at the East Williams Optimist Park, which is operated by the East Williams Optimist Club.

Recreational outdoor skating has been a Canadian tradition for many generations, although the ability to maintain natural outdoor rinks has become increasingly difficult due to climate change. Natural ice rinks are the most affordable method to build and maintain given that expenses are largely relegated to water and operational time. Maintenance, however, can be cumbersome when temperatures are near or above the freezing mark during warmer days or weeks. Offering a refrigerated outdoor skating under a pavilion, such as in North Middlesex, is one strategy to maintain the skating surface. In some municipalities, refrigerated outdoor rinks (potentially with a roof) have been a standard of

provision or are being contemplated, although this approach is more costly to build, maintain and operate.

As a best practice, outdoor skating rinks, especially natural ice surfaces, are provided through a community development approach where municipalities provide initial set-up and ice flooding and volunteers assist with maintenance and operations, which is currently similar to the approach at East Williams Optimist Park. Municipalities may also be required to enforce rules and ensure that outdoor skating rinks are being used appropriately and during designated times. Outdoor skating rinks are operationally intensive as daily upkeep is required to maintain suitable ice quality and thus, harnessing the assistance of volunteers allows municipalities to direct human resources to other areas in the community.

While there is currently no evidence to suggest that there is a demand for any new outdoor ice-skating rinks, consideration should be given to the above factors on a case-by-case basis.

Recommendations – Outdoor Skating Rinks

29. Additional outdoor skating rinks should only be provided if there are willing volunteers that would be responsible for daily operations and maintenance. The Municipality should be responsible for providing support including initial set up and take down, and enforcement.

5.17 Sand Volleyball Courts

There is one sand volleyball court at the Parkhill Sports Park. The court is generally underutilized as there is no organized sand volleyball group that uses the court on a regular basis; however, the YMCA has been exploring strategies to expand the scope of their programs to include the use of the volleyball court.

The demand for outdoor sand volleyball courts is growing across the province as residents are gravitating towards more casual, unstructured activities. Sand volleyball courts are particularly popular among youth and young adults who are seeking social activities and its low cost to participate also adds to its appeal.

Some requests for sand volleyball courts were heard from the public. The community survey found that 15% of respondents have played volleyball and approximately one-third of respondents supported investment new or enhancing existing volleyball courts.

Demand for the sand volleyball courts is currently driven by programming offered by the YMCA. Given that the YMCA are currently in the early stages of developing community volleyball programming, it is expected that the existing single court will be adequate to meet community needs during the planning period. The Municipality should continue to work closely with the YMCA to promote volleyball programming among youth and young adults in North Middlesex and monitor participation levels to inform future decisions add additional sand volleyball courts.

Recommendations – Sand Volleyball Courts

30. Work with community partners such as the YMCA, Grace Bible Chapel and schools to promote volleyball programming among North Middlesex residents and monitor participation levels to inform future decisions to add additional sand volleyball courts and/or locations.

5.18 Disc Golf Courses

A disc golf course with nine baskets is located at Coronation Park in Parkhill. Disc golf is a sport in which players throw a flying disc on a course consisting of between nine and 18 targets (or baskets). The sport is a century old game that originated in Canada in the early 1900s that is now played across the world. It has been gaining in popularity in recent times as an increasing number of young adults have been taking up the sport. The governing body for the sport is the Professional Disc Golf Association, which reported a total of 150,000 professional and amateur members in 2021.⁴

Interest in disc golf continues to grow as people continue to seek casual and active outdoor physical activities, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. While there is no organized disc golf group in North Middlesex, the Municipality reports that there has been an increase in casual disc golf players, which also experienced a boost during the pandemic as residents sought outdoor activities, including those that could be done with appropriate social distancing.



⁴ Sports Illustrated. 2021. Paige Pierce Is Taking Disc Golf To the Moon. Retrieved from <https://www.si.com/>

The community survey found that one-in-ten (11%) respondents have played disc golf and nearly one-third (31%) of respondents supported investment in new or enhancing existing disc golf course facilities.

While the sport continues to gain in popularity across the Province, there is no standard level of service guiding the provision of disc golf courses. There is currently no evidence to suggest that there is a need for additional disc golf courses or to expand the existing location. The Municipality should monitor use of the existing disc golf course and to promote its use through general awareness and program opportunities with community partners, in order to inform future disc golf course needs.

Recommendations – Disc Golf Courses

- 31. To inform future disc golf course needs, monitor the use of the existing disc golf course and promote its use through general awareness and working with community partners to provide programming.

5.19 Community Gardens

A community garden is located at the North Middlesex Community Centre in Parkhill. The community garden has six plots that can be rented by volunteers and food from the garden can be donated to those in need in the community.

Community gardening opportunities are popular in urban communities, although they can also be justified in smaller rural communities as there is a greater emphasis on food security, healthy eating, increasing physical activity, and providing a healthy

and sustainable food source. Promoting healthy eating is also a key strategy identified in the Municipality’s Community & Corporate Strategic Plan. Social interaction and horticultural education opportunities are also part of the appeal of community gardening.

Requests for community gardening opportunities were heard through the consultation process. Nearly two-thirds (62%) of community survey respondents supported investment in community gardens, which was the 10th highest priority out of 24 facility types.

North Middlesex’s approach to providing community gardens is a common approach found in other communities as it is a collaborative partnership between the municipality and volunteers to share responsibilities. This should continue to be the pathway forward where the Municipality is responsible for providing and supporting infrastructure, while volunteers are responsible for general oversight and maintenance. The Municipality should monitor requests to expand the number of community gardening plots at the current location and evaluate additional locations at other parks in North Middlesex if there is a volunteer or community organization interested in pursuing this opportunity.

Recommendations – Community Gardens

- 32. Monitor demand and requests to expand the existing community garden in Parkhill. Evaluate opportunities for additional community garden locations if the Municipality is approached by a volunteer or community organization interested in pursuing this opportunity. The Municipality should be responsible for providing land and supporting infrastructure and volunteers should be responsible for general oversight and maintenance.

5.20 Water-Based Activities

The Parkhill Creek and the Ausable River are two natural features found in North Middlesex. Located on the north side of Parkhill, the Parkhill Dam and Reservoir was created in 1969 by the Ausable River Conservation Authority (now the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority) in order to control flooding around Parkhill Creek. The natural amenity boasts over 100 hectares of open water that can be used for a range of water-based activities, including canoeing, kayaking, and fishing (motorized boating is prohibited); the surrounding lands are used for hiking, birdwatching, passive outdoor enjoyment, picnicking, small gatherings, and geocaching.

The consultation process revealed that there is a desire for greater water access for watercrafts in the Municipality and there is an opportunity to respond to these requests, which would also further the Municipality's efforts to expand local opportunities and connect with nature. Working collaborative with the Ausable Bayfield Conservation authority to raise awareness about the water-based activities available at the Parkhill Reservoir is encouraged to maximize opportunities for the community to enjoy this natural amenity. Ensuring that trail connections exist to this location is also encouraged to facilitate greater access and use, as discussed in Section 6.4. Additional locations to access the water are also encouraged such as along the Ausable River, where there are currently no formal access points. A preferred site would ideally have suitable parking, visibility, compatibility with adjacent land uses, connections to active transportation infrastructure, and safety considerations. This investigation may be undertaken in consultation with others, including the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority, the public, and other community stakeholders.

Recommendations – Water-Based Activities

33. Work in partnership with the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority to raise awareness and promote the use of the Parkhill Reservoir for non-motorized water-based activities such as canoeing, kayaking, and fishing.
34. Initiate a site selection process to establish appropriate locations along the Ausable River for casual viewing and enjoyment, including opportunities to launch personal, non-motorized watercrafts. Potential site considerations should include parking, visibility, compatibility with adjacent land uses, connections to active transportation, and safety.



5.21 Other Recreation Facility Requests

North Middlesex may receive requests for recreation facilities that are not currently provided through its core service mandate or there is presently insufficient demand to warrant a specific recommendation in this Master Plan. The Municipality must be prepared to respond appropriately to public requests pending future market characteristics related to population growth, emerging sports and activities, future recreation trends and preferences, and other demands that may arise for existing or new facilities.

When public requests are brought forward for investment in new, non-traditional, emerging and non-core municipal facilities, North Middlesex should evaluate these recreational needs on a case-by-case basis. This should involve an examination into:

- Local, regional and provincial trends pertaining to usage and popularity of the activity and/or facility;
- Examples of delivery models in other municipalities;
- Local demand for the activity and/or facility;
- The ability of existing Municipal facilities to accommodate the new level of service;
- The feasibility for the Municipality to provide the service and/or facility as a core service with consideration given to resources (e.g., staffing), and be able to do so in a cost-effective manner; and
- The willingness and ability of the requesting organization to provide the service and/or facility if provided with the appropriate municipal supports.

Recommendations – Other Recreation Facility Requests

35. Evaluate requests for new indoor and outdoor recreation facilities on a case-by-case basis with consideration given to trends, examples in other municipalities, local demand, the feasibility of utilizing existing public space, the willingness of an organization to partner in providing the facility or space, and other factors.





6.0 Parkland

Public parks offer numerous community benefits. A well-designed parks system provides safe spaces to build a sense of community and social belonging, while inspiring creativity and energizing individuals. Parks provide spaces for sports and physical activity, support habitats for wildlife, sustain healthy ecosystems and watersheds, and build resiliency to climate change. Parks systems can also support sport, cultural and eco-tourism objectives that create revenue generating opportunities and distribute economic spin-offs that benefit local businesses.

This section examines the current state of North Middlesex's parkland system, including a review of the existing supply and service level, other public space providers, policies, design guidelines and parks and recreation trail needs.

6.1 Parkland Classification System

A parkland classification system is a core element of park planning, design and development. The 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 intensification 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.

A parkland classification system is recommended for North Middlesex, which should be used as a guide for ongoing parks planning and development. It does not imply that there is an importance of one park class over another, but rather reflects a geographic hierarchy whereby certain parks service a highly localized catchment area (e.g., Coronation Park), while others serve a much broader area to meet Municipal-wide and regional needs (e.g., Ailsa Craig Community Park). As a result, there is a differing level of order of intensity of park functions and activities that take place between different types of parks.

The parkland classification system distinguishes the Municipality's parkland as Community Parks and Neighbourhood Parks. In addition, the Municipality may also own or manage open spaces that are intended to be preserved in a natural state, such as forests, wetlands, floodplains, and other protected open spaces.

Recommendations – Parkland Classification System

36. Utilize the parkland classification system contained in the Recreation & Facilities Master Plan to guide the planning and development of active parkland according to park type, form, function, size and the features and amenities they provide.

Table 5: Recommended Parkland Classification System

Community Park

Description: Community Parks provide active and passive outdoor recreation facilities and amenities for all residents in the Municipality and the broader regional population. Community parks also serve as locations for special events and festivals.

Permitted Uses: May include, but not be limited to, sports fields, playgrounds, hard surface courts, splash pads, skateboard parks, indoor recreation and community facilities, specialized facilities, seating, shade, pathways, supporting amenities for events, parking, washrooms, open space, and other similar uses and features.

Location: Ideally co-located with an indoor facility that's centrally located within the community along major roads that are accessible by car and active transportation.

Size: Vary in size depending on the nature and extent of the facilities being provided and the purpose of the park.

Neighbourhood Park

Description: Neighbourhood Parks provide local, walkable access to active and passive outdoor recreation facilities and amenities.

Permitted Uses: May include, but not be limited to, playgrounds, hard surface courts, sports fields, seating, shade, pathways, parking, open space, and other similar uses and features.

Location: Visibly located within the neighbourhood and accessible by active transportation.

Size: Target a minimum of 0.8 hectares, unless there is a need to reconcile a gap area or expand an existing park.

6.2 Parkland Supply

North Middlesex owns 19.4 hectares of active parkland across seven sites (Figure 15). These parks offer outdoor recreation facilities such as sports fields and playgrounds, with support amenities, including paved pathways, shade, seating, washrooms and more. The parkland system also includes open greenspaces that can support unstructured activities and gatherings. An inventory of the Municipality’s parkland supply is summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: Active Parkland Supply

Park Name	Area (hectares)
Ailsa Craig Community Park	1.5
Coronation Park	1.2
East Williams Optimist Park	3.0
Ken Vernon Park	4.7
Lieury Park	1.5
Lions Community Park	3.2
Parkhill Sports Park	4.3
Total Area	19.4

The Municipality’s parks system is complemented by an extensive supply of natural heritage features and outdoor spaces that are owned by other agencies, as well as schools. Key non-municipal parks in North Middlesex include the following:

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority manages the **Parkhill Conservation Area**, which is located northeast of Parkhill. The Conservation Area offers passive outdoor enjoyment including views of the Ausable River from the Parkhill Commemorative Woods and Scenic Lookout, and activities including hiking, birdwatching, canoeing, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, and picnicking. **Ausable River Valley & Mystery Falls** and the **Lucan Conservation Area** is located on the west and east sides of North Middlesex, which also offer similar passive opportunities.

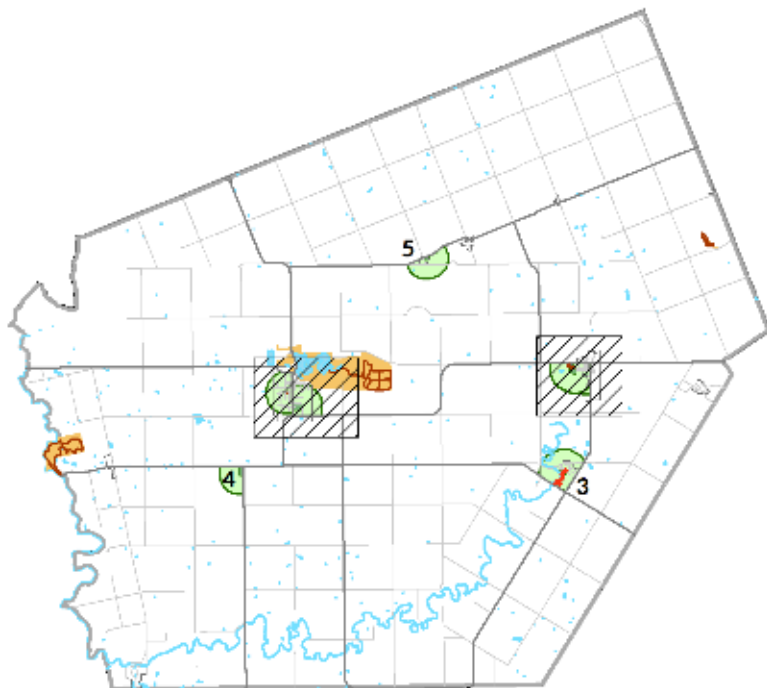
The Thames Talbot Land Trust owns passive lands along the western boundary of North Middlesex, including **Joany’s Woods**, which offers both easy and difficult hiking trail through wooded forests and along the Ausable River.

There are also **campgrounds** located in the Municipality, including Harmony Woods Campground, Great Canadian Hideaway, Shady Pines Campground, Camp Sylvan. Some of these locations offer recreational amenities for campers, including outdoor pools, sports fields, playgrounds, basketball courts and more.

Based on a 2021 population of 6,600 residents, the Municipality is providing a service level of 2.9 hectares of active parkland per 1,000 residents.



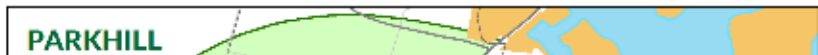
Figure 15: Parks and Trails Map



Parkland

- Municipal Park with an 800-metre Service Area
 - Non-Municipal Park
 - Recreational Trail
 - - - Potential Trail Connection *
1. Ailsa Craig Community Park
 2. Coronation Park
 3. East Williams Optimist Park
 4. Ken Vernon Park
 5. Lieury Park
 6. Lions Community Park
 7. Parkhill Conservation Area (Parkhill Commemorative Woods and Scenic Lookout)
 8. Parkhill Sports Park

* Municipality of North Middlesex Official Plan Schedule A3-1



6.3 Parkland Needs

Community input found that the Municipality's parks system is highly valued. 72% of community survey respondents have used parks for their enjoyment, which was the second most popular activity surveyed; 69% of respondents also supported additional investment in enhancing existing or acquiring additional parkland.

Municipalities often provide active parkland based on historical service levels. Active parkland service targets typically range between 2.0 to 4.0 hectares per 1,000 residents for lands suitable for the development of recreation amenities such as sports fields, playgrounds, courts and other features that support organized and unorganized activities. North Middlesex is providing a strong parkland service level of 2.9 hectares per 1,000 residents, which is within the range of what other municipalities provide.

Over the next 10 years, the Municipality is projected to add approximately 400 to 2,000 additional people to a total population of 7,000 to 8,600 residents. To maintain the existing parkland service level, the Municipality would need to provide up to 24.9 hectares of additional active parkland, which is 5.5 hectares more than what is currently provided.

There are currently several active residential subdivision applications that are being considered. During the planning period, the Municipality is expected to receive one new park approximately 0.29 hectares in size in the southeast area of Ailsa Craig. The Municipality is also expected to receive lands for stormwater management and pedestrian pathways.

With no other future parkland expected to be dedicated to the Municipality, there would be a deficit of 5.2 hectares by the end of the planning period based on the current service level. Alternative land acquisition strategies will need to be considered to optimize parkland opportunities, which are discussed further in Section 6.5.

To understand where new active parks should be provided, a distributional analysis was undertaken by applying an 800-metre service area to each park, which equates to a five to 10-minute walk within urban settlement areas, unobstructed by physical barriers such as County roads and waterbodies.

This distribution analysis revealed that there is a strong distribution of parkland in Parkhill and Ailsa Craig. Notable gaps where parkland is not available within walking distance exist in Ailsa Craig on the east side of Queen Street and north of Elginfield Road. Minor gaps also exist in the southwest corner and northeast corner of the Parkhill settlement area. Recognizing that future residential development is anticipated in these areas, the Municipality should explore parkland acquisition and development opportunities to address needs in these areas as opportunities become available. As the Municipality is expected to attract new residents, with some from more urban municipalities, it can be expected that they will have high expectations for quality parks and varied interests for outdoor activities, which may not be accommodated within the existing park supply.

While parks contribute to the quality of life and desirability of communities, existing parks may not be well suited to today's needs due to improper size or location, resulting in inaccessible and underutilized lands. In these instances, consideration should be given to the future of these locations based on an understanding of current uses, level of public use, land constraints, future needs, and repurposing opportunities.

Located southwest of Parkhill in the Municipality's rural area, Ken Vernon Park was historically an active park that had soccer fields, a playground, a pavilion, and the West Williams Community Centre. Today, the park is underutilized as the soccer fields are surplus to the needs of the Municipality's local sports organizations and the playground was removed after reaching the end of its lifecycle and it was not replaced. The park is currently being utilized once a year for the Municipality's Canada Day celebration. As discussed early in Section 5.5, the West Williams Community Centre is also underutilized, although this Master Plan

recommends that the Municipality work with the community to enhance use of this facility and monitor demand.

Similarly, the Municipality is encouraged to explore opportunities to enhance the use of the open space at Ken Vernon Park, such as working with community groups to deliver outdoor programming. Ken Vernon Park may also be suitable as the location to replace the ball diamond at Ailsa Craig Community Park with space to add a second diamond if required, and other supporting amenities, although this would likely require the removal of the West Williams Community Centre.

Recommendations – Parkland Needs

37. Maintain an active parkland target of 2.9 hectares per 1,000 residents, excluding woodlots and passive open space lands. On this basis, approximately 5.2 additional hectares should be secured by 2031 to address gaps and meet growth-related needs. A combination of parkland dedication as part of subdivision development or alternative land acquisition strategies recommended in this Master Plan may be required to meet the entirety of these needs.
38. Explore opportunities to enhance the use of the open space at Ken Vernon Park, such as working with community groups to deliver outdoor programming.

6.4 Recreational Trails

The Municipality's recreational trails primarily consist of pathways within its parks. For example, a 600-metre trail is located at the Lions Community Park in Ailsa Craig (a portion of which is paved) and 150 metres of paved pathway is found at Coronation Park in Parkhill (Figure 7). These pathways are complemented by sidewalk systems found in Parkhill and Ailsa Craig.

The Municipality's pathways and sidewalks are complemented by other active transportation routes in North Middlesex. For example, the Barn Quilt Trail is promoted in North Middlesex, which is an initiative led by an organization that encourages erecting large, painted quilt patterns onto Barns and other spaces to encourage visitors to visit each site to showcase the rural landscape, key destinations and landmarks. Barn Quilts are found throughout the Municipality, including within the parks system such as at Lions Community Park in Ailsa Craig and Ye Olde Towne Hall.

Non-municipal trails are also found within the Parkhill Conservation Area, Lucan Conservation Area, Ausable River Valley and Mystery Falls Trails and Joany's Woods, as well as an off-road trail along a closed road allowance between Parkhill Main Street to the west (north of King Street) and Elginfield Road to the east.

Trail development is supported by the North Middlesex Official Plan. Section 8.2.6 of the Official Plan recognizes the importance of cycling and walking and infrastructure such as trails and pathways support these active modes of movement and contribute to the development of healthy communities. As a result, the Official Plan identifies that the Municipality may require the dedication of pedestrian and bicycle pathways as a condition of development. The Official Plan also encourages the use of corridors for trail development (Section 8.2.7). Additionally, Section 5.1.3.1 identifies potential trail development opportunity in Nairn to strengthen walking opportunities from East Williams Memorial Public School to East Williams Optimist Park and future residential development opportunities, as illustrated on Schedule A3-1.

The Municipality's 2021 Community Improvement Plan also speaks towards pursuing long-term opportunities to connect the communities of Parkhill, Ailsa Craig, and Nairn, potentially through a multi-use trail.

Walking and cycling trails are commonly identified as one of the most desirable features in a community. In addition to supporting

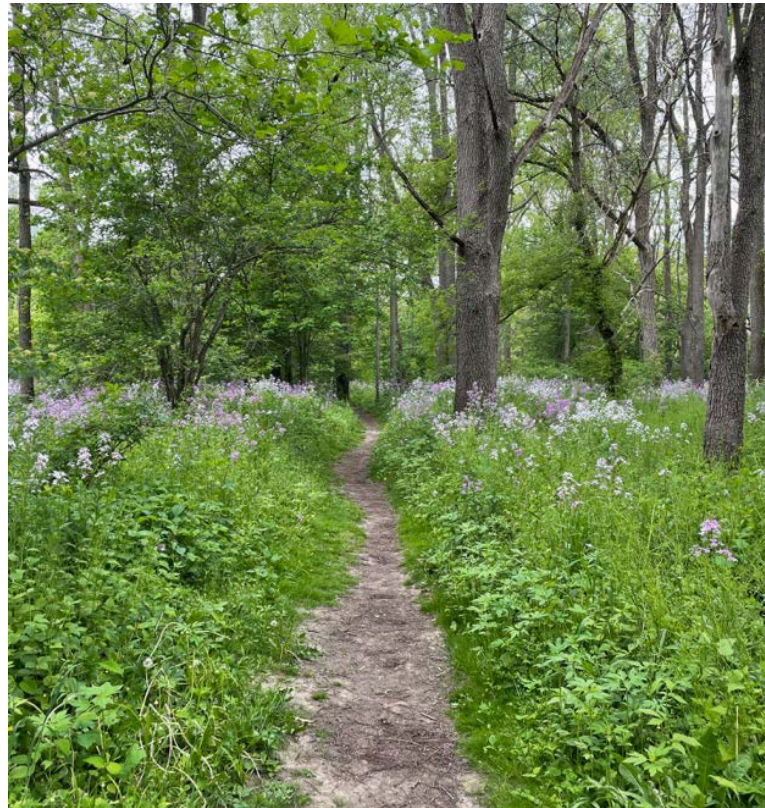
healthy communities, a strong trails system provides environmental benefits, promotes physical activity, connects people to nature, enables unstructured and affordable recreation opportunities, and contributes to the development of a sustainable transportation system. Research has also found that trails heighten community vibrancy by encouraging compact development and walkable neighbourhoods where people are more likely to socialize and interact with each other. Through these benefits, there is merit in exploring strategies that enhance the trail system in North Middlesex to contribute to an improved quality of life for residents.

The consultation process found strong support for building upon the Municipality's trails and sidewalks to strengthen connections. Suggestions were received to connect key settlement areas, including Parkhill, Ailsa Craig and Nairn, utilizing decommissioned railways, park pathways, and working with the Conservation Authority to establish trails within Conservation Areas. The community survey found that 80% of respondents participate in walking and hiking during their leisure time; 90% and 77% of respondents supported public investment in nature trails and paved multi-use trails, respectively.

At the conceptual level, the Master Plan investigated opportunities for new trail routes, with consideration given to strengthening existing linkages and connecting destinations. A conceptualized trails network is illustrated in Figure 16, which is intended to be used as a guide to develop new route opportunities. With walking, and hiking activities noted as popular recreational pursuits through the consultation activities, there is strong support for continued investment in related infrastructure.

The key to the continued development of an effective and robust trail network will be to ensure that safe, accessible, and convenient linkages exist between users and key destinations (e.g., civic and institutional facilities, parks, residential and commercial areas, etc.). The conceptual trail network builds upon the proposed network recommended through the 2018 Middlesex County Cycling Strategy and considers developing connections within the

Municipality's settlement areas, which should be achieved through a combination of on and off-road trails and sidewalks. While trail development within established areas is often a challenge, emphasis should be placed on providing walking pathways within the Municipality's parks to provide accessible circulation areas to internal amenities (e.g., sports fields, playgrounds, etc.). As future residential development occurs, particularly in Parkhill and Ailsa Craig, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure should be planned to facilitate active transportation movement, as directed by the Official Plan. Under the Planning Act, the Municipality is eligible to negotiate land for trails as part of subdivision development. Trail design features and comfort amenities should also be considered in appropriate areas, are discussed in Section 6.6.



Recommendations – Recreation Trails

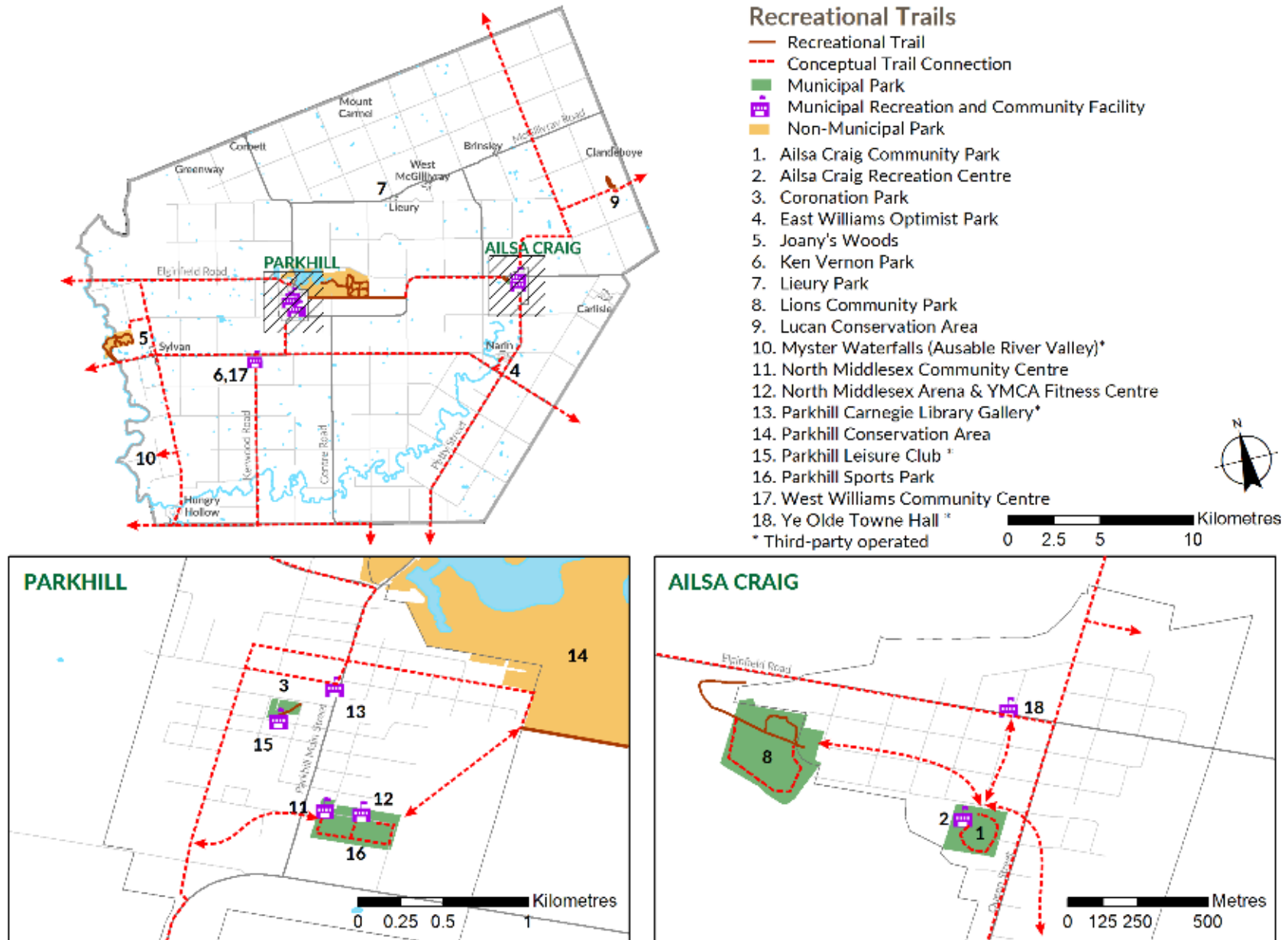
Within the Municipality’s rural area, the conceptual network identifies proposed paved shoulders and signed routes to support cycling, as identified in the 2018 Middlesex County Cycling Strategy to connect residents across North Middlesex, including to conservation areas and to adjacent municipalities. Some of these initiatives have already been explored by the Municipality and local volunteers. For example, the Municipality had previous discussions about widening or paving shoulders along County roads to support active transportation. Volunteers are also working with the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority to maintain and establish trails in the Parkhill Conservation Area. Continued dialogue with partners, including land owners, Middlesex County, Conservation Authority, Recreation Advisory Committee, the general public, and others will be required to identify routing, public access, coordinate projects, and other opportunities to work together.

The conceptual trail network put forth in this Master Plan is intended to be viewed as a point of departure through which additional work should be initiated. For example, this Master Plan does not go into detail regarding property ownership, design, engineering, environmental impacts, and compatibility with the broader transportation system. Further trail investigations should be undertaken to confirm these details, which may be determined through the development of a Trails Master Plan. The Trails Master Plan may also explore details including, but not limited to, detailed routing, design standards, funding strategy and more. The potential to maintain trails during the winter season may also be considered to support year round walking and winter activities such as cross country skiing.

Promoting active transportation opportunities in North Middlesex is supported by the Master Plan to encourage outdoor physical activities, which is consistent with the Municipality’s Community & Corporate Strategic Plan. Suggested strategies include publishing a trails map and mobile trails application, wayfinding signage, creating temporary pedestrian street events, and working with others to promote active transportation (e.g., walking groups).

39. Undertake a Trails Master Plan to refine the proposed conceptual trail network to guide the development of non-motorized, active transportation opportunities. Among matters related to detailed pathway routing, design standards, and funding strategy, the Trails Master Plan should further explore the following:
 - a. A walking loop within Parkhill and Ailsa Craig using a combination of sidewalks and off-road trails.
 - b. Connections between Parkhill, Ailsa Craig and Nairn.
 - c. Establish pedestrian circulation areas within parks (e.g., pathways to sports fields, playgrounds, etc.).
 - d. Identify active transportation routes within future residential areas, potentially as part of land dedication as permitted by the Planning Act.
 - e. Coordinate with others to create or formalize trail connections to non-municipal destinations such properties owned by the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority, Thames Talbot Land Trust, and campgrounds.
 - f. Consider winter trail maintenance to support year round walking and winter activities such as cross country skiing.
 - g. Either alone or in partnership with others, promote active transportation opportunities, including publishing trail routes (e.g., online, print, mobile application, etc.), establishing walking groups, create pedestrian-oriented community events, raise awareness of non-Municipal trails, and other strategies identified by the Municipality.

Figure 16: Proposed Conceptual Trail Network



Note: Conceptual Trail Connections includes the potential Narin trail on Schedule A3-1 of the Municipality of North Middlesex Official plan and routes identified in the 2018 Middlesex County Cycling Strategy.

6.5 Parkland Policy and Acquisition

Parkland policies are guided by the North Middlesex Official Plan, which is the Municipality’s primary document directing matters related to land use planning. The Official Plan must conform to overarching documents, including the Planning Act, Provincial Policy Statement⁵ and the County of Middlesex Official Plan.

Policies related to parkland dedication are contained in Section 9.11 of the Official Plan. It establishes that the Municipality may require land dedication for parkland in accordance with the provision of the Planning Act. The following is a summary of relevant policies regarding parkland dedication:

- For residential development, the Municipality may require the conveyance of up to 5% of land for development densities of 25 units per hectare or less, or dedication at a rate of one hectare per 300 units for densities greater than 25 units per hectare.
- For commercial or industrial development, the Municipality may require the conveyance of up to 2% of land proposed for development.
- The Municipality may require cash-in-lieu of parkland if the development or redevelopment is not located in an area where parkland is required.
- Lands dedicated to the Municipality for parkland must be conveyed in a physical condition that is satisfactory to the Municipality and exclude lands with physical limitations or hazards.

- As a condition of draft plan of subdivision approval, the proposal shall be required to provide a park design satisfactory to the Municipality for any park with the plan of subdivision. However, to ensure that the size, configuration and orientation of the park is such that it can be programmed in an efficient manner, it may be necessary to prepare a park facilities design prior to draft plan approval.
- The Municipality will carry out programs to improve park facilities and provide public parks to meet the needs of the community, as well as augmenting the present park deficiencies.

In 2022, the Ontario government introduced Bill 23 (More Homes Built Faster Act), which proposes sweeping changes to a number of land use legislation in order to expedite the Province’s goal of constructing 1.5 million new homes by 2031. Notable to this Master Plan, Bill 23 introduced changes that will reduce development charges, revenue, community benefits charges, and parkland dedication requirements.



⁵ The Government of Ontario is currently exploring the development of a Provincial Planning Statement to replace the existing Provincial Policy Statement and A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe to support ensure that

the policy framework is housing supportive to meet the Province’s goal to construct 1.5 million new homes by 2031.

The changes to the Planning Act are significant and will reduce the amount of parkland the Municipality can receive as part of the development approval process. Specifically, a summary of key changes is highlighted below:⁶

- The maximum amount of land that can be conveyed or paid in lieu is capped at 10% of the land or its value for sites under 5 ha, and 15 % for sites greater than 5 ha.
- Maximum alternative dedication rate reduced to 1 ha/600 units for land and 1 ha/1,000 units for cash in lieu.
- Parkland rates frozen as of the date that a zoning by-law or site plan application is filed. Freeze remains in effect for two years following approval. If no building permits are pulled in that time, the rate in place at the time the building permit is pulled would apply.
- Affordable residential units, attainable residential units, inclusionary zoning residential units, non-profit housing and additional residential unit developments are exempt from parkland dedication requirements.
- Encumbered parkland/strata parks, as well as privately owned publicly accessible spaces (POPS) to be eligible for parkland credits.
- Landowners can identify land they intend to provide for parkland, with the municipality able to appeal to the Tribunal if there is a disagreement.
- Parks plans to be required prior to the passing of any future parkland dedication by-law (would not apply to by-laws already passed). This Master Plan can be used as the

basis for a Parks Plan that supports the development of a parkland dedication by-law to apply the alternative rate.⁷

- Parkland dedication will apply to new units only (e.g., no dedication can be imposed for existing units).
- Municipalities will be required to spend or allocate 60% of parkland reserve funds at the start of each year.

The full impact of these modifications will continue to be assessed for months to come and should be considered by the Municipality and will need to be considered through a future Official Plan review.

Recognizing the parkland needs identified through this Master Plan, it is recommended that the Municipality adopt a “parkland-first” approach that directs staff to prioritize the dedication of land in appropriate locations rather than cash-in-lieu of parkland during the development review process. This means that:

- Policies and practices that support on-site parkland dedication and encourage front-end acquisition of parkland should be encouraged.
- Parkland will be required when development will result in a park block that: (i) is at least 0.8 hectares in size, unless there is a need to reconcile a gap area; or (ii) expands an existing park site.
- The Municipality may still accept cash-in-lieu of parkland when it is determined to be advantageous, such as for development projects that would not meet the minimum requirements. For example, cash-in-lieu may be considered for sites that cannot physically accommodate a park block.

⁶ Osler. (2022). Forget everything you thought you knew about planning approvals in Ontario. Retrieved from <https://www.osler.com>

⁷ Municipalities are required to develop a Parks Plan prior to passing a parkland dedication by-law. It is a requirement of the Planning Act that the municipality shall consult with local school boards.

- All lands to be dedicated for park purposes must be to the Municipality’s satisfaction.
- The Municipality should consider criteria for accepting suitable lands for active parkland, including street frontage, proximity to existing parks and facilities, opportunities for future expansion, and site conditions.

As a best practice, the Municipality may consider alternative approaches for acquiring parkland to supplement dedication policies through the Official Plan and the Planning Act, including the following (generally listed in order of priority):

- 1) On an ongoing basis, evaluate proposed development applications for future park dedication and connectivity opportunities (e.g., sidewalks, trails, etc.).
- 2) Evaluate other municipal or public lands (not currently designated as parks) within these areas for their ability to be used as parkland or – at a minimum – accommodate a public playground.
- 3) Consider improvements to parks to enhance active and passive recreational opportunities in the vicinity of the growth area.
- 4) Encourage voluntary conveyance, donations, gifts and bequests from individuals or corporations.
- 5) Monitor real estate opportunities and seek to purchase (or swap) one or more properties that could be developed as a municipal park. This may be the highest cost option that would require additional resources.

Recommendations – Parkland Policy and Recommendations

40. At the time of an Official Plan review, undertake the necessary policy updates to reflect amendments to the Planning Act and Bill 23.
41. Adopt a “Parkland First” approach that prioritizes parkland conveyance over cash-in-lieu of parkland to address parkland needs. Parkland conveyance should: (a) be acceptable to the Municipality and (b) result in park blocks that are at least 0.8 hectares in size (unless to reconcile a gap area) or expand an existing park site.
42. Utilize a range of land acquisition tools to maximize public access to parkland and natural areas (e.g., land purchase/lease, land exchanges, partnerships, donations, partnerships, land reallocation, etc.)

6.6 Strengthening Park Experiences

The Municipality can attract greater use of parks and further animate them through smaller-scale investments that are commonly focused on drop-in use, comfort, accessibility, and functionality. There is some evidence of this in North Middlesex. For example, the Municipality works with the Parkhill Horticultural Society and the Ailsa Craig Village Association to beautify the community including within parks.

Through community consultations, desires were expressed for more shade, seating, and accessibility. Comfort features benefit everyone, but especially families with young children and older adults and persons with disabilities. There is a trend towards greater informal gatherings within parks that are inclusive of all residents such as picnics, community gatherings, or simply meeting up with friends. The following best practices in park design should

be considered to create more inviting parks and respond to public requests for enhanced outdoor public spaces.

Designing for Comfort

Comfort amenities can create more inviting parks for everyday use. Well-design parks can create a feeling of comfort that encourage more frequent use. Key comfort features that are typically desired by the public include, but are not limited to, shade, seating, paved pathways, picnic tables, washrooms, and other features that attract people and encourage use. Requests for these types of amenities was also heard through the consultation process.

The Municipality recognizes the importance of having common comforts as many of these features are already featured within its parks and some of these amenities have been made possible with the support of community groups. As a general best practice, the design and placement of comfort amenities is determined on a case-by-case basis with consideration given to public demand, safety, placement, construction and maintenance costs, partnerships, fundraising and other factors. Continuing to work with community partners to fund park comfort features such as seating is encouraged.



Maintaining existing park features also needs to be considered. For example, park observations found that the gazebo located at Coronation Park is aging due to refurbishment. Recognizing its prominent location in the community, it is recommended that the Municipality undertake renewal of the gazebo to ensure that it continues to meet community needs over the planning period and beyond. Alternatively, consideration may be given to replacing it with a new structure in a location that supports the use of the splash pad at the park.

Signage and Wayfinding

Signage is an essential design feature that plays an important role in identifying publicly accessible outdoor spaces, as well as establishing a visual identity or brand for a municipality. Alignment with corporate branding initiatives, or at the Department level, is a common practice to effectively communicate the availability of municipally delivered services.

North Middlesex has done an excellent job with installing signage within its parks, including entrance and regulatory signs, memorial plaques and other information signs. The Municipality’s parks signs differ in size, style and variety, as well as the information being conveyed. It is recommended that the Municipality undertake a review of all park signage to ensure consistency in design and the information being conveyed.

A wayfinding system for the Municipality’s parks and trails system is also recommended to enhance public awareness of North Middlesex’s public amenities, which may also include the location of community amenities. This may include erecting community maps around the Municipality identifying the location of North Middlesex parks, trails and other key community assets to encourage use of these amenities. Ensuring that this information is available online is also recommended to extend the Municipality’s public reach. Details regarding the development of a municipality parks and trails wayfinding system may be further refined through the development of a Trails Master Plan, as recommended in this Master Plan.

Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change

Fostering an active, healthy, and livable community is a key goal of the Municipality's Community & Corporate Strategic Plan. To achieve this goal, the Master Plan identifies strategies including, but not limited to, reducing the Municipality's impact on climate change, protecting our natural resources, and more.

The public parks system is how many residents connect with the public and the protection and preservation of the environment is commonly a top-of-mind issue for many Canadians. Strategic park design is one approach the Municipality can explore to minimize its impact on climate change. Municipalities across the Province have made efforts to design parks to be more environmentally friendly and sustainable through planting native species, setting tree canopy targets, creating pollinator and community gardens, establishing programs to raise awareness and educate the public about local natural heritage (e.g., outdoor classrooms, stewardship, interpretive signage, etc.), and strategies to be more resilient to climate change.

Opportunities to promote environmental sustainability in the Municipality should be explored in strategic locations. For example, swaths of open greenspace are located within some parks that are not frequently used such as at Lieury Park, Ken Vernon Park, and Lions Community Park. Opportunities exist to establish low-maintenance landscaping with native plantings and pollinator gardens, as well as to return portions to a naturalized state to reduce regular maintenance.

Recommendations – Strengthening Park Experiences

43. On a case-by-case basis, consider comfort and accessibility features, which may include, but not be limited to, seating, shade, pathways, picnic tables, garbage cans, washrooms, and other amenities that attract people and encourage use.
44. Undertake renewal of the Coronation park gazebo or replace it with a new shade structure or pavilion.
45. Review of the Municipality's park signage to ensure consistency in design and the information being conveyed.
46. Create wayfinding signage at key locations across the Municipality to highlight the location of all North Middlesex parks and facilities, trails, and other community assets to raise awareness of local amenities. This information should also be published online. Details may be refined through the development of a Trails Master Plan.
47. Alone or in partnership with other organizations, explore initiatives to be more resilient to climate change and protect and enhance the natural environment. Initiatives include strategically returning portions of parkland back to a natural state, establishing pollinator gardens, planting native species, setting tree canopy targets, establishing outdoor educational programs, and other strategies determined by the Municipality. Opportunities to implement these strategies may exist at Lieury Park, Lions Community Park, Ken Vernon Park, and other locations.



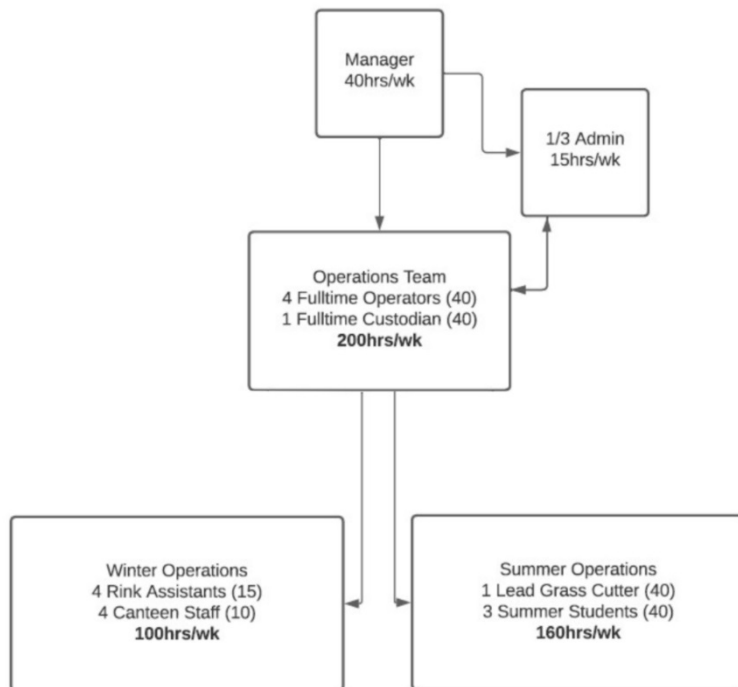
7.0 Service Delivery System

A strong service delivery system hinges on the strength of the Recreation & Facilities Department and municipal staff, and effectiveness of partnerships with volunteers, community organizations, non-municipal entities, and others. This section explores the role of the Recreation & Facilities Department in providing services in North Middlesex and strategies for enhancement to ensure that they are inclusive of all residents and respond to the needs of a growing community.

7.1 Recreation & Facilities Department

The North Middlesex Recreation & Facilities Department is responsible for delivering various aspects of parks and recreation services. The Municipality also supports community organizations in providing a range of parks, recreation and culture opportunities. The Department is led by the Recreation & Facilities Manager, who oversees an operational team that is responsible for summer and winter duties, including full time operators (e.g., rink operators and lead grass cutter), canteen staff, a custodian, and summer students (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Municipality of North Middlesex Recreation & Facilities Department Organizational Chart



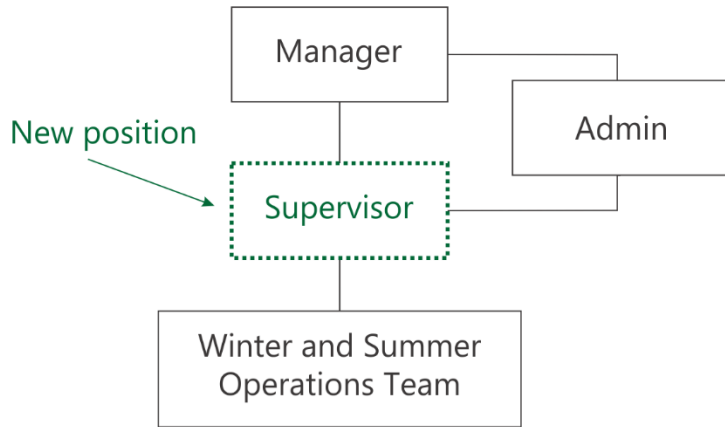
The Department’s organizational structure is similar to that found in other municipalities across the Province, though there are opportunities to strengthen internal operations to enhance service delivery and to ensure that staff are prepared to respond to increasing expectations of a growing community.

While a detailed staffing review is beyond the scope of the Master Plan, a high-level review of the Department’s organizational structure revealed that there is a gap between the Recreation & Facilities Manager and the operations team. As a best practice, municipal recreation departments employ a Supervisor to oversee the operations team, which may include: establishing day-to-day duties; ensuring goals, tasks, and timelines are achieved; training; scheduling, and more.

A Supervisor role does not currently exist within the Department and as a result, the Manager position must fill this role. While this lean staffing model has been adequate to meet community needs, there is limited capacity for the Manager to execute tasks that are typical of this position. The Department’s Manager should be responsible for special projects, developing policies and procedures, high level long-range capital planning, and oversight to further the Municipality’s recreation and active living goals, which will include implementing this Master Plan’s recommendations. Undertaking these and other managerial duties is limited as the Department’s Manager is currently focused on overseeing the daily duties of staff.

With these considerations in mind, there is merit in considering expanding the staffing complement of the Recreation & Facilities Department to include a Supervisor position who will report to the Manager and be responsible for overseeing day-to-day operations of the Operations Team. Figure 18 illustrates the proposed organizational structure for the Department. This should be confirmed by undertaking a departmental review to ensure that the staff complement is suitable to meet current and future needs. This can be done internally by the CAO or through an outside source.

Figure 18: Proposed Recreation & Facilities Department Organizational Structure



Subject to the findings of the recommended departmental review and the proposed organizational structure, continued support and collaboration between the Recreation & Facilities Department other municipal departments will be needed such as Planning Services (lead by Middlesex County), Economic Development, and others, as well as the Recreation Advisory Committee, YMCA and key community organizations.

This Master Plan contains recommendations to address recreation and facility needs for current and future residents that includes new facilities, parkland and services. It will be important to ensure that the Department’s staffing complement grows with the community to maintain the existing level of service as there will be greater expectations for high quality parks and facilities, as well as to respond to public and stakeholder requests.

Providing enhanced levels of service will also require staff to work efficiently and effectively in completing their daily routines and responsibilities. Efforts to continue supporting the staff team are encouraged, which may include but not be limited to, the use of technology and equipment, training, professional development, and other strategies to function as a high performing Department.

Recommendations – Recreation & Facilities Department

- 48. Undertake a departmental review by the CAO or an external source to confirm the need for a Supervisor position for the Recreation & Facilities Department to provide day-to-day oversight of the Operations Team, as well as other related duties including, but not limited to: coordination with the Manager; monitoring work quality; ensuring goals, tasks and timelines are met; staff training; scheduling; and more. As part of this review, evaluate the need for additional staff requirements to ensure the successful implementation of this Master Plan.
- 49. Provide staff with the appropriate supports to deliver exceptional community services and execute daily responsibilities, which may include, the use of technology and equipment, training, professional development, and other strategies to function as a high performing Department.

7.2 Recreation Advisory Committee

The Recreation Advisory Committee advises Council and advocates on a range of related matters. The Committee's terms of reference, the group's mandate is described below:

The Recreation Advisory Committee will make recommendations to Council on matters that will foster and enhance a strong and stable recreation environment that is consistent with the attributes of a sustainable community. The RAC provides recommendations on issues pertaining to the encouragement, co-ordination and development of activities relating to the enhancement of recreation within North Middlesex. RAC will liaise with existing recreation and minor sports groups and facilitate the development of new recreation options through support and provision of opportunities for new recreation growth to benefit the quality of life and prosperity in North Middlesex.

(By-law 10 of 2019)

The RAC advises Council on a range of matters, including:

- Reviewing the recreation needs of the community;
- Assisting with the development of recreation and facilities level of service;
- Ensuring programs and services attain the expected level of service;
- Best management practices regarding policies, practices and programs concerning parks, recreation and facilities;
- Provide feedback on issues and concerns regarding recreation, parks, and facilities; and
- Ensuring programs and services are accessible.

The RAC provides a voice for the community as it relates to recreation (and parks) opportunities. Noting the Municipality's limited resources, the RAC will continue to play an important role in North Middlesex as it's recommended that the group be tasked with providing support in implementing the Master Plan. For example, the RAC would continue to provide Council with advice as directed by the terms of reference, but also assist the Municipality with community and stakeholder engagement, coordination with the Youth Advisory Council, research, identifying recommendations that should be implemented in the short-term, assisting with the preparation of regular status reports, and provide general oversight of and input on the Master Plan implementation process. Expanding the RAC's mandate to recognize, promote, and strengthen the local arts and culture industry in North Middlesex should also be explored. This would further support the community's desire to raise the arts and culture profile in the Municipality, which was heard through the consultation process.

Recommendations – Recreation Advisory Committee

50. Amend the Terms of Reference for the Recreation Advisory Committee to support the Municipality with the implementation of the Recreation & Facilities Master Plan. This may include, but not be limited to, assisting with community and stakeholder engagement, coordination with the Youth Advisory Committee, research, identifying short-term recommendations, assisting with the preparation of status reports, and providing general oversight and input on the Master Plan implementation process. Expanding the RAC's mandate to recognize, promote, and strengthen the local arts and culture opportunities is encouraged.

7.4 Programming

The Municipality currently provides a narrow range of direct recreation programs given that it has primarily focused on providing space; this approach is consistent with other smaller urban/rural communities. Recreational skating opportunities is the only program type offered directly by the Municipality, which includes public skating, Mom and Tots, and Seniors' Skating.

Recreation programming in North Middlesex is also a collaborative process between the Municipality and community organizations. These relationships are crucial to providing programs that contribute to quality of life and are important for creating a sense of place, strong community cohesion, civic pride, and economic spin-offs.

The YMCA of Southwestern Ontario is the Municipality's primary service provider, which delivers a range of community programs. In addition to operating the fitness centre at the North Middlesex Arena & YMCA Fitness Centre, the YMCA offers a range of programs, including childminding, arts, science, active and creative play, pickleball, and group fitness (e.g., yoga, circuit training, etc.).

Community groups that operate North Middlesex facilities also provide direct programming. The Parkhill Leisure Club provides traditional seniors activities such as cards, bingo, meals, and general rentals. The Parkhill Carnegie Library provides arts exhibitions, classes, and music concerts. The Ye Olde Towne Hall offers youth activities and camps, coffee times, CraigActive, health clinics, dances, and arts and crafts programs. The Ailsa Craig Arts Centre is not municipally owned or operated, although they are also an important pillar in the local community. The Ailsa Craig Arts Centre offers art classes and exhibits, and offers drop-in studio hours that welcomes artisans to use the space and equipment.

In addition to these facility and program providers, there are several other dedicated community organizations and volunteers that use North Middlesex's indoor facilities and parks to deliver

their activities, events and services, or within facilities and spaces in the community. For example, Grace Bible Chapel runs Five Fun Days in Parkhill during the summer. Other examples include the Ailsa Craig & District Co-op Playschool, Parkhill and Ailsa Craig Scouts, Parkhill Optimists, Ailsa Craig & Parkhill Lions Club, Ailsa Craig Village Association, Parkhill Agricultural Society, Parkhill Legion, Youth Unlimited, VON Middlesex, minor sports organizations, and more.



The consultation process found that there is a desire for more programming for youth, older adults, sports and non-sports activities such as arts and culture that are offered year round. In making decisions to support existing or new programs, the Municipality and community providers should prioritize those that align with the goals of the Framework for Recreation in Canada. This includes programs that:

- Focus on children/youth, older adults/seniors, and under-represented populations;
- Are affordable and accessible;

- Incorporate physical literacy into child and youth activities;
- Support healthy living and active aging;
- Strengthen community partnerships;
- Support unstructured and self-scheduled activities;
- Promote the appropriate use of parks and facilities for special events;
- Optimize the use of municipal parks and facilities; and
- Allow people to connect with nature and be good stewards of the environment.

There is a clear desire for enhanced programming that responds to a greater variety of interests. As the Municipality's population continues to grow and diversify, new residents will be seeking a range of activities. Continuing to work with community organizations to promote existing programs and explore new activities within the Municipality's indoor and outdoor spaces is recommended to engage residents on a year round basis.

Specific opportunities to strengthen community programming are highlighted below. While additional community engagement may be required to identify specific program requests, emphasis should be placed on providing a broad range of different opportunities to respond to all age groups and interests. Providing programming on a trial basis is encouraged to test demand before implementing activities on a full time basis, which may need to consider resource requirements.

Focusing on children, youth, and older adults

The consultation process revealed that there is demand for children, youth, and older adult activities. Engaging these segments of the community are more important than ever to

address issues of social isolation, physical inactivity, and mental wellness. A wider range of programming is required to address the needs of current and future residents that are beyond traditional sports, particularly if the Municipality is expected to diversify during the planning period. People have a broad range of interests including, but not limited to, virtual programming, education and learning, arts and culture, skill development, low-impact fitness, and more.

Offering convenient, casual/drop-in activities

The community survey found that the lack of time was one of the main barriers to participation. This is common in many communities, particularly adults who are faced with competing priorities. Activities that are convenient, accessible, affordable, and relevant – like drop-in activities – have proven to be popular. Across the Province, drop-in exercise and group fitness, skating, arts and crafts, pickleball, and activities for pre-school children and caregivers have been on the rise. Casual activities must continue to be emphasized and adapted to emerging trends.

Expanding low-cost outdoor recreation programs within parks

Municipalities are increasingly animating their park spaces through programming and new forms of community engagement. Some examples include, but are not limited to, fitness in the park, outdoor yoga, art and music in the park, food trucks, summer camps, and special events and festivals. Some of these examples are found in the North Middlesex, delivered by community partners with the support of the Municipality. Viewing parks as “outdoor living rooms” helps to broaden their scope of use and engages a wider audience, leading to experiential learning, participation, and community mobilization.

Recommendations –Programming

51. Work with community service providers and other public entities to promote existing activities and explore new program ideas to engage the community and increase use of the Municipality's parks and facilities year round, particularly within underutilized spaces or locations with capacity for additional use. An emphasis should be placed on providing a broad range of in-person and virtual programs that are affordable for all age groups including organized and drop-in programs centered around education and learning, arts and culture, skill development, low-impact fitness, and sports. Additional consultation may be undertaken to confirm or refine program demand.

7.5 Special Events

There are three signature special events are held in North Middlesex each year that are put on by community organizations with the assistance of the Municipality – Parkhill Fair, Gala Days, and Canada Day Fireworks. These events celebrate local traditions, builds community spirit, fundraise for causes, and facilitates tourism and economic activity, as well as contribute to building a sense of place with unique experiences that take place in North Middlesex.

Parkhill Fair

The Parkhill Fair is an annual event that has been put on by dedicated volunteers of the Parkhill Agricultural Society for over 160 years. First held in 1860, the Parkhill Fair is held at the Parkhill Sports Park, North Middlesex Community Centre and North Middlesex Arena & YMCA Fitness Centre to celebrate the local rural and agricultural community over several days in August that includes family-oriented local entertainment, friendly games and

competitions, prize draws, vendors, displays, rides, petting zoo, amusement and barrel rides, exhibits, ball tournaments, wrestling, demolition derby, tractor pull, snowmobile grass drag racing, arts and crafts, food, and other fun events.

Ailsa Craig Gala Days

The idea for Ailsa Craig Gala Days originated in 1973 when two residents were inspired by a turtle racing competition in Manitoba known as the Great Turtle Derby. The event was adapted in Ailsa Craig and the inaugural turtle race was held in the community in 1974. The popularity of the event grew into a major annual family attraction that is now known as Gala Days, which draws residents from across the Municipality and beyond. While turtle racing is no longer part of the celebrations, this signature event is held over three days in the summer and is filled with family friendly events and activities to celebrate Ailsa Craig, including entertainment to showcase local talent, food, games and competitions, dinners, exhibits, movie in the park, and more.



Canada Day Fireworks

The Municipality celebrates Canada Day at Ken Vernon Park. Hosted by the Canada Day Committee, this one-day event is filled with live entertainment, food, family games, and other attractions. The evening ends with a fireworks display.

In addition, more events are held throughout the year that are put on by other community groups such as the Ye Olde Towne Hall, Parkhill Optimist Club, Parkhill and Ailsa Craig Legions, Ailsa Craig Arts Centre, and more. North Middlesex special events are made possible by hard working and dedicated volunteers while the Municipality is responsible for providing space and ensuring that the appropriate services are available to support activities such as water and power services, pavilions, washrooms, parking and more.

Given the vast experience community organizations have with planning, developing, and delivering special events in North Middlesex, the Municipality should continue to play a supporting role in providing space and assisting groups, as necessary, to ensure that organizations and special events continue to be successful and sustainable.

The Master Plan identified that the Municipality explore alternative options for the West Williams Community Centre and Ken Vernon Park due to these spaces being underutilized for the majority of the year. Recognizing that this site is the location for the Canada Day Celebration, this Master Plan recommended that the Municipality work with event organizations to explore options to host the event at existing community spaces or alternative locations (See Recommendation 6).

There is benefit in developing a Special Events Guide to create a standardized approach for organizations that provide events on public property. This may include, requirements and responsibilities of all parties involved (including the Municipality), as well as policies and procedures groups must adhere to such as insurance, alcohol, security, and other protocols. Establishing a

process for monitoring attendance levels and tracking the economic impact is also encouraged to evaluate performance and to measure the community value of these important events.

Recommendations have been identified in this Master Plan to support special events such as strengthening volunteerism and enhancing communication and marketing.

Recommendations – Special Events

52. Ensure that the Municipality’s indoor and outdoor spaces can support community programs and events in strategic locations, including the availability of water, power, pavilions, washrooms etc.
53. Establish a system to monitor attendance levels and track the economic impact of special events to determine the success of events that take place in North Middlesex.
54. Prepare a Special Events Guide to establish the policies, procedures, requirements to support the planning, development, and delivery of community-led events on Municipality of North Middlesex property.

7.6 Child Services

The Municipality currently provides space at the Ailsa Craig Recreation Centre that is used by the Ailsa Craig & District Co-op Playschool, which is a non-profit organization that provides nursery school activities for toddlers and pre-school children between the ages of 18 months and five years. The school offers part-time childcare between Tuesday and Friday during the school year. There are approximately 25 children attending the centre. The YMCA also provides childminding services at the North Middlesex Community Centre.

Privately-operated daycare services are also available in Parkhill for infants, toddlers, and pre-school from the ages of three months to six years. The centre reported that they currently have 34 registrants and are generally at capacity due to staff availability. Capacity is also limited due to physical space requirements, although it is noted that the facility could potentially be enhanced or expanded to accommodate increased enrollment. In addition to this provider, home-based daycares may also exist throughout the Municipality.

As the population of North Middlesex is expected to grow over during the planning period, it can be expected that pressure for daycare services in the Municipality will continue, particularly in Ailsa Craig where considerable population growth is expected during the planning period.

Convenient access to affordable childcare is an important consideration for many new families. Recognizing the community benefits associated with this service, there is merit in considering new childcare opportunities to respond to current needs, as well as anticipated demand driven by the future residential growth that is expected to attract new young families over the planning period.

There are local examples of best practices related to public childcare services. For example, the Municipality of Southwest Middlesex secured \$2.5M in 2020 from the Province to construct a new, standalone daycare, which is operated in partnership with a non-profit organization. This allowed the Municipality to expand childcare services from 44 pre-school children to 88 infants, toddlers, and pre-school children.

It is recommended that the Municipality initiate a process for establishing a new, affordable childcare space in the Municipality to serve the community, which should include a site selection exercise to determine an appropriate location.

Recognizing the capital and operational requirements associated with providing childcare services, and the limited resources of the Municipality, undertaking this initiative with experienced partners

is recommended. Potential partner may include, but not be limited to, the Province of Ontario, Middlesex County, YMCA, Ailsa Craig Playschool, and others.

Ensuring that families have affordable access to childcare services are available should also be emphasized, particularly as it was heard through the Master Plan consultation process. Promoting the Ontario Child Care Fee Subsidy is recommended, and it is encouraged that the future childcare operator enroll in the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care program that aims to reduce childcare fees to \$10 a day by 2025.

Recommendations – Child Services

55. Explore future opportunities to provide affordable childcare services in North Middlesex in coordination with partners, which may include, but not be limited to, the Province of Ontario, Middlesex County, YMCA, Ailsa Craig & District Co-op, and/or other third-party entities.
56. Promote the Ontario Child Care Fee Subsidy to provide financial assistance for families in need.

7.7 Youth Services

It is a key strategy for the Municipality to engage and retain youth and new young professionals in North Middlesex. This age group is commonly referred to as a vulnerable segment of the community as close attention and engagement is needed to ensure lifelong success. The availability of youth-oriented parks, recreation and culture opportunities is a key component to this success and is one that is often viewed as a gap in many communities. The Master Plan community survey found that 25% of respondents were unsatisfied with parks and recreation opportunities for youth in North Middlesex, which was the highest among all age groups.

There was a desire for more programming geared towards youth, particularly non-sport activities.

According to the 2021 Census, youth between the ages of 10 and 19 represent 12% of the Municipality's population. Although this segment of the Municipality's population is declining, this trend may experience a reversal over the planning period as population growth is expected given that residential development is anticipated to attract young families with youth (and children).

The Municipality works with its partners to offer a range of parks, recreation, and culture opportunities in North Middlesex such as outdoor sports fields and courts, ice activities, splash pads, community-based recreation and cultural programs and more. Additionally, youth opportunities are provided by others as discussed in Section 7.4.

One of the common challenges associated with engaging youth is that this age group tends to have a wide variety of interests that can change and evolve over time. Engaging youth directly to understand what programs and activities they would like to see offered is the first step to addressing needs. One approach is to establish a Youth Action Council to empower youth and give them a voice in municipal decision-making. While staff resources will be required for coordination, the Youth Action Council would be responsible for providing input on leading trends and consulting with the broader youth population (including engaging students in schools) to explore programs and activities that interest them. Potential opportunities may be tested by the Municipality and its community partners on a trial basis and successful programs can be delivered on a regular basis.

The Municipality's commitment to retaining youth and growing opportunities can be bolstered by embracing the principles of being a "Youth Friendly Community". This concept was created by the Play Works Partnership, which is an organization that is currently on hold, although municipalities can continue to actively work with its partners to create diverse opportunities for youth to play, with consideration given to the following:

- Youth have options to play.
- Youth are formally connected community-wide.
- It is easy for youth to find information about activities in the community.
- The community recognizes and celebrates youth.
- The community formally commits funding for youth play.
- The community supports positive youth development.
- Youth feel valued by the community.
- Schools and school boards support the youth friendly application.
- Play is accessible to youth.
- Play is socially inclusive.

The Youth Action Council may have a role to play in ensuring that North Middlesex responds to as many of these principles as possible. Collaboration with community partners should be considered to recognize the full range of youth opportunities in North Middlesex.

Recommendations – Youth Services

57. Establish a Youth Advisory Council to empower youth and give them a voice in the decision-making process. With staff support for coordination, the Youth Advisory Council should be responsible for consulting with the broader youth population (including engaging students within schools); identifying trends, issues and programs that matter to them; and identifying how parks, recreation and culture opportunities can be improved to be more youth friendly.

Recommendations – Youth Services

58. Embrace the principles of being a “youth friendly community” to ensure that a full range of youth opportunities are available in North Middlesex.

assist with this, it is recommended that the Municipality regular engage the older adult and senior community to discuss their needs and challenges, as well as to identify achievable solutions to ensure that they continue to be active in their retirement years.



To encourage the older adult and senior population to age in place, the Municipality is also encouraged to establish an Age-Friendly Action Plan, which is a key initiative that’s also identified in the North Middlesex Community & Corporate Strategic Plan. By having an Age-Friendly Action Plan, the Municipality can establish

7.8 Adult, Older Adult and Senior Services

Between the 2011 and 2021 Census, the Municipality’s older adult and senior population (ages 55+) increased by 17%. North Middlesex is an aging municipality, and it is expected that this trend will continue during the next 10 years. Research suggests that the aging population is more active than ever before. This is driven by the baby boomer population wishing to remain active as they age, including those seeking lifelong-learning opportunities and persons managing chronic illness, disease, and/or those that are seeking low-impact, therapeutic, and rehabilitative programs. The consultation process revealed that there is a growing desire for older adult programming, including low-impact group fitness and pickleball.

The Municipality and its community partners offer a broad range of recreational activities geared towards older adults and seniors, including pickleball, trails, fitness, community gardening, social groups, dancing, and more. The Municipality’s older adult and senior programs complement activities provided by other community facility, service, and program providers, including those mentioned in Section 7.4.

As North Middlesex’s population continues to age, there will be an increasing demand for parks, recreation and culture opportunities to appeal to older adults and seniors to support aging in place, which is a key strategy in the Municipality’s Community & Corporate Strategic Plan. Providing high-quality parks, recreation and culture services geared towards this segment of the population should be a priority over the foreseeable future. To

strategies for how parks, recreation and culture opportunities can be better suited for older adults and seniors, such as considering comfort amenities and offering programs and services geared towards these age cohorts. The Age-Friendly Action Plan should also address other community areas to encourage residents to age in place such as transportation, housing, health care, and more. Engaging the Municipality’s service clubs as part of preparing the Age-Friendly Action Plan is encouraged recognizing that many of these community groups are represented by older adults and seniors, as well as the broader public.

Recommendations – Adult, Older Adult and Senior Services

59. In consultation with community stakeholders and the public, prepare an Age-Friendly Action Plan to identify strategies to be more welcoming of older adults and seniors and encourage them to age in place. Consideration should be given to enhancing parks, recreation and cultural opportunities including, but not limited to, accessibility, comfort amenities (e.g., seating and shade), and addressing gaps in programs and services (potentially in coordination with community partners). Other strategies should also be explored with respect to transportation, housing, health care and more.

7.9 Effective Communication & Marketing

Effective means of community outreach and awareness is critical to ensure that there is a high degree of public participation in parks and recreation activities. With an overwhelming amount of information being directed to people in their day-to-day lives combined with limited skills and financial resources of community providers, the ability to effectively promote local parks and recreation opportunities can get lost.

Experiences across Ontario demonstrate that people find it difficult to know what services are being offered by municipalities and community providers. This was apparent through the consultation process as the community survey revealed that the lack of information or being unaware of what opportunities exist in the Municipality was a common participation barrier.

Adding to the challenge is the fact that different forms of communication are favoured by different markets. For example, social media advertising may be more effective for younger generations and tech-savvy residents, while print media and word-of-mouth may be more accessible for older generations. Digital communication and marketing may also be less effective for households with limited or no internet access or for those who are not comfortable with using technology.

It is a key goal of the Municipality’s Community & Corporate Strategic Plan to encourage community participation to help residents feel welcomed, informed and engaged. North Middlesex uses a range of methods to communicate with the public including, but not limited to, the Municipality’s website, social media, The Navigator community e-mail newsletter, word-of-mouth, and special events such as Discover North Middlesex that brings together local organizations to promote their services in the community and attract new volunteers and participants. Continued use of these methods is encouraged and to extend the Municipality’s public reach, consideration should be given to publishing a Community and Recreation Guide to provide residents with valuable information about the location of parks, recreation, and culture facilities and amenities, programs and services, rental information, community directory, event calendar, volunteer organizations, and more. Utilizing a range of print and digital methods to communicate is encouraged to reach a wide audience.

The Municipality also developed a new mobile application to further its reach to the community to connect residents with important civic information from across municipal departments. From a recreation perspective, residents will have immediate

access to programming, events, municipal updates, contact information, and other information to ensure that they are informed about what's going on in the community.

Strengthen communication with the general public and community stakeholders is also recommended as it is a best practice for municipalities to engage groups and the broader public on a regular basis to promote opportunities to the community (such as programs and events), understand challenges groups are facing, particularly because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and improve coordination with Municipality staff and more. This strategy would directly respond to input received from the consultation process that suggested that greater communication between stakeholders and the Municipality was needed.

Recommendations – Effective Communication & Marketing

60. Regularly engage community organizations and the broader public, either together or separately, to receive community feedback, raise awareness and promote local recreation opportunities, understand challenges groups are facing (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic impacts), improve coordination with Municipal staff, and explore strategies to enhance communication and marketing using a broad range of print and online resources. Community engagement may be led by the Recreation Advisory Committee.
61. Create a print and online Community and Recreation Guide to include information about recreation and community facilities, programs, and services available across the Municipality. Information may include, but not be limited to, the location of parks, facilities and amenities, programs and services, rental information, community directory, event calendar, volunteer organizations, and more.

7.10 Community Partnerships

Part of continuing to implement the blended service delivery model recommended through this Master Plan involves formally working with groups and individuals to deliver parks, recreation and culture services. There may be instances where no one party is able to provide a program, service or facility on its own, or the risk is too great for any one party to overcome. In such instances, the creation of a partnership can be a great benefit in addressing identified needs or service gaps, while minimizing service duplication.

North Middlesex is an indirect service provider which is typically used in departments with limited financial and human resources. Under this model, the Municipality's primary role is to provide physical space, while programming and activities that occur within these spaces delivered by the YMCA, service clubs, community organizations, and sports groups. The Municipality is also in the process of establishing a shared use agreement with schools.

Consultation with these community groups found that there is support for the Municipality to continue implementing this indirect service delivery model over the foreseeable future. Continuing to maintain and build upon successful relationships is the recommended approach going forward and requires that the Municipality regularly review and or form new partnership agreements to ensure that they are relevant, beneficial to the public interest, and achieve the Municipality's vision for parks, recreation and culture. Exploring opportunities to work collaboratively with community organizations in implementing the recommendations of this Master Plan is encouraged.

When considering new partnership opportunities, it is important to ensure that they are mutually beneficial to all parties. There are a number of factors the Municipality should consider when evaluating new partnership opportunities. At a minimum, the

Municipality should use the following criteria as a standard framework for partnership evaluation:

- The purpose of the proposed partnership and how it aligns with the Municipality and Corporate mandate and philosophies;
- The role of the Municipality in providing the proposed program or service;
- Whether there is quantifiable or justified need for the program or service in the community;
- If there is a cost-benefit to establishing a partnership to provide the program or service;
- The program or service can be accommodated within the Municipality’s parks and/or recreation and community facilities without negatively impacting existing users;
- How the service be can appropriately accommodated within the Municipality’s long-term capital and/or operating resources;
- If the partner is sufficiently capable/qualified to deliver the program or service over the long-term and in compliance with legislative policies and municipal standards;
- That the level of risk is acceptable to both parties and there is a plan in place to manage the risk;
- Whether the potential partner can provide the program or service on a sole basis; and
- There is a full agreement of the terms, conditions, standards and responsibilities for all parties involved.



Formalizing partnership agreements with existing relationships is another area that the Municipality should explore. While the Municipality has maintained relationships with local community groups, establishing a formal partnership agreement with consideration given to the above criteria ensures that there is clarity in the roles and responsibilities between the parties involved. It also ensures that any entity partnering with the Municipality can deliver on its promises so that the Municipality is not left in a position to take over operations and/or financial commitments if a partner no longer participates.

Recommendations – Community Partnerships

62. Establish a partnership guide or a standardized framework for evaluating potential partnership opportunities to deliver parks, recreation and culture opportunities.
63. Formalize partnership agreements with community organizations operating in North Middlesex to provide a program or service to establish clearly defined roles and responsibilities, minimize risk, and other necessary details.

7.11 Volunteerism

The strength of local volunteers in North Middlesex is crucial as the Municipality relies on these individuals for the successful delivery of parks, recreation and culture programs, services and events. The efforts of North Middlesex's volunteers contribute to the Municipality's quality of life and are important for creating a sense of place, strong community cohesion, civic pride and economic development.

While the importance of volunteerism cannot be understated, research reveals that interest in volunteering is declining. While younger Ontarians are required to volunteer to meet secondary education requirements, research found that older adults and seniors make up the majority of volunteer hours. The number of volunteer hours from older adults and seniors are also declining and they are not being offset by volunteers from younger age groups. As a result, some organizations struggle to find sufficient volunteers to provide the high-quality programs, services and events that residents expect. This echoes the sentiments expressed by many local community groups that participated in the stakeholder consultation sessions for the Master Plan.

The Municipality recognizes the importance of volunteering and connecting residents with organizations that are seeking assistance. North Middlesex is proud to celebrate National Volunteer Week to help bring attention to the importance of giving back to the community. The Municipality encourages residents to get involved in the community by volunteering and has a dedicated section of the North Middlesex website that advertises open volunteer positions and community organizations that residents can join. The Municipality also uses social media to help attract volunteers.

The Municipality also has two Volunteer Recognition Awards to recognize outstanding volunteer contributions in the community. The North Middlesex Civic Award recognizes an individual age 25 or younger under and an individual age 26 and over. The Municipality's Senior Achievement Award also recognizes an individual over the age of 65.



The Municipality's Community & Corporate Strategic Plan emphasizes the need to support local volunteers through recognition and capacity building as it is identified as a key strategy to engage the community. The Community & Corporate Strategic Plan recommends a number of actions to achieve this (some of which have been completed or are in progress), and are supported by the Master Plan and are highlighted below:

- Determine the current level of volunteerism in North Middlesex;
- Develop a Volunteer Strategy for each age group and for core sectors to encourage volunteerism at all ages;
- Set targets and indicators for enhanced volunteerism;
- Develop a bi-annual volunteer recognition and appreciation event (completed);

- Support funding to build volunteer organizational capacity and networks (e.g., Community Development Fund Program and Community Vibrancy Funds) (completed);
- Partner to support existing Hall of Fame Program;
- Develop an annual Municipal Awards Program; and
- Develop a strategy to increase volunteer activities in the Municipality.

In addition to these strategies, the Municipality should strengthen their approach to promoting volunteer opportunities through their website, social media and print mediums to ensure that volunteer opportunities are advertised from all community groups. Engaging community stakeholders on a regular basis to understand their volunteer needs may form part of this process. Supporting volunteers and organizations with necessary training and hosting a volunteer fair should also be explored to bring together stakeholder groups and residents to encourage greater community involvement.

Recommendations – Volunteerism

64. Explore strategies to further enhance volunteer opportunities in North Middlesex including, but not limited to, ensuring that the Municipality’s website, social media and print media promote volunteer opportunities for all community organizations, host a volunteer event to bring together community organizations and residents, and support stakeholders with providing training for volunteers, as necessary.

7.12 Inclusion & Access

Providing inclusive parks, recreation and culture services is a key goal for many communities. Minimizing participation barriers is critical to ensure that all residents in North Middlesex have an opportunity to participate, regardless of income, ability, background and orientation. North Middlesex seeks to provide inclusive opportunities in a number of ways, including removing physical barriers from public facilities and working with its community partners to offer a wide variety of programs that appeal to a variety of abilities and interests. The following highlights some of the ways the Municipality is currently providing inclusive opportunities to engage residents.

Minimizing Financial Barriers

North Middlesex’s median household after-tax income of \$79,000 is on par with the Province (\$79,500) and higher compared to Middlesex County (\$71,000) and the 2021 Census found that 8% of the population were experiencing low income in 2020. The Municipality recognizes the need to engage all residents, including those who may not have disposable income to participate in recreation programs. A nominal fee is applied to the Municipality’s recreation skating programs, which is on par with other communities, and financial assistance programs are provided through the Municipality’s community partners and others such as the YMCA and Canadian Tire Jumpstart.

6% of respondents to the Master Plan community survey reported that the cost to participate in activities was a barrier. Ensuring that affordable parks, recreation and culture opportunities are available for all residents, regardless of income, should be a priority and can be achieved by promoting existing financial assistance programs to bring awareness of these services to the community. Fee-based activities should be complemented by a variety of no to low-fee opportunities such as trails, splash pad, special events and more.

The Municipality also provides funding to community organizations through its Operations Budget (\$43,000 per year), as well as the Community Vibrancy Fund, which is funded by an amenity fee of \$255,000 paid by Bornish Wind GP. The Municipality's Community Vibrancy Fund Policy ensures that the use of these funds is allocated and spent in a fair and transparent manner. The Policy identifies that \$50,000 of this fund is allocated to the Community Development Fund Program, which identifies that:

- The purpose of this program is to financially assist community groups and organizations that offers programs or projects which will provide a benefit to improve the well-being of the Municipality.
- By-law outlines policy, procedures, and eligibility criteria to encourage community organizations to undertake these projects or programs.
- The intent is for the funding to benefit the general public without a profit motive or to support specific interests of an organizations.
- Any funds must not be used by individuals involved in organizations for their own personal financial gain.
- If the approved allocations during any given year fall below the budgeted amount, the difference shall be added to the Budget Mitigation Program.

Community groups may apply for program funding through the following categories:

- Ongoing Program Funding – up to \$20,000 per year
- Multi-Year Project Funding – up to \$5,000 per year
- Cash Assistance for Facility Rental – up to \$15,000 per year

- Disaster Relief Funding Assistance – up to \$2,000 per year
- Other Charitable Funding – up to \$1,000 per year

Public financial support for community organizations is important to ensure the long term success of groups as they are providing vital public services that offset resources and responsibilities of the Municipality. Financial support at this time is particularly important as many groups are still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the consultation process, requests for greater financial support for community organizations was requested as it was also recognized that that there have been increasing costs that make delivering programs and services more costly. Undertaking a review of how the Community Development Fund is allocated to community groups, including how much funding is provided, is recommended to continue financially supporting organizations.

Persons with Disabilities

The 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability found that approximately 22% of Canadians are living with some form of disability. Applying the national average to North Middlesex's population suggests that there could be more than 2,000 residents living with a disability. The Master Plan community survey found that 3% of respondents reported that having a disability was a barrier to participating in activities.

The Municipality is committed to including persons with disabilities in the community, including working with the Middlesex County Accessibility Advisory Committee to implement its Accessibility Plan, as well as various policies and guidelines related to accessibility including, but not limited to, trail design, procedures for support animals and persons, and staff and volunteer training.

From a facility perspective, the Municipality also completed accessibility upgrades to the Ailsa Craig Community Centre in 2020 with the support of federal funding. Continuing to undertake retrofits and enhancements to the Municipality's facilities and

services will need to be a priority to achieve the Province’s goal of making Ontario accessible by 2025. This should involve continuing to work with Middlesex County Accessibility Advisory Committee and engaging persons with disabilities in the community. Building upon the Municipality’s accessibility initiatives, this Master Plan also recommends ensuring that its parks and facilities are designed to be inclusive of all residents, such as establishing park pathways.

LGBTQ2+

Statistics Canada reports that approximately 4% of Canadians ages 15 and over identify as a member of the LGBTQ2+ community. This suggests that nearly 300 North Middlesex residents are part of this community and trends suggest that this group is more likely to face exclusion, particularly in rural communities where supports may be more limited compared to urban centres. Past consultation activities undertaken by the Municipality for its Community & Corporate Strategic Plan revealed that greater support for the LGBTQ2+ community was needed.

Their participation in the community is critical as LGBTQ2+ advocacy groups attribute exclusionary attitudes with mental health issues, homelessness, suicides, and harmful practices in the community. As a regional example, Strathroy was the first community in Middlesex County to host a pride event in 2020 and the Thames Valley District School Board encourages all schools within its district, including North Middlesex, to raise the Pride Flag during Pride Month in June.

It is important to for the Municipality to be aware of the resources that are available and explore potential synergies with partners to minimize participation barriers for LGBTQ2+ residents in North Middlesex. For example, the Middlesex-London Health Unit provides a directory of LGBTQ2+ support groups and resources. As a part of a broader corporate initiative, consideration may also be given to raising the Pride Flag at North Middlesex community facilities to demonstrate the Municipality’s commitment to creating a safe and inclusive space that is free of judgement discrimination. Ongoing engagement with residents of the

LGBTQ2+ community is encouraged to understand how the Municipality can make parks, recreation and culture services welcoming and to bring awareness of the resources and support groups that are available.

Recommendations – Inclusion & Access

65. Work with community partners to ensure that parks, recreation and culture facilities, programs and services are inclusive and accessible for all residents in North Middlesex. Key strategies include, but not be limited to, promoting existing financial assistance programs; offering no to low-cost activities; providing barrier-free facilities, programs, and services; and regular engagement with traditionally marginalized groups such as persons with disabilities and the LGBTQ2+ community to identify ways to make parks, recreation and culture opportunities welcoming and bring awareness to the resources and support groups that are available.
 66. Undertake a review of the Community Development Fund to ensure that funding allocated to organizations are reflective of increasing costs to provide programs and services.
-



8.0 Implementation

Activation of the Recreation & Facilities Master Plan is critical to its success. This requires coordinated efforts and a commitment from Council, staff, stakeholders, and the public, as well as a variety of funding options to implement the Master Plan. This section provides guidance on the Master Plan's implementation.

8.1 Financial Considerations

The Master Plan calls for continued financial investment in new and existing parks, recreation and culture infrastructure over the next ten years. To assist the Municipality in establishing a financial strategy for the Master Plan, several assumptions have been made. These assumptions provide direction towards various opportunities and constraints that must be considered when budgeting for the Plan's implementation. As the Master Plan is implemented, it is expected that:

- Increases in costs to develop, revitalize, and maintain parks, recreation and culture facilities will be greater than the rate of inflation because of rising land costs, increasingly complex projects, the general public's heightened quality expectations, legislated building, and accessibility standards, etc.
- The Municipality will be expected to adhere to fiscally responsible revenue generation policies and practices, along with the allocation of sufficient capital and operating resources to fund core priorities.
- The magnitude of investments required to achieve and maintain facilities in acceptable condition will grow in proportion to an expanded volume of assets and the increasingly aged stock of facilities.
- The range of new types of parks, recreation and culture infrastructure will continue to expand, which will increase funding and staffing requirements to address a growing inventory and responsibilities.
- The need for sufficient, stable and predictable infrastructure funding streams will be increasingly important to support sound and proactive facility planning.

- The need for creative infrastructure funding solutions will be greatest in periods of low-growth and where aging facilities need to be revitalized or replaced.
- Working collaboratively with the community, developers, and other partners will be important to successfully keep pace with escalating needs for more and better services.
- It will take time and continued investment to assist the parks, recreation and culture sector to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Municipality has limited resources and cannot afford to do everything that the community desires; underscoring the importance of the Master Plan. While North Middlesex may experience various challenges in providing applicable financial and human resources to achieve the Master Plan's recommendations, it is expected that the Municipality will make every effort to implement these strategies through appropriate means.

Full implementation of the Master Plan will require the use of a range of funding sources, including (but not limited to) the strategies below. Feasibility studies and sound business planning (with public input) should be conducted prior to undertaking major capital projects to ensure that they are aligned with community needs, partnerships and financial capabilities.

Development Charges

Development charges are fees that are collected through the building process to address growth-related infrastructure needs of a community, such as new or enhanced recreation facilities. Bill 23 contains changes that impact the amount of funding generated through development charges, such as extending development charge by-laws to 10 years instead of five years. Some of the recommendations identified in this Master Plan may be eligible for development charge funding.

Parkland Cash-in-Lieu

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 Municipality's discretion, cash-in-lieu may be collected and used to purchase parkland or improve existing parks. As identified in this Master Plan, the amount of cash that can be collected by the Municipality has been impacted by Bill 23, which will need to be considered as part of a future Official Plan review to ensure that the North Middlesex policies align with modifications to Provincial legislation. As of February 2023, the Municipality had a cash-in-lieu reserve of approximately \$50,000.

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. Industry standards suggest that 2% of the capital value of assets be put into a reserve annually. The Municipality currently has a facility reserve of approximately \$1.3M as of February 2023 for general projects; approximately \$250,000 is added reserve each year. The Master Plan recommends establishing a dedicated reserve for a future arena replacement/new facility development.

Fundraising, Donations and Sponsorships

The capital and ongoing operational costs associated with parks, recreation and culture services are substantial and will inherently place pressures on the municipal budget. Seeking assistance from the community to contribute resources towards the construction and/or operation of parks, recreation culture services can be an

effective way to provide services that are desired by residents. In the past, local user groups and service clubs have collected donations and/or participated in fundraising for new facilities and this practice is expected to continue to some degree, noting that future donations and fundraising efforts may be impacted by residents, businesses and service clubs who have experienced pandemic-related financial constraints.

User Fees and Surcharges

User and rental fees for most parks, recreation and culture services – particularly those that are for broad use – are minimal as they exist to promote physical activity, social interaction and community benefits. Fees are in place for some dedicated-use space or amenities (e.g., arenas) that benefit specific groups or individuals. Increases in user fees – such as through a project specific surcharge – can be used to offset the costs associated with capital upgrades. However, there must be caution in increasing user fees as this can result in creating barriers to participation (e.g., reduced affordability), reducing the number or participants which can impact program feasibility, etc. Over the past two years, the Municipality's arena rental fees have remained unchanged, although a modest 3% increase has been put into place for the 2022 to 2023 period, although public skating fees have remained unchanged. The Master Plan recommends considering the implementation of an arena surcharge towards future arena enhancements, redevelopment, or replacement as this would complement the recommended dedicated reserve for a future arena replacement/new facility development..

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 Municipalities credit rating and ongoing or planned capital projects this can be a more expensive funding alternative and can impact the future borrowing rate and fiscal capacity.

Ongoing Government and Funding Programs

One example of an ongoing government program is the Canada Community Building Fund, which provides municipalities with a funding stream that can be used for the construction of public infrastructure, including recreation, sports, tourism, culture, roads, and more. Since 2019, the Municipality has received an average of \$200,000 per year through this fund for community projects.

The Municipality also receives \$255,000 per year from Bornish Wind GP to fund community initiatives including the Community Development Fund Program, Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital Foundation program, Community Improvement Plan, Endowment Fund Program, and Annual Budget Mitigation Program.

One-Time Grants

Municipalities often seek financial support from senior levels of government for major municipal capital projects. In 2020, a COVID-19 Resilience stream was created to provide an accelerated process to fund projects that respond to the pandemic. The Municipality benefited from this project and received a total of \$100,000 from the Federal and Provincial government towards enhancements to a McGillivray works shed. The Municipality also received \$100,000 from the Enabling Accessibility Fund towards accessibility enhancements to the Ailsa Craig Community Centre. By having an approved Master Plan, which may be required for securing grant funding, the Municipality can demonstrate to upper-tier governments that the needs and priorities have been studied and there is community support for new and/or improved capital projects. Additional staff resources may be required to assist with monitoring and applying for grants.

Partnerships

To maximize benefits to the community, the Municipality has a history of engaging in partnerships with community groups, service clubs, sports groups, and others to provide access to parks, recreation and culture services. Strengthening existing and creating new partnerships during the planning period should be the pathway forward to maximize the use of available resources, while sharing roles and responsibilities. Several recommendations identified throughout this Master Plan that may be implemented through partnerships.

Recommendations – Financial Considerations

67. Where appropriate, consider alternative funding and cost-sharing approaches including, but not limited to, user fees, fundraising, donations, grants, partnerships, and other strategies to provide the best value to residents.
68. Use this Master Plan as a resource to inform the Municipality's annual capital budget and other related studies.
69. Conduct feasibility studies and sound business planning (with public input) prior to undertaking major capital projects to ensure that projects are aligned with community needs, partnership opportunities and financial capabilities.

8.2 Monitoring & Updating the Master Plan

The Municipality will need to regularly review and assess, and periodically revise the recommendations of the Master Plan to ensure that they remain reflective of local conditions and responsive to the changing needs of the community. This will require measuring the performance of various parks, recreation and culture services, including monitoring population growth,

subdivision development applications, activity patterns, participation, facility usage, user satisfaction, regular dialogue with community organizations. Developing key performance indicators is encouraged to quantitatively track these measures and establish baseline data that can be compared year-over year.

To ensure that recommendations continue to reflect the needs of the community, undertake a mid-cycle five year review (2027/2028) and a detailed 10-year update to the Master Plan with consultation with stakeholders and the general public. Through these mechanisms – or as a result of other internal or external factors – adjustment of resource allocations, priorities, and timing for implementation identified in this Master Plan may be required.

To highlight achievements and statistics related to parks, recreation and culture, as well as the implementation status of the Master Plan, the Municipality should work with the Recreation Advisory Committee to prepare and present regular status reports of the Master Plan to Council. This report should be extended to include objectives and recommendations that staff plan to achieve within the short-term.

Reviewing the Master Plan requires a commitment from all staff involved in the planning, financing, and delivery of parks, recreation and culture services, Recreation Advisory Committee, Council, stakeholders and the general public. An appropriate time for this is prior to the annual budgeting process. The following steps may be used to conduct a regular review of the Master Plan.

- a) Review of the past year (recommendations implemented, capital projects undertaken, success/failure of new and existing initiatives, changes in participation rates, issues arising from the public and community groups, etc.);
- b) Identification of issues impacting the coming year (anticipated financial and operational constraints, emerging opportunities, etc.);

- c) cursory review of the Master Plan for direction regarding its recommendations;
- d) Preparation of a staff report to indicate prioritization of short-term projects and determination of 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.);
- e) Communication to staff and Council regarding the status of projects, criteria used to prioritize projects, and projects to be implemented in the short-term; and
- f) Budget requests/revisions, as necessary.

Recommendations – Monitoring & Updating the Master Plan

- 70. Work with the Recreation Advisory Committee to establish a system for the regular monitoring and reporting of the Master Plan. The Recreation Advisory Committee should prepare progress reports to Council to and identify key recommendations to be implemented within the short-term and factors that may impact implementation such as population growth, usage data, new grant and partnership opportunities, and other variables.
- 71. Establish key performance indicators to measure participation levels, facility usage, satisfaction levels, and other key data to support reporting to Council and to establish baseline data to be compared year-over-year.
- 72. Undertake a mid-cycle review around 2027/2028 and a detailed 10-year update of the Master Plan. Timing may be adjusted based on the pace of implementation and changes in population growth, trends, and other internal and external factors.

8.3 Action Plan Summary

Recommendations have been identified throughout the Master Plan at the end of each subsection or by topic area. By approving the Master Plan as a guiding document, the Municipality is not bound to implement every recommendation or provide facilities, programs and services in the order, amount or manner indicated; rather this Master Plan provides guidance on community priorities and sets a general course for meeting needs as they are presently defined.

Recommendations contained in the Master Plan are summarized on the following pages, together with potential resource implications, including preliminary cost estimates for capital projects or staff time to implement actions. Estimates are based on past projects in comparable municipalities and should only be used as a guide for capital planning purposes. Actual costs will need to be determined by the Municipality at the time of implementation.

Determining priorities is a process that should be revisited regularly such as prior to the Municipality's budget development exercise. In addition to funding availability, factors that may affect priorities may include:

- Capital lifecycle needs and safety considerations;
- Legislation and mandated requirements;
- Changes to service standards;
- Public input and community interests;
- Emerging trends and changes in participation rates;
- Availability of alternative providers;
- Socio-demographic changes and growth forecasts; and
- Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Priority is often, but not always aligned 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 with consideration given to public input, trends, demographics, capacity, demand, etc. North Middlesex should make efficient use of resources through initiatives that have the broadest community benefit and serve the widest range of needs. The priority and timing of recommendations are organized into the following categories:

Timing

- **Short-Term:** 2023 to 2025
- **Medium-Term:** 2026 to 2028
- **Long-Term:** 2029 and beyond
- **Ongoing:** Guidelines and best practices to be followed on a continual basis

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 or completed.

Potential Cost Impacts

(Note: all cost estimates are preliminary and to be confirmed by staff or through future study prior to implementation)

- **Minor (\$):** Estimated at \$100,000 or less
- **Moderate (\$\$):** Estimated to be between \$100,000 and \$500,000
- **Major (\$\$\$):** Estimated at \$500,000 or more

Recommendation	Timing	Priority	Cost
Section 5: Recreation Facilities			
1. Explore strategies to bolster ice use such as increasing morning usage, engaging schools to utilize daytime rentals, promoting available ice time on the Municipality’s website, and encouraging use of the arena floor for community rentals and programming during the spring/summer season.	Ongoing	High	
2. Begin long-term planning for the eventual redevelopment or replacement of the arena, with consideration given to continuing to contribute to its facility reserve fund (or establish a dedicated fund for arena replacement/new facility development), establishing an arena surcharge, evaluating potential opportunities for site acquisition, exploring external funding and partnerships, appropriate business and financial planning; and other facility enhancements or community space needs. These considerations may be explored through a detailed feasibility study prior to further decision making.	Short-Term	High	\$\$\$ (>\$500,000)
3. Investigate strategic locations for outdoor fitness equipment at Parkhill Sports Park and Ailsa Craig Lions Park. Subject to demand, other locations may also be considered at the discretion of staff including, but not limited to, Ailsa Craig Community Park, Coronation Park, East Williams Optimist Park, and Lieury Park.	Medium-Term	Medium	\$ (<\$100,000)
4. Once a Shared Use Agreement with local school boards is in place, monitor the level of access to school gymnasiums to inform future decisions to provide a municipally owned and operated gymnasium.	Ongoing	Medium	
5. Promote the availability of community meeting spaces that can support a wide range of community recreational, cultural, and social activities.	Ongoing	High	
6. To determine if there is demonstrated demand to maintain the West Williams Community Centre, raise awareness and promote this facility to bolster utilization, and work with the community to improve use of the facility, such as encouraging general rentals, hosting more special events, and other activities. Monitor and track annual usage	Short - Term	High	
7. Promote the availability of recreation opportunities provided by the Parkhill Leisure Club and Ye Olde Towne Hall, YMCA, and other community service providers to meet the needs of youth, older adults, and seniors. Supporting these groups in providing and expanding drop-in and structured activities within community spaces is encouraged.	Ongoing	High	
8. Engage local arts and cultural groups to ensure long-term success by raising community awareness to ensure the public is aware of what spaces, programs and services they offer, help plan and develop future opportunities, and provide other needed supports.	Ongoing	High	
9. Monitor the condition of the Parkhill Gallery and the Ye Olde Towne Hall and create a capital reinvestment plan to understand the costs required to maintain these facilities to guide future decisions. Working with	Ongoing	High	

Recommendation	Timing	Priority	Cost
groups to secure a range of funding sources (e.g., grants, fundraising, etc.) for facility enhancements is encouraged.			
10. Work with the arts and culture community to examine opportunities to incorporate public art and local history within the Municipality’s parks and facilities. A Public Art Policy should be created to establish an evaluation and approval process, as well as direction on developing, acquiring, maintaining and funding public art. Establishing a Public Art Reserve should also be created.	Short - Term	High	
11. In consultation with field users and community organizations, identify and prioritize opportunities to enhance the use of soccer fields at East Williams Optimist Park, which may include but not be limited to, field condition, field reconfiguration (may require removal of the surplus ball diamond) and other strategies to be determined by the Municipality.	Medium - Term	Low	
12. Explore opportunities to increase field utilization such as seeking new field users and sports such as rugby or non-sports related community uses.	Short - Term	Low	
13. Explore opportunities to establish a new park in Ailsa Craig to relocate the ball diamond at Ailsa Craig Community Park, potentially with landowners and the development community. The preferred site should be large enough to accommodate two lit, adult-size ball diamonds with supporting features, including parking, pavilion, and other outdoor recreation amenities. Ken Vernon Park may be an alternative option. Consultation with ball user groups and the broader public is recommended to guide decision making.	Medium - Term	High	
14. Regularly engage ball diamond organizations to identify, prioritize enhancements to the existing supply of diamonds, including but not limited to, encouraging weekend usage and use of the Lieury ball diamond, safety netting, pathway development, redevelopment of the pavilion and washrooms at the Parkhill Sports Park, and more.	Short - Term	High	
15. Construct two courts for tennis and pickleball at Ailsa Craig Community Park, contingent upon re-locating the existing ball diamond to another location.	Medium - Term	Medium	\$ (<\$100,000)
16. Undertake targeted consultation with residents within proximity to Lieury Park and East Williams Optimist Park to evaluate the demand for outdoor tennis and pickleball courts.	Long - Term	Low	\$ (<\$100,000)
17. Undertake enhancements to the Parkhill Sports Park basketball court to renew the basketball hoops and posts with more robust fixtures to withstand community use. Consideration should be given to posts with ball hockey nets to support multi-use activities.	Short - Term	High	\$ (<\$100,000)

Recommendation	Timing	Priority	Cost
18. Construct a multi-use court for basketball and ball hockey at Ailsa Craig Community Park, potentially adjacent to the skateboard park. Alternative locations within the park may also be considered subject to relocating the existing ball diamond to another site.	Medium	Low	\$ (<\$100,000)
19. Construct a smaller scale splash pad East Williams Optimist Park. Consultation with the community and stakeholders is encouraged to fundraise, design and construct the splash pad. Timing may be coordinated with renewal of the playground at this park.	Long - Term	Low	\$\$ (\$100,000 to \$500,000)
20. Enhance the use of splash pads through strategies including, but not limited to, promotion to raise awareness, establishing safe walking linkages, and providing supporting amenities such as a shade structure at Coronation Park.	Ongoing	Low	
21. Provide playgrounds within 800 metres of residents within settlement areas, unobstructed by physical barriers. On this basis, address playground gaps on the east side and north side of Ailsa Craig through future park development, as opportunities become available.	Ongoing	High	
22. Replace the East Williams Optimist Park playground with a community-level playground.	Short - Term	High	\$\$ (\$100,000 to \$500,000)
23. Replace the Coronation Park playground with a community-level playground.	Short - Term	High	\$\$ (\$100,000 to \$500,000)
24. Replace the basic playground at Lieury Park.	Medium - Term	Medium	\$ (<\$100,000)
25. New and redeveloped playgrounds should be designed to address accessibility requirements and such as firm and stable surfaces, barrier-free play components, accessible and/or adult swing, and pathways. Other unique features should be considered including, but not limited to musical instruments, mobile gaming applications, natural and adventure play components, etc. Thematic playground designs and unique features should also be considered to create enhanced play experiences.	Ongoing	High	
26. Construct a small-scale skate zone at East Williams Optimist Park.	Medium - Term	Medium	\$\$ (\$100,000 to \$500,000)
27. Undertake renewal of the skateboard park at Ailsa Craig Community Park, including resurfacing (or repairs), and adding skate components and amenities (e.g., seating), at a minimum.	Medium - Term	Medium	\$ (<\$100,000)

Recommendation	Timing	Priority	Cost
28. Monitor use of the Ailsa Craig off-leash dog park and evaluate future opportunities to establish additional locations, potentially in Parkhill and Narin, only if there is a viable community partner to assist with daily operations.	Ongoing	Medium	\$ (<\$100,000)
29. Additional outdoor skating rinks should only be provided if there are willing volunteers that would be responsible for daily operations and maintenance. The Municipality should be responsible for providing support including initial set up and take down, and enforcement.	Ongoing	Low	
30. Work with community partners such as the YMCA, Grace Bible Chapel and schools to promote volleyball programming among North Middlesex residents and monitor participation levels to inform future decisions to add additional sand volleyball courts and/or locations.	Ongoing	Low	
31. To inform future disc golf course needs, monitor the use of the existing disc golf course and promote its use through general awareness and working with community partners to provide programming.	Ongoing	Low	
32. Monitor demand and requests to expand the existing community garden in Parkhill. Evaluate opportunities for additional community garden locations if the Municipality is approached by a volunteer or community organization interested in pursuing this opportunity. The Municipality should be responsible for providing land and supporting infrastructure and volunteers should be responsible for general oversight and maintenance.	Ongoing	High	
33. Work in partnership with the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority to raise awareness and promote the use of the Parkhill Reservoir for non-motorized water-based activities such as canoeing, kayaking, and fishing.	Short	High	
34. Initiate a site selection process to establish appropriate locations along the Ausable River for casual viewing and enjoyment, including opportunities to launch personal, non-motorized watercrafts. Potential site considerations should include parking, visibility, compatibility with adjacent land uses, connections to active transportation, and safety.	Medium - Term	Medium	
35. Evaluate requests for new indoor and outdoor recreation facilities on a case-by-case basis with consideration given to trends, examples in other municipalities, local demand, the feasibility of utilizing existing public space, the willingness of an organization to partner in providing the facility or space, and other factors.	Ongoing	Low	

Section 6: Parkland

Recommendation	Timing	Priority	Cost
36. Utilize the parkland classification system contained in the Recreation & Facilities Master Plan to guide the planning and development of active parkland according to park type, form, function, size and the features and amenities they provide.	Ongoing	High	
37. Maintain an active parkland target of 2.9 hectares per 1,000 residents, excluding woodlots and passive open space lands. On this basis, approximately 5.2 additional hectares should be secured by 2031 to address gaps and met growth-related needs. A combination of parkland dedication as part of subdivision development or alternative land acquisition strategies recommended in this Master Plan may be required to meet the entirety of these needs.	Ongoing	High	
38. Explore opportunities to enhance the use of the open space at Ken Vernon Park, such as working with community groups to deliver outdoor programming.	Short - Term	High	
<p>39. Undertake a Trails Master Plan to refine the proposed conceptual trail network to guide the development of active transportation opportunities. Among matters related to detailed pathway routing, design standards, and funding strategy, the Trails Master Plan should further explore the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. A walking loop within Parkhill and Ailsa Craig using a combination of sidewalks and off-road trails. b. Connections between Parkhill, Ailsa Craig and Nairn. c. Establish pedestrian circulation areas within parks (e.g., pathways to sports fields, playgrounds, etc.). d. Identify active transportation routes within future residential areas, potentially as part of land dedication as permitted by the Planning Act. e. Coordinate with others to create or formalize trail connections to non-municipal destinations such properties owned by the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority, Thames Talbot Land Trust, and campgrounds. f. Consider winter trail maintenance to support year round walking and winter activities such as cross country skiing. g. Either alone or in partnership with others, promote active transportation opportunities, including publishing trail routes (e.g., online, print, mobile application, etc.), establishing walking groups, create pedestrian-oriented community events, raise awareness of non-Municipal trails, and other strategies identified by the Municipality. 	Medium - Term	High	\$(<\$100,000)

Recommendation	Timing	Priority	Cost
40. At the time of an Official Plan review, undertake the necessary policy updates to reflect amendments to the Planning Act and Bill 23.	Timing to coincide with an Official Plan Review		
41. Adopt a “Parkland First” approach that prioritizes parkland conveyance over cash-in-lieu of parkland to address parkland needs. Parkland conveyance should: (a) be acceptable to the Municipality and (b) result in park blocks that are at least 0.8 hectares in size (unless to reconcile a gap area) or expand an existing park site.	Ongoing	High	
42. Utilize a range of land acquisition tools to maximize public access to parkland and natural areas (e.g., land purchase/lease, land exchanges, partnerships, donations, partnerships, land reallocation, etc.)	Ongoing	High	
43. On a case-by-case basis, consider comfort and accessibility features, which may include, but not be limited to, seating, shade, pathways, picnic tables, garbage cans, washrooms, and other amenities that attract people and encourage use.	Ongoing	High	
44. Undertake renewal of the Coronation park gazebo or replace it with a new shade structure or pavilion.	Long - Term	High	\$ (<\$100,000)
45. Review of the Municipality’s park signage to ensure consistency in design and the information being conveyed.	Medium - Term	Low	
46. Create wayfinding signage at key locations across the Municipality to highlight the location of all North Middlesex parks and facilities, trails, and other community assets to raise awareness of local amenities. This information should also be published online. Details may be refined through the development of a Trails Master Plan.	Medium - Term	Low	\$ (<\$100,000)
47. Alone or in partnership with other organizations, explore initiatives to be more resilient to climate change and protect and enhance the natural environment. Initiatives include strategically returning portions of parkland back to a natural state, establishing pollinator gardens, planting native species, setting tree canopy targets, establishing outdoor educational programs, and other strategies determined by the Municipality. Opportunities to implement these strategies may exist at Lieury Park, Lions Community Park, Ken Vernon Park, and other locations.	Ongoing	High	

Section 7: Service Delivery System

48. Undertake a departmental review by the CAO or an external source to confirm the need for a Supervisor position for the Recreation & Facilities Department to provide day-to-day oversight of the Operations Team, as well as other related duties including, but not limited to: coordination with the Manager: monitoring work quality; ensuring goals, tasks and timelines are met; staff training; scheduling; and more. As part of this	Short - Term	High	\$ (<\$100,000)
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Recommendation	Timing	Priority	Cost
review, evaluate the need for additional staff requirements to ensure the successful implementation of this Master Plan.			
49. Provide staff with the appropriate supports to deliver exceptional community services and execute daily responsibilities, which may include, the use of technology and equipment, training, professional development, and other strategies to function as a high performing Department.	Ongoing	High	
50. Amend the Terms of Reference for the Recreation Advisory Committee to support the Municipality with the implementation of the Recreation & Facilities Master Plan. This may include, but not be limited to, assisting with community and stakeholder engagement, coordination with the Youth Advisory Committee, research, identifying short-term recommendations, assisting with the preparation of status reports, and providing general oversight and input on the Master Plan implementation process. Expanding the RAC’s mandate to recognize, promote, and strengthen the local arts and culture opportunities is encouraged.	Short - Term	High	
51. Work with community service providers and other public entities to promote existing activities and explore new program ideas to engage the community and increase use of the Municipality’s parks and facilities year round, particularly within underutilized spaces or locations with capacity for additional use. An emphasis should be placed on providing a broad range of in-person and virtual programs that are affordable for all age groups including organized and drop-in programs centered around education and learning, arts and culture, skill development, low-impact fitness, and sports. Additional consultation may be undertaken to confirm or refine program demand.	Ongoing	Medium	
52. Ensure that the Municipality’s indoor and outdoor spaces can support community programs and events in strategic locations, including the availability of water, power, pavilions, washrooms etc.	Ongoing	High	
53. Establish a system to monitor attendance levels and track the economic impact of special events to determine the success of events that take place in North Middlesex.	Medium - Term	Low	
54. Prepare a Special Events Guide to establish the policies, procedures, requirements to support the planning, development, and delivery of community-led events on Municipality of North Middlesex property.	Medium - Term	Low	
55. Explore future opportunities to provide affordable childcare services in North Middlesex in coordination with partners, which may include, but not be limited to, the Province of Ontario, Middlesex County, YMCA, Ailsa Craig & District Co-op, and/or other third-party entities.	Short - Term	Medium	
56. Promote the Ontario Child Care Fee Subsidy to provide financial assistance for families in need.	Ongoing	High	
57. Establish a Youth Advisory Council to empower youth and give them a voice in the decision-making process. With staff support for coordination, the Youth Advisory Council should be responsible for consulting with	Short - Term	High	

Recommendation	Timing	Priority	Cost
the broader youth population (including engaging students within schools); identifying trends, issues and programs that matter to them; and identifying how parks, recreation and culture opportunities can be improved to be more youth friendly.			
58. Embrace the principles of being a “youth friendly community” to ensure that a full range of youth opportunities are available in North Middlesex.	Short - Term	Medium	
59. In consultation with community stakeholders and the public, prepare an Age-Friendly Action Plan to identify strategies to be more welcoming of older adults and seniors and encourage them to age in place. Consideration should be given to enhancing parks, recreation and cultural opportunities including, but not limited to, accessibility, comfort amenities (e.g., seating and shade), and addressing gaps in programs and services (potentially in coordination with community partners). Other strategies should also be explored with respect to transportation, housing, health care and more.	Short - Term	Medium	
60. Regularly engage community organizations and the broader public, either together or separately, to receive community feedback, raise awareness and promote local recreation opportunities, understand challenges groups are facing (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic impacts), improve coordination with Municipal staff, and explore strategies to enhance communication and marketing using a broad range of print and online resources. Community engagement may be led by the Recreation Advisory Committee.	Ongoing	High	
61. Create a print and online Community and Recreation Guide to include information about recreation and community facilities, programs, and services available across the Municipality. Information may include, but not be limited to, the location of parks, facilities and amenities, programs and services, rental information, community directory, event calendar, volunteer organizations, and more.	Short - Term	High	
62. Establish a partnership guide or a standardized framework for evaluating potential partnership opportunities to deliver parks, recreation and culture opportunities.	Long - Term	Low	
63. Formalize partnership agreements with community organizations operating in North Middlesex to provide a program or service to establish clearly defined roles and responsibilities, minimize risk, and other necessary details.	Long - Term	Low	
64. Explore strategies to further enhance volunteer opportunities in North Middlesex including, but not limited to, ensuring that the Municipality’s website, social media and print media promote volunteer opportunities for all community organizations, host a volunteer event to bring together community organizations and residents, and support stakeholders with providing training for volunteers, as necessary.	Medium - Term	Medium	
65. Work with community partners to ensure that parks, recreation and culture facilities, programs and services are inclusive and accessible for all residents in North Middlesex. Key strategies include, but not be limited to,	Ongoing	High	

Recommendation	Timing	Priority	Cost
<p>promoting existing financial assistance programs; offering no to low-cost activities; providing barrier-free facilities, programs, and services; and regular engagement with traditionally marginalized groups such as persons with disabilities and the LGBTQ2+ community to identify ways to make parks, recreation and culture opportunities welcoming and bring awareness to the resources and support groups that are available.</p>			
<p>66. Undertake a review of the Community Development Fund to ensure that funding allocated to organizations are reflective of increasing costs to provide programs and services.</p>	Short - Term	High	
Section 8: Implementation			
<p>67. Where appropriate, consider alternative funding and cost-sharing approaches including, but not limited to, user fees, fundraising, donations, grants, partnerships, and other strategies to provide the best value to residents.</p>	Ongoing	High	
<p>68. Use this Master Plan as a resource to inform the Municipality’s annual capital budget and other related studies.</p>	Ongoing	High	
<p>69. Conduct feasibility studies and sound business planning (with public input) prior to undertaking major capital projects to ensure that projects are aligned with community needs, partnership opportunities and financial capabilities.</p>	Ongoing	High	
<p>70. Work with the Recreation Advisory Committee to establish a system for the regular monitoring and reporting of the Master Plan. The Recreation Advisory Committee should prepare progress reports to Council to and identify key recommendations to be implemented within the short-term and factors that may impact implementation such as population growth, usage data, new grant and partnership opportunities, and other variables.</p>	Ongoing	High	
<p>71. Establish key performance indicators to measure participation levels, facility usage, satisfaction levels, and other key data to support reporting to Council and to establish baseline data to be compared year-over-year.</p>	Short - Term	High	
<p>72. Undertake a mid-cycle review around 2027/2028 and a detailed 10-year update of the Master Plan. Timing may be adjusted based on the pace of implementation and changes in population growth, trends, and other internal and external factors.</p>	Medium - Term	High	

APPENDIX A: Community Survey Summary

1) Have you or anyone in your household participated in any of the following parks and recreation activities? By participation, we mean situations where you or a member of your household actively participated, either at home or in public. Select all that apply.

	#	%	
Walking or Hiking for Leisure	177	80%	
Enjoying Parks and Open Spaces	159	72%	
Going to Special Events (e.g., festivals, fairs, etc.)	145	65%	
Use of Splash Pad	137	62%	
Use of Playground Equipment	134	60%	
Hockey, Ringette, Figure Skating or Ice Skating	124	56%	
Dog Walking (on or off-leash)	123	55%	
Aerobics, Yoga, Fitness or Weight-training	112	50%	
Baseball or Softball	91	41%	
Camping	84	38%	
Cycling or Mountain Biking	76	34%	
Jogging or Running for Fitness	75	34%	
Organized Children & Youth Programs (e.g., day camps)	75	34%	
Soccer	73	33%	
Swimming (recreational)	72	32%	
Boating (e.g., powerboating, canoeing, etc.)	66	30%	
Swimming (instructional or aquafit)	56	25%	
Basketball	41	18%	
Pickleball	39	18%	
Volleyball	34	15%	
Wheeled Action Sports (e.g., skateboard, BMX, scooter, etc.)	30	14%	
Tennis	25	11%	
Disc Golf	24	11%	
Organized Seniors' Programs (e.g., cards, dancing)	21	9%	
Other (please specify)	1	0%	
	answered question	222	98%
	skipped question	5	2%

2) Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, were you and members of your household able to participate in parks and recreation activities as often as you would like?

	#	%
Yes	169	81%
No	40	19%
	answered question	209
	skipped question	18
		92%
		8%

3) Why were you NOT able to participate in parks and recreation activities as often as you would like? Select up to three.

	#	%
Lack of desired programs or facilities	30	20%
Lack of personal time / Too busy	24	16%
Program not offered at convenient time	24	16%
Lack of information / Unaware of opportunities	23	16%
Lack of money / Too expensive	13	9%
Lack of motivation / Not interested	9	6%
Lack of child care	9	6%
Health problems / Disability / Age	6	4%
Lack of transportation / Facility too far away	5	3%
Language / Cultural barrier	1	1%
Don't know	2	1%
Other (please specify)	1	1%
	answered question	147
	skipped question	80
		65%
		35%

4) Generally, what percentage of your household's parks and recreation needs are met within North Middlesex?

	#	%
All (100%)	11	5%
Most (67-99%)	92	42%
About half (34-66%)	62	28%
Some (1-33%)	42	19%
None (0%)	6	3%
Don't know	7	3%
	answered question	220
	skipped question	7
		97%
		3%

5) What factors lead you (and members of your household) to seek parks and recreation activities outside of North Middlesex?

	#	%
Facility / Program is not available in the area	115	60%
Facility / Program not available in the area at the preferred time	66	35%
Tournaments / Special events / Travel teams	46	24%
“Connected” to the other community / Used to live there	38	20%
Quality of facility / Program is superior	33	17%
Closer to home, work or school	23	12%
Less expensive elsewhere	19	10%
Don't know	11	6%
Other (please specify)	1	1%
answered question	191	84%
skipped question	36	16%

6) If applicable, list up to two (2) parks and recreation activities/programs that you (or members of your household) would like to see provided in North Middlesex that are NOT available.

Top 10 Requested Parks and Recreation Opportunities	
1. Swimming pool	6. Volleyball
2. Trails	7. Pickleball courts
3. Off-leash dog park	8. Basketball
4. Older adult programming	9. Special events and festivals
5. Indoor walking track	10. Splash pad

7) In general, how important are the following items to your household?

	Not at all important		Somewhat unimportant		Neither unimportant nor important		Somewhat important		Very important		Don't Know		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Indoor recreation facilities such as arenas and community spaces	2	1%	8	4%	7	4%	44	22%	142	71%	3	2%	199
Recreational trails and pathways	4	2%	8	4%	33	16%	36	18%	150	74%	4	2%	202
Outdoor recreation facilities such as sports fields and playgrounds	6	3%	8	4%	11	6%	38	19%	139	71%	5	3%	196
Open space parks for unstructured use	8	4%	8	4%	23	13%	68	38%	92	51%	3	2%	179

8) What is your level of satisfaction with the following parks and recreation facilities in North Middlesex?

	Not at all satisfied		Somewhat dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Somewhat satisfied		Very satisfied		Don't Know		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Indoor recreation facilities such as arenas and community spaces	6	3%	18	9%	22	11%	100	50%	54	27%	5	3%	183
Outdoor recreation facilities such as sports fields and playgrounds	4	2%	9	5%	27	14%	95	48%	56	29%	12	6%	176
Open space parks for unstructured use	8	4%	16	9%	56	31%	76	42%	28	16%	17	9%	145
Recreational trails and pathways	28	14%	39	19%	32	16%	69	34%	21	10%	15	7%	172

9) For each age group listed below, what is your level of satisfaction with the parks and recreation activities in North Middlesex?

	Not at all satisfied		Somewhat dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Somewhat satisfied		Very satisfied		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Children (Ages 0 to 9)	3	2%	14	11%	48	38%	10	8%	50	40%	125
Youth (Ages 10 to 19)	8	6%	23	18%	55	44%	21	17%	19	15%	126
Adults (Ages 20 to 34)	6	5%	11	9%	63	51%	27	22%	17	14%	124
Mature Adults (Ages 35 to 54)	5	4%	20	15%	56	43%	29	22%	21	16%	131
Older Adults (Ages 55 to 69)	9	8%	13	11%	44	39%	28	25%	20	18%	114
Seniors (Ages 70+)	14	15%	9	9%	25	26%	33	35%	14	15%	95
Families	5	3%	21	14%	70	47%	27	18%	27	18%	150

10) For the amenities and facilities listed below, to what degree do you support/oppose ADDITIONAL spending towards improving existing or building new ones?

	Strongly oppose		Somewhat oppose		Neither oppose nor support		Somewhat support		Very support		Don't Know		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Nature Trails	2	1%	1	1%	11	6%	40	21%	134	69%	6	3%	194
Paved Multi-Use Trails	5	3%	7	4%	23	12%	45	23%	103	54%	9	5%	192
Playgrounds	3	2%	2	1%	28	14%	54	28%	92	47%	15	8%	194
Splash Pads	4	2%	3	2%	33	17%	56	29%	84	44%	13	7%	193
Acquisition of Parks and Open Space	7	4%	11	6%	33	17%	59	31%	71	38%	8	4%	189
Outdoor Ice Rinks	6	3%	9	5%	32	17%	49	26%	81	42%	15	8%	192
Swimming Pools (outdoor)	16	8%	5	3%	25	13%	39	20%	89	47%	17	9%	191
Equipment-Based Fitness Centre	10	5%	14	7%	30	15%	54	28%	76	39%	10	5%	194
Indoor Walking Tracks	7	4%	3	2%	41	21%	45	24%	81	42%	14	7%	191
Community Gardens	5	3%	6	3%	47	24%	54	28%	66	34%	16	8%	194
Arenas (indoor ice)	17	9%	21	11%	28	14%	60	31%	59	30%	9	5%	194
Gymnasiums	8	4%	15	8%	40	21%	66	35%	50	26%	12	6%	191
Fitness Studio	11	6%	16	8%	42	22%	50	26%	62	32%	12	6%	193
Basketball Courts (outdoor)	9	5%	9	5%	51	27%	57	30%	48	25%	15	8%	189
Off-leash Dog Parks	22	11%	17	9%	27	14%	36	19%	70	36%	22	11%	194
Baseball or Softball Diamonds	12	6%	19	10%	42	22%	51	27%	53	28%	15	8%	192

	Strongly oppose		Somewhat oppose		Neither oppose nor support		Somewhat support		Very support		Don't Know		Total
Space for Community Meetings and Events	13	7%	26	14%	43	22%	57	30%	46	24%	7	4%	192
Soccer Fields	17	9%	11	6%	44	23%	51	27%	49	26%	19	10%	191
Pickleball Courts (outdoor)	10	5%	4	2%	49	26%	58	31%	39	21%	30	16%	190
Outdoor Fitness Equipment	16	9%	12	6%	51	27%	43	23%	41	22%	24	13%	187
Tennis Courts (outdoor)	13	7%	8	4%	53	28%	58	31%	27	14%	31	16%	190
Skateboard/BMX Park	12	6%	14	7%	66	35%	44	23%	24	13%	31	16%	191
Volleyball Courts (outdoor)	8	4%	11	6%	70	38%	36	19%	28	15%	33	18%	186
Disc Golf Course	19	10%	14	7%	67	35%	36	19%	22	12%	31	16%	189

11) For the items listed below, please indicate if your expectations are being met for the following items about parks and recreation services.

	Greatly below expectations		Below expectations		Matched expectations		Exceeds expectations		Greatly exceeds expectations		Don't Know		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Location of parks, recreation and facility amenities.	6	3%	17	9%	134	69%	28	14%	6	3%	4	2%	195
Maintenance of parks, recreation and facilities	17	9%	49	25%	93	48%	24	12%	6	3%	5	3%	194
Inclusion and accessibility for all residents regardless of income, ability, orientation and background.	19	10%	47	24%	85	44%	15	8%	4	2%	24	12%	194
Value of tax dollars spent towards parks, recreation and facilities.	20	10%	44	23%	92	47%	9	5%	1	1%	29	15%	195

12) Please provide us with any additional comments.

Additional comments have not been included but the input received has been considered in the development of the Master Plan.

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

	<i>Total Number of Persons</i>
Under 10 years	108
10 - 19 years	109
20 - 34 years	99
35 - 54 years	159
55 - 69 years	104
70+ years	52
Total number of persons	631
skipped question	

14) In what year were you born? (Optional)

Median Year	1975
Median Age	48 Years

15) Do you live in...?

	#	%
Parkhill	75	33%
Rural area in the Municipality of North Middlesex	52	23%
Ailsa Craig	39	17%
Nairn	13	6%
Outside of the Municipality of North Middlesex	4	2%
Mount Carmel	3	1%
West McGillivray	2	1%
Carlisle	2	1%
Sylvan	1	0%
Greenway	1	0%
Corbett	1	0%
Clandeboye	1	0%
Lieury	0	0%
Hungry Hollow	0	0%
Brinsley	0	0%
answered question	194	85%
skipped question	33	15%