



Community Parks, Recreation & Cultural **STRATEGIC MASTER PLAN**



Town of Tillsonburg

**Community Parks, Recreation & Cultural
Strategic Master Plan**

FINAL REPORT

June 2011

Prepared by:



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Acknowledgements

The Community Parks, Recreation & Cultural Strategic Master Plan has truly been a community-driven process. We would like to thank the numerous individuals and organizations who have represented the diverse viewpoints and interests which exist in Tillsonburg today. A specific thank you is extended to Town of Tillsonburg Council and Staff, the Strategic Master Plan Steering Committee, and the community groups and residents who provided input through the consultation process. It is our sincere hope that the Community Parks, Recreation & Cultural Strategic Master Plan plays an important role in enhancing the quality of life of Tillsonburg residents for years to come.

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Councillor Chris Rosehart
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MONTEITH BROWN PLANNING CONSULTANTS

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Executive Summary

The Community Parks, Recreation & Cultural Strategic Master Plan provides a comprehensive framework articulating the needs and priorities for recreation programs, facilities, culture, parks, sports fields, trails and open space. The Strategic Master Plan has been developed with ample feedback received from elected officials, Town staff, community organizations, and the general public. Results from consultations have been compared to national and provincial research, as well as local demographics, to form the strategic framework in which nearly one hundred recommendations have arisen from. These recommendations are intended to serve as a guide for Town Council, Staff and the various stakeholders of the parks, recreation and culture system to consider as Tillsonburg grows and evolves over the next twenty years.

The Strategic Master Plan is intended to be a living document. It promotes ongoing communication with the community to ensure that services remain responsive, and encourages regular updating of the Strategic Master Plan in line with new demographics, market conditions, trends, etc. The following paragraphs summarize some of the key themes and findings from the Strategic Master Plan.

Continuing to Build Upon Tillsonburg’s History of High Quality Service

Tillsonburg has long been a leader in the provision of high quality facilities, programs and services which are not only used by local residents but serve a regional market as well. A robust range of services are directly provided by the Town, indicating Tillsonburg’s willingness to ensure that residents are provided with balanced and inclusive opportunities which greatly contributes to the high quality of life for residents of all ages.

The Tillsonburg Community Centre is the showpiece of the local recreational system and continued focus on improving this facility is recommended, in order

Guiding Principles for the Strategic Master Plan

1. Striving for Service Excellence

Tillsonburg will continue to strive to provide parks, facilities and services in a manner that is sustainable, innovative, fiscally-responsible and driven by customer service.

2. An Integrated & Collaborative Approach

In order to best meet the needs of our residents, the delivery of high quality spaces and programs will be viewed holistically and implemented by working hand-in-hand with a range of municipal departments, supporting volunteers, and establishing strategic partnerships that will maximize the public interest through a community-development approach.

3. Innovative & Appropriate Infrastructure

Parks, recreation and cultural facilities will be provided in an inclusive and integrated manner, to create opportunities for multi-use, multi-generational, and multi-seasonal experiences that meet the diverse needs of Tillsonburg’s population.

4. Embracing the Arts, Culture & Heritage

The Town will work with its vibrant arts, cultural and heritage sector to enhance and further develop the creative capacity of Tillsonburg and proudly showcase our roots to visitors.

5. Focus on Wellness Through Programming

A continued emphasis will be placed on facilitating inclusive activities that promote healthy living, physical activity, wellness, skill development, knowledge, and community pride through the collaborative delivery of structured and unstructured opportunities to key markets such as youth, older adults, newcomers and families.

6. A Functional and Sustainable Parks System

Parks, trails and open spaces will be designed and managed in an integrated manner so as to enable sustainable ecological management practices, link residential and employment areas, and provide opportunities for a wide variety of active and passive recreation and cultural experiences.



to ensure that this venue remains a destination for high quality, modern leisure activity. In doing so, the Strategic Master Plan recommends:

- Undertaking a **comprehensive business plan and/or concept design process to improve the functionality and amenity level of the Tillsonburg Community Centre** by investigating ways to improve circulation and accessibility, enhancing components such as the aquatic centre and fitness area to respond to new trends and program opportunities, and diversifying the types of uses that can occur here by repurposing/reconfiguring existing spaces to accommodate arts and cultural activities and/or youth opportunities.
- Ensuring that all municipal facilities, services and programs are **supported by appropriate staff resources** and that the Town continuously monitor up-to-date trends and best practices associated with the delivery of parks, recreation and cultural services.
- **Making better use of existing parks and facilities**, thus recommending initiatives such as a Cemetery Revitalization Plan, Vision for the Memorial Park/Fairgrounds site, Waterfront Revitalization Study for Lake Lisgar, and a Vision for the Tillsonburg Special Events Centre (in the event that it is not sold).

Collaboration with Stakeholders

The Town has worked with many community groups and other partners over the years, recognizing the tremendous benefits and skills brought to the table by these individuals. The Strategic Master Plan recognizes that the Town cannot “be everything to everybody” and thus promotes a greater focus on a community development approach. The Town should **remain a direct provider of its core services** while placing a greater focus on being a facilitator for emerging and non-traditional services by working hand-in-hand with community providers and volunteers to provide necessary supports that allow community-based services to grow and thrive. In support of such objectives, the Strategic Master Plan recommends:

- Continuing to **take the lead in providing needed facilities and services** that cannot reasonably be provided through the community sector (e.g. capitably intensive facilities and programs), while **ensuring that Town Staff are supported** by the appropriate resources required to deliver high quality services.
- Continuing to **support the volunteer sector** through a variety of initiatives, including the creation of a Volunteer Management Strategy in consultation with local stakeholders as a means to assist groups with recruitment, retention, training and recognition.

- Exploring ways to **fill local gaps in program/service needs** with potential partners, guided through a standardized partnership evaluation and selection process to ensure fairness and adherence to municipal objectives.
- Encouraging a **Community Development model** through the provision of appropriate supports aimed at bolstering the internal capacity of the community to sustainably deliver programs.

Spreading the Message

Throughout consultations, ample feedback was received about the need to better communicate available parks, recreation and cultural opportunities to residents but also to potential visitors and tourists. To this end, the Strategic Master Plan recommends:

- Undertaking a Marketing Strategy to promote awareness of recreation and cultural assets such as the Annandale National Historic Site, Lake Lisgar Water Park, the local trails system, etc. to further municipal sport and cultural tourism objectives.
- Bolstering information distributed to the community through print and digital media (continuing to use newsletters and the Program Guide, updating the municipal website, using social media such as Facebook, etc.), as well as through word-of-mouth through regular dialogue with stakeholders and residents.





Balancing Affordability with Cost-Effectiveness

The Town of Tillsonburg provides many high quality facilities and services to its 16,000 residents. The level of service afforded to Tillsonburg’s population is excellent in relation to many communities of comparable size, and while there are costs associated with providing such services, the community benefits in a number of ways such as increased levels physical activity and social interaction (healthy lifestyles) and economic development (e.g. spinoffs from non-residents, attracting employers, professional services, and new residents, etc.). The Strategic Master Plan recommends:

- Exploring a variety of ways to fund the development and operation of municipal parks and facilities through financing tools and community involvement; furthermore, it is recommended that the Town approach adjacent municipalities whose residents benefit from Tillsonburg’s facilities to develop a cost-sharing approach that reduces the operational pressures placed on local residents.
- Ensure that a broad range of low-to-no cost opportunities are available to residents.
- Initiate a Pricing Strategy to review the current fee structure in relation to the Town’s ability to sustain its high quality facilities and services.

Summarizing the Strategic Master Plan’s Top Priorities

Within the Strategic Master Plan, a number of recommendations have been identified for the Town to consider over the next twenty years. The following is a synopsis of the most pressing actions for the Town of Tillsonburg to implement in the coming years.

1. Undertaking a Master Plan and Concept Design exercise for the 55 acres Memorial Park and Fairgrounds. This Strategic Master Plan states that a community vision needs to be established specifically for Memorial Park, and particularly whether the Fairgrounds would benefit from revitalization of the present site or if it should be relocated to an alternative location. As part of this process, the Town will have to evaluate the costs associated with revitalization of the Fairgrounds and its associated buildings versus potential land acquisitions or leases elsewhere, while also factoring in the ability of the Agricultural Society to play a more active role in the operations and finances of any improved venue.
2. Creating a new Ball Diamond Complex that relocates the Annandale Ball Diamonds and at least one ball diamond from Memorial Park, in order to concentrate a number of high quality sports fields that are



designed to allow local programs to grow, promote sports tourism through tournament potential, and allow the Town to repurpose the relocated diamonds to other higher need uses (e.g. parking at the Tillsonburg Community Centre, providing space for other park uses which may be required to serve the community).

3. Undertaking a comprehensive business plan and/or concept design process to improve the functionality and amenity level of the Tillsonburg Community Centre.
4. Continuing to build upon the local trails system to increase connectivity, comfort and safety (e.g. shade, benches, lighting, parking, etc.), the range of uses (e.g. pedestrian and cyclist, all season uses), and other improvements that are implementable through the Town of Tillsonburg Trails Master Plan.
5. Developing a vision for the Tillsonburg Special Events Centre (TSEC). This Strategic Master Plan has found both merits and inefficiencies in continuing to operate the TSEC, however, a Council-supported vision needs to be established to either:
 - a. invest moderately in the TSEC to maintain the status quo and accept the net operating subsidy that would result;
 - b. invest heavily in the TSEC to position it as a regional attraction that runs at or near a profitable level;
 - c. consider leasing the space to an interested community organization or private sector enterprise that runs at or near a profitable level; or
 - d. divesting of the facility (recognizing Council's recent resolution to declare these as surplus lands under Section 270 of the *Municipal Act*, allowing the Town to explore sale of the TSEC).

Section 1: The Strategic Framework

The Community Parks, Recreation & Cultural Strategic Master Plan is built upon a number of inputs which have been compiled to create a holistic framework for assessing the needs of the community.

This Section presents the context in which the Strategic Master Plan has been developed. Also included is the Plan's purpose, Vision, and Guiding Principles which provide direction for the Town of Tillsonburg to effectively deliver a high quality parks, recreation and cultural system in a manner that is responsive to the needs of its residents.





Study Context

The Town of Tillsonburg is located in Oxford County (and borders the Counties of Norfolk and Elgin), and has a storied past among Canada’s agricultural communities. Tillsonburg continues to maintain strong ties to its agricultural roots while also benefitting from economic diversification as a result of its strategic location between the urban agglomerations of London and Kitchener-Waterloo. The recorded population (as defined through the Statistics Canada Census) increased by 5.5% between the years 2001 and 2006, and nearly 16,000 residents¹ are now estimated to live in the Town at present. As a result of this growing, evolving, and increasingly diverse population, new pressures are being placed on local facilities and services relating to parks, recreation and culture.

The Town provides nearly 80 hectares (198 acres) of parkland, a number of key indoor facilities (such as the Tillsonburg Community Centre, the Annandale National Historic Site, etc.), a number of sports fields and park amenities, and a comprehensive trails system. The Town also works with a strong base of volunteers, service clubs, community organizations, and regional agencies to provide a number of recreation and cultural services to residents of Tillsonburg. The local arts and cultural community is a thriving and vibrant sector, providing programs out of facilities such as the Tillsonburg Theatre and Station Arts Centre.

In order to effectively manage these municipal and community-based assets to deliver sustainable and high quality services to local residents into the future, a framework is needed to guide decision-making and make sound investments (in terms of human, social and financial capital) through long-range strategic planning. As a result, the Community Parks, Recreation & Cultural Strategic Plan has been undertaken.

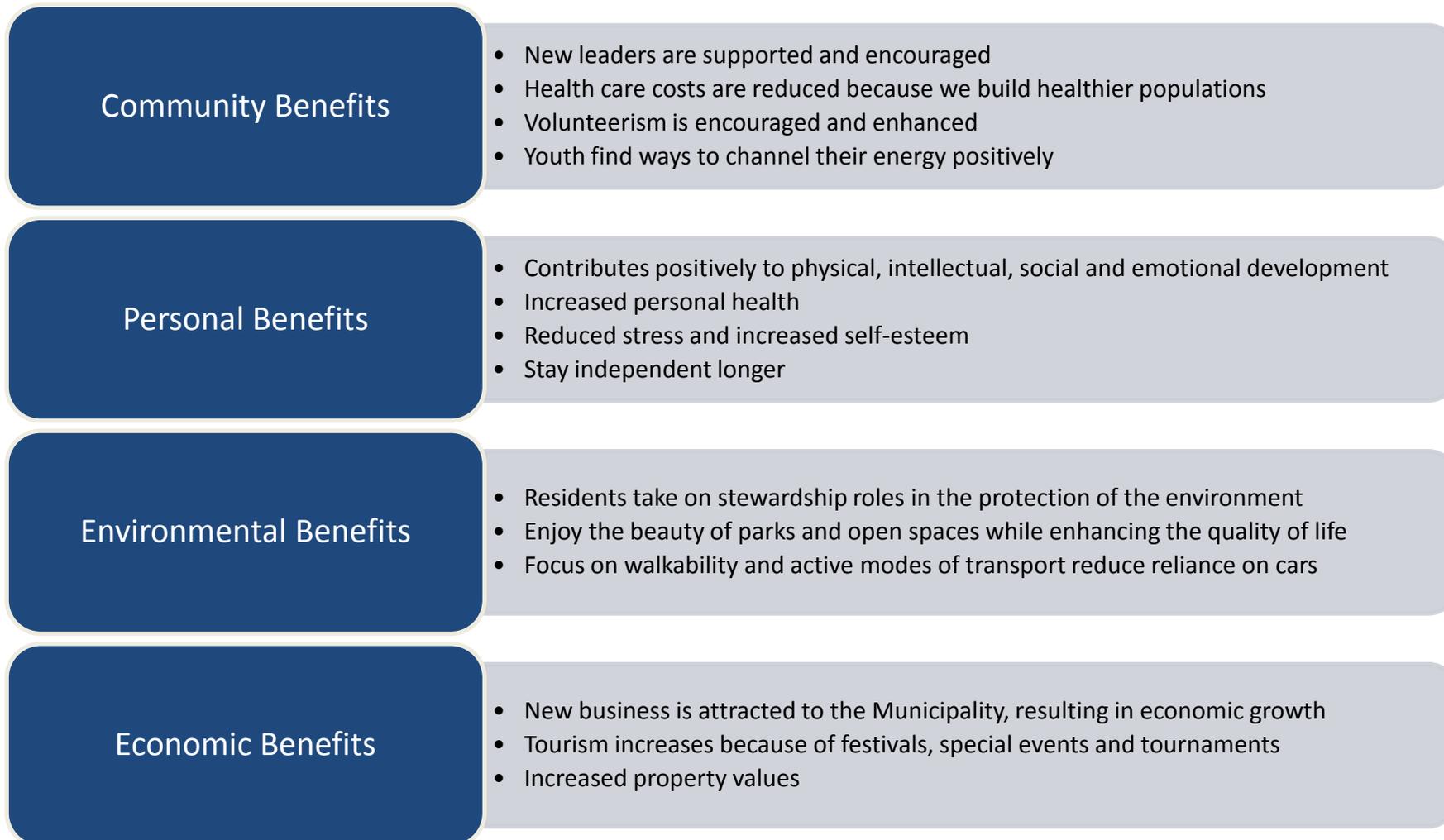
Recreation and cultural activity, both in organized and unstructured forms, provides individuals with numerous physical health, psychological, economic and environmental benefits which are associated with a high quality of life. Not only does participation in recreation and culture provide opportunities for a healthy lifestyle, it also facilitates greater self-esteem, social interaction, economic spending, conservation of natural lands, and community vibrancy.



¹ County of Oxford. Development Charge Background Study. 2009.



Figure 1: Benefits Associated With Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services



Sources: Canadian Parks & Recreation Association. *The Benefits of Recreation*. 1992. Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. *What Sport Can Do, the TrueSport Report*. 2008.



Terms of Reference & Methodology

In July 2010, the Town of Tillsonburg released a Request For Proposal for its Community Parks, Recreation & Cultural Strategic Master Plan, containing the Town’s Terms of Reference for undertaking the project. In September 2010, following a competitive bid process, the Town awarded the Strategic Master Plan to MONTEITH BROWN PLANNING CONSULTANTS.

As stated through the Town’s Terms of Reference, the purpose of the Strategic Master Plan is to *“clearly provide a comprehensive framework of the planning and developmental needs and priorities for recreation programs, facilities, culture, parks, sports fields, trails and open space for the next 5, 10 and 20 years.”*

The Terms of Reference also identified a number of objectives, including:

- undertaking a ‘values assessment’ of existing services through an extensive communication and participation strategy with current customers, the community and key stakeholders;
- undertaking an extensive inventory of programs, facilities, parks and cemeteries, sports fields, trails and open space to establish an assessment of current and future requirements;
- analyzing the existing level of service and determine the impact of any service level changes within the Department;
- determining the level of service required to meet the needs of current and future growth, and identify the impact that change would have on existing and future resources;

- reviewing existing practices pertaining to the operational and management needs of recreational and cultural facilities and programs; and
- reviewing and suggesting new policies and design standards for parkland, trail and open space development, and making recommendations as to how the Town acquires and funds parkland and associated facilities in the future.

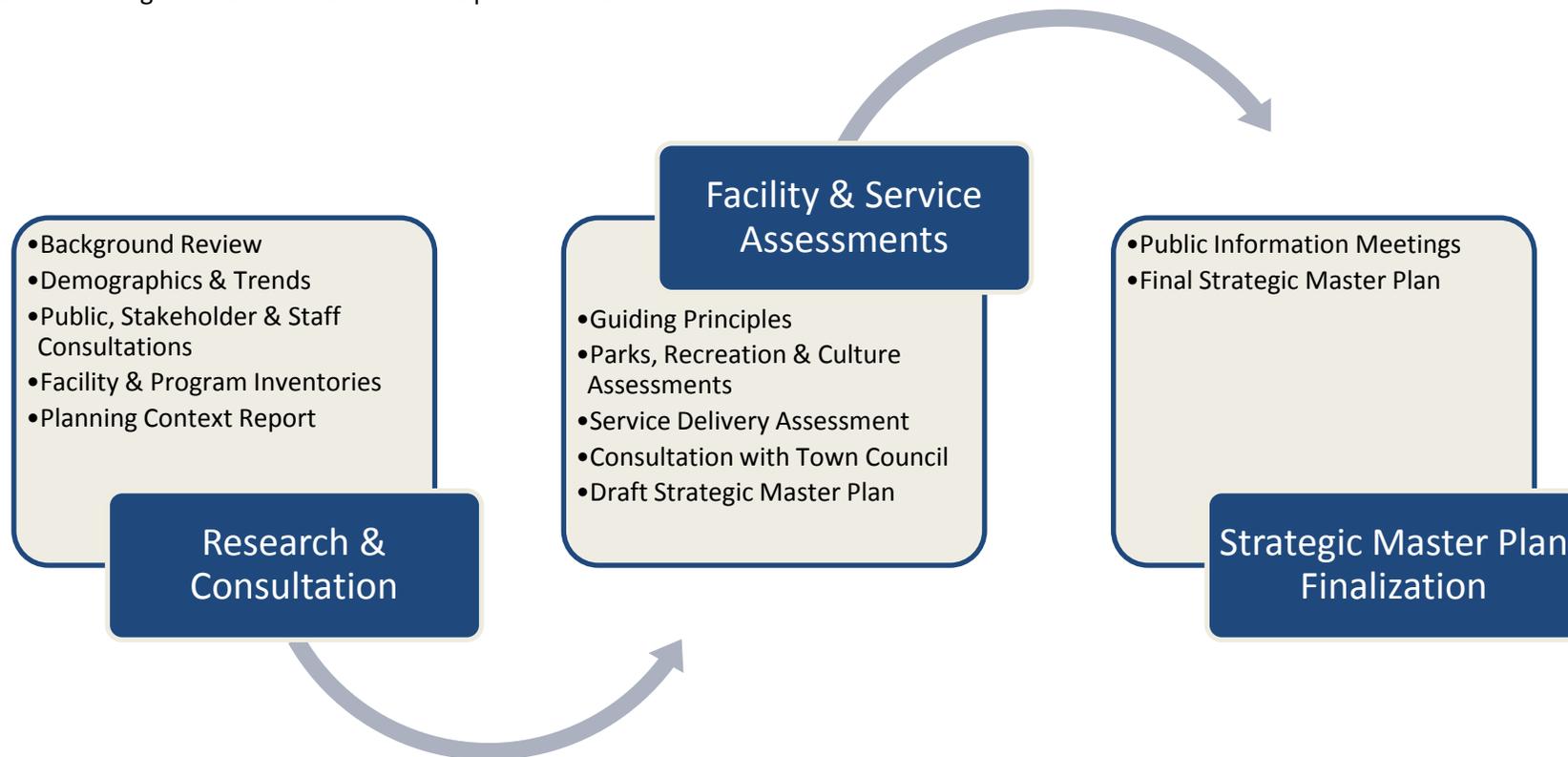
The Strategic Master Plan’s development was overseen by a Steering Committee consisting of appointed members of Town Staff, the Recreation Advisory Committee, and selected members of the public with expertise in the Plan’s topics. The Steering Committee’s role was to direct and participate in the strategic master planning process and deliver a Community Parks, Recreation and Cultural Strategic Master Plan, with the assistance of the Consultants, which meets the project goals and objectives set out in the Town’s Terms of Reference.





The development of the Strategic Master Plan flowed through three distinct phases. Phase 1 consisted of a comprehensive research and values assessment, culminating in a Planning Context Report. The foundational inputs contained in this Report were then used to generate analysis associated with Phase 2 of the master planning process (also known as the parks, facility and service delivery assessments) which created preliminary recommendations that formed a draft Strategic Master Plan. Phase 3 consisted of finalizing the Community Parks, Recreation & Cultural Strategic Master Plan after conducting final consultations with the public and Council.

A number of tasks have been employed in the development of the Community Parks, Recreation & Cultural Strategic Master Plan. An extensive review of background research and community demographics has been conducted to support the analysis existing supplies of parks, recreation and cultural resources. To ensure that analyses adequately reflect local circumstances and needs, a comprehensive consultation program has been carried out with local residents, user groups, agencies and representatives from the Town of Tillsonburg to provide input into the Strategic Master Plan.

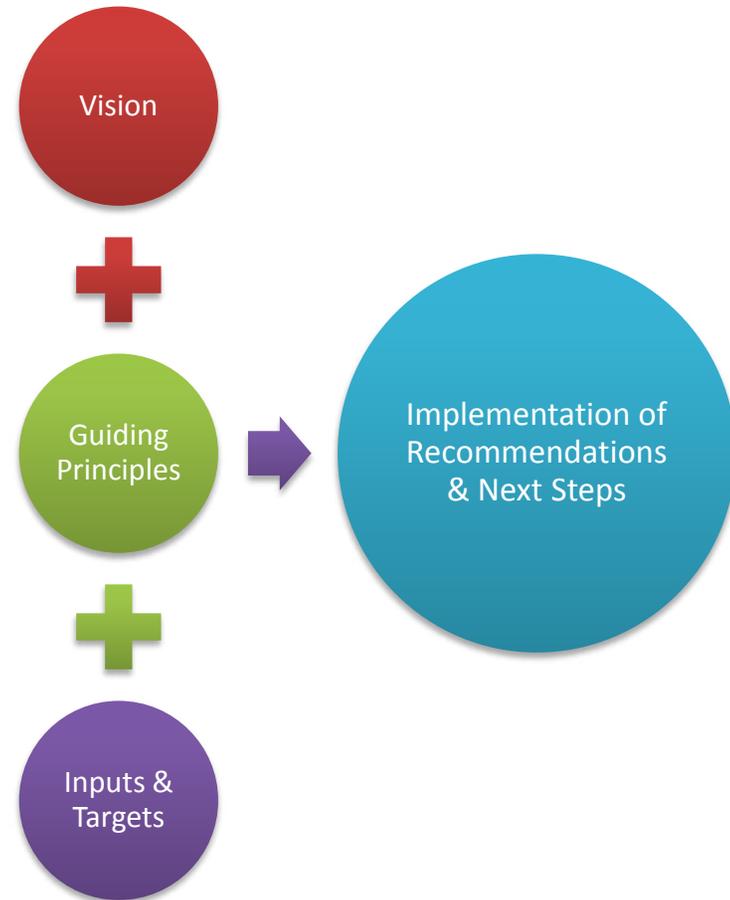




Specifically, the community consultation program has employed the following tasks:

- A statistically significant, random sample telephone survey of 386 households in Tillsonburg;
- A stakeholder and user group questionnaire;
- A Community Search Conference with local residents and stakeholders with an interest in recreation and culture;
- Key informant interviews with municipal representatives, external agencies, community user groups, and other local providers of parks, recreation and leisure services;
- Online feedback opportunities;
- Interviews and a Workshop with Town Council; and
- Staff and Council will present the draft strategic directions through a number of public open houses.

Based upon the background research and consultation efforts, the Strategic Framework (i.e. the Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles) was formed utilizing the key themes from the initial inputs. This Strategic Master Plan's needs assessments consider the research and consultative framework, in conjunction with a number of market-driven and per capita service level targets in conjunction with utilization data contributed by municipal staff and local user groups.





A Vision for Parks, Recreation & Culture

In order for the Strategic Master Plan to form appropriate recommendations, it is important to understand the strategic orientation and priority areas of the Town of Tillsonburg as a whole. By aligning facility and service assessments with strategic values and guiding principles, recommendations will be targeted to achieving the broad directives of the Community Parks, Recreation & Cultural Strategic Master Plan.

The Strategic Master Plan’s success will be defined by the framework in which it is created, therefore, it is cognisant of other municipal documents such as the Official Plan, Strategic Plan, as well as input provided through consultations with the community. The Town’s Corporate Strategic Plan, which is the primary philosophical document guiding municipal decision-making, identifies the following mission statement.

TOWN MISSION STATEMENT

“The Corporation of the Town of Tillsonburg will continue to be an innovative and proactive customer-focused organization, effectively empowering our team with processes and technology which enables Tillsonburg to be an outstanding town to visit, live, work, operate a business, raise a family and enjoy retirement; facilitating a community environment with rich and diversified economic, social, cultural, volunteer and recreational opportunities...a place to build your future!”

TOWN OF TILLSONBURG, CORPORATE STRATEGY

A vision statement has been crafted for the Community Parks, Recreation & Cultural Strategic Master Plan in order to guide the document and establish a Strategic Framework. This Vision Statement, which aligns with the Town’s Mission Statement, reflects what Tillsonburg intends to be and what it strives towards in the future as it pertains to community-oriented services.

VISION FOR PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURE

“Tillsonburg is a vibrant, active and sustainably-driven municipality that provides our residents with a desirable quality of life through the provision of high quality parks, sports, recreation, arts, and cultural opportunities.

Our strong sense of heritage and modern approach to delivering community services will be reflected through the Community Parks, Recreation & Cultural Strategic Master Plan to continue to encourage healthy, active and fulfilling lifestyles while continuing to respect our natural surroundings.”

With regard to parks, recreation and cultural services, the Community Services Department’s mandate is to:

- promote participation in organized and non-programmed forms of sport and recreation through the provision of appropriate facilities and services;
- enhance awareness and vibrancy of local arts, culture and heritage resources by recognizing their importance, embracing their creative benefits and providing them with the necessary tools in which to succeed; and



- provide a connected network of parks and trails that offer opportunities for active and passive forms of leisure and also contribute to ecological health on a local, regional and global level.

The Department's mandate and Vision Statement will be fulfilled through the Strategic Master Plan's Guiding Principles.

The Plan's Guiding Principles

The Guiding Principles are core statements which are intended to fulfill the Vision Statement. Recommendations which have been developed for the Strategic Master Plan align with the Guiding Principles as a means for the Town to implement and realize its Vision for parks, recreation and cultural services.

Striving for Service Excellence

Tillsonburg will continue to strive to provide parks, facilities and services in a manner that is sustainable, innovative, fiscally-responsible and driven by customer service.

An Integrated & Collaborative Approach

In order to best meet the needs of our residents, the delivery of high quality spaces and programs will be viewed holistically and implemented by working hand-in-hand with a range of municipal departments, supporting volunteers, and establishing strategic partnerships that will maximize the public interest through a community-development approach.

Innovative & Appropriate Infrastructure

Parks, recreation and cultural facilities will be provided in an inclusive and integrated manner, to create opportunities for multi-use, multi-generational, and multi-seasonal experiences that meet the diverse needs of Tillsonburg's population.

Embracing the Arts, Culture & Heritage

The Town will work with its vibrant arts, cultural and heritage sector to enhance and further develop the creative capacity of Tillsonburg and proudly showcase our roots to visitors.

Focus on Wellness Through Programming

A continued emphasis will be placed on facilitating inclusive activities that promote healthy living, physical activity, wellness, skill development, knowledge, and community pride through the collaborative delivery of structured and unstructured opportunities to key markets such as youth, older adults, newcomers and families.

A Functional and Sustainable Parks System

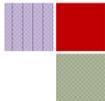
Parks, trails and open spaces will be designed and managed in an integrated manner so as to enable sustainable ecological management practices, link residential and employment areas, and provide opportunities for a wide variety of active and passive recreation and cultural experiences.

Section 2: The Planning Context

Fundamental to the Strategic Master Plan is an understanding of local demographics, as well as regional and national trends which provide an indication of current and future needs. Demographic characteristics are pertinent to the analysis of the Town's community parks, recreation and cultural needs. Identifying *who* lives in Tillsonburg, and *how* this community profile will differ in the future is imperative to truly understanding and responding to local needs.

Combined with an understanding of trends, a general picture can be formed that identifies the types of activities that will be required. This understanding is supplemented at the local level through consultations with the community, which provide insights into the needs and preferences associated with Tillsonburg's population.



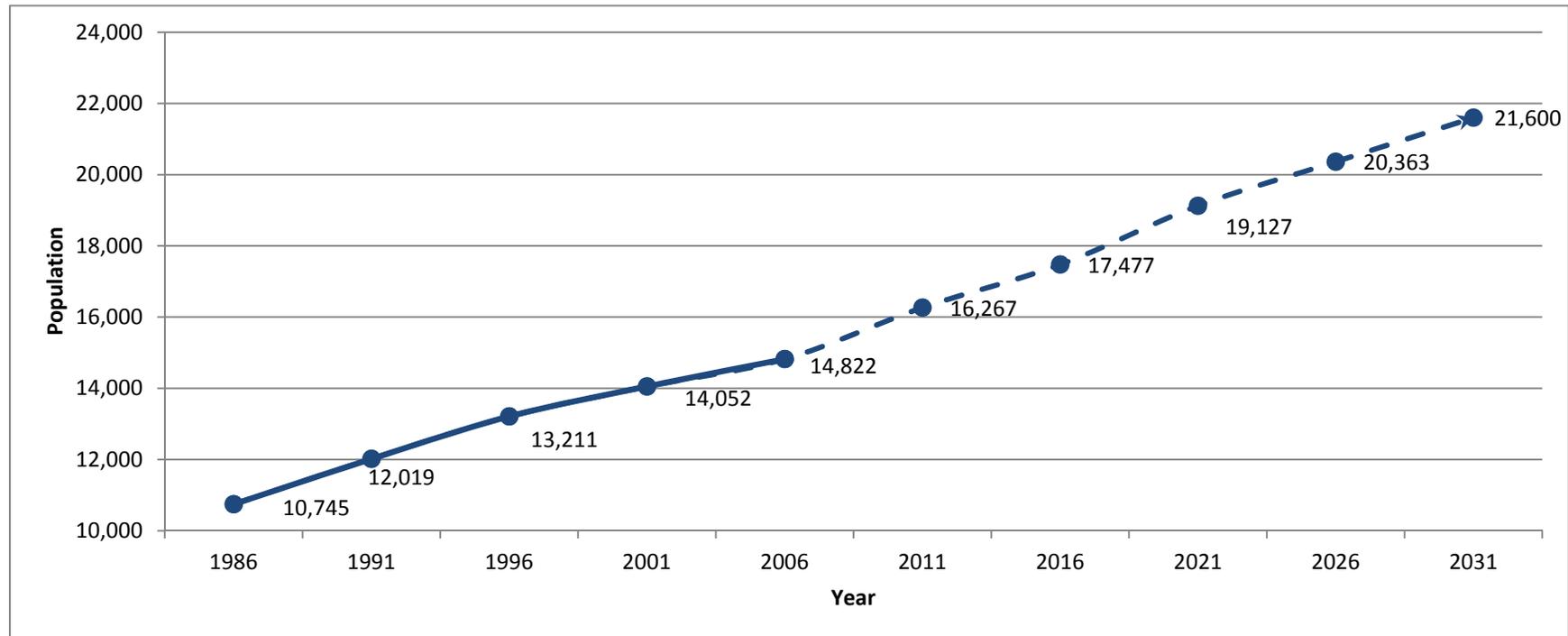


The Community Profile

Statistics Canada recorded the Town of Tillsonburg’s population as 14,822 for the year 2006, representing an increase of 5.5% from the 2001 Census. The Town experienced a steady growth in population, increasing by nearly 50% since 1986. The current population (2010) is estimated at nearly 16,000 residents according to the Development Charges Background Study completed for the County of Oxford in 2009.

The Strategic Master Plan examines parks, recreation and cultural needs over a twenty year period. For the purposes of the Master Plan, population projections will generally align to Census years (i.e. every five years from 2011 to 2031) and will be based upon forecasts prepared as part of the County of Oxford Development Charge Background Study (2009). According to this Study, Tillsonburg’s population was 15,359 in the year 2008 (representing a 4% increase from the 2006 Census population) and is forecasted to grow to 18,385 residents in the year 2018, and ultimately to 21,600 residents in the year 2031.

Figure 2: Historical & Forecasted Population Growth, 1986-2031



Source: Statistics Canada Census, 1986-2006; County of Oxford Development Charge Background Study, 2009



Using these baseline estimates, an assumption of population growth can be interpolated using a straight line projection. The preceding graph illustrates the anticipated population growth by Census year, though it is recognized that these numbers will likely vary depending upon the actual rate of annual growth, availability of serviced lands, local and regional market conditions, etc.

It is worth noting that Tillsonburg is considered to be a regional centre, with many facilities and services serving markets beyond municipal boundaries (the Town has a catchment of over 100,000 people within a twenty minute drive). A number of communities in the Counties of Oxford, Elgin and Norfolk utilize local services; this regional focus is important in the service delivery context though for the purposes of the Strategic Master Plan, only Tillsonburg-specific characteristics are considered given that local residents represent the major stakeholders responsible for sustaining the robust opportunities available in Tillsonburg.

In addition to the number of people residing in Tillsonburg, gaining an understanding of their demographic characteristics is important. Factors such as age, income and ethnicity all have a bearing on the types of recreation and cultural activities that will be sought.

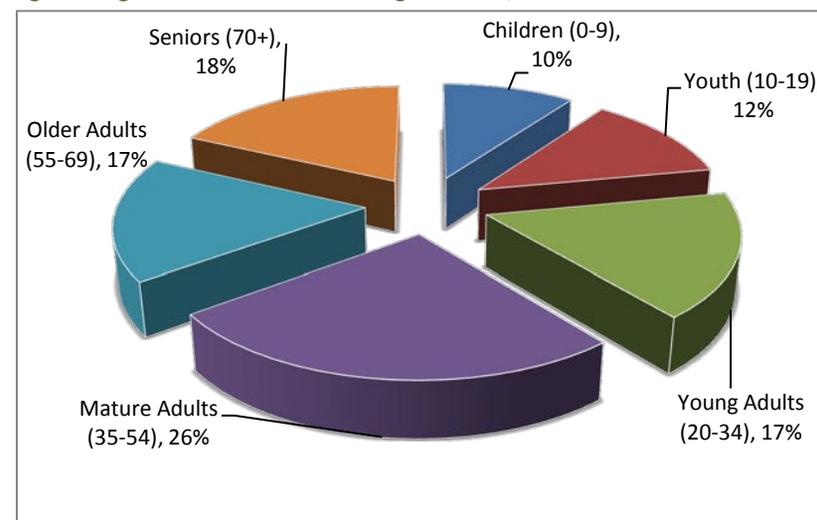
Age, for example, plays an important role in determining the types of activities that are pursued by residents. For example, children and teens are more likely to participate in organized active sports (such as hockey or soccer), whereas many older adults may prefer more non-programmed passive activities such as personal fitness or hiking.

According to the 2006 Census, the Town’s median age is 43.9 years, noticeably older than the provincial median of 39.0 years. Furthermore, the population of Tillsonburg is aging as a whole as evidenced by the Town’s median age of 41.4 years in 2001; this

‘greying’ of the population is a common demographic trend that is being observed across Canada, and Tillsonburg’s population can be expected to continue to age accordingly throughout the foreseeable future.

The Town’s age distribution is fairly balanced in terms of program markets, that is, children and youth (22%), young adults, (17%), mature adults (26%), older adults (17%), and seniors (18%). The mature adult category contains the largest proportion of the population, which is significant due to the fact that these residents will move into the older adult market segment over the next few years, thus placing added program and facility demands for this type of user. This is not to say that older adults should be the primary area of focus for future program delivery; continued population growth will result in higher program and facility demands across all age groups.

Figure 3: Age Distribution of Tillsonburg Residents, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada Census, 2006



Generally speaking, income can be a barrier for households due to the cost of participating in certain recreation and cultural activities. Higher levels of income in a community, therefore, tend to correlate with higher levels of participation in recreation and cultural activities.

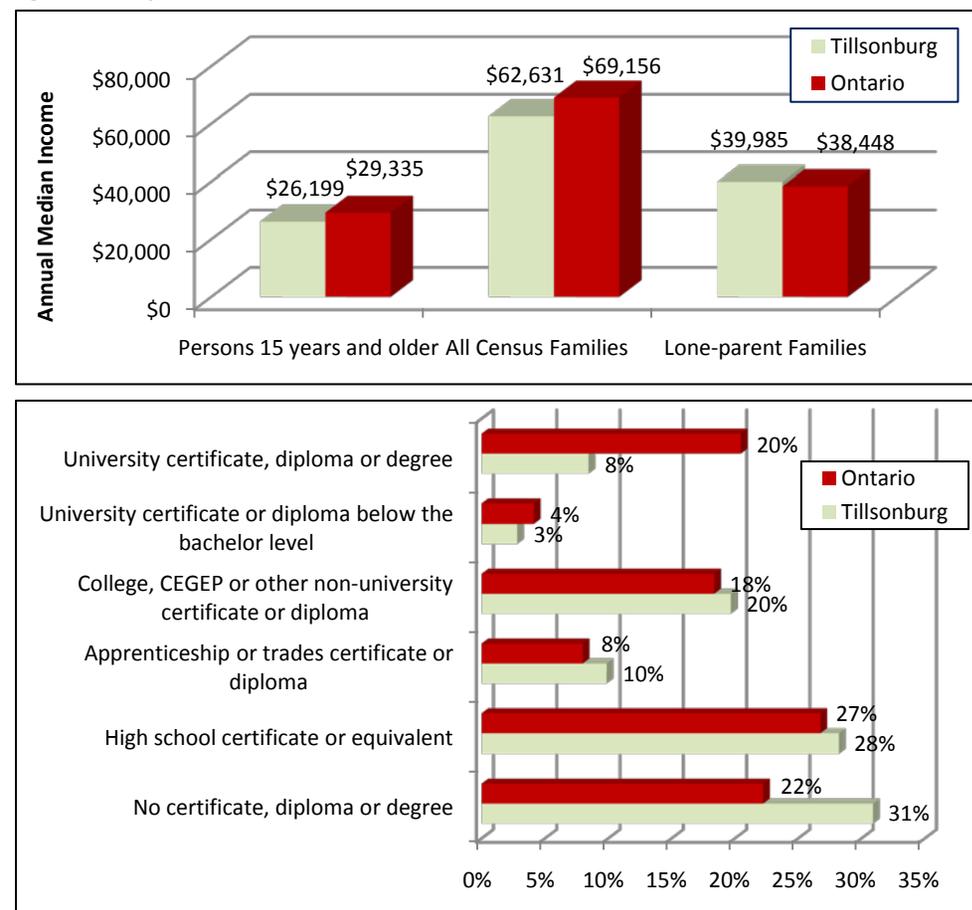
In the 2006 Census, Statistics Canada reported the median income in Tillsonburg as \$26,199 for individuals and \$62,631 for families. The provincial average is higher in both cases where the median income for individuals and families is \$29,335 and \$69,156 respectively. This may indirectly imply that participation may be slightly below average based solely on income, though this correlation may be offset to some degree by a lower cost of living in Tillsonburg relative to the provincial average. Furthermore, the Census shows that Tillsonburg has a lower percentage of people, including children and youth under the age of 18, in low income brackets than the provincial average. That being said, the need for affordable recreation and cultural opportunities is required to engage those with financial barriers thus the provision of parks and drop-in, no fee facilities and programs represents an opportunity for activity among all households.

Similarly, the level of education attained can also impact participation rates, with increased participation levels being correlated to higher degrees of educational attainment (i.e. generally, the more educated a person is, the more likely they are to participate). Among those aged 15 years or older, the Town of Tillsonburg has a higher average proportion of college educated, apprenticeship, trades and high school certificate or equivalent residents than the province.

Looking at the adjacent chart, Tillsonburg has a considerably lower proportion of university educated residents and higher proportion of residents with no certificate, diploma or degree compared to the

province. Due to this disproportion of Tillsonburg’s university educated residents and residents with no certificate, diploma or degree, the data suggests that the Town may expect lower rates of participation when being compared to the province, based solely on educational attainment.

Figure 4: Comparison of Income & Education Levels to the Province, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada Census, 2006



The last demographic factor to be considered pertains to ethnicity. Canada is a nation that has been historically settled by a number of immigrants from other countries, who have often brought their leisure interests with them. Approximately 14% (2,045 persons) of Tillsonburg’s population consists of immigrants, the majority of whom settled in the Town prior to 1991.

Of the Town’s 12,240 residents over the age of 15, 17% are first generation Canadians, 20% residents are second generation and the remaining 63% are third generation Canadians or greater. Therefore, a significant portion of Tillsonburg’s residents are well established in Canadian culture and can generally be expected to seek traditional recreation and cultural programs and facilities.

Of these immigrants, 4% of the Town’s population, or 580 residents, are visible minorities, many of whom are South East Asian (320 people) and Black (155 people) according to the 2006 Census. This is significantly lower than the provincial average, where 23% of the population is a visible minority. Although only a small portion of the Town’s population is a visible minority, national immigration and population growth trends suggest that the level of ethnic diversification will increase; this is a trend that could be seen locally as well as the population grows over time. As such, the implication for the future is that increasing levels of ethnic diversity may lead to the emergence of “non-traditional” activities, thus suggesting that flexibility in the design and function of facilities and programs would be a key consideration in their provision/enhancement.

Parks, Recreation & Cultural Trends

Lack of Free Time

- Primary barrier to participation for recreation and cultural activities in Canada
- Affects both youth and adults
- Longer hours and flexibility in scheduling is important
- A lack of time prevents about 20% of the Tillsonburg's household sample from participating in recreation and cultural activities as often as they would like

More People are Physically Inactive

- Resulting in higher levels of obesity, particularly among youth, and chronic disease such as diabetes, heart conditions, etc.
- Reliance on automobiles has created a culture of driving to destinations as opposed to encouraging active forms of transportation such walking or cycling
- The popularity of video games, Internet and television are out-competing physical activities
- Providing additional programs which respond to interests may help to address issues of inactivity

Emerging Activities

- Growing demands for spontaneous, non-programmed recreation and cultural activities where people can drop in at their own convenience (responds to lack of time)
- Increasing interests in field sports beyond soccer (such as Ultimate Frisbee, disc golf, rugby, etc.) which are not currently popular at the local level but could be in the future based on provincial trends
- Non-traditional sports such as skateboarding, sand volleyball, cricket, etc. are expected to gain popularity
- Demands for passive recreation and cultural activities in parks, such as walking, bird-watching, picnicking, etc.



Organized Activities

- Soccer is typically the most popular sport for children, followed by ice hockey, swimming and basketball
- Throughout Canada, stable to declining participation in many organized sports is being observed due to time constraints and changing work schedules
- Less than one third of Canadians participate in one or more sports (a decline since the 1990s)
- Emerging popularity of informal, drop-in and self-scheduled activities for both youth and adults

Active Seniors

- Regular physical activity promotes healthy aging, mental health and the prevention of chronic disease
- Growing expectations for services that provide high quality wellness and active living opportunities
- "Older Adults" are more interested in maintaining their active lifestyles, just at a gentler pace, and thus are looking for activities unlike previous generations of seniors
- There is still a segment of this population who will require traditional seniors' activities which are much more passive
- High quality programming and a variety of services for older adults and seniors is being provided by the Town, the County and local community groups (e.g. the Tillsonburg Seniors Centre)

Arts, Culture & Heritage

- Creative Cities enhance interest in local culture by embracing and promoting assets such as museums (such as the Annandale House), galleries, historic sites, areas of architectural or cultural interest, festivals, fairs, and farmers' markets
- The promotion of heritage has become an important part of urban regeneration, particularly within downtown cores, and helps to create a unique sense of place
- Promotion of heritage has generally become a cooperative effort between many local partners (such as the Station Arts Centre) within the not-for-profit, private and government sectors

Festivals & Special Events

- Create a sense of local pride, builds community and offers variety of leisure opportunities
- Municipalities seek "multiplier effects" from both tourism and local spending when facilitating special events
- New potential to boost funding through partnerships, volunteers, and provincial and federal assistance

Community Trails

- Walking for leisure ranks as the most popular activity for all ages - 84% of the household survey sample reported walking or hiking for leisure
- Increasing demand for the establishment and expansion of trail networks
- Active Transportation advocates trail usage for both recreational and utilitarian activities such as for physical activity, commuting, accessing services, etc.
- Master planning specifically for the trails system can improve trail provision, connectivity, management and amenity level

Design of Parks & Public Spaces

- Parks are closely tied to the quality of life, providing a variety of benefits to residents
- Parks are valued by all age groups, especially when geared to unstructured activities and socialization
- The growing population places increased demands on public spaces, particularly for aesthetically pleasing places such as around Lake Lisgar
- Integrating natural features that promote and enhance ecological function is a growing expectation



Multi-Use Parks & Facilities

- Centralizing a number of services and activities into individual locations, such as indoor community centres, sports field complexes or community gathering/special event areas
- Multi-use community centres are often designed with flexible/adaptable spaces and the ability to be expanded (the Tillsonburg Community Centre is a multi-use facility)
- Increasing demand for multi-field parks which can host tournaments or developmental clinics
- These hubs for recreation and cultural activities generate economy of scale efficiencies for both the Town and user groups

Volunteerism

- Concerns over shortages of volunteers and the ability to recruit new volunteers, both locally and nationally
- Seniors contribute the most volunteer hours
- Secondary school requirements present an opportunity to attract new volunteers
- Strategies are required to address volunteer-related issues

Partnerships

- Partnerships and cost sharing relationships can efficiently address parks, recreation and cultural needs
- Benefits can be maximized for all parties, including the user/consumer
- Many municipalities view partnerships as essential to providing high quality recreation and cultural services
- A partnership evaluation framework is necessary to guide decisions that can consistently assess whether or not to enter into agreements

Economic Considerations

- Local municipalities predominantly fund recreation and culture. Some view their role as being a ‘provider’ while other see themselves as a ‘facilitator’
- Schools operate as significant partners in provision of leisure services, but there is concern with reduced funding and subsequent reduction in provision of recreation and cultural opportunities
- Level of income can be a significant barrier to participation in leisure pursuits
- Rising costs provide a challenge to ensure that fees and rates are accessible to residents
- Increasing pressure for affordable municipal recreation and culture programs and subsidies
- “Ability to Pay” - setting pricing points and providing subsidies based on income rather than age, given national statistics showing that many older adults have higher levels of disposable income compared to other age groups

Opportunities for Tourism

- Parks, recreation and cultural services can be a major contributor to the economy in terms of spending and job creation
- Parks, recreation and cultural facilities are being assessed for their contributions to both residential population and tourism sector
- Municipalities can develop high quality facilities to draw participants from external markets (e.g. tournaments)
- Emerging opportunities for sport, nature-based, historical, urban tourism, etc.



Summary of Community Consultations

Community consultation is a key component of the master planning process as it provides insight into the perceived needs of the public, stakeholders, staff and members of local government. Combining locally collected data with an analysis of national and provincial trends and other factors provides a solid foundation upon which this Strategic Master Plan can be built. To date, a number of public consultation tools have been utilized (household survey, stakeholder group survey, key informant interviews, a staff workshop and a community search conference), with public information meetings planned for later stages of the process.

These consultation methods provide valuable input regarding strengths, challenges, needs and concerns of local residents of Tillsonburg. The findings of both completed and planned consultation efforts have been considered as part of the assessments of community parks, recreation and cultural facility and service delivery needs.

Household Survey

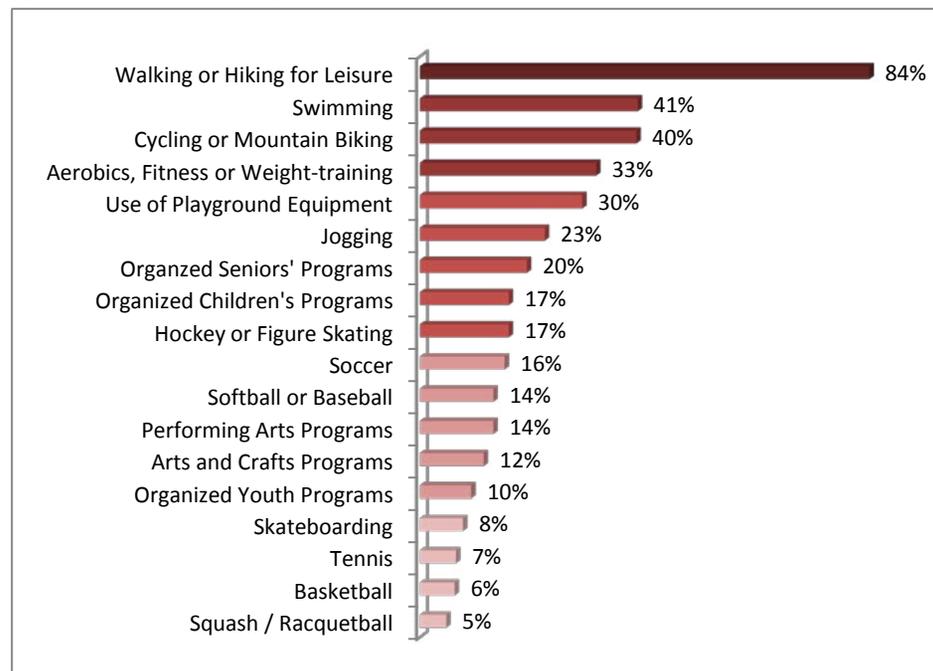
The purpose of the survey was to identify needs and preferences, and to set priorities for the provision of community parks, recreation and cultural facilities and services. Specifically, the survey asked questions about participation, activity barriers, importance and satisfaction ratings, and priorities for capital spending.

A random sample telephone survey was administered to households in the Town of Tillsonburg in October, 2010. In total, a sample size of 386 randomly selected telephone numbers was utilized for this survey which provides statistical confidence of ±5%, 19 times out of 20 (i.e. it can be considered representative of the local population).

Household Participation in Parks, Recreation & Cultural Activities

Respondents were asked to indicate whether or not their households had participated in particular types of activities within the past 12 months.

Figure 5: Household Participation in Parks, Recreation & Cultural Activities

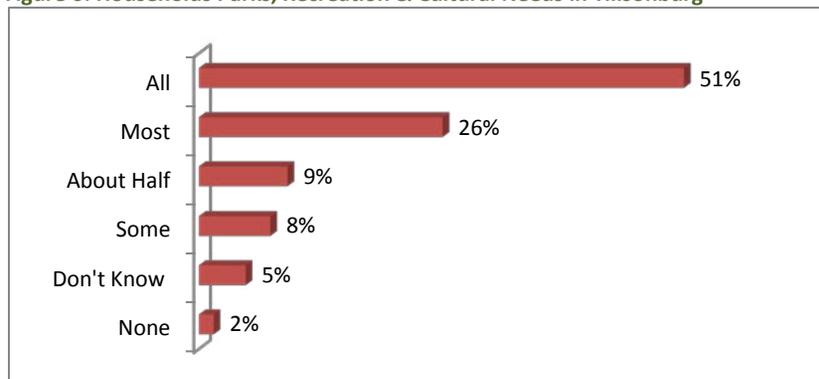


Walking and hiking for leisure was ranked as the most popular activity (84%), followed by swimming (41%), cycling and mountain biking (40%), aerobics, fitness or weight training (33%), and use of playground equipment (30%). It is worth noting that the six most popular activities are generally undertaken as unorganized, drop-in style activities that are flexibly scheduled, which, has become a common trend throughout the rest of Ontario.



Respondents were asked what percentage of their household’s parks, recreation, and cultural needs take place within Tillsonburg. Approximately half of all respondents indicated that all of their parks, recreation and cultural needs takes place within Tillsonburg (51%), followed by ‘Most’ (26%), and ‘About Half’ (9%).

Figure 6: Households Parks, Recreation & Cultural Needs in Tillsonburg



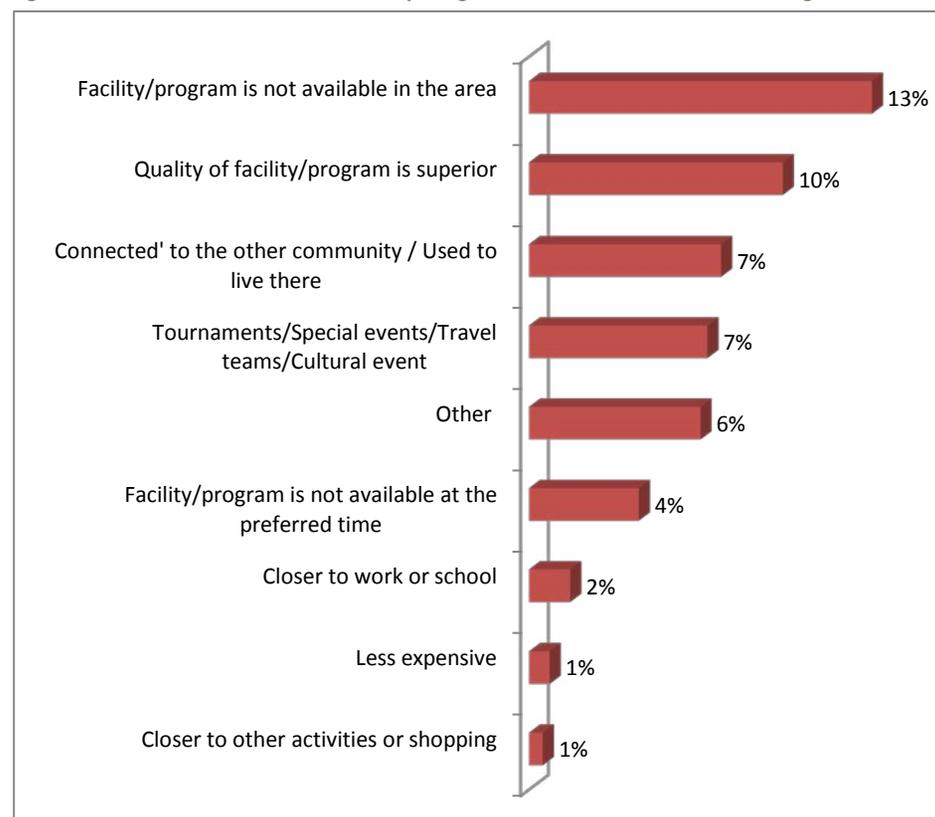
Respondents were queried about the types of activities that they participated in outside of Tillsonburg. The most common activity that they participated in outside of Tillsonburg was ‘Theatre’ (8% of the sample), closely followed by ‘Hiking’ (7.5%), ‘Golf’ (4%), and ‘Hockey’ (4%). The adjacent table identifies the top ten activities undertaken outside of Tillsonburg.

Respondents who participate in activities outside of Tillsonburg were asked why they choose to participate in these activities outside of Tillsonburg. The ‘facility or program is not available in the area’ (13%) was the most common response, as shown in the adjacent figure, followed by ‘quality of facility/program is superior’ (10%) and ‘connected to the community/used to live there’ (7%).

Table 1: Top 10 Activities Pursued Outside of Tillsonburg (% of Total Sample)

Top Ten Activities Pursued Outside of Tillsonburg				
1.	Theatre	(8%)	6. Baseball	(3%)
2.	Hiking	(8%)	7. Cycling/Mountain Biking	(2%)
3.	Golf	(4%)	8. Parks	(2%)
4.	Hockey	(4%)	9. Shopping	(2%)
5.	Swimming	(3%)	10. Walking	(2%)

Figure 7: Households Reasons for Participating in Activities Outside of Tillsonburg





Barriers to Participation

Respondents were asked about their ability to participate in arts and cultural activities (such as performing, visual, and literary arts) as often as they would like, then subsequently asked the same question about recreation activities. 60% of respondents said that they were able to participate in arts and cultural activities as often as they would like, while 37% of respondents said they were not. 65% of respondents indicated that they were able to participate in recreation activities as often as they would like and 35% said they were not.

The most common reason for not participating in recreation and cultural activities was the lack of personal time/too busy, followed by ‘health problems, disability, or age’, ‘lack of desired facilities or programs’ and unaffordable options. These findings are in line with trends described in the previous subsection, primarily due to busy lifestyles and an aging population.

Importance, Satisfaction & Priorities

Respondents rated the importance of various parks, recreation, and cultural items to their household, as well as their level of satisfaction with these items, using a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 meant ‘not at all important/satisfied’ and 5 meant ‘very important/satisfied’). The adjacent figure represents the average response out of 5. It is noteworthy that in areas where the satisfaction rating is lower than the importance rating, this typically indicates that there are service gaps. For example, ‘natural areas and open space’ ranked as being most important to them with an average rating of **4.46** out of 5 (or 89% importance rating) with a corresponding average satisfaction rating of **4.11** out of 5 (82% satisfaction rating).

Figure 8: Barriers to Participation in Recreation, Arts & Cultural Activities

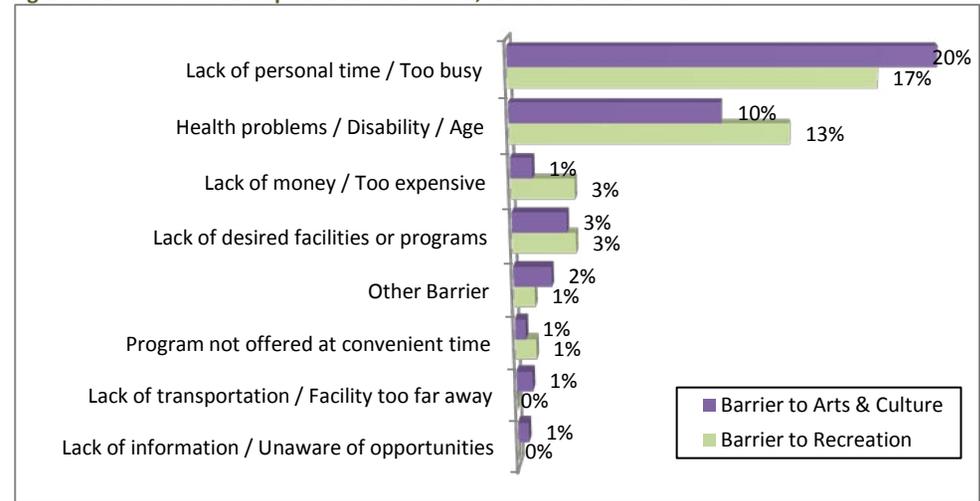
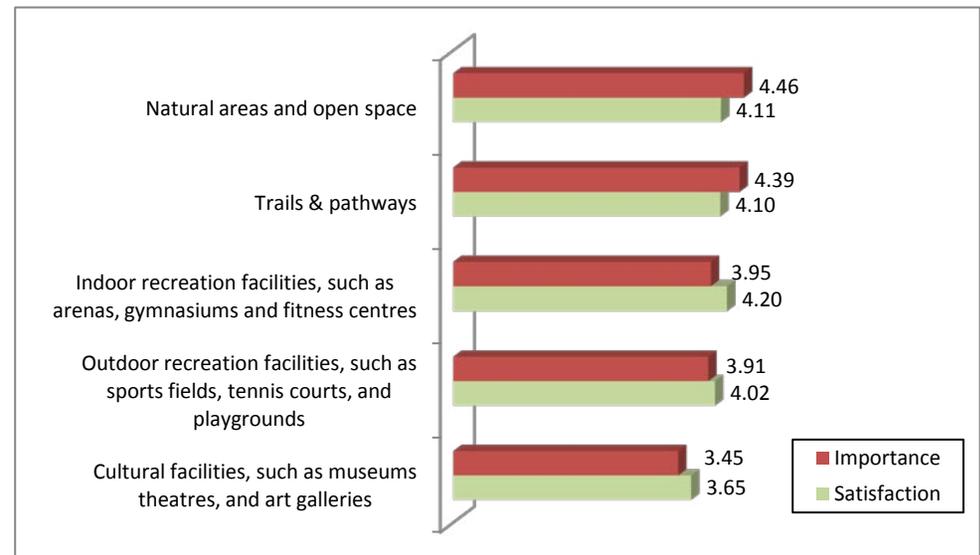


Figure 9: Household Importance and Satisfaction Ratings



Note: ‘don’t know’ responses are not included. Averages are scored out of 5

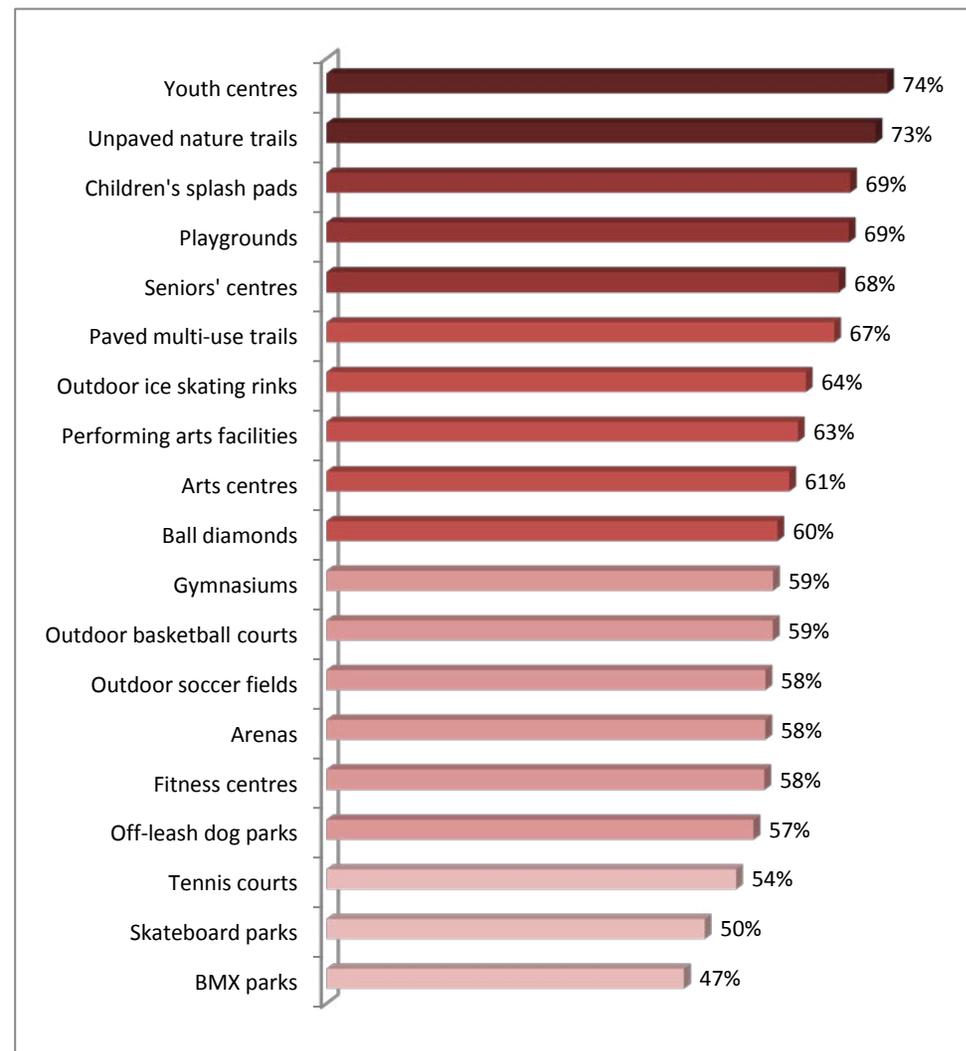


Natural areas and trails had higher importance ratings than satisfaction ratings, which could indicate that there is room for the Town to improve or may also be interpreted as residents having high expectations for these highly valued amenities. On the other hand, recreation and cultural facilities had higher satisfaction ratings than importance, which could be interpreted as the Town doing an excellent job in meeting needs and that residents are generally satisfied with what is available.

To assess more specifically where respondents felt the Town's resources should be allocated, they were asked which amenities should receive additional public funding (either for new construction or improvements). Respondents were asked to answer on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 meant 'don't spend additional funds' and 5 meant 'definitely spend additional funds'. The adjacent figure represents the overall average response (based on a percentage based on the average score out of 5). As shown, an average of 74% of respondents stated that 'youth centres' were most in need of public spending, followed by 'unpaved nature trails' (73%), 'children's splash pads' (69%), 'playgrounds' (69%) and 'seniors' centres' (68%).

In other communities that have been sampled, trails generally rank very high (usually at the top of the rankings for additional public spending) while youth centres are also usually a popular choice. Also as expected, amenities that ranked lower within the spectrum typically appeal to niche-type demographics such as BMX parks (47%), skateboard parks (50%), and tennis courts (54%).

Figure 10: Households that Support Additional Public Spending to Improve Parks, Recreation & Cultural Amenities



Note: 'don't know' not included in calculations

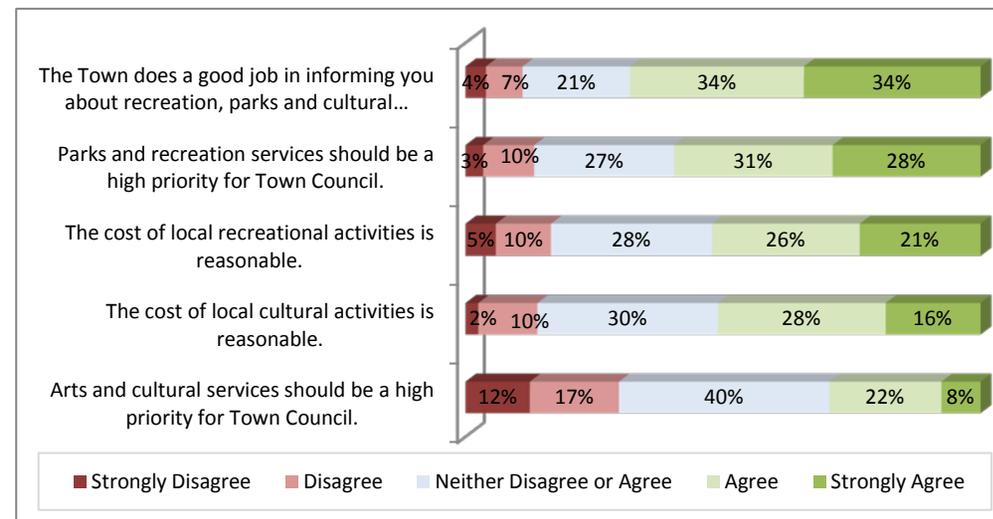


Respondents were then asked to respond to a series of statements related to the Town’s parks, recreation and cultural services. Respondents were asked to rank their level of agreement, ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. As shown in the adjacent figure, there was a good degree of agreement with the majority of these statements, with the exception of “Arts and cultural services should be a high priority for Town Council” where 30% of respondents ‘agreed or ‘strongly agreed’ and 29% or respondents ‘disagreed’ or ‘strongly disagreed’ (40% were neutral).

Subsequent to the statement “The Town does a good job in informing you about recreation, parks and culture services”, respondents were asked how the Town should inform them about recreation, arts, and cultural programs and activities in Tillsonburg. Newspapers were found to be the best way for the Town to inform people about services, followed by the Recreation & Leisure Guide mailed to homes, and radio/television.

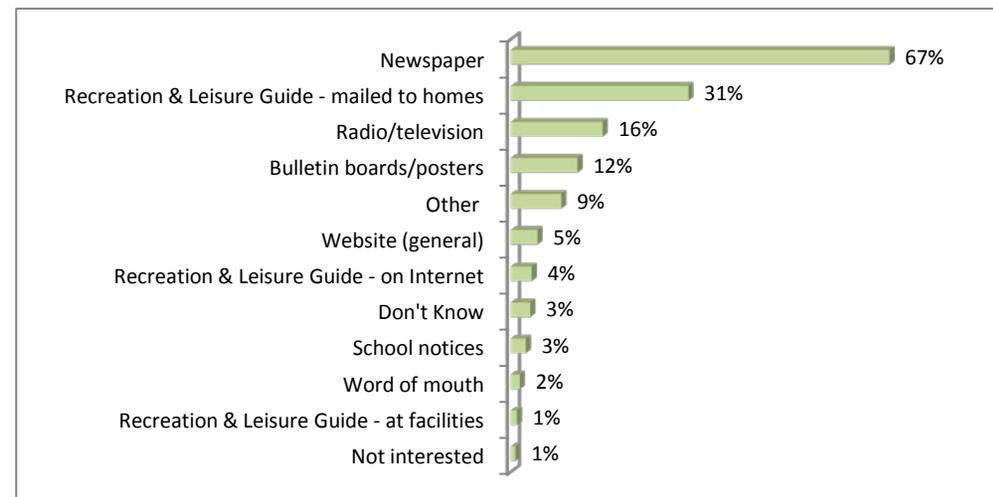


Figure 11: Household Level of Agreement with Various Statements



Note: ‘don’t know’ not included in calculations

Figure 12: Suggested Ways to Inform Households of Available Opportunities



Note: ‘don’t know’ not included in calculations



Stakeholder Questionnaire

A self-administered questionnaire was distributed to dozens of local organizations and user groups with an interest in community parks, recreation and cultural services. A total of 35 questionnaires were received and analyzed from the following groups:

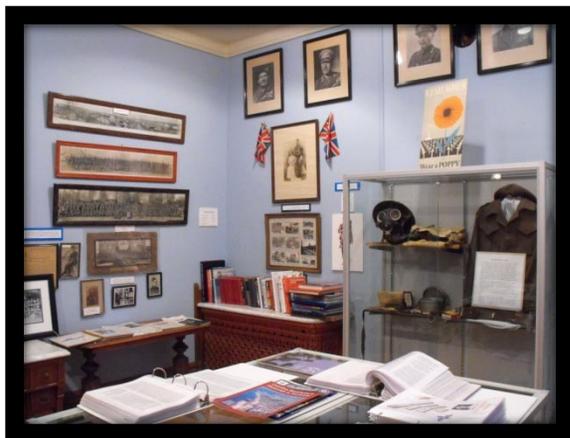
- 2nd Tillsonburg Scouts
- Festival of Music (Tillsonburg Canada Day Festival of Music)
- Club Oxford Hockey
- Kinetite Club of Tillsonburg
- Kinsmen Club
- Lake Lisgar Sailors
- Special Olympics Tillsonburg
- Solid Rock Theatre Company
- Ostrander’s Funeral Home
- Participate Community Arts Program
- Pawsitive Park Association
- Pioneer Cemetery Ad Hoc Committee
- Tillsonburg BIA
- Tillsonburg District Craft Guild/Station Arts Centre
- Tillsonburg & District Multi-Service Centre (MSC)
- Tillsonburg Historical Society
- Tillsonburg Horticultural Society
- Tillsonburg Indoor Soccer League
- Tillsonburg Ladies Slo-Pitch
- Tillsonburg Lions Club
- Tillsonburg Lioness Club
- Tillsonburg Minor Baseball Inc.
- Tillsonburg Minor Hockey Inc.
- Tillsonburg Minor Soccer
- Tillsonburg Oldtimers / Tuesday Night Oldtimers
- Tillsonburg Old Sox Baseball Club
- Tillsonburg Red Sox Senior Baseball Club
- Tillsonburg Ringette
- Tillsonburg Rowing Club
- Tillsonburg Senior Centre
- Tillsonburg Shrine Club
- Tillsonburg Skating Club
- Theatre Tillsonburg
- Tillsonburg Youth Advisory Committee
- Youth Unlimited Tillsonburg

Detailed input submitted by stakeholder groups has been carefully considered in the development of the Strategic Master Plan. The following key findings are tabulated from the questionnaire:

- 53% of groups had less than 100 members, 35% of groups had between 100 and 400 members and 6% of groups had 400 or more members.
- 31% of groups represented community groups, 17% of groups represented outdoor recreation groups, 17% represented indoor recreation groups, 14% represented arts and cultural groups, 14% represented service groups and 3% of groups represent other categories.
- 49% of groups expected to expand the scope of their programming, services, or membership while 37% expected little or no change – no groups planned to decrease the scope of their services (6% of groups did not respond).
- 18% of groups reported a need for additional access to existing parks, recreation or cultural facilities while 52% of groups stated they did not.
- 40% of groups stated that they required access to new parks, recreation or cultural facilities while 40% of groups said they did not.
- 37% of groups were willing to contribute financially towards the cost of the development or operation of any new or expanded facilities while 26% were not and 29% of groups were unsure.
- Of the groups that were willing to contribute financially, the largest proportion felt that fundraising was the most attractive option (50%), followed by partnerships (32%) or other options (20%).



- 72% of groups strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that “The Town should explore partnerships with public and non-profits to improve facilities/programs” while 6% strongly disagreed or disagreed.
- 29% of groups strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that “The Town adequately supports your group’s activities (financially or otherwise)” and 35% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.
- 28% of groups strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “Art, culture, or sport tourism should become a priority even if that involves some cutbacks from local programs or facilities” while 31% of groups strongly disagreed or disagreed.
- 75% of groups strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “Your organization is inclusive to all residents in Tillsonburg (i.e. those with disabilities, ethnic backgrounds, new residents, age groups etc.)” while 9% strongly disagreed or disagreed.



Community Search Conference

A search conference was held for the Town of Tillsonburg Community Parks, Recreation and Cultural Strategic Master Plan on October 21, 2010 in the Lion’s Den at the Tillsonburg Community Centre. The public consultation session was attended by a total of 46 individuals representing the general public and 24 different organizations. Town Staff and members of the Project’s Steering Committee were also present at the meeting to assist in facilitating small group discussions.

In addition to local residents interested in parks, recreation and culture, the Search Conference participants included members from the following community groups:

- Annandale National Historic Site
- Church of Christ
- Festival of Music
- Hickory Hills Association
- Kinsmen Club
- Pawsitive Park Association
- Ostrander’s Funeral Home
- Station Arts Centre
- Solid Rock Theatre
- Theatre Tillsonburg
- Tillsonburg Historical Society
- Tillsonburg Rowing Club
- Tillsonburg Red Sox Baseball
- Tillsonburg Old Sox Baseball
- Tillsonburg Skating Club
- Tillsonburg Men’s Slo-Pitch
- Tillsonburg Minor Baseball Inc.
- Tillsonburg Ladies Slo-Pitch
- Tillsonburg Minor Hockey Inc
- Tillsonburg Community Centre
- Tillsonburg Multi-Service Centre
- Tillsonburg Senior Centre
- Tillsonburg Lion’s Club
- The Bridges at Tillsonburg Golf Course

A number of key themes emerged from the Community Search Conference. In terms of values, residents appreciated the availability of a range of parks, recreation and cultural opportunities in the Town. Residents of Tillsonburg enjoy living in a small town that offers all the services and amenities that can be found in a city, and allows residents to develop strong social ties and a sense of community.



In contrast, when questions were raised pertaining to the improvement of Tillsonburg's parks, recreation, and cultural opportunities, participants from the search conference identified a number of issues. The most common issues identified by participants are: the need to reduce the cost to participate and rent facilities; improving communication between the Town, service groups, and the community to improve the availability and access to facilities; and, improving marketing strategies to inform the community of current events, services and programs. Improvements to the Town's website to be more user-friendly were also a common issue raised by many participants.

Participants from the community search conference also suggested improvements to the Town's facilities, specifically for two facilities – Lake Lisgar and the Tillsonburg Special Events Centre. Participants suggested that a number of improvements should be made to Lake Lisgar to be more enjoyable such as cleaning the Lake, improvements and repairs to the dock, storage facilities, and building a boardwalk. Improvements to the Special Events Centre included general maintenance and updating to attract new users and better utilize the space. Participants also suggested building a park amphitheatre or band shell to promote arts and cultural events.

Through the search conference, a number of creative and unique ideas were expressed to address challenges and build upon community strengths. These community-based solutions will be considered throughout the planning process and incorporated in the Community Parks, Recreation & Cultural Strategic Master Plan as appropriate.

Key Informant Interviews

Interviews were conducted with municipal representatives, key service providers and selected other stakeholders with a vested interest in recreation, parks and culture. Given the personal and/or confidential nature of these communications, individual responses have not been reproduced but rather, key concerns, ideas and themes were integrated in latter stages of the planning process to supplement action plans that were developed.

Written Briefs & Online Feedback

An opportunity to provide written feedback for the Strategic Master Plan was advertised, and a number of briefs have been received through letters, emails and informal discussions with Town Staff. The following are key themes emerging from input provided through the municipal website, emails and other correspondence:

- provision of playgrounds, splash pads, etc. to serve the needs of young families;
- better marketing (e.g. improving the website or using social media, better signage, use of the Community Calendar, etc.). to show what is available in the Town to both residents and visitors;
- lighting additional sports fields to increase scheduling capacities; and
- incorporating child-minding/supervision at facilities such as the Tillsonburg Community Centre.

Guiding Principle 1: Striving for Service Excellence

Tillsonburg will continue to strive to provide parks, facilities and services in a manner that is sustainable, innovative, fiscally-responsible and driven by customer service.

This Guiding Principle will specifically look at:

- the Town's role in delivering high quality, innovative parks, recreational and cultural services;
- maximizing the Town's performance in how it delivers services;
- ensuring effective operating systems, practices and procedures
- providing excellent customer service; and
- the need to undertake regular strategic planning initiatives.





The Town’s Role in Delivering Innovative & High Quality Services

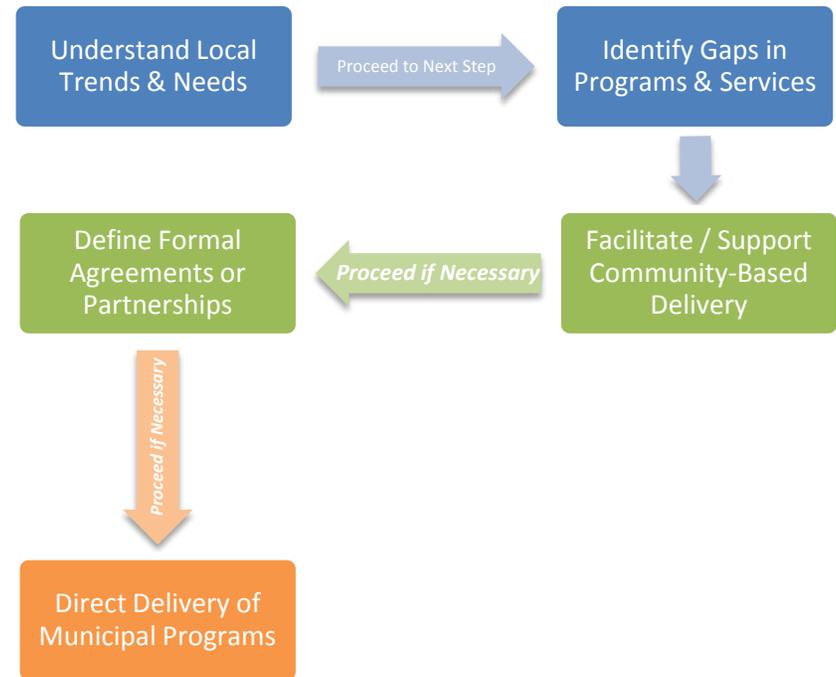
The “business” of parks, recreation and culture service delivery is rapidly evolving, which means that progressive municipalities and their departments must be flexible in adopting methods to manage and control their day-to-day activities. Successful parks, recreation and cultural organizations recognize that management and operating techniques must be revised over time in response to shifts in corporate culture or changes in market conditions.

The Town of Tillsonburg has long been a regional leader in the provision of recreation and cultural facilities and services, not only for its residents but also serving outlying, rural populations outside of the municipal boundary as well. The Town’s mission statement, articulated earlier in this Strategic Master Plan, recognizes that services must be focused to the customer, responsive to resident’s needs and contribute to a number of municipal goals such as promoting physical activity, facilitating social interaction and community pride, and encouraging tourism and economic development.

The Town, through its Community Services Department, will continue to provide leadership in the delivery of high quality parks, recreation and cultural opportunities. The Town also recognizes that it does not have to “be everything to everybody” as there is a highly skilled, dedicated base of volunteers and community partners who contribute to the delivery of facilities and programs that raise the quality of life in Tillsonburg.

As such, the Town’s role will be to continue to provide core facilities and services that are deemed to be necessary to the public good, while encouraging the non-profit and private sectors to also grow their programs and services. For example, the Town will continue to provide facilities such as its arenas and sports fields while leaving it up to the community to run the programs (e.g. minor sports, adult softball, etc.).

Figure 13: Executing & Maximizing the Municipal Role



In order to provide a broad range of choice, however, the Town will have to strategically evaluate where the community sector cannot or has not been able to address market demands. An annual review and revision of the program inventory established as part of this Strategic Master Plan will allow the Town to understand “gap” areas and undertake business planning to determine the feasibility of direct municipal provision, being cognisant that program delivery will require additional human and financial resources (that will need to be recovered to an acceptable level of operating subsidy or surplus by ways such as user fees or alternative funding streams).



For example, a gap area has been observed with regard to youth and teen’s programming (this is discussed further in Guiding Principle 5). A way for the Town to approach this could be to take a direct role in some areas, notably the provision of space, such as a youth centre, and the provision of a limited number of recreation

programs (which is within its area of expertise); the Town would also take an indirect role by facilitating certain partners (who could include the socially-focused youth agencies, local arts or theatre groups, etc.) to provide services as well out of facilities, parks or other ideal venues. In this way, a holistic delivery of services (which is the most effective approach to dealing with youth) can be attained without the Town having to be the sole provider of services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ Continue to be a direct provider of a robust range of programs and services which fall within the Town’s core mandate, while also acting as a facilitator of parks, recreation and cultural opportunities through the provision of space and other supports that indirectly support programming offered through the community sector.
- ☑ Conduct an annual review of the municipal and community-based program inventory, and identify if there are any major gaps. Based upon this review, the direct provision of non-core facilities and services may be considered if required to fill program gaps that cannot reasonably be provided through the community sector, so long as market need can be quantified and justified through business planning.

Maximizing Municipal Performance

The Town of Tillsonburg possesses an excellent pool of talented Staff, who work as a cohesive unit to achieve necessary objectives of delivering quality parks, recreation and cultural services to the community. Discussions held with Town Staff, through interviews and workshops, suggest that meeting public needs are their top priority and that staff are flexible and communicate well with each other to achieve the desired ends.



Sound leadership at the executive levels is apparent from Council, the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer through to Department Heads and others in the organization, with a willingness to delegate and listen generally apparent as well. It would appear that Town Staff are well engaged and accessible to the public and community groups, which is strong asset in any community but particularly important in a

smaller urban-rural community where collaboration is critical to delivering a broad range of high quality services.

A continued emphasis should be placed on service excellence and understanding trends and best practices. The Town employs a progressive approach in ensuring that its staff are trained, and in fact, are able to spread their knowledge to others in the organization. Building on this culture of knowledge, municipal performance could be further maximized by dedicating some staff

resources to trend tracking and monitoring of best practices/innovation, and could also be utilized to evaluate progress being made on this Strategic Master Plan's actions. Further to the point of best practices and innovation, it is important to note that the concept applies to *what* services the Town delivers and *how* it delivers them.

Municipal leadership is evident in the desire to provide high quality facilities and services, which are progressive and leading edge. As an example, the Tillsonburg Community Centre represents current best practices in facility design (through co-location of multiple activities and services) despite being constructed over thirty years ago. The Town should continue to facilitate high quality services, potentially by adopting nationally and internationally recognized quality assurance programs such as promoting civic beautification through involvement in the Communities In Bloom (possibly in partnership with local groups such as the Tillsonburg Horticultural Society, the BIA, etc.), benchmarking municipal performance to accepted standards such as Parks & Recreation Ontario's High Five Program for children and youth, etc.

The way in which the Town delivers its parks, facilities and services is guided by policies and practices that have been established over the course of time. A number of the policies are currently informal, a result of many different corporate practices and historical relationships with others. In order to attain service excellence, it is important to ensure that operations are transparent and consistent in order to provide guidance to staff, volunteers and the public in how policies and procedures are implemented.

As such, the Town would benefit from annually reviewing all of its standardized, formal and informal policies to assess their relevancy and any need to update them. Furthermore, ensuring that all staff



are aware of updated policies should be facilitated by the provision of copies of the policies within leisure facilities. This will enable consistent implementation and ultimately lead to a higher level of service to the customer.

The Town is also considering ways in which to incorporate new technologies to deliver leisure services more effectively to the community. The Internet represents one of the most powerful communication tools, with the Town already providing considerable information through its website. The increasing popularity of social media (Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, etc.) could be capitalized upon in order to raise awareness within the community. Making use of the Internet to not only to disseminate information but also to assist groups with online registration opportunities (as well as for any programming that the Town may choose to deliver directly) would be a valued service among many in the community, while also providing the Town with a way to track data and statistics that can be utilized as performance measures.

As an example of incorporating newer technologies, an online booking system for municipal facilities could accompany registration capabilities. Other ways to increase effectiveness of the municipal service delivery system could also consist of providing service kiosks at major municipal facilities (e.g. community centres, libraries, etc.), continuing to utilize the Town's utilization and tracking software (CLASS is presently used) to better gauge performance on a monthly or annually basis, or incorporating other new technologies/best practices as they emerge.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ Continue to ensure awareness of best practices in service delivery by assigning staff to track current and innovative trends. These staff or staff teams should also be used to evaluate progress made on the implementation of the Strategic Master Plan, in light of their understanding of best practices.
- ☑ Incorporate appropriate new technologies in delivering parks, recreation and cultural services, which are aimed at improving internal performance and customer service.
- ☑ Investigate involvement in provincially and nationally recognized quality assurance programs such as Communities In Bloom, High Five, etc.
- ☑ Review Departmental policies and procedures, preferably on an annual basis, to ensure relevancy to current community and operational requirements.



Effective Operating Practices & Procedures

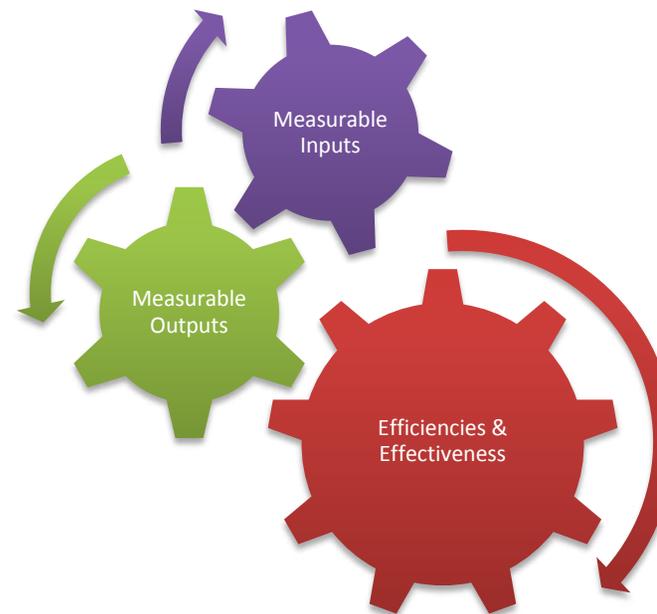
In order for the Town to track and quantify areas of success and required improvement in *how* it delivers its services, use of quantifiable targets and performance measures is encouraged. Doing so creates a process whereby operational transparency results from the delivery of leisure services, and eventually programs, as staff have accountability in meeting targets and desired outcomes in their respective areas of focus.

Similarly, the strong volunteer and community sector presence can also benefit by adopting targets and measures to improve their services, allows the Town to benchmark external community-based delivery in the context of its own expectations; the result is a collaborative process where all stakeholders have an interest in achieving targets for the betterment of their patrons, and ultimately the stakeholders themselves.

Performance measures generally consist of four primary components:

- **Inputs** are the resources which are required to provide leisure services; examples may include the number of full-time staff equivalents (FTEs) per service type, the budget allotment for each service, or the square footage or number of hectares per service type.
- **Outputs** are the performance of the service, as compared to its service standard; examples may include the number of participants or users per service type, parks and trails visits, program visits, number of fitness memberships sold, number of trees maintained, or the square footage of horticultural displays.

- **Efficiencies** are generally the cost per service type; for example, the cost per hectare of open space maintained, the annual cost per facility visits, cost per square footage of property maintained, or the cost per resident per service type provide an indication of efficiency year-over-year.
- **Effectiveness** is generally measured through customer satisfaction or relativity to the anticipated opinion from local residents; for example, overall satisfaction with leisure services can be measured every two years, satisfaction per service type, or if the public opinion changes with regard to the anticipated level of service are all factors that can be used to assess how effective the Town has been doing in delivering services.



The Town currently is mandated to collect data as part of the Provincial Municipal Performance Measures Program (MPMP), although while MPMP is useful for provincial benchmarking, it does not necessarily benefit internal planning and reporting exercises. Furthermore, MPMP data is not always comparable between municipalities (due to variability in service levels, populations and densities, service delivery models, capacity to collect and analyse data, etc.) The development of specific measures tailored to allow Tillsonburg's Community Services Department to annually track and compare its successes and challenges is thus encouraged.



At the onset, basic measures (such as the ones listed in the preceding paragraphs) should be developed which can be refined and expanded upon as the Department service delivery becomes more complex with increasing sophistication and program demands of the growing resident base. This will require staff resources to create performance targets, collect the necessary data, and interpret and compare results. The Town may wish to integrate performance measurement with other organizations, such as the

Ontario Municipal Benchmarking Initiative (OMBI), and internal initiatives such as the proposed customer satisfaction survey which is discussed in the following pages.

For the Town of Tillsonburg to strive for continual excellence in the delivery of recreation and leisure services, it must follow a standardized business process as all good service organizations do, and ensure that it consistently applies best practices, policies and procedures throughout all of its Departments. These operational standards define the very parameters of how services are delivered and ensure that up-to-date and innovative practices are utilized, regardless of any obstacles or barriers (such as time pressures).

The basis of an effective service delivery model is defined through a sound strategic plan (most recently developed in 2008 for the Town as a whole), from which meaningful priorities, policies, practices and procedures can be developed. Utilizing a delivery framework that is innovative, effective and customer-focused will position the Town favourably in terms of continued success.

As such, Tillsonburg's management systems should emphasize a number of key concepts such as:

- *Team-based Approaches* – staff throughout the Community Services Department should be trained to collaborate and support each other, as necessary, in fulfillment of the Departmental vision and operating philosophy.
- *Creativity* – with a dynamic operating environment, it will be up to the Community Services Department to innovate, create, adapt and respond to the needs for new types of services, facilities and programs.
- *Adaptability* – to be effective, delivery systems need to be flexible and adaptable to a changing market, new priorities



set out by Council or upper tiers of government, etc. which means that the Department will always have to be up-to-date on best practices and regularly engaging its public to truly understand what is required, and how best to deliver.

- *Accountability Through Empowerment* – establishing basic guidelines and ground rules that define operational parameters within the Department, and encouraging staff to make decisions and take actions, with the knowledge that they will be accountable for their performance.
- *Financial Sustainability* – Staff with responsibilities and control over revenue and cost aspects of the plan should understand their level of accountability and the implications of falling short, reaching or exceeding business plan estimates (for example, the Community Services Department could set an internal goal for its management staff to try to reduce annual costs by a certain percentage during their yearly budget planning processes).

In order to plan for the effective use of municipal facilities and maximize utilization, the Town needs to possess consistent practices in how it allocates time at its facilities. As discussed in Guiding Principle 3, the need for an ‘Ice Allocation Policy’ has been articulated so that municipal staff are able to equitably allocate time and access to multiple user groups. At a minimum, the Ice Allocation Policy would ideally address elements such as rental rates, allocation priority (e.g., youth, adult, low income households, community groups, non-resident rentals, private resident rentals, etc.), rental procedures, and responsibilities of user groups. Depending upon the need to do so, allocation policies could be extended to other facilities such as sports fields, aquatics, etc.

As part of the allocation and capital planning process, all organized users of municipal facilities (notably minor and adult sport leagues using sports fields, gymnasiums, arenas, etc.) should be required to provide registration data so that the Town is able to equitably allocate facility access while also monitoring trends in participation of various activities, and concurrently.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ Establish a simple set of quantifiable targets and performance measures that can gauge the efficiency and effectiveness of services, and eventually programs, which are offered by the Town. These measures can be refined and expanded upon over time to respond to changing consumer expectations and Departmental operating practices.
- ☑ In consultation with local user groups, establish an Ice Allocation Policy to formalize equitable access to municipal arenas. Allocation Policies may also be created for other municipal facilities (e.g. sports fields, gymnasium, etc.) should the need arise to do so.
- ☑ The Town should require groups regularly using municipal facilities to provide participant data, including names and addresses to adequately plan for facility access requirements, through tracking, monitoring statistics application of performance measures.



Responsive Customer Service

Throughout the province, consumers of public recreation services are more sophisticated and demanding than ever before. Patrons of recreation and cultural facilities and programs seem to be expecting new degrees of service treatment that is well beyond traditional norms. This trend will become increasingly prevalent in Tillsonburg as newcomers arriving to the Town from larger urban areas seek the high quality, convenient programs and facilities that they have grown accustomed to. Town Staff appear to be up to the task, as great pride is already taken in providing excellent customer service to facility patrons and program users.

A well managed, quality-focused customer service system is considered to be one of the fundamental components of an effective service delivery system. Top performing parks, recreation and culture departments acknowledge this by allocating sufficient resources as well as an appropriate number of well trained staff to fulfill the service expectations of their clientele. By being progressive with new technologies, piloting projects, undertaking satisfaction surveys, etc., Town staff will continue to build on the customer service being delivered to residents.

In fact, it is recommended that the Town of Tillsonburg undertake a comprehensive customer satisfaction survey so that Community Services management can actively seek customer feedback and their evaluation of municipal services. Such a survey should be regularly undertaken (e.g. at three or five year intervals) so that the Town can adequately identify areas for improvement, which in turn can lead to better program utilization and/or cost-recovery.



The way in which a patron is treated by staff is often perceived to be just as important as the quality of the facility or program that they are using. Consequently, progressive organizations are placing greater emphasis on their ability to meet their patrons' service expectations, while also realizing that the consistent delivery of quality customer service is a planned activity that must be carefully managed and effectively coordinated. They recognize that they must devote at least as much time on the "people side of the business" as they do on the technical and procedural aspects of providing facilities and services. Therefore, they split their planning and implementation energies between:

- creating systems, procedures, practises and controls to deliver quality services; and



- training and assisting service personnel to adopt attitudes, behaviours and verbal skills that will effectively meet customers’ expectations.

Lastly, discussions with Community Services Staff have suggested that some residents are confused by the mandate of the Department, as some associate “Community Services” with more of a social services role. There have been a few municipalities who have changed the names of Departments responsible for parks, recreation and culture services to better articulate to the community what is provided through the Department. Some municipalities have added the word “Culture” to their Parks & Recreation Departments while others have changed the name entirely (such as the City of Windsor who recently renamed their Community Services Department to the Parks & Recreation Department).



In doing so, parks, recreation and/or culture can be branded as an essential service and raising the profile of municipally-delivered services. As part of the recommended customer satisfaction survey, the Town should include a question on how residents interpret the term Community Services and then subsequently decide if the Departmental name needs to be changed (e.g. to Parks, Recreation & Culture or Leisure Services, etc.).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ Continually investigate ways in which to enhance the way in which services are being delivered to customers, with a continued view on quality. As such, the Town should be willing to explore new approaches and technologies which will aid Staff in their ability to administer the high quality customer services that residents now associate with municipal facilities and programs.
- ☑ Undertake a Customer Satisfaction Survey at regular intervals to provide important insights into how the public perceives the availability and delivery of municipal parks, recreation and cultural services.
- ☑ After consulting with the general public, Town Staff, and the identified Council advisory committees, investigate the need to rename the Community Services Department to better reflect and articulate the role of municipal parks, recreation and cultural services.



Marketing & Awareness

Promoting Awareness throughout the Town & Region

The Town and its Community Services Department place a high priority on communications within itself and with the community. By listening to the public and informing them of the benefits of creative, healthy and active lifestyles, the intent is that quality of life and awareness of locally available opportunities will be enhanced. Parks and leisure facilities enjoy thousands of visitors annually and consistent messaging will contribute the social changes needed in the areas under the Departments’ purview. Messaging with respect to embracing active lifestyles, respecting and becoming stewards of the environment, and the benefits of participating in recreation and parks opportunities are all messages that the Town must consistently impart through its many communications vehicles.

Tillsonburg’s providers of recreation and cultural services also play a key role in educating the public and influencing the degree of participation within the community. The Town recognizes the valuable role of the community in providing a diverse and healthy base of programming that benefits local residents. Between the Town and its partners, a consistent message is delivered to local residents about the importance of leading healthy lifestyles.

No matter how comprehensive the availability and quality of recreation and cultural services is within the community, they can be rendered ineffective if the public is unaware that the programs or spaces exist. While 68% of the Strategic Master Plan’s household survey sample agreed that they were aware of parks, recreation and cultural activities available in their areas, 28% disagreed (the remaining 4% neither agreed nor disagreed); this represents an area for improvement for the Town in getting the message out. Making

residents aware of programs and services made available by the Town and its community partners has been an ongoing challenge, but one that is getting better as more efforts are devoted to understanding the needs of specific target markets, such as youth. Furthermore, it is not only important for the public to understand what opportunities are available for participation in recreation and cultural activities, but it is also crucial that they are also aware of ways for them to become engaged and provide feedback to decision-makers.

To this end, it is recommended that the Town undertake a Marketing Strategy for its recreational and cultural assets (such an initiative is also recommended through the Trails Master Plan) that aligns with other municipal marketing initiatives. As discussed in Guiding Principle 2, this marketing strategy will also support economic development and tourism goals by promoting municipal leisure assets such as the Annandale National Historic Site, Lake Lisgar Water Park, sports field complexes (for sport tourism), special events (such as the Tillsonburg Fair) and other attractions.





Spreading the Message

It is not only important for the Town to improve its internal communications strategy, but as part of a community development approach, communications are part of the tools that groups will need to effectively understand if they are to inform the public of their services (and thus provide the potential for longevity and success). The Town should continue to provide the necessary supports to groups in terms of enhancing communication strategies and vehicles of its partners through initiatives such as providing affordable advertising in the Recreation & Leisure Program Guide or assisting with the development of marketing strategies. The Town should also attempt to facilitate dialogue between groups in order to bolster communication between them and ensure that a collaborative approach is employed in delivering services across Tillsonburg (e.g. by hosting an annual forum of service providers with common interests, as discussed in Guiding Principle 2).

Users and non-users of programs and services must have the opportunity to have open and ongoing dialogue with the Town on accessing programs and services, emerging trends, community and individual involvement, current and future needs and potential partnerships at a minimum. The Town must use all of its communication vehicles to maximize communications and its ability to listen to and influence residents and stakeholder behaviours. Currently, the Recreation & Leisure Program Guide published by the Town is the primary method of informing the community of available facilities, programs and local service providers in Tillsonburg. Continuing to ensure that the Program Guide clearly articulates programming options is a key priority for the Town to focus upon, though there are other ways to market opportunities as well.

As evidenced through the most recent elections in Canada and the United States, use of the Internet has become the primary medium in which to target the masses (particularly younger voters) through Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc. Furthermore, the Town's younger age bases who frequently are involved in recreation and culture are a generation that is at the forefront of using emerging technologies, and will eventually be the ones that best understand it. Conversely, the aging population may need to be better trained to use technology, though a number of Baby Boomers have been directly involved in the digital age by use of technology in the workplace.

As such, making recreation, arts and cultural opportunities more visible and improving the dissemination of such information on the Town's webpage will assist in enhancing awareness. For example, the Recreation & Leisure Program Guide is currently available as a basic PDF on the Town's home page, which is an excellent first step. As the primary advertising/awareness medium for the Community Services Department's programs and facilities, the online Program Guide could be enhanced to be more user-friendly by incorporating technologies which allow the user to quickly toggle between sections (e.g. going from aquatics programs to facility rental info with the click of a button) or creating a more interactive, graphical interface using alternative software (e.g. mimicking the reading of a hard copy) could be considered, among other things.

In addition, communicating opportunities to the children's and youth markets is critical to engaging those individuals (particularly those who are less involved in organized activities) to ensure that they are aware of local activities, which in turn can lead them towards healthy and safe lifestyle choices. As such, marketing available opportunities through online sources and social networking sites poses great potential and provides municipalities such as Tillsonburg with the ability to reach a large number of

residents. While it is easy to rely upon the allure of the Internet to market opportunities, it should be viewed as a supporting tool (i.e. combined with other forms of advertising) as there is still a proportion of households that either do not have frequent access to a computer or are not comfortable with the technology. For example, over two-thirds (67%) of the household survey sample suggested that making use of the newspaper is the best way to keep them informed of opportunities while 5% suggested use of the municipal website.

Lastly, the internal capacity of Town staff is an excellent way to 'get the word out' on certain activities. Word of mouth is a powerful marketing vehicle, particularly among younger generations, thus talking to residents about available opportunities can go a long way in promoting services. In partnership with other community leisure providers, outreach to a broad range of residents can be attained to inform them of all community-based services which are at their disposal.

As many people also tend to value face-to-face communications with their peers or colleagues, providing staff with training to spread 'word of mouth' messages about municipal programs and activities would be beneficial for the Town to market its services. This training can position municipal staff to understand how various marketing mechanisms can be implemented and choosing the appropriate medium for the program/target market in question. For example, attending workshops or seminars which teach 'word of mouth' marketing methods (as well as other techniques) would assist Town staff in promoting this type of advertising.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ Update the municipal corporate communications program and undertake enhanced marketing and public awareness efforts, after considering the return on investment of these initiatives through business planning.
- ☑ Undertake a Marketing Strategy to promote local and regional awareness of parks, recreation and cultural assets in Tillsonburg, which at a minimum should consider the Lake Lisgar Water Park, the local trails system and the Annandale National Historic Site.
- ☑ Ensure that all municipal staff are aware of corporate objectives and key services which can be disseminated to the customer by increasing interaction between all levels of staff (i.e. from Management to the Front-Line, and between all staff operation depots).
- ☑ Develop an annual communications plan that addresses key messages to target audiences, and the associated communication media. This communications plan should also look at cross promotion of messages between the Town and user groups, as well as any information sharing opportunities between all stakeholders in recreation and leisure service delivery.
- ☑ Bolster information disseminated to the community through the Recreation & Leisure Program Guide, newsletters, the Town website, social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter), and word-of-mouth.
- ☑ The Town should ensure that its marketing methods for reaching youth are current, innovative and targeted (through use of social media, working with the schools for print advertising, word-of-mouth, etc.).

Regular Strategic Planning

As a Town continually striving for service excellence, care must be taken to ensure that long-range planning is supported by short-term monitoring. In essence, this implies planning for the future while consistently understanding the current circumstances and context of the community. For the Community Parks, Recreation & Cultural Strategic Master Plan, the Town should track progress made on implementing the Recommendations contained in this document and review them when new information (such as updated population forecasts) becomes available. It is suggested that the Town annually review the progress made on implementing the Strategic Master Plan's recommendations, as part of the capital and operating budgeting exercises, while also utilizing the aforementioned Performance Standards to evaluate whether certain Recommendations need to be revisited.



Regular strategic and long-range planning is an important exercise that ensures that the Town is well positioned to respond to

unforeseen or anticipated circumstances. By being well prepared, consistent and high quality services can be provided in a cost-effective and sustainable manner, which is a common trait of the most successful Departments and leisure service providers. Leadership staff in the Department should prepare annual plans that are aligned with strategic priorities and are held accountable to achieve targets and initiatives. Lastly, it is strongly recommended that the Town undertake an Update to the Strategic Master Plan after five years to not only track progress made on implementation but also ensure that the Recommendations and their supporting assumptions remain appropriate for that future time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ Conduct annual reviews (e.g. at the time capital and operating budgets are being prepared/reviewed) which monitor progress made on the Strategic Master Plan's recommendations, with key consideration given to alignment to the Town's Corporate Strategic Plan. Doing so will allow the Town to remain apprised of their status and reaffirm the need for the facilities and services which are articulated in the Strategic Master Plan.
- ☑ Prepare an update to the Community Parks, Recreation & Cultural Strategic Master Plan after five years have elapsed in order to ensure that the future population profile and future best practices in municipal delivery of services align with the recommendations contained herein.

Guiding Principle 2: An Integrated & Collaborative Approach

In order to best meet the needs of our residents, the delivery of high quality spaces and programs will be viewed holistically and implemented by working hand-in-hand with a range of municipal departments, supporting volunteers, and establishing strategic partnerships that will maximize the public interest through a community-development approach.

This Guiding Principle will specifically look at:

- ways in which to support Town Staff to effectively carry out their responsibilities;
- the role of Volunteers, and finding ways to bolster the volunteer system;
- the role of partnerships in the delivery of services and integrated municipal objectives such as tourism; and
- enabling others through community development and integrated delivery of services.





A Strong Base of Dedicated Volunteers

The Town of Tillsonburg has an active volunteer force, and its Community Services Department utilizes volunteers in a variety of ways, including program delivery and Parks Maintenance. The Town generally focuses its volunteer resources in the areas of outdoor recreation, youth programs, museums and special interest activities.

Volunteers are the backbone of a community-based parks, recreation and cultural service delivery system, and Tillsonburg recognizes the tremendous contribution of these dedicated individuals. From sport and recreation to arts and culture, local volunteers contribute a significant amount of time towards helping community groups deliver programs and services to residents of Tillsonburg. There are areas for improvement, however, as have been expressed by volunteers who have participated in the master planning process. Many of the issues are similar to experiences in other communities in the province, and Canada.

A recent report citing the 2007 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating² provides the most comprehensive and up-to-date national data regarding the role and commitment of volunteers. The report finds that the number of volunteers has increased since 2004, though there are some notable characteristics of those who constitute the volunteer profile. For example, while the highest rates of volunteering were found among young Canadians, seniors contributed the most volunteer hours. Furthermore, the report found that a small minority of volunteers accounted for the bulk of volunteer hours; this is a sentiment that was expressed through the Strategic Master Plan's consultations

² Imagine Canada and Statistics Canada. [Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians: Highlights from the 2007 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating](#). Ministry of Industry, 2009.

with volunteers stating that a core group is largely involved in a variety of community services and their challenge was finding new volunteers to supplement and grow existing services. A cause of concern is that while volunteer rates are increasing in many parts of the country, in Ontario a decline was observed where the volunteerism rate dropped from 50% to 47% between the years 2004 and 2007.

The report also found that one in ten Canadians volunteered for sports and recreation, and that these organizations accounted for the second largest percentage of volunteer hours. Between 2004 and 2007, the average number of volunteer hours per year declined slightly for sports and recreation (from 122 to 119 hours) while an even greater decline was observed in the average number of volunteer hours for arts and culture organizations (from 120 to 107), though arts and culture still ranked fourth in the number hours volunteered relative to other volunteer sectors.

The likeliness of volunteering decreases with age, though the number of hours actually increases. As mentioned, volunteer recruitment is challenging across the country and is apparent in Tillsonburg as well. It is known that seniors tend to contribute the most volunteer hours, thus it is important to find ways to engage future seniors in the volunteer sector (trends suggest that the 'new' generation of seniors does not have the disposable time that previous generations had). Perhaps more importantly, is to consider how to encourage other segments of the population to become involved. The implications are that if the existing base of volunteers (presently made up of seniors) is not replenished, there will be a concern that shortages in the number or availability of volunteers will lead to a loss of valued services.



As the Baby Boomer generation begins to reach retirement, there is concern that this group as a whole may not be as dedicated as past generations. A recent publication by the United States Corporation for National and Community Services (USCNCS) found the following characteristics of Baby Boomers in relation to volunteering:

- Baby Boomers have higher volunteer participation rates than past generations had at the same ages – but a lower number of volunteer hours per year per person.
- Baby Boomers have different volunteer interests (e.g., education and cultural organizations) than past generations.
- Approximately 3 out of every 10 Baby Boomer volunteers dropped out of volunteering each year, which highlights the necessity for awareness and promotion of volunteering.
- The likelihood of continuing to volunteer increased as an individual’s participation hours in volunteer activities rises.
- Retention of Baby Boomer volunteers is related to the type and nature of volunteer activity – volunteer retention is lowest for those who provide general labour.³

Recognizing that Baby Boomers will need to be targeted to promote volunteering, the USCNCS has undertaken an awareness campaign. Their slogan, published across the United States reads *‘Get Involved! Lead. Inspire. Change the World. Again.’* The study also identified the shift in the types of organizations that 41 to 59-year-olds volunteered with in 1989 and in 2003–2005. The data suggested that while overall volunteer participation rates within this age group are declining in most sectors, growth is being seen in educational and youth service, as well as social and community service sectors.

³ Corporation for National & Community Service. Keeping Baby Boomers Volunteering: A Research Brief on Volunteer Retention & Turnover. 2007.

A Need to Recruit, Retain & Recognize Volunteers

The Imagine Canada report suggests that the type of individual who contributes the most number of volunteers is generally characterized by those who attend religious services, those with higher levels of educational attainment and incomes, and those in households with school-aged children. Furthermore, the report identifies that the likelihood of volunteering later in life appears to be linked to a number of early life experiences, including individuals who had a parent that volunteered, those belonging to a youth group, or having participated in an organized team sport.

Thus, there is a reciprocal relationship between the provision of leisure services and the volunteers who sustain programs; for example, the provision of leisure services leads to long-term involvement in leisure services, including volunteerism. As such, it is important for both the Town and its community groups to find ways to recruit, retain and sustain the number of volunteers in the community. For example, the Imagine Canada report suggests that under half of current volunteers stated that they approached an organization by themselves to become involved, though once they joined, they provided an average of 148 hours versus 108 hours for those who did not approach an organization on their own. The report also stated that one of the barriers to volunteering was that people were not asked to do so, which would suggest that the Town and local groups would benefit from communicating their need for volunteers to the public-at-large in order to target residents who are unaware of opportunities but would otherwise be willing to help.

To provide unique, locally-driven strategies that respond to Tillsonburg’s specific challenges, the Town should undertake a ‘Volunteer Management Strategy’ aimed at increasing volunteer participation. This Strategy should be developed in consultation



with local volunteers and focus on topics such as recruitment and retention, selection, training, supervision and recognition. The Volunteer Management Strategy is also seen as a tool to coordinate the roles of and partnership parameters of the Town of Tillsonburg, local volunteers, service clubs and other organizations by providing a framework to operate within.

Working with the community and volunteer sector will be critical to achieving sustainable community-based program delivery. Local volunteer-based groups are well established in the community and benefit from ample experiences of sustaining themselves; if these groups can organize and share resources within themselves, efficiencies can be attained which will support the delivery of sustainable programming over the long run. It is, therefore, in the interests of the Town to explore ways in which to facilitate the sharing of information and resources between volunteer groups through initiatives such as annual volunteer forums, to build off any existing listings of local volunteer groups to encourage volunteer-based networking opportunities, developing information tools (e.g. a Volunteer Fact Sheet), etc. In this way, the Town acts as the liaison between groups but also achieves community development objectives, as will be advanced later in this Guiding Principle.

Furthermore, the Town could explore the establishment or enhancement of any existing regional volunteer database (i.e. for the surrounding Counties or municipalities) in conjunction with regional partners. While continued recognition of volunteer efforts are needed and appreciated, volunteers themselves have stated that it is now more about supports received from the Town, thus efforts to facilitate dialogue and encourage better coordination between groups (perhaps through recognition events) is deemed by groups as a more pressing priority.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ Continue to support the volunteer sector through appropriate community development and capacity building initiatives. For the latter, a 'Volunteer Management Strategy' should be developed in consultation with local stakeholders that defines roles and provides direction on topics such as recruitment, selection, retention, training, supervision and recognition.
- ☑ Build upon existing databases of volunteer groups to facilitate volunteer-based networking opportunities (e.g. sharing resources and combining training opportunities) across the entire Town and possibly with other volunteer agencies in the Tri-County area. Efforts should be made to ensure that all information in the database is kept up-to-date and accurate.
- ☑ Continue to host annual volunteer events with the aim of increasing coordination and development opportunities among volunteer groups. The meetings should allow groups to provide feedback to each other and to the Town, educate them on best practices in community-based delivery of services, and discuss successes and challenges of implementing the proposed Volunteer Management Strategy. Additionally, the Town should consider customizing recognition efforts to individual volunteer sectors (e.g. service clubs, arts and cultural groups, minor sports, etc.) to provide more targeted coordination and development opportunities within the volunteer sector.



Committed & Caring Staff

The Evolving Roles of Staff

As direct providers of facilities, programs and services, Town of Tillsonburg Staff are hard working, uniquely skilled individuals who greatly contribute to the success of the municipality and enjoyment of use for patrons. Moving forward, the role of Departmental staff will be fairly similar with regard to the provision and ongoing operation of municipal facilities, and delivery of high quality programming, while remaining cognisant of ever changing customer expectations.

As discussed in the previous subsection, new and non-traditional services beyond the municipal mandate should be achieved by facilitating indirect provision of programs through building capacity of local groups (through community development). The proposed corporate mentality and philosophy becomes oriented to the Town being more of a ‘Facilitator’ of such programs and services. The Town has an excellent base of knowledge to build upon, having acted as facilitators for organizations such as Tillsonburg Minor Soccer (who have grown their ability to operate their programs and maintain their fields, which are located on municipal lands) and the Station Arts Centre (who have received assistance from the Town in the past and now offer an array of programs, services and events).

Continued focus on supporting and facilitating community groups to grow their programs means that Staff will take on greater roles of liaising with groups, whether in the planning of new programs or assisting more groups with the execution of their services. To clearly define roles and expectations, a formalized ‘Code of Conduct’ is recommended that governs the approach to work by staff and

volunteers which would assist in promoting and enforcing the Town’s expectations with regard to operating behaviours.

There are over 100 legislative acts governing the delivery of parks, recreation and cultural services. These span topic areas such as accessibility, privacy, safety, service standards, etc. resulting in a complex operating environment for municipal staff. The Town of Tillsonburg regularly sends its staff to seminars, workshops and conferences to ensure that training and knowledge is current; furthermore, the Community Services Department encourages its trained staff to share their knowledge and training with other staff as a means to ensure that the entire Department is familiar with best practices. The Town also greatly benefits from having Staff who are trained in multiple disciplines, creating efficiencies at facilities such as the Tillsonburg Community Centre where employees can work in a range of environments, whether related to arena, aquatic, fitness or customer service operations.

With many different divisions and disciplines within the Community Services Department, each unit is responsible for compliance with their individual operations. A centralized database or system governing the Department as a whole, however, is not available to govern each of the divisions and ensure compliance. The Lifestyle Information Network (LIN) has most recently compiled an online summary and search tool of updated legislative acts and has developed a compliance tool to assist with annual audits.⁴ It is recommended that staff distribute the requirements, host any needed training (which will be available through LIN and Parks & Recreation Ontario) and monitor compliance annually at a minimum.

⁴ Accessible at <http://lin.ca>.



With a new and growing role, combined with an increasingly sophisticated base of customers, a greater complexity within the municipal operating environment can be expected. The Town will need to be in a position where it is able to respond to a changing operating environment by ensuring that it has appropriate staff resources that can monitor and respond to future trends and circumstances. Not only will this imply that an added focus be placed on creating high level policies and program development, but also the need to consider supporting realities such as risk and liability management, health and safety for staff and patrons, regulations of other levels of government, fiscal responsibility, and operating performance. As will be discussed in subsequent pages, a need exists for integrated planning and other team-based approaches in order to effectively deliver programs, facilities and services to the community. This would involve other Departments in the planning of new services (e.g. Finance would provide insight into capital and operating constraints, Building Services could provide information into zoning or building code requirements, etc.).

Finally, a recurring theme throughout the Strategic Master Plan is for the Town and its staff to take a proactive role in community development. The Town can assume a leadership role in educating, training and making use of local volunteers and potential partners as a means to build the capacity of their groups. In this way, the development of a holistic and comprehensive parks, recreation and cultural system can be facilitated without the Town necessarily having to function as the sole provider of spaces and programming. Training staff to liaise and interact with community groups can open the channels of communication while dedicating certain staff to take a more specialized role in making community participation a reality.

For example, supporting volunteer groups in the provision of community gatherings and special events, helping groups to generate awareness of their services through inclusion in the Recreation & Leisure Program Guide or other marketing/promotion efforts, assisting a local group to maintain their own facilities through grants or upgrading municipal facilities through capital investment, facilitating partnership arrangements to provide programs, or taking on new direct programming when the community is not in a position to deliver programs themselves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ Continue to ensure that municipal facilities, services and programs are supported by appropriate staff resources. Given the growth and complexity within the municipal parks, recreation and cultural system, undertake a process to develop appropriate staffing standards that reflect service levels. These standards should lead to a 'Long-Term Staffing Review' to ensure support for Departmental objectives.
- ☑ The Town, through its Council and Staff, should assume a leadership role in building the capacity of the local community to deliver recreation and cultural services by facilitating access to space, coordinating the delivery of municipal and community-based programs, and providing financial, logistical and promotional support as necessary.
- ☑ Formalize a 'Code of Conduct' that governs the staff and volunteer approach to work.



Providing Necessary Supports to Staff

For the Town to make informed decisions, deliver high quality facilities and services, and provide excellent customer services, its staff need to be up-to-date on best practices in how to do their jobs effectively and efficiently.

The number of staff required to fulfill the municipal role and core delivery of services, along with the associated financial implications, will need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis through ongoing business planning that would be associated with implementing the recommendations arising from this Strategic Master Plan. For example, provision of a new youth space is recommended in Guiding Principle 5 (preferably as a partnership between the Town and a community-based organization) which may require new staff resources depending upon the frequency of the program delivery and whether expertise currently exists in-house (i.e. in addition to program development, staff would ideally have expertise with the High Five program or “youth-friendly” training).

With regard to the staff complement, the Town has a screening process in its hiring process for new employees (e.g. qualifications and experience required to do a job) though it is equally important to recognize that existing employees often benefit from professional development initiatives and finding alternative methods to “doing what has always been done.” As such, the Town should continue to look at professional development opportunities, ranging from on-the-job training, seminars, symposiums and conferences, etc. as a means to improve internal skill sets and capabilities, and to provide a supportive professional network. While there are financial implications associated with staff development, the return on investment can be high if the employee(s) are able to deliver on their roles and responsibilities in a more efficient manner.

In terms of municipal leadership and setting an example, part of the Community Services Department mandate is to facilitate physical activity through the provision of facilities and programs. As such, implementing programs that also encourage municipal staff to engage in healthy and active lifestyles is viewed as a logical complement to initiatives that are pursued by the public-at-large. The creation of policies and programs specifically for municipal staff, such as physical activity days, distributing health-related information, creating a Staff Wellness Committee, or discounting fitness memberships at the Tillsonburg Community Centre, are ways in which to improve the health, productivity and commitment to their jobs over their lives. Furthermore, the Community Services Department is ideally positioned to lead these initiatives for other municipal departments by way of its mandate and area of expertise.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ Ensure that the Strategic Master Plan’s Guiding Principles and Recommendations can be effectively fulfilled by providing the necessary staff resources. The need for additional staff resources will need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis associated with the implementation of individual actions contained within the Strategic Master Plan.
- ☑ Identify the needed skills and competencies, provide opportunities for staff development through training and professional development, and identify departmental and individual training plans.



The Potential of Partnerships

Discussions with local volunteers, stakeholders and municipal staff suggest that not one organization alone can comprehensively meet the needs of Tillsonburg's residents. There is a need for communication, coordination, and cohesion when developing a holistic facility and service delivery model that maximizes benefit to all parties, and ultimately the general public. In this way, the Town can ensure that between itself and its partners are able to fill program gaps through balanced and inclusive provision of opportunities that respond to a variety of market segments (e.g. by age, incomes, abilities, etc.).

Emerging consumer demands and shifting economic conditions have caused many communities to pursue partnership approaches that dramatically differ from traditional service delivery mechanisms. Partnerships, alliances and collaborative relationships of varying types are required in today's economy to effectively and efficiently provide for the leisure needs of citizens. Collaborative agreements with Tillsonburg's schools, places of worship, social clubs, user groups, etc. can be extremely effective in delivering sustainable and fiscally responsible recreation services to the community. Facilitating partnerships with external service providers and maximizing on the internal strengths of the community will allow Tillsonburg to provide the best possible service to its residents. With Tillsonburg's willingness to be a facilitator of services through the community, it has established a number of partnerships with its community providers, though many of them through informal arrangements and historical affiliations.

Not only is there growing interest in public-private partnerships (P3s), but also in arrangements with Trusts acting on behalf of community organizations and formal operating or cost sharing

relationships with school boards as well as user/community groups. A 2006 survey that investigated the level of support amongst Canadians for P3s, found that 9 out of 10 Canadians believe that Federal, Provincial and Municipal governments are not keeping pace with demand for new or improved public infrastructure services.⁵

Examples of potential partners in Tillsonburg should include, at a minimum:

- Upper tiers of government (e.g. Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Oxford County, etc.);
- Adjacent or nearby municipalities (e.g. Norfolk, Bayham, Norwich, South West Oxford, Malahide);
- Environmentally-focused organizations such as the Long Point Conservation Authority;
- Thames Valley School Board and the London District Catholic School Board;
- Local stakeholders such as service clubs, minor sports and recreation providers, arts and cultural groups, seniors' centres, community associations, BIA, etc.;
- Non-profit organizations such as Big Brothers and Sisters, United Way, Community Health Centres, etc.; and/or
- The private sector (e.g. fitness providers, sporting groups, local theatres, etc.) and local land owners.

⁵ The Canadian Council for Public Private Partnership (2006). *Trends in Canadian Support for Public Private Partnerships*. Available online at: www.pppcouncil.ca

As alluded to, the Town already has established relationships with a number of other groups with common interests (including some of those in the list above), though it is largely done through informal and verbal agreements. While casual conversations and discussions are important, with respect to the actual agreement it is important that a clear and transparent process be undertaken so that expectations of all parties and the public can be treated fairly and consistently.

Use of Schools

Continuing to devote efforts in strengthening the relationship between the Town and its local school boards should continue to be a priority area of focus for the Town. The County Official Plan (Section 8.6.2.3) provides policy support to this position by stating that the Town will coordinate the planning of parks and open space linkages located adjacent to school sites to maximize integration between facilities and efficiency of use.

The *Education Act* permits joint agreements between School Boards and municipalities to allow use of school facilities for recreational, athletic, cultural, educational or community purposes. Schools have been long used for community activities (e.g. for their sports fields, gymnasiums, resource areas, etc.), though escalating costs across the province has led to recent challenges. This has led to frustrations where many people view Ontario’s schools as “sitting empty” while their groups struggle to find space to deliver cost-effective programs.

Due to their very nature, schools are distributed across the Town and can provide opportunities for outreach or satellite services, particularly to peripheral residential areas. Furthermore, municipal staff should continue working with school boards to remain apprised of potential school relocations/closures which may pose an opportunity for the Town to adaptively reuse vacated school properties for recreational and cultural uses, particularly those with sports fields, gymnasiums, arts and crafts rooms, etc.





For example, the Town assumed the former Elliott Fairburn elementary school and now leases space at to the Ontario Provincial Police for its training activities. While this is not a recreational or cultural use, nor does it allow public access, it illustrates opportunities as to how the Town can potentially add space to its supply (acquisition of the Tillsonburg Special Events Centre is another example of this approach), and could be extended to improve public access to other non-municipal resources where it makes sense to do so (e.g. access to Conservation Areas, trails located on private lands, private sector facilities, etc.).

The Role of Adjacent Municipalities

As discussed earlier, Tillsonburg is seen as a strategic urban area for many residents living in its neighbouring rural municipalities. These non-residents have come to rely upon facilities such as the Tillsonburg Community Centre, the Town's high quality sports fields, and arts and cultural programs which do not exist immediately outside of Tillsonburg.

Adjacent municipalities have contributed capital dollars towards the construction of new facilities in Tillsonburg, recognizing the benefit to their respective residents. There are no operating arrangements, however, which provide the Town with regular contributions over the lifecycle of any particular facility. As recommended in Guiding Principle 3, the Town should approach adjacent municipalities and collaborate to find ways in which to make local operations more sustainable at a regional level.

A Standardized Approach to Evaluating Partnerships

Throughout the Strategic Master Plan, partnerships are a key theme in the effective delivery of programs and services. Whether it be in collaboration with volunteer or community organizations, local institutions, conservation authorities, school boards, or the private sector, the entire community benefits from the collective expertise of facility and service delivery providers working together towards a common goal.

Municipalities that have successfully implemented alternative service delivery approaches suggest that a standardized framework is helpful in choosing the most appropriate delivery strategy as well as measuring the capacity of potential service providers. Furthermore, a pre-set process allows for the department to proactively pursue and cultivate relationships with community groups and makes service delivery decisions more transparent.

Tillsonburg's relationships with its community partners are important to the process of fulfilling the Town's service delivery goals in the most fiscally responsible fashion. While the Town is a director provider of certain programs (such as aquatics, fitness, summer camps, etc.), it also assumes an "indirect" service delivery role through the provision of facilities that facilitate community-based programming with respect to recreation and leisure services. Discussions with municipal representatives suggest that a standardized framework to decide upon the most appropriate delivery approach would help to systematize decision-making, and provide guidance on what constitutes a valid opportunity for the Town to pursue as opposed to one that may not be sustainable.



There are a number of criteria that must be considered prior to establishing a relationship and a partnership with a third party wishing to introduce a new level of service with municipal assistance. At a minimum, the Town will have to consider:

- first and foremost, that the proposed partnership is consistent with the municipal mandate and philosophies;
- that there is a role for the Town to play in the provision of the program or service;
- whether there is a quantifiable or justified need for the service in the community;
- that the service can be sustainably accommodated within the Town's long-term capital and/or operating resources;
- whether the partner is sufficiently capable/qualified (e.g. financially, staffing, internal expertise, etc.) to be able to deliver the service over the long-term, and in compliance with legislated policies and municipal standards;
- the level of risk (e.g. financial, liability, etc.) and how this will be managed by the partner or the Town;
- whether the partner can provide the service on a sole source basis; and/or
- agreeing upon terms, conditions, standards, and responsibilities for all parties involved.

After partnerships are developed and agreements are formalized, it is important that the Town regularly meet with its partners to discuss successes and challenges of the partnership and, where necessary, revisit and strengthen the agreements to ensure that a dynamic process exists to respond to changes and public preferences. For example, a representative of the Community Services Department could arrange monthly meetings with partners to discuss not only the effectiveness of the partnership agreements

but also as a means to continually understand local trends and needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ Continue to explore ways with local partners to fill local gaps in programming through the balanced and inclusive provision of opportunities for residents of Tillsonburg. Where appropriate, this should include conducting regular meetings with partners to discuss implementation of partnership agreements, and where necessary, revisit and/or strengthen agreements to maximize benefits to all parties and the general public.
- ☑ Continually evaluate ways to strengthen agreements with the Thames Valley and London District Catholic School Boards to increase access to indoor and outdoor leisure spaces. A particular focus should be placed on updating the types of uses that are permitted to occur through the joint use agreement that governs usage at the Glendale High School gymnasium.
- ☑ Requests for facilities and services that are not part of the Town's core mandate should be evaluated based on anticipated municipal role, quantifiable measures of demand and costs to the Town, and other long-term implications prior to deciding whether or not to partner in the public interest. As part of this process, the Town should develop a standardized process or framework for evaluating and responding to requests for partnerships, with the view of maximizing public interests.



Community Development

Supporting Community Objectives

Successful recreation and leisure organizations are flexible, creative and dedicated to constantly deliver maximum quality, value and top-notch customer service. In doing so, these organizations focus on achieving results in the areas of their work that are most likely to have the most influence on successful performance. In striving to be innovative, efficient and customer focused, results oriented organizations adjust their management systems and operating protocols in response to changing environments and escalating expectations of their constituents.

A standardized community development initiative would offer a more structured method of involving community groups in the development and delivery of recreation services and programs. Normally, a structured community development approach entails proactively engaging groups in most phases of program planning, design, delivery and evaluation. Community groups help to identify issues and goals and then make collective commitments to produce positive solutions. As such, the Town should regularly consult with its community sector regarding strategic planning efforts and other key initiatives that may have a great influence on groups to deliver services.

Typically, a functional community development approach stimulates partnerships, networks and collaboration at all levels of program design and delivery. Furthermore, shared decision-making between municipal staff and key stakeholders helps to foster a degree of ownership and empowerment amongst community partners. As Tillsonburg grows and experiences demand for increased programming (particularly for services outside of the Town's core

mandate), the capacity of community organizations could be leveraged to augment the parks, recreation and culture system. Applying the principles of a community development approach would strengthen the Community Services Department's relationship with its partners and increase community capacity.

It is important to recognize that for a community development approach to be effective, appropriate municipal resources need to be devoted in order to maximize relationships that will be developed with groups. Municipal staffing will need to be available in a meaningful capacity to ensure that groups are engaged, understood and collaborated with while financial resources may also be required to enable them to "get off the ground." The Municipality of Chatham-Kent, for example, has established a Community Partnership Fund which provides community groups with up to 50% (to a maximum of \$10,000) in support of community-based services, while the Town of Halton Hills has a Municipal Assistance Program which supports local groups by targeting key areas such as waiving municipal fees, marketing, start-up costs, volunteer training, and also establishing Management Agreements with a number of community associations.

As a local example, the Town could assist groups in developing templates that can track operational measures such as utilization rates and satisfaction, which would require municipal staffing (expertise) and potentially financial resources (grants, staff time) though the aim would be to provide groups with a tool to assist them to sustainably deliver services over the long-term. In this way, the Town sets a leadership example to facilitate access and provision of programming to the community. As discussed throughout the Strategic Master Plan, the Town should investigate additional areas for the indirect delivery of limited municipal leisure programs to address gap areas, based upon business planning and



consideration of services being provided by its partners. For example, active living programs, youth and older adult activities, day camps, dance, etc. could be explored initially on a trial basis at selected municipal parks and facilities, though in line with the municipal role, this would occur after first evaluating the ability of the community to deliver these programs. Similarly, arts and cultural programming could be indirectly bolstered by encouraging groups, such as the Station Arts Centre, to run programs out of the Tillsonburg Community Centre (working collaboratively to determine any necessary upgrades to the multi-purpose rooms) in lieu of a group having to find capital funding to construct new spaces to grow.

The result of municipal provision of facilities and services being increasingly combined with a view towards community development is an integrated service delivery system, made up of many important parts. With the Town providing leadership and appropriate supports, its internal operating logistics will need to ensure that all Departments are focused on municipal service delivery in addition to facilitating community-based delivery through engaging community groups, neighbourhoods, residents and businesses. As such, inter-departmental communication is critical to ensuring that community requests are heard and that duplication is minimized.

As a leader, the Town will attempt to facilitate capacities of individuals, organizations, agencies and neighbourhoods to interact amongst each other in order to develop creative approaches to providing services. This does not represent a considerable deviation from existing municipal practices, as many of the Departments already liaise with their community while stakeholders often meet to discuss their services either on a casual or formal basis. The role of Town Staff will continue to be as facilitators to help different

groups find common ground, focus them on addressing needs and challenges through innovative and creative solutions, and ultimately working to maximize efficiencies in the delivery of Town-wide parks, recreation and cultural services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ Encourage a Community Development Model through engagement and the provision of appropriate supports (e.g. financial, logistical, expertise, etc.) as a means to empower the Tillsonburg community, continually develop their internal capacity, and enhance their capacity to sustainably deliver programs and services over the long-run.
- ☑ Assist groups in developing templates that can track operational measures such as capacity and fill rates, patron satisfaction, financial performance, etc. as a means to improve their internal service delivery practices.
- ☑ Maximize synergies within the Community Services Department and the rest of the Town of Tillsonburg through joint planning, integrated communications and the sharing of resources, where possible.

Supporting Economic Development/Tourism Priorities

The provision of parks, recreation and cultural services ties into the Town's overall sense of place. While the core recreational and cultural mandate of the Community Services Department is to stimulate physical and social activity through the provision of facilities and programs, such services impact economic development and other priority areas for the Town (such as contributing to environmental health, creating lively streetscapes, attracting new residential and employment growth, etc.).

The provision of facilities and services that increase the quality of life are highly sought amenities when seeking new residents and employers for the community. Businesses, both large and small, tend to evaluate the potential employment pool as well as the civic opportunities available to its employees when choosing to locate in a community. Communities which are interesting, affordable, have natural beauty, and a strong creative sector have been found to be attractive to employers and new residents alike, while the provision of facilities such as pools, arenas, theatres and parks all greatly contribute to a decision to relocate to a community. As a result, the provision of such facilities can help attract new businesses (e.g. manufacturing plants, company headquarters or satellite offices, etc.), highly demanded professionals (e.g. doctors, entrepreneurs), and new residential growth.



Tillsonburg, due to its strategic position amidst three Counties, can be considered as an urban service hub to many outlying rural areas. Many Town facilities (particularly the Tillsonburg Community

Centre, the trails system and local sports fields) are attractors for non-residents who may generate economic "spin-offs" to local businesses (such as grocery, retail, services, etc.). Bolstering local facilities, both municipal and non-municipal, may result in increased visits to the community.

As such, the local parks, recreation and culture system contributes greatly to tourism potential of the Town. For example, linking the trail system to external networks (e.g. the Trans Canada Trail) can encourage users to pass through the Town, tournaments at the existing sports fields bring sport tourism dollars, while arts and cultural activities may bring overnight guests seeking experiences associated with creative and vibrant communities.

For example, the number of soccer and softball tournaments that occur each year brings many visitors into the Town, though discussions with the community suggest that marketing Tillsonburg's other amenities to these visitors poses great potential; to address this, the Town could consider bolstering visitor information at the Tillsonburg Minor Soccer Park clubhouse, developing a Town information package that could be distributed through the field sport user groups, etc. as ways to encourage people to not only visit the sports field complex but also to experience other elements that the Town has to offer.

While outside of the scope of this Strategic Master Plan, economic development and tourism must be guided by a collective vision and an identity, of which parks, recreation and culture will form a part



of. The tourism infrastructure must be considered holistically (i.e. not just recreation and culture) as a number of supporting services are required such as evening entertainment, overnight accommodation, etc. Economic development and tourism are presently also addressed in the Town’s Strategic Plan, and addresses the importance of enhancing municipal facilities.

Furthermore, the Town’s 2004 Municipal Strategy advanced a vision for tourism, culture, parks and recreation as well as a number of strategies including:

- Create a marketing capability to drive the tourist industry (that defines a clear and marketable identity for the Town);
- Investment in capital improvements to certain facilities;
- Create a marketing and promotion effort in concert with the Commercial Prosperity Council; and
- Develop capability to attract overnight visits.

Capitalizing on existing resources, such as Tourism Oxford, can assist the Town in marketing recreation, cultural and other tourism experiences to potential markets; it is believed that partnerships and coordination with other municipalities is required as it would be difficult for the Town to successfully implement tourism priorities in isolation. To this end, the proposed Marketing Strategy for parks, recreation and cultural assets (as recommended through Guiding Principle 1) can assist in promoting awareness of strategic municipal and community-based facilities such as the Lake Lisgar Water Park, Annandale National Historic Site, Tillsonburg Minor Soccer Park, Tillsonburg Special Events Centre, Theatre Tillsonburg, etc. These important elements of the recreation and cultural system can contribute sport, heritage and cultural tourism opportunities and be used to develop a local or regional system that provides tourism-

related amenities throughout the day (i.e. both day and evening), week (i.e. weekdays and weekends) and the year.

It is recommended that the proposed Marketing Strategy include a specific Sport & Cultural Tourism component that provides an investment strategy guiding the provision of spaces and services oriented to accommodating special events. For example, the sport and cultural tourism component could assess the economic impact of tourist visits, evaluating ways in which to fund tourism-specific initiatives and special events, evaluating partnerships and capacity of the community to deliver services, etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ Ensure that elements of the parks, recreational and cultural system are aligned with goals and priorities associated with economic development and tourism objectives.
- ☑ As part of the proposed Marketing Strategy, ensure the inclusion of a specific Sport & Cultural Tourism Policy that creates a framework for assessing the ability of local facilities and services to serve a broader market, potential partnerships, funding opportunities, and the benefits that would be incurred through the promotion of sport and cultural tourism objectives.

Guiding Principle 3: Innovative & Appropriate Infrastructure

Parks, recreation and cultural facilities will be provided in an inclusive and integrated manner, to create opportunities for multi-use, multi-generational, and multi-seasonal experiences that meet the diverse needs of Tillsonburg's population.

This Guiding Principle will specifically look at:

- the role of infrastructure and ways to fiscally sustain it;
- the need for indoor recreation facilities such as arenas, aquatic centres and gymnasiums (note that arts and cultural facilities are largely discussed in Guiding Principle 4); and
- the need for outdoor recreation facilities such as sports fields, hard surface courts and skateboard parks.





The Role of Infrastructure

The provision of infrastructure, in terms of built structures and the services that are associated with them, plays an important role in day to day life. These facilities allow the community to grow socially and economically, through the provision of built structures and the activities/interactions that take place within them. In terms of social development of the community, the Town’s recreation and cultural infrastructure promotes physical activity and healthy lifestyles, creative thought, community interaction and pride in knowing that high quality exist for the benefit of residents.

With regard to economic development in the community, infrastructure can encourage new residents to locate to Tillsonburg resulting in an increased tax base, new types of businesses and professional services. Infrastructure can also be targeted to tourism purposes by attracting regional or provincial events (thus generating multiplier effects in the community), and creating an identity for the Town (e.g. creating a destination for sports or heritage tourism such as tournaments, theatre opportunities, etc.).

In any context, infrastructure is viewed holistically across the Town as a collection of assets spanning numerous sectors, not just recreation and culture. Publically funded infrastructure, in the recreation and cultural context, should be accessible and inclusive to the people it serves. As emphasized in other areas of this Strategic Master Plan, this may include establishing standardized allocation policies for key facilities (to ensure fairness and transparency through the scheduling and permitting process), continued application of subsidy policies (to promote affordability), ensuring accessibility, requiring organized facility users to provide registrant information annually to the Town (to promote informed and rational decision-making), etc.

Recreational and cultural infrastructure can represent a significant capital cost to construct, however, long-term operating resources are just as important to consider when making decisions to develop new, or enhance existing facilities. Funding for local facilities has largely come from municipal and community contributions (e.g. taxes, debentures, capital reserves, fundraising, etc.) as well as grants from federal and provincial governments. Tillsonburg has historically not had a high rate of residential and commercial





development, which in turn has limited the ability of the Town to utilize Development Charge dollars (about \$46,000 was contributed in 2009), and thus places pressures to find alternative ways for funding. It is also noted that adjacent municipalities have contributed funds towards selected capital initiatives given the benefit of not having to provide facilities themselves, however, there are no ongoing contributions from Tillsonburg’s neighbours towards operation of the facilities (though non-residents can bring indirect spin-offs to Tillsonburg). All of these funding options remain viable choices and should be explored, however, business planning must be continue to be undertaken to ensure fiscal responsibility and sustainability over the long term.

To promote a community development approach, the Town should work with local community providers to train and assist them in developing their own internal financial planning practices. A number of groups are already well adept in securing alternative revenue streams through corporate sponsorships and advertising, renting out spaces within their facilities, etc. For example, the Town could act as a facilitator between community groups and potential corporate sponsors, provide groups with assistance in writing grant applications, etc.

Lastly, infrastructure has major impacts on the environment. Integrating sustainable design principles that promote energy efficiency, water conservation, “green” technologies, etc. While no new major capital projects have been recommended through the Strategic Master Plan, it is important that the Town continue to assume a leadership role in local sustainability planning as exemplified through various initiatives it has undertaken to improve green efficiencies. For example, the Tillsonburg Community Centre should be evaluated for conformity to best practices in reducing energy consumption for the arena and aquatic centre, integrating

low-flow plumbing and high-efficiency lighting features in municipal facilities, utilizing solar energy for electricity and heat (e.g. to heat the Lake Lisgar pool), and assessing the insulation and heat retention capacity of buildings. Given the recent announcement of a renewable energy manufacturing plant in Tillsonburg, such objectives would dovetail nicely in positioning the Town as a leader in the promotion of alternative energies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ Continue to explore broad ways in which to fund the development and operation of parks and facilities, through use of a variety of funding mechanisms and community involvement which at a minimum could consist of user fees, grants, fundraising, development charges, and cost-sharing agreements with other parties.
- ☑ The Town should approach adjacent municipalities to develop a cost-sharing approach associated with operating the Tillsonburg Community Centre given the share of non-residents that it serves.
- ☑ Provide assistance, as necessary, to local community groups in finding alternative revenue streams as a means to facilitate their ability to fund the delivery of facilities and programming over the long-term.
- ☑ Continually evaluate ways in which to maximize energy efficiency and water conservation at local facilities, in line with current best practices, particularly at the time of capital renewal/upgrade projects.

The Tillsonburg Special Events Centre

The Tillsonburg Special Events Centre (TSEC) is a former tobacco auction arena that was purchased by the Town in 2002, with the vision of becoming a venue for major community events. The facility contains 62,000 square feet of floor space that is supplemented by another 9,000 square feet of office space and a cafeteria. The TSEC also contains ample outdoor space for events and parking.

The TSEC has received modest investment from the Town in terms of upgrades, and presently runs a net subsidy of approximately \$175,000 per year based on its current uses. The building is primarily marketed towards trade shows, concerts and dances, home and lifestyle shows, car and boat shows, arts and cultural events, and large weddings and Christmas parties. It is closed for the months of January and February, largely as the facility's lack of insulation makes it cost prohibitive to heat.

A review of the bookings for 2010 suggest that a total of 33 events were booked (the majority of which were organized by local groups), which ranged from a few hours (e.g. Stag and Does, Video Dance) to over a span of a few days (e.g. Dog Show, Home & Rec. Show, Tillsonburg District Hospital Extravaganza). A Focus Group of TSEC Users was held in October 2010 to obtain feedback with regard to the facility, with users generally stating:

- contentment with the amount and flexibility of the space, assistance provided by Town staff, availability of parking and the presence of the overhead doors; and
- considering improvements around the general aesthetics of the interior and exterior, providing a better sound system and enhanced acoustics, access to Wi-Fi service, and provision of additional washrooms or change rooms.





The Community Search Conference conducted for the Strategic Master Plan echoed similar sentiments, with participants indicating that they believed the TSEC could become a valuable asset to the Town if it was improved and marketed accordingly. Other ideas which emerged through consultations included using the TSEC as a wellness facility or for indoor walking, particularly in the winter months (by installing an indoor track), and a number of recreational suggestions oriented to youth and families. A major point of emphasis was to make the TSEC a flexible space that could accommodate a wide range of cultural and recreational uses. It is noted that the TSEC, in its current form, has limited architectural appeal (both outside and inside) due to its historical function as a warehouse, and there are a number of structural columns which constrain the ability to conduct certain activities (and in fact make it cost-prohibitive to retro-fit/redesign the interior space for some new uses, such as an indoor sports field).

While the TSEC does not have a great deal of regional competition as a special events venue, its functional and aesthetic limitations challenge its ability to attract high quality events that instead will be held in London, Brantford or even Woodstock. Bringing the TSEC up to a level of quality that accommodates its current uses alone would undoubtedly require significant capital cost (which would need to be established through concept design and business planning), and positioning the facility as a high quality venue that competes with the larger municipalities could cost even more.

From the perspective of the Strategic Master Plan, the TSEC does meet a community need though it is noted that the Tillsonburg Community Centre (TCC) is able to accommodate many of the same functions, albeit at a smaller scale. For example, the TCC can host stag and does, wedding receptions and parties in the Lions Auditorium or Lions Den though clearly the TSEC can host much

larger events of this type. The primary benefit of the TSEC, compared to the TCC, is the ability to host trade shows and events that require use of the TSEC's oversize, overhead doors that provide access for large equipment, as well as the fact that parking is presently a constraint at the TCC (which would inhibit productions attracting a large number of patrons).

As a result, the Town will first have to define its desired vision for the TSEC. The primary options to consider are to: a) operate the facility as per status quo; b) position the facility to compete on a regional scale; and c) divest of the asset (note that this last option is presently on the table, with Council having resolved to put the TSEC up for sale).

If the Town continues to operate the TSEC as per *status quo* to meet local needs (or with undertaking improvements that may increase local or inter-regional bookings), it must be willing to accept that an operating subsidy will likely be apparent on an ongoing basis as there are not likely enough events that would satisfactorily utilize both the TSEC and the TCC.

If the Town's desired vision is to position the TSEC as a venue that **competes with regional markets** of London, Brantford, Woodstock or even the Tri-Cities (i.e. Cambridge, Kitchener, and Waterloo), this is more of an economic development and tourism approach as compared to fulfilling a local recreation or cultural need; therefore, decisions pertaining to the TSEC need to be considered in a much broader context than allowed within the scope of this Strategic Master Plan.

In any of the two desired visions (i.e. a view of fiscal prudence versus that of facilitating intrinsic benefit, or a blended perspective), should the Town commit to the long-term operation of the TSEC



then considerable investments will be required both in terms of enhancing the physical structure but also in terms of how the facility will be operated. Capital considerations have been discussed in earlier paragraphs, but equally (and if not more) important is the ability for the TSEC to be managed in a fiscally-responsible manner. This will require investments in marketing, promoting and managing the facility, and would undoubtedly require a new staff position (i.e. a dedicated manager/promoter for the facility) or an outsourced management company to actively run the TSEC as a business unit and attract the desired events. It should be noted that the Tillsonburg Agricultural Society (Fair Board) have expressed an interest in the TSEC site as a potential new venue for their operations, as well as an interest to manage the facility.

The Agricultural Society has suggested the site could be capable of hosting events (pending its own internal confirmations and from the Town) such as the Tillsonburg Fair, live music shows, internal meetings as well as providing the Society with the options to rent out the space. Discussions, therefore, should be carried out with the Agricultural Society or any other interested party who have an interest in long-term management and use of the TSEC and determine, at a minimum: roles and responsibilities of the Town and the partner; the internal capacity and capability of the partner to sustainably attract/deliver programming; responsibilities for capital investments and ongoing operational costs associated with the facility's management; acceptable uses for both the interior of the TSEC and the exterior grounds; and/or access and benefit afforded to local residents.

A final option to consider is the **divestiture of the TSEC**, which would be the outcome if the Town's vision is to not duplicate a number of activities that could be accommodated by the TCC (recognizing that attracting large trade shows would then be left to the local private

sector), or if the desire does not exist to operate a regionally-competitive high quality venue. It is noted that the TSEC was originally purchased by the Town with the foresight that the facility could be transformed, given the right market circumstances, as well as the opportunistic view that it could be sold in the future if the facility did not perform or work out as envisioned. It is noted that during the strategic master planning process, Council resolved to declare the TSEC as surplus lands, under Section 270 of the *Municipal Act*, which allows the Town to explore sale of these lands.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ Prior to making additional investments in the Tillsonburg Special Events Centre, the Town should define its desired vision for the facility. This should involve:
 - a detailed feasibility study, partnership evaluation, business plan and/or concept design process that defines the vision for the facility, the desired uses and market demand, and the costs involved of fulfilling the vision; or
 - considering divestiture of the facility should the business planning exercise render investments as being unsustainable or beyond the fiscal means of the Town over the long-term.
- ☑ If the vision is to continue to operate the facility for local and/or regional events, appropriate capital investments should be made to the building that support the desired uses, while operational investments will also need to be made in terms of marketing, promoting and managing the facility (the latter which would require dedicated staff resources with expertise in facility management).

The Tillsonburg Community Centre

The Tillsonburg Community Centre (TCC) can be considered to be the heart of the Town's recreation and cultural system. Centrally located at Memorial Park, the TCC and its surrounding park create a destination of community activity in Tillsonburg by grouping a number of recreational (e.g. ice sports, aquatics, field sports, skateboarding, etc.) and cultural (e.g. seniors programming, fairs, community meeting space, etc.) activities throughout the year.

The TCC is a facility that was developed with great foresight. Expanding onto the original ice pad, the current footprint of the TCC was shaped in the 1970s when the Town took a progressive approach of consolidating multiple activities to capitalize on operational efficiencies and conveniences to patrons. This approach was utilized at a time when many municipalities were constructing single purpose facilities (such as single pad arenas and community halls), though the multi-use community centre model which is representative of the TCC is now the best practice in facility design.



The following components are contained in the TCC:

- A **twin pad arena** with the Kinsmen Memorial rink (Arena A) measuring 200' x 85' (NHL size) and spectator seating for 700, the Colin Campbell Community rink (Arena B) which measures 180' x 80', as well as a third mini "goalie pad." The arena also contains a total of nine change rooms (one of which is reserved for female players), as well as warm viewing and disabled viewing areas. The Kinsmen Memorial Arena is part of the original building structure, first constructed in 1949 with the Colin Campbell Community Arena added nearly thirty years later in 1977.
- An aquatic centre that was constructed in 1972, containing a 25 metre, six lane **rectangular lap pool** with separated viewing area, shared change rooms (with the fitness centre), and lifeguard office. Persons with disabilities enter the pool via a lifting device or Easy Ladder, both with a capacity for 300 pounds.
- A full service **fitness centre** containing cardio and weight-training equipment, as well as three squash courts.
- The **Tillsonburg Seniors Centre** (which is operated by its own Board of Directors) containing meeting rooms, a games room, two carpet bowling lanes, a computer lab, woodworking shop, exercise room and a warming kitchen. This facility and its programs are discussed further in Guiding Principle #5.
- Multi-purpose **halls and meeting rooms** suitable for community rental and programming opportunities.
- **Administrative space** housing municipal staff working in the Town's Community Services Department.

While the TCC brings a number of efficiencies through its centralized delivery of multiple facilities and programs, the facility could benefit from a degree of modernization to bring itself up to a level of service and quality that responds to current populations. For example, the facility was designed, constructed and expanded during times where the needs of persons with disabilities were not considered to the extent that they are today. Positioning the TCC to



respond to Tillsonburg's aging population and those with disabilities will become increasingly important to comply with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* but also to ensure that a level of amenity geared to younger populations and families is offered.

As such, opportunities should be examined in which to increase *accessibility* (e.g. improving barrier-free access throughout the facility, integrating family change rooms), *circulation* (e.g. increasing the flow of common spaces, providing a second elevator by the steep set of stairs required to access the pool and fitness area, improving staff control of access to the lower level facilities, etc.), *amenity* level (e.g. adding a therapeutic pool for older populations, increasing the size and visibility of the fitness centre, updating change rooms, etc.), and *diversifying* the types of use (e.g. facilitating more arts programming, possibly in conjunction with local groups as discussed in Guiding Principle 4). It will also be important to look for ways to improve *operational performance* through energy saving or water conservation efficiencies (e.g. low flow plumbing systems, enhanced HVAC systems such as utilizing heat exhausted from the arena to heat the pool or common areas),

and *safety* (e.g. designs adhering to principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design).

Improving the functionality of the TCC would likely benefit the Town in the sense that this facility would then position the municipality to address indoor recreational needs for the duration of the strategic master planning period, and possibly beyond. As a result, no new multi-use community centres are required within the next ten years.

The following pages will delve into greater detail regarding indoor recreation facilities, many of which are already provided at the TCC, as well as assessments of outdoor recreation facilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ In addition to other recommendations contained throughout this Strategic Master Plan that pertain to the Tillsonburg Community Centre's individual components, the Town should undertake a business planning and/or concept design process to investigate opportunities in which to modernize the facility in a manner that responds to the needs of current and future populations. At a minimum, the Town should consider opportunities to improve accessibility for patrons, level of amenity, and operational efficiencies.

Aquatic Facilities

Indoor Aquatics

The Tillsonburg Community Centre contains the Town’s only indoor aquatic facility, consisting of a 25 metre, six lane rectangular lap pool. This pool is used for a variety of programs ranging from lessons, aquafit classes, lap swimming and organized swims. The water temperature is accordingly set at 84°F, though it can be adjusted depending upon the type of use (e.g. it can be set lower for swim competitions).



One of the reasons for the local popularity of swimming is because it is an activity for all ages, from toddlers to seniors, and persons of various cultural backgrounds. Year after year, provincial trends suggest that swimming continues to be one of the most popular activities pursued by citizens, usually ranking only behind walking as the favoured leisure pursuit. Residents in Tillsonburg are able to benefit from the Town choosing to provide this level of service, as it is noted that the propensity is low for municipalities with populations below 35,000 to consider provision of indoor aquatic facilities (though there are a handful of smaller towns in the province who operate indoor pools).

Municipality (Data Year)	Population	Indoor Pools	Per Capita
North Huron (2006)	5,015	1	5,015
St Marys (2006)	6,617	1	6,617
Hanover (2006)	7,147	1	7,147
Goderich (2006)	7,563	1	7,563
Kincardine (2009)	12,016	1	12,016
Saugeen Shores (2009)	13,000	1	13,000
Bracebridge (2006)	15,652	1	15,652
Tillsonburg (2010)	16,000	1	16,000
Port Hope (2010)	16,894	1	16,894
Owen Sound (2006)	21,600	1	52,007
Centre Wellington (2008)	28,326	1	28,326
St Thomas (2007)	36,110	1	36,110

The Town of Tillsonburg has established its level of service for indoor aquatics at 1 per 16,000, a level of service that is considerably higher than the traditional standard in the province. Although this standard is considered to be on the higher end, the preceding table shows that it is not entirely uncommon for smaller municipalities with populations of around 15,000 people, especially those in areas without reasonable access to a larger regional pool facility (Town Staff note that the TCC pool, for example, has a regional catchment of up to 100,000 people).

The provision of indoor aquatic opportunities brings about many intrinsic benefits that can improve the quality of life in the community, either through structured programming or informal drop-in opportunities. That being said, such facilities are expensive and require significant outlays for capital and operational expenses, and are most often assured of running an operational deficit each year. The success of indoor aquatic facilities, particularly in smaller communities, is highly dependent upon local usage, user-pay pricing points, and the acceptance of the majority of residents to support an increase in the tax rate to subsidize deficits.



The current level of service would suggest that the indoor aquatic facility at the TCC would be sufficient to address population-related requirements over the next ten years and beyond. With population levels expected to increase by only 5,600 residents over the next twenty years, the addition of a second indoor pool facility is not deemed to be sustainable in terms of both usage and fiscal impact to the Town.

While the population standard evaluates needs in relation to the number of facilities, observations and assessments would suggest that the Town would benefit from upgrading its existing indoor aquatic facility to provide a more modern level of service. The pool has largely served its purpose for what it was originally designed for, however, trends in the design of aquatic facilities have changed in recent years. It is recommended that the Town evaluate the existing pool for opportunities to bring it in line with more modern aquatic standards.

For example, one of the most prevalent trends in aquatics is the provision of family change rooms (now deemed to be a core level of service in pool service) given that they respond to the evolving shift in family structures (e.g. lone parent families) and can meet accessibility needs of disabled patrons. Another notable trend pertains to the provision of warm water/teaching tanks which respond to programming demands associated with older adults and seniors (who are forecasted to be the largest growth market in the Town), lessons for younger children, and would allow for separate water temperatures suited to both therapeutic use (warmer water) and lap/competitive swims (slightly colder water) in the existing tank. While this is simply articulating a trend (and thus addition of a second tank would need to be rationalized through business planning), alteration of the existing pool tank is not likely to be a possibility due to facility constraints, implying that the addition of a

new tank would have to be achieved by enlarging the footprint of the natatorium (i.e. a structural expansion). Other observations would suggest consideration to increasing the space associated with the lifeguard office, deck storage space and/or spectator viewing areas pending architectural confirmation and detailed cost assessments.

Outdoor Aquatics

The Town of Tillsonburg's primary venue for outdoor aquatic activities centres on the municipally owned and operated Lake Lisgar Water Park. This facility is open to the public between June and September, and contains a number of amenities such as a swimming area with beach entry, inflatable and spray features, a "Giant Twister" waterslide, and is supported by change rooms and a canteen. The Water Park is fully accessible and can be booked for parties and private rentals throughout the operating season.

Lake Lisgar Water Park offers a level of service and amenity that rivals facilities in many large municipalities, and in fact is a facility that has a regional market (i.e. a number of people from outside of Tillsonburg make use of the water park). As such, the Town should continue to fully operate the Lake Lisgar Water Park in a manner that provides a high quality level of service to residents and tourists. As discussed in Guiding Principle 1, the Lake Lisgar Water Park would benefit from a marketing strategy to facilitate greater number of regional visits.

With regard to the provision of new outdoor aquatic infrastructure, provincial trends suggest that a number of communities are looking towards spray/splash pad templates as the most cost-effective option to meeting outdoor aquatic needs instead of developing new outdoor pools. This is largely due to the cost to construct, maintain and operate an outdoor pool (including both lap and wading pools)

which can be considered to be fiscally unsustainable given the short operating season in the summer. Furthermore, splash pads do not require lifeguard supervision as there is no standing water. The notable disadvantage of discouraging investments in outdoor pools is the lack of outdoor swimming opportunities (i.e. lessons, public swims, etc.), particularly for older youth and adults, though many municipalities balance out these needs if they have indoor aquatic centres available (as Tillsonburg does).

Typically, splash pad facilities are geared to the children's age segment and therefore a market-driven service level target of 1 splash pad per 4,000 children (ages 0 to 9) has been established for (though this is generally for no-cost access, which is not the case at Lake Lisgar). This level of service is in line with many other communities, and would mean that Tillsonburg is well serviced with outdoor aquatic infrastructure based upon the number of children in the community (recorded at 1,515 through the 2006 Census). Even with the forecasted population growth in Tillsonburg and assuming the proportion of children remains the same, the Town would not need to provide additional outdoor aquatic infrastructure over the next twenty years.

Instead of the prototypical splash pad facility, the Town may consider the provision of basic cooling amenities at selected park locations (e.g. in neighbourhoods with a high population of children, areas located a considerable distance threshold from Lake Lisgar, etc.) to provide a cooling feature for young children (these basic facilities would not be included in the application of the age-specific service level target). These minor facilities would also reconcile distributional access to waterplay features by providing a neighbourhood level of service in appropriate locations. Examples of minor cooling amenities could include a basic mister that is integrated within a traditional creative playground set and would be

considered to be a low-cost item relative to major splash pad components, but their impact on usage of Lake Lisgar needs to be studied prior to their provision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ The Town should modernize the existing indoor pool facility at the Tillsonburg Community Centre, as appropriate, to bring it up to a standard that is more reflective of current aquatic demands. At a minimum, this would include the provision of family change rooms and/or other leisure components, such as a warm water therapy/teaching tank in order to attract a greater number of families and casual users to the facility. A business planning exercise should be undertaken to confirm costs involved in relation to market demand.
- ☑ While no new major outdoor aquatic infrastructure (e.g. pools or splash pads) is recommended for construction over the next twenty years, the Town should consider the provision of basic cooling amenities at strategic park locations to increase access/geographic distribution to neighbourhoods containing higher populations of children (any impacts to the Lake Lisgar Water Park should be studied prior to their provision).

Ice Rinks

Arenas

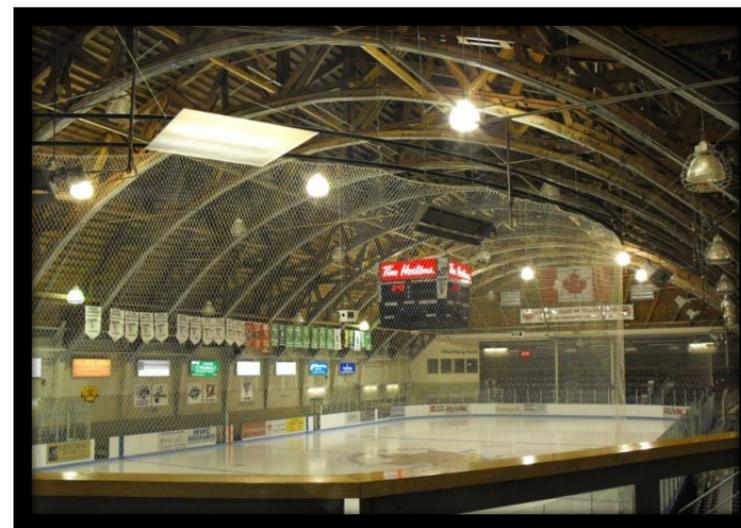
The arenas at the Tillsonburg Community Centre are well utilized during prime times. For the 2010 season, schedules show prime time utilization at 88% for the Kinsmen Memorial Arena and 94% for the Colin Campbell Arena, with a total system wide availability of 11.5 prime hours per week (though the surplus is the sum of a number of small time slots spread across the week at each rink).

Ice sports continue to be in high demand and pressures on arenas, particularly during prime times, have been observed across the province. Future outlooks suggest that ice demand at a provincial level will remain steady at current participation rates, although there could be fluctuations from sport to sport. For example, there has been considerable growth in the number of females playing hockey, but figure skating has seen declines provincially. With an aging population, greater demand for 55-plus hockey teams may become apparent, but it is not certain whether this trend would be significant from a Town-wide demand perspective.

According to the household survey, 17% of the sample households were involved in hockey or figure skating in the past twelve months. Based on stakeholder input, it is estimated that there are approximately 900 registered players in local hockey, figure skating and ringette leagues (400 players, representing nearly half of the registrants, are associated with Tillsonburg Minor Hockey). This information is key to the analysis of arena needs, which are based upon a market-driven service level target defined by the number of arena users during the winter season. For the Strategic Master Plan, a provision standard of one ice rink per 600 registered players has been established.

The following table illustrates Tillsonburg’s service level of ice rinks in relation to other similarly sized municipalities.

Municipality (Data Year)	Population	Ice Rinks	Per Capita	Per User
St. Marys (2006)	6,617	2	3,309	n/a
Kincardine (2009)	12,016	2	6,008	365
Lambton Shores (2010)	14,119	2	7,060	365
New Tecumseth (2008)	30,654	4	7,664	n/a
Tillsonburg (2010)	16,000	2	8,000	450
Haldimand County (2006)	44,786	5	8,957	545
North Dumfries (2007)	9,060	1	9,060	788
Centre Wellington (2008)	28,326	3	9,442	642
Owen Sound (2006)	21,753	2	10,877	692
East Gwillimbury (2007)	22,000	2	11,000	544
St Thomas (2007)	36,110	3	12,037	611
Blue Mountains (2006)	16,531	1	16,531	550
Port Hope (2010)	16,894	1	16,894	630





Assuming that participation rates do not dramatically change over the strategic master planning period, it is expected that the existing supply of ice will be sufficient to serve needs of arena users. Using the market-driven standard, the Town would presently require 1.5 ice pads in total, representing a surplus of 0.5 ice rinks; this surplus would slightly decrease to 0.2 ice rinks in 2021 based upon population and registrant forecasts.

Given the current availability of prime time ice hours and application of the market-driven standard, no new arena facilities are recommended in the next ten years. By the year 2031, however, there would be an estimated 1,215 arena users who would generate a need for 2.0 rinks, after which long-term capacity within the current supply would start to be constrained. Arena needs, however, should be re-examined every five years through update to the Strategic Master Plan to ensure that the standard remains relevant given future participation and registration trends).

To maximize efficiencies in scheduling ice, the Town should attempt to piece together its surplus prime ice times into 1 hours slots (thus eliminating the small time slots currently spread throughout the week). Furthermore, finding ways to bolster non-prime usage through marketing to Parent/Grandparent & Tot skates, “oldtimers” leagues, etc. is also encouraged.

As recommended in Guiding Principle 1, the Town should create an Ice Allocation Policy that clearly defines and communicates how ice will be managed, allocated and distributed. This may include the creation of policies specifically outlining facility operations and capacities, allocation and distribution (e.g. for affiliated versus unaffiliated groups, residents versus non-residents, etc.), processing and management of permits (e.g. for tournaments and special events, dealing with returned ice, etc.).

As part of annual ice allocations, users should be required to submit detailed registration information to the Town to aid in the equitable distribution of ice time. Furthermore, the cost of ice rentals has been subject of some input received from consultations. Guiding Principle 5 contains a comparison of ice rates in the region and suggests that the Town’s rates are reflective of the average, though it will be important to balance affordability with fiscal responsibility in operating the arenas.

Curling

With regard to curling, the Tillsonburg Curling Club has approximately 300 full members who utilize the four sheets. It is believed that the Club and other regional facilities are able to address demands for the sport, and thus would not warrant the Town’s entry into what would amount to a new level of service (particularly in relation to the investment that would be required).



Should local curling enthusiasts be interested in enhancing the existing Club or developing a local facility jointly with the municipality, the Town should entertain the notion by encouraging an interested party to submit a business plan articulating capital funding opportunities, operational responsibilities, access to the general public, etc. prior to making a decision.

Outdoor Rinks

There are presently no outdoor skating rinks which are operated by the Town of Tillsonburg. Outdoor rinks are becoming increasingly difficult to maintain due to warming climates being experienced globally, thus many municipalities choosing to provide outdoor skating opportunities are having to look at artificial refrigeration or synthetic ice systems which are typically much more expensive to construct and operate than natural rinks.

The Strategic Master Plan’s consultations reveal that residents would like to see more outdoor skating opportunities. The provision of outdoor ice rinks is also a way to reduce pressure on municipal arenas, particularly for time slots dedicated to public skating or shinny. Unfortunately, it would appear to be cost prohibitive for the Town to construct an artificial outdoor rink at this time.



Instead, the Town should work collaboratively with residents and community organizations to provide volunteer-maintained natural ice rinks. This may include working with neighbourhoods to find a suitable site (e.g. within a park), providing assistance in setting up boards, offering rebates on water bills of those who volunteer to flood the rink, etc. The use of hard surface courts or neighbourhood-level sports fields also pose as potential venue for ice rinks due to their size and the relative simplicity of framing them to create the ice surface.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ No new arenas are recommended over the strategic master planning period. Arena needs should be re-evaluated as part of a five-year review and update of this Strategic Master Plan and consider registration data that is provided by user groups as part of a proposed Ice Allocation Policy that is to be created by the Town.
- ☑ Work with community and neighbourhood groups to encourage residents to maintain natural ice rinks on municipal land for public use, particularly at future multi-use courts and existing parks and open spaces which are suitable to accommodate the use.



Gymnasiums

Provincially, gymnasium sports continue to exhibit high levels of demand, especially among youth and younger adults who participate in programs such as basketball, volleyball, badminton, etc. While the Town does not own or operate a gymnasium, it contributed \$944,000 towards the construction of a gym as part of a major renovation at Glendale High School.

The gym is owned by the Thames Valley District School Board, who maintains all ownership and operating responsibility of the gym. The Town's capital contribution guarantees preferred scheduling for the municipality, governed through a Gymnasium Agreement that spans twenty year period. The Town is entitled to a minimum of 30 hours per week, though school activities are given the first priority with respect to booking and scheduling. Furthermore, the Agreement identifies a list of Permitted Activities which are limited to aerobics and pilates, badminton, basketball and volleyball, boxing, dance, fencing, gymnastics, handball, judo, taekwondo and wrestling, table tennis, and yoga. The Town and the Board meet every two years to discuss successes and challenges of executing the agreement.

Early indications based on feedback from key informant interviews, the Search Conference and surveys received from gym users suggest that the Agreement has not necessarily met expectations of the community. With the School Board having authority on determining scheduling and permitted uses, certain groups have reported challenges in gaining access to the gym and/or being able to offer desired programs (some of which do not fall under the Permitted Activities). The gym, however, does benefit the community overall by making space available and provides a level of service that is not available elsewhere in Tillsonburg (other than undersized gymnasiums at elementary schools).

Given the recent investment in the Glendale gymnasium, it is not deemed to be fiscally realistic to invest in a new, dedicated gymnasium. While the preference is to attempt to improve relations with the School Board, it is recognized that there will always be certain constraints associated with the joint use agreement. To meet community demands for gymnasium times (e.g. indoor soccer), the Town should attempt to replicate certain smaller-scale gymnasium activities (particularly those which do not require high ceilings) within the Tillsonburg Community Centre (TCC). This would need to be achieved by repurposing/reconfiguring existing space such as adapting the TCC's large halls or repurposing the underutilized squash courts (see the Fitness Centre assessment for more details regarding squash) to accommodate more wellness and active living opportunities. A last opportunity to consider may include looking at the Tillsonburg Special Event Centre, depending upon the desired vision that is ultimately established for that venue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

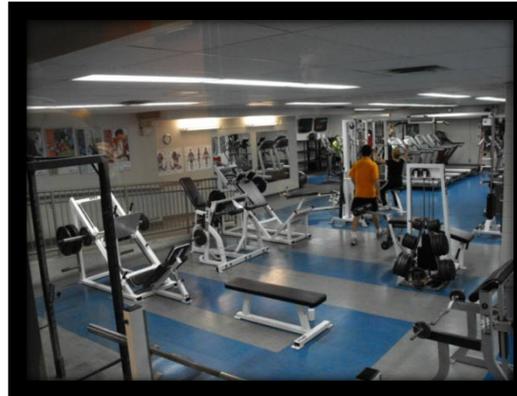
- ☑ As part of the two year review for the Glendale Gymnasium Agreement, the Town should try to maximize the number of Permitted Activities that can occur in order to keep pace with demands for new and emerging gymnasium activities. Community access to other local school gymnasiums should also be pursued by working with the respective School Boards.
- ☑ Consider reconfiguring program and meeting spaces within the Tillsonburg Community Centre as a means to accommodate certain smaller-scale gymnasium activities, thereby, freeing up time at the Glendale gym for additional uses.

Fitness Centres

Through its fitness centre (the Health Club) at the Tillsonburg Community Centre, the Town offers full service fitness programming that is geared to a diverse range of ages. The facility contains a full service equipment-based fitness centre, sauna and shower facilities, and three squash courts. Wellness and active living programs are generally provided within the Lions Den and Lions Auditorium.

Given trends towards active living (i.e. the integration of physical activities into an individual's daily routine), the Town should continue to expand its focus on wellness programs. Existing hall/multi-purpose rooms such as those within the Tillsonburg Community Centre are ideally positioned to accommodate these types of programming.

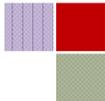
Tillsonburg is approaching a point where the private sector is able to offer many of the same kinds of services that are catered to the Town's target fitness market, or will be able to do so in the near future. For example, there are a number of smaller-scale private clubs operating in Tillsonburg such as Curves, Extreme Health & Fitness, and Cardio Plus. It is common for small municipalities to provide fitness centres to ensure that residents have access to affordable, stable access to physical activity opportunities either through direct provision (as done in Tillsonburg) while others have found ways to work with third parties to indirectly offer space (e.g. Lambton Shores has recently constructed and leased fitness space to the YMCA while Halton Hills has an agreement that allows a private sector provider to access the Town's indoor pool in exchange for community access to the private fitness club).



At present, no new municipal fitness centres are required as the Town has an existing presence with its studio-type multi-use rooms and the Health Club. Specific efforts should continue to be made toward retaining and attracting members, collectively encouraging Tillsonburg's residents to become more physically active, and investigate space options as the fitness membership grows. Although no new fitness centres are recommended over the course of the master planning period, the success of the Health Club warrants a closer examination in how to maximize the existing space. Observations would suggest that the size of the fitness centre limits its ability to grow and expand equipment/services; furthermore, the space is located on the lower level of the community centre and is not considered to have high visibility nor does it permit a great degree of natural light.

As such, the Town would benefit from undertaking an assessment of how the Health Club could be improved from a size, service level and accessibility perspective, in order to provide a higher quality level of service geared to attracting a greater number of residents, such as older adults who will likely form a greater percentage of users in the future. This assessment should, at a minimum, explore options to increasing the physical square footage of programmable fitness space, updating components such as the change rooms and sauna, and evaluating the role of the squash courts.

With specific regard to the squash courts, recent trends in racquet sports (e.g., squash, racquetball, etc.) suggest that the service largely tends to be a private sector practice. Bookings of squash



courts generally peaks in the winter months but decline significantly in the summer, suggesting the seasonal nature of the sport may not be best suited as part of a municipal community facility.

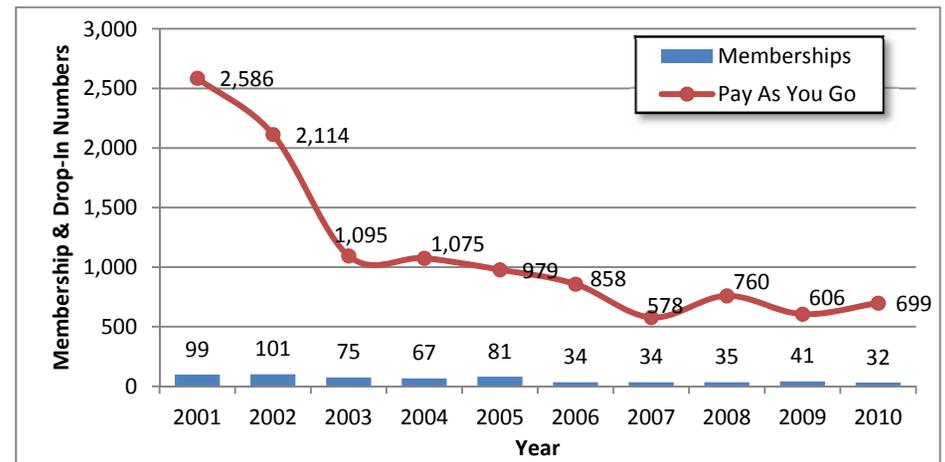
While it is a logical component to fitness centre operations, and the Town is filling a niche level of service not currently offered elsewhere in Tillsonburg, participation trends indicate that while squash remains a popular fitness activity, the sport is not attracting a high number of younger players and it is unclear whether demand will persist into the future. Illustrating this trend, data compiled by the Town indicates a declining trend in both memberships sold and drop-in utilization. In 2001, there were a total of 99 memberships sold for squash though by October 2010, this had dropped by nearly 70% to 32 memberships sold; similarly, there were nearly 1,900 fewer pay-as-you-go visits in the year 2010 compared to 2001, representing a nearly a 75% decrease in utilization.

While operational costs associated with squash courts tends to be relatively low, these facilities are not deemed to be the most efficient use of space per user due to their size and ability to only accommodate two participants in the area. As such, the provision of additional squash courts is not recommended, particularly given the space constraints associated with the facility footprint and the need to address other types of fitness programming, as articulated in the assessment of gymnasium and fitness spaces.

It is recommended that the Town undertake a detailed assessment of repurposing the existing squash courts at the Tillsonburg Community Centre (e.g. to studio space, a youth centre, wallyball, etc.) based upon business planning, though it will be important to seek input from local squash players as part of this process to explore alternative options to facilitate their play. For example, if a local squash/racquetball association is willing to take operational

responsibility and accountability (including costs) to manage and maintain the courts, offer lessons and introductory opportunities, and organizing league play and competitions, the feasibility of this option should be considered as part of the Town’s business planning process. Furthermore, the Town could consider retaining one of the squash courts and repurposing the other two for alternative use.

Figure 14: Memberships & Drop-In Utilization of Municipal Squash Courts



Note: data is current as of October 12, 2010

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ The Town should undertake a comprehensive examination into the reconfiguration/expansion of its Health Club and squash courts in order to provide a higher quality, higher performing level of service geared to addressing the fitness-related needs of future residents and facility users.



Community Program & Meeting Space

Multi-purpose community and program spaces largely reflect the supply of rooms/halls that are available for community rental while also providing a venue for municipal program delivery (e.g. dance or active living classes). The Town has meeting rooms, both large and small, at the Tillsonburg Community Centre (as well as the arena floors which have accommodated events in the off-season), the Annandale National Historic Site, and the Summer Place at Lake Lisgar. There are also a couple of privately owned community centres with meeting spaces that have been developed as part of recent condominium/seniors-oriented residential projects (Hickory Hills and Baldwin Place) in the Town of Tillsonburg.



Maximizing existing community spaces to accommodate a wider variety of uses is a preferred approach to providing the public with access to multi-purpose community and program space. As need for additional municipal programs increases and the population grows, further

demand for such spaces can be expected and may necessitate additional venues. There may be opportunity to reconfigure the spaces within existing facilities centres if single-purpose venues continue to be promoted as flexible spaces that can accommodate a range of activities and events (e.g. making the Annandale House meeting room more suited to wellness or arts and crafts, improving the ability of the Lions Auditorium to accommodate community-level theatrical or musical productions, using spaces within the public library branch or the Tillsonburg Special Events Centre,

working to increase usage of the Glendale High School gymnasium, etc.).

The Town should continue to make use of these existing assets and invest in appropriate upgrades in order to ensure that a sufficient distribution of rental and program delivery spaces exist, while also recognizing that land supply constraints will limit the ability of the municipality to construct new facilities in the future. Prior to any investment in existing facilities, the municipality will need to assess the costs of carrying out any improvements and rationalize this expense through a cost-benefit evaluation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ Continue to offer a variety of community program and rental opportunities out of existing and newly developed municipal facilities, to the greatest degree possible, while exploring opportunities to enhance these spaces in a manner that promotes a more diverse and flexible range of uses. If warranted by need, the Town should also evaluate the merits of obtaining underutilized or vacant community buildings that could provide increased program opportunities.

Sports Fields

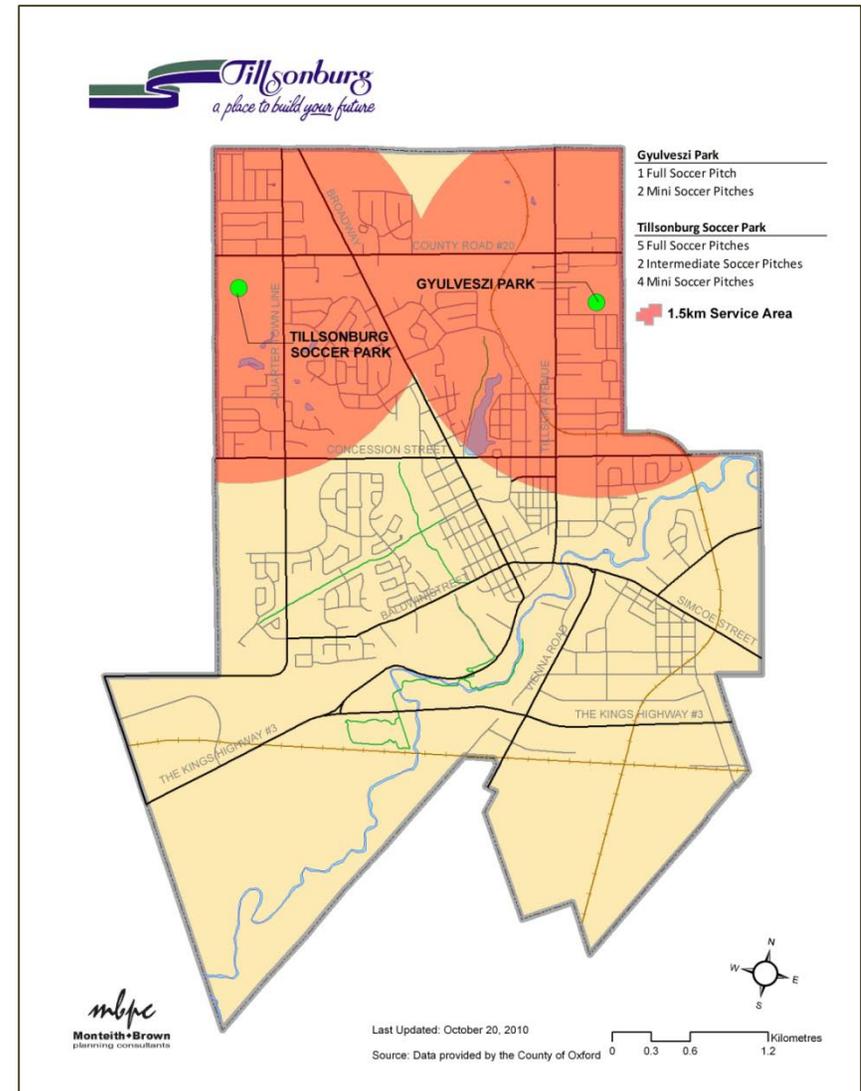
Soccer Fields

There are a total of 14 soccer fields located on lands owned by the Town. Soccer fields are concentrated north of Concession Street at Gyulveszi Park (3 fields) and the Tillsonburg Soccer Park (11 fields, including 1 lit field), the latter of which is maintained by Tillsonburg Minor Soccer. Many municipalities factor lit fields as being equivalent to 1.5 unlit fields due to the ability of a lit field to extend play into the evening and lengthen the season into the early fall. This also offers a benefit to provide more opportunities for adult, travel team and rep-level programming. Tillsonburg’s supply is thus assumed to be 14.5 fields.

The following table illustrates Tillsonburg’s service level of soccer fields in relation to other comparable municipalities.

Municipality (Data Year)	Population	Soccer Fields	Per Capita	Per User
North Dumfries (2007)	9,060	11	824	0
East Gwillimbury (2007)	22,000	23.5	936	52
Haldimand County (2006)	44,786	42	1,066	47
Tillsonburg (2010)	16,000	14.5	1,103	70
Owen Sound (2006)	21,600	14	1,543	100
Port Hope (2010)	16,894	10	1,689	84
St Thomas (2007)	36,110	18	2,006	103
Lambton Shores (2010)	14,119	7	2,017	0
Saugeen Shores (2010)	15,000	6	2,500	75
Centre Wellington (2008)	28,326	11	2,575	127
Blue Mountains (2005)	16,531	1	16,531	397

Figure 15: Distribution of Soccer Fields





A market-driven target of 1 soccer field per 80 registered participants has been developed for Tillsonburg, based upon generally accepted standards of play. There are presently 1,017 players registered in Tillsonburg Minor Soccer (including about 110 adult players), representing a decline of 6% from the year before. While Minor Soccer expresses a need for an additional two fields, the application of the market-driven target to the current number of registrants would require nearly 13 fields in total, implying that there is a slight surplus of about 1 available field.

If local participation rates in soccer remain the same over the next ten years, population growth would increase the total field requirement to 15 and suggests that 1 additional soccer field would be needed by the year 2021. By the year 2031, 17 fields would likely be required and warrant 3 additional fields. As such, the Town and Tillsonburg Minor Soccer should begin a collaborative process to assemble lands that would accommodate at least 2 full soccer fields. Ideally, land would be assembled adjacent to the existing Soccer Park and could be combined with the proposed Ball Diamond Complex (see next subsection) to offer efficiencies to the Town and its user groups. It is also noted that the Minor Soccer has integrated new field lighting into its capital plans, which will also increase the effective capacity. With increased levels of field usage on lit facilities, the Town will have to remain cognisant of turf regeneration and field rotation practices. The installation of irrigation and drainage systems will go a long way in ensuring that field availability is maximized.

The need for soccer fields should be re-examined in five years (as part of an update to this Strategic Master Plan) to evaluate participation trends and the need for additional facilities, given market characteristics at that time. It will be important for the Town to continue to consult with Tillsonburg Minor Soccer, and support it

as required, as they are instrumental in providing high quality programming to the community and have also demonstrated their commitment to being self-sustaining through its maintenance of the Tillsonburg Soccer Park. As discussed in Guiding Principle 1, an allocation policy for sports fields may also be considered if warranted by growth in the sport.

Furthermore, the Town should encourage Minor Soccer to program its full size soccer fields to hold simultaneous mini field games/practices rather than develop dedicated mini fields (i.e. running two mini field programs across the width of one full sized field). It is important that any mini field programming across full fields employs a temporary net system in order to avoid sideline collisions during use of the field for junior/senior programs. Adequate storage for temporary nets, therefore, should be a consideration in the design of soccer parks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ To address the long term need for soccer fields, the Town and Tillsonburg Minor Soccer should collaboratively assemble lands capable of holding a minimum of two soccer fields, preferably adjacent to the Tillsonburg Soccer Park. Tillsonburg Minor Soccer should also be encouraged to install additional field lighting as a means to increase the effective capacity and supply. Subsequent to these actions, soccer field needs should be re-examined as part of the five year review and update of the Community Parks, Recreation & Cultural Strategic Master Plan to confirm the need for additional facilities based upon future trends and market characteristics.

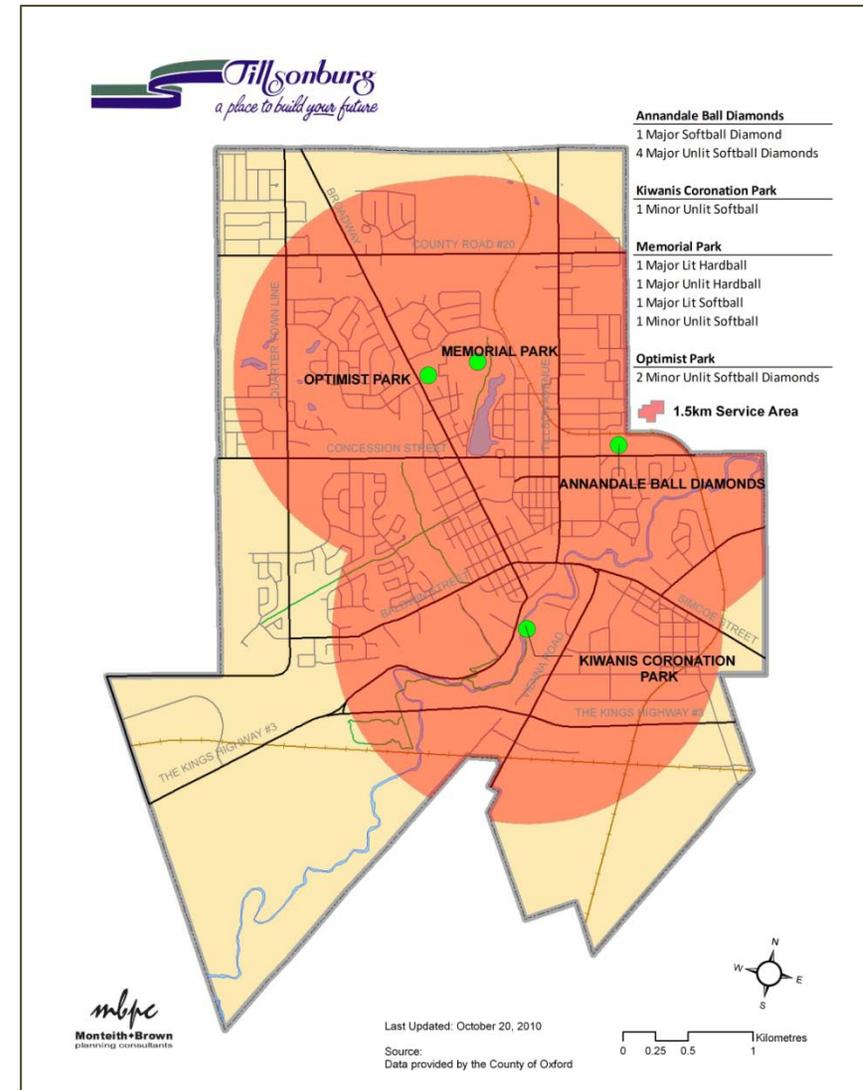
Ball Diamonds

There are a total of 11 programmed ball diamonds in Tillsonburg, including 1 lit hardball diamond and 2 lit softball diamonds (the practice diamond at Memorial Park has not been considered as it is not permitted for organized use). As discussed in the soccer assessment, field lighting contributes up to 50% additional capacity, which means that the 3 lit diamonds in fact provide the equivalent capacity of 4.5 unlit diamonds. The total supply is thus considered to be 12.5 ball diamonds which serve the community. The following table illustrates Tillsonburg’s service level of ball fields in relation to other comparable municipalities.

Municipality (Data Year)	Population	Diamonds	Per Capita	Per User
Haldimand County (2006)	44,786	51	878	53
Port Hope (2010)	16,894	17	994	48
Owen Sound (2006)	21,600	20	1,080	60
Tillsonburg (2010)	16,000	12.5	1,280	74
Lambton Shores (2010)	14,119	10.5	1,345	57
Saugeen Shores (2010)	15,000	10	1,500	n/a
St Thomas (2007)	36,110	23	1,570	84
East Gwillimbury (2007)	22,000	14	1,571	n/a
North Dumfries (2007)	9,060	4	2,265	n/a
Centre Wellington (2008)	28,326	10.5	2,698	n/a
Blue Mountains (2005)	16,531	5	3,306	17

Locally, participation in baseball and softball appears to be fairly strong, with groups reporting stable to slightly increasing participant numbers over the past three years. This is in contrast to provincial trends, where baseball and softball have been experiencing declining participation rates, particularly in youth programs. Provincially, however, there are indications that rates are beginning to stabilize due to developmental efforts on the part of national and provincial sport associations, and increasing popularity of softball among adults.

Figure 16: Distribution of Ball Diamonds



Through the stakeholder survey, groups (i.e. Ladies Slo-Pitch, Minor Baseball, Old Sox and Red Sox) reported a collective registration of 539 players while it is assumed that another 390 players are registered in the 28 teams under Men’s Slo-Pitch (this group did not submit a stakeholder survey), as well as three other local teams; thus, the total number of ball registrants in Tillsonburg is estimated to be 930 players. A market-driven service target of 1 ball diamond per 100 registrants is deemed appropriate given Tillsonburg’s characteristics and factoring other variables such as the ability of turf grass to regenerate. Based upon the total registration of 930 players, 9.3 ball diamonds are required, resulting in a surplus of approximately 3 diamonds.

If participation rates remain constant over the ten year strategic master planning period, projected registration would generate the need for a total of 11 ball diamonds by the year 2021 and create surplus of 1.5 diamonds; by 2031, it is expected that the current supply will be at full capacity.

Furthermore, groups booked a total of 190 hours per week at local diamonds which results in a utilization rate of 90%, indicating that the surplus capacity is available though in the tolerable range for effectiveness, amounting to about 20 hours per week or just over 1.5 hours per diamond per week. Assessment of utilization rates and application of the service level target confirms that existing diamonds are likely to accommodate future growth in the sport.

Based upon observations, the Annandale Ball Diamonds should be re-examined for their suitability to meet the needs of local user groups. These diamonds were designed in the 1980s but the changing characteristics of players has rendered the Annandale diamonds as being too small (i.e. players now are regularly able to hit balls well beyond the park boundaries). It is recommended that, in consultation with local ball groups, the Town evaluate options to relocate the Annandale Ball Diamonds to another site that allows for the provision of multiple diamonds geared to the standards and specifications of play set out for different age groups.





Furthermore, it would be worthwhile for the Town to consider relocating the diamond from Memorial Park as well as at least one of the diamonds from the Fairgrounds given that this site is very intensively programmed and has parking constraints. As discussed in Guiding Principle 6, the Memorial Park site is part of a large community hub and thus maximizing its use is critical moving forward. Relocation of the hardball diamond located across from the Fairgrounds Grandstand should be considered in order to provide a greater variety of programming options in that space.

Relocation of the diamond(s) from Memorial Park and/or the Fairgrounds would also serve a secondary benefit in reducing parking-related pressures not only within the Park but also at the Tillsonburg Community Centre (and in fact, repurposing a relocated diamond to a parking area would alleviate the considerable pressures placed on the Tillsonburg Community Centre during the winter months, while positioning the facility to also be able to host events that are currently better suited to the Special Events Centre due to available parking).

Prior to the relocation of any ball diamonds, the Town should ensure that local ball groups are adequately consulted throughout the process with respect to a new location, as well as the desired level of design/amenity which is associated with the new fields. The most plausible approach would be to create a ball diamond complex that provides groups with the types of diamonds needed to grow their programs, while also facilitating the potential to host high quality tournaments.

The grouping of diamonds would imply the acquisition and development of a sports field complex, potentially by assembling lands adjacent to the Tillsonburg Soccer Park, in order to centralize sports field operations and allow efficiencies between soccer and

ball users, as well as the Town. Accordingly, the Town could divest itself of the Annandale Ball Diamonds and allocate the proceeds towards the development of the proposed sports field complex (or instead repurpose the ball diamonds to other park uses). The Town should work hand-in-hand with its ball groups to adopt a model similar for soccer by assisting groups in seeking alternative funding streams (e.g. sponsorships, donations, grants, etc. as discussed earlier in this Guiding Principle) in which to not only contribute to the capital development of the proposed park, but also encourage the internal capacity of local ball groups to become more involved with maintenance of their field. Sufficient space should thus be allocated at the proposed ball diamond complex to allow any future expansion, if required, given that participation in ball has been increasing locally, and the current surplus represents a contingency option should additional diamonds be required beyond the strategic master planning period.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ The Annandale Ball Diamonds should be relocated to an alternative location where they can be reconstructed with appropriate field dimensions and playing standards required to meet the needs of local ball organizations. As such, consultations with local user groups will be required prior to relocating and redesigning the Annandale Ball Diamonds.
- ☑ The Town should consider repurposing and/or relocating the ball diamond from Memorial Park as well as at least at least one of the Fairgrounds diamonds. This would allow a greater diversity of events to occur (e.g. at the Fairgrounds) and alleviate vehicular parking pressures associated with the sports fields and the Tillsonburg Community Centre.

Other Sports Fields

Historically, organized sports such as football, lacrosse and rugby have relied more heavily upon school-owned fields more so than municipal soccer fields, which is largely a result of the popularity of soccer generating the most pressure on the need for fields. Although football utilizes rectangular sports fields, they do so largely after the soccer season (i.e. football takes place in the fall) and historically have used school fields.

The degree of use on fields used by all sports field users is extremely heavy and takes a toll on the field's quality (an impact that could be exacerbated if local popularity grows for sports such as lacrosse or rugby). Typically, population based standards are not applied to multi-use fields due to the traditional reliance on non-municipal fields, therefore, they should be provided on a case-by-case basis after assessing local demand for field sports other than soccer.



Many municipalities are exploring the concept of providing multi-use' fields which focus usage priority on sports other than soccer. Doing so minimizes the expectation from soccer organizations that the field will be of very high quality for their season, while providing other sports with more regular access to a municipally operated field. While the Strategic Master Plan's consultations did not find sufficient demand for dedicated multi-use fields beyond that available at schools, the Town should continue to engage non-soccer field users if requests are made for multi-use fields and confirm needs by pursuing additional access at school fields and/or development of a municipal field.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ The Town should continue to work with the local School Boards to ensure that community access is maintained to sports fields located on school property. In the event that local organizations are unable to access school-owned sports fields, or sports fields which are not maintained to a satisfactory level of play, the Town should investigate options to develop at least one multi-use field that gives scheduling priority to field sports other than soccer.



Indoor Sports Fields

Indoor field sports, and particularly indoor soccer, are growing in popularity and demand can be expected to increase locally if regional trends are any indication. Municipalities are increasingly entering into the realm of providing indoor turf facilities due to the significant growth in indoor soccer. While once traditionally a private sector venture, indoor turf is now generally available in many municipalities with over 75,000 residents with some smaller municipalities developing these facilities as well.

In Tillsonburg, indoor soccer is generally played at the Glendale High School gymnasium; the program is run by the Tillsonburg Indoor Soccer League, who appear to be satisfied with their present level of access to the gym. On the other hand, the Tillsonburg Minor Soccer Club has expressed an interest in forming an indoor youth soccer league but have been faced with difficulties in accessing facilities such as the Glendale gymnasium for time slots geared to children and youth (i.e. earlier in the evening).

It is believed that the Glendale gymnasium would adequately be able to accommodate the need for indoor sports opportunities (including soccer, volleyball, dodgeball, dry-land training activities, etc.) provided that community access can be solidified. As discussed in the gymnasium assessment of the Strategic Master Plan, community expectations have not been fulfilled for the Glendale gym and the Town will need to work to the best of its abilities with the School Board in ensuring that local groups have consistent access to the facility.

Rather than developing an indoor field house within the master planning period (a course of action which would enter the Town into a new level of service at a considerable capital and ongoing operating expense), utilizing the Glendale and any other gyms in

Tillsonburg is the preferred course of action. This would allow the Tillsonburg Minor Soccer to grow its registrant base to a sustainable level which could warrant a field house in the future, while allowing the Town to gauge demand for indoor field sports, and fully investigate and understand the demand for a dedicated facility in the longer-term.

While the need for an indoor field house would be re-assessed through updates to this Strategic Master Plan, a public-private partnership would be the most plausible approach to delivering the facility/service if justified by need in the future (i.e. if warranted by the number of players/users, if access to the Glendale gym continues to be constrained, etc.). Joint entry into the market would reduce the Town's risk on investment and may offer efficiencies associated with operation. That being said, seeking better access to the gymnasium should take priority over the development of a field house due to the uncertainty in the market and the costs involved with constructing/operating a new facility.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ The Town should work with Tillsonburg Minor Soccer and the Thames Valley School Board to facilitate greater access to the Glendale High School gymnasium as a means to develop indoor soccer programming. This approach should also be undertaken with other user groups who are looking to deliver indoor recreation or dry-land training programs.



Hard Surface Courts

Hard surface courts generally consist of tennis and basketball courts contained in municipal parks. The Town provides 3 tennis courts at Optimist Park (across from the Tillsonburg Community Centre), as well as a basketball court and a ball hockey court at Southridge Park. The basketball hoop at Memorial Park, adjacent to the Pavilion, is considered to be the equivalent of half (0.5) a court.

With regard to tennis, trends research is generally inconclusive as it pertains to participation. Some trends suggest that the aging Baby Boom generation could fuel demand for the sport due to their interest in active living opportunities, while other trends indicate that tennis is not a growth sport. Experience also suggests that the interest in tennis varies greatly between municipalities and can be influenced by the existing level of service and ethnic composition.



The unstructured and unprogrammed nature of tennis may bode well for future participation as the sport can be accommodated within a busy lifestyle; for this reason, courts that players can walk to are preferred as are multi-court venues (two or more hard surface courts) due to the increased maintenance efficiencies. In

addition, some tennis organizations in the province have taken a proactive approach to increasing participation through programs aimed at children and youth. In Tillsonburg, 7% of the household survey sample reported participation in tennis, ranking sixteenth out of eighteen listed activities, and very limited input regarding tennis was provided through the other consultation efforts.

Conversely, basketball is generally considered to be a growth sport in many communities, especially among the youth demographic. Demand for outdoor basketball courts has been found to be high as they are easily incorporated into neighbourhood-level parks, thus allowing pedestrian or bicycle access (which are the primary modes of transportation among youth). In the case of Tillsonburg, however, the results of the household survey showed that participation in basketball ranked second to last in terms of participation, though it ranked towards the middle for facilities that respondents wanted additional investment; this could suggest a gap in service, and the provision of more courts could increase participation rates. Basketball courts are consistently identified by youth as being a favoured recreational facility and provide opportunities for spontaneous, informal play. It should be noted that the Town's supply of outdoor basketball courts is supplemented by courts and hoops provided at most elementary schools (though these are of varying quality).

As a non-programmed neighbourhood/community level amenity, the utilization of a population-based provision target can assist in planning for future needs based upon forecasted population growth for hard surface courts. The provision target of 1 tennis court per 5,000 residents is based upon experience in other communities, the existing level of interest in tennis and industry standards. The target would suggest that the current supply of three tennis courts are sufficient to serve the existing population of 16,000, though one



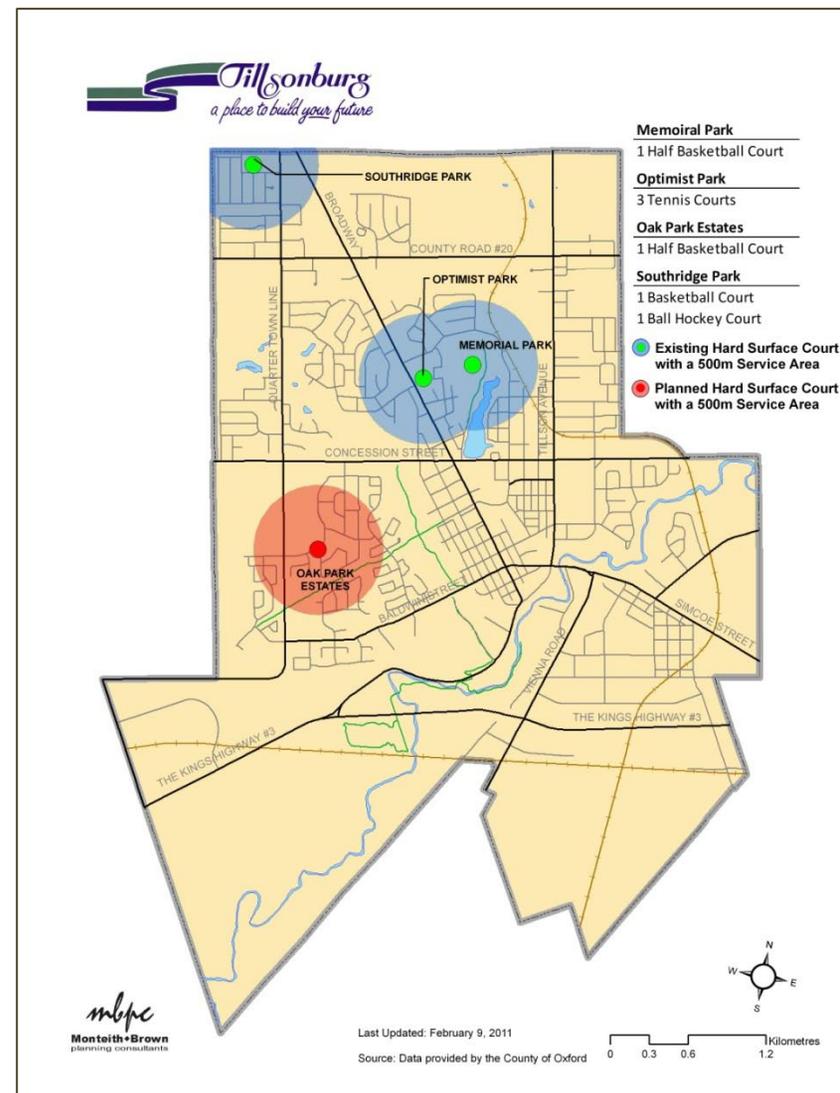
new tennis court would be needed to meet the needs of 19,127 residents forecasted in the year 2021 (and would also largely reconcile needs until 2026, after which a fifth tennis court would need to be considered).

In the case of basketball, a standard of 1 court per 800 youth (ages 10 to 19, who represent the primary users of these courts) generally addresses local needs. In the absence of age-specific demographics, we have assumed a modest annual growth rate of 1% for children and youth populations (note that the number of children and youth remained nearly the same between 2001 and 2006, despite an increase in the population as a whole). For the purposes of the Strategic Master Plan, it is assumed that the youth population (10-19) is 1,821 at present and will be 2,011 youth by the year 2021. This would suggest that the two existing courts are sufficient to meet current and future needs, though needs would need to be re-evaluated as age-specific population estimates are better defined.

Equally as important as the provision standard, however, is geographic distribution of hard surface courts. These are facilities that are generally considered to be walk-to and neighbourhood-level amenities (particularly basketball and multi-use courts), and benefit from being located near trail routes (given that many youth, who form a large part of the users, do not have access to a car).

As shown in the adjacent map, tennis courts are relegated to Optimist Park, which can be considered fairly central to the majority of the Town’s population. With regard to basketball and ball hockey courts, Southridge Park is located in the Town’s north and is generally considered to be an inaccessible location for youth residing south of North Street (which is considered to be a barrier given its function as a County Highway).

Figure 17: Distribution of Hard Surface Courts





It is recommended that a basketball court be constructed along with one new tennis court, so that the Town can take advantage of economies of scale in constructing and maintaining the asphalt courts (i.e. all future hard surface courts should be developed in groups of at least two). Optimist Park would appear to be the most ideal location, space permitting, given there are already three tennis courts (and a fourth court would provide the opportunity for a tennis club, if formed, to deliver suitable programming).

Similarly, the proposed basketball court is an ideal complement to the existing skateboard park at Optimist Park which would create a centralized and supervised destination for youth, particularly if youth space is developed at the Tillsonburg Community Centre (see Guiding Principle 5). As an alternative, a future park (preferably one located south of Concession Street) could also be an option for a basketball court to reconcile distributional gaps. Furthermore, new residential developments should also have access to playing courts using a 500 to 800 metre service radius as a guide, however, the Town should also consider aspects such as proximity to high quality school courts when determining appropriate locations for hard courts.

In designing new hard surface courts, the concept of “multi-use” courts is becoming more prevalent. Multi-use courts, depending upon design and orientation, can accommodate more year-round activities by integrating basketball, tennis, ball hockey, outdoor skating, etc. within the space occupied by a dedicated basketball or tennis court. As such, they are good fits in neighbourhood level parks to cater to a wide range of drop-in interests. Southridge Park is a simplified example of this concept as a ball hockey court sits adjacent to the basketball court, but together allow for a wider variety of activities to take place without barriers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ The Town should provide one additional tennis court at Optimist Park, and construct a basketball/ball hockey court at the same location in order to take advantage of amenities already offered at the park site.
- ☑ In the design of new hard surface courts at neighbourhood-level parks, consider the integration of multi-use templates which allow a variety of uses that can be pursued year-round.



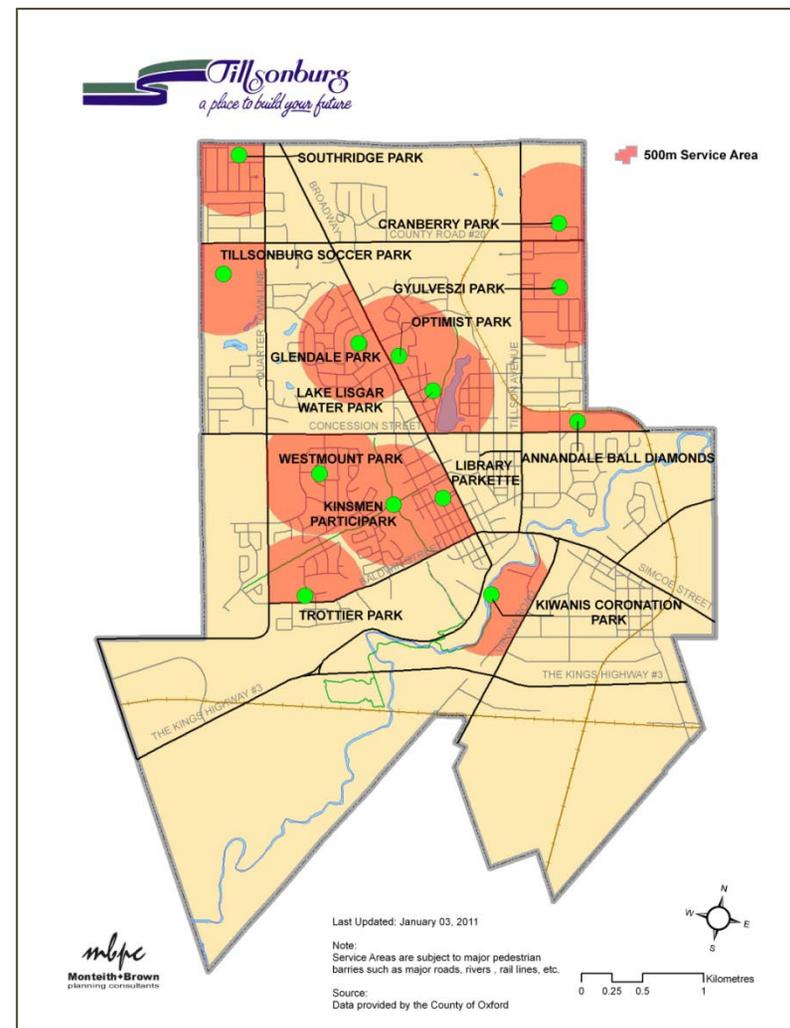
Children’s Playgrounds

Playgrounds are provided at a total of 14 municipal parks. It should be noted that elementary schools may also provide play structures that may be used by residents during off hours and days upon which the school is closed; these facilities are not included in the municipal inventory. Playgrounds serve as a neighbourhood level amenity which can provide opportunities for early childhood leisure.

Municipal playgrounds are generally considered ‘walk-to’ facilities in that they are usually located within a 5 to 10-minute walk or up to 800 metres of all built-up areas, and should not be impeded by major pedestrian barriers such as railway lines, waterways or major roads/highways. In line with walking criteria established in the County Official Plan, a 500 metre (5 minute walk) service radius shows fairly good coverage across Tillsonburg’s major residential areas with its existing play structure supply (and is in fact better if applying a less aggressive 800 metre radius), though there are a few notable gap areas.

The first gap area is located centrally, south of Concession Street and east of Broadway Street, though Bert Newman Park would be the only existing park that could address the gap though its size is fairly small, suggesting a play structure may impede other park uses. A similar situation exists nearby with neighbourhoods east of the intersection of Tillson Avenue and Concession Street, though Maple Lane Parkette is the only park in the vicinity and its small size and high traffic volume would likely be a constraint to playground development (the Annandale School is in the vicinity of both these gaps and could pose a potential location if collaboration with the school board can be attained in this regard). Other gap areas in the north and west may be addressed through the future parks which are already planned for these subdivisions.

Figure 18: Distribution of Playgrounds



In addition to addressing gap areas, it is recommended that at least one barrier-free playground be developed, preferably at the Tillsonburg Community Centre site (perhaps replacing the aging play equipment located at Optimist Park). Incorporation of basic barrier-free elements into typical playground designs is preferred as well (e.g. low curbs, wheelchair friendly surfacing, visually stimulating amenities, etc.), particularly in new playgrounds, however, existing playgrounds should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine which ones would be appropriate for retrofits or replacement in this regard. Barrier-free designs are consistent in the County of Oxford Official Plan (Section 8.6.2.2) parkland development standards which state that “the needs of persons with disabilities and other special needs groups shall be addressed in the site development and operational policies.”



Adherence to Canadian Standards Association (CSA) guidelines for design and safety is of key importance in the provision of play structures, which has resulted in a move from traditional steel

design to creative play structures that include softer surfaces, creative and cognitive stimuli and/or barrier free components for children with special needs. It is necessary that all new playgrounds be approved to CSA standards and inspected on a regular basis to avoid equipment-related injury and all playground sites continue to be regularly inspected by trained municipal staff (the Town presently has one certified playground inspector on staff and playgrounds are audited on an annual basis). Through the park redesign or redevelopment process, the Town should update these playground apparatuses in favour of new creative playgrounds, preferably with barrier-free elements (as previously mentioned).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ The Town should provide playgrounds within 500 to 800 metres of all major residential areas to ensure walkability to these neighbourhood-level facilities. At present, this would imply that a gap exists for neighbourhoods located south-east of the Concession Street and Broadway Street intersection, thus opportunities to address this gap should be explored through municipal and school board properties in the vicinity.
- ☑ At least one fully accessible (barrier-free) playground should be provided at the Tillsonburg Community Centre or Lake Lisgar Water Park site to ensure that children with special needs and disabilities have a venue for unstructured physical activity. Opportunities to integrate barrier-free features at existing playgrounds should also be considered through the playground update process.

Skateboard & Bike Parks

A skateboard park is provided at Optimist Park, located adjacent to the Tillsonburg Community Centre. Although once considered a fad, skateboarding has demonstrated sustained longevity and appears to have become a mainstream pursuit among children, youth, and to a lesser extent, young adults. Skateboard parks are increasingly being viewed as positive venues that respond to the interests of a number of youth; this includes skateboarders, trick cyclists and inline skaters.

An age-specific target is the most appropriate tool for determining the demand for skateboard parks since youth are the primary users of the facility. A target of one skateboard park per 5,000 youth aged 10 to 19 is sufficient, however, spatial distribution of these facilities is also key given the fact that youth have limited transportation opportunities.

With a total of 1,750 youth recorded by the 2006 Census, the current skateboard park is deemed to be satisfactory not only to meet present needs but also the population of youth that would be expected over the next ten to twenty years. Instead of focusing on major skateboard facilities, such as the one found at Memorial Park, the Town should consider incorporating smaller-scale introductory-level skateboard features (e.g. fun boxes, rails, etc.). Known as “skate zones”, these amenities are ideally added in during park development and redevelopment projects and appeal to a market that may not be ready for the advanced skill set required at major skateboard parks. This would encourage children and youth, particularly those who are learning to skateboard, to make use of the casual opportunities offered by neighbourhood-level parks.



Similarly, BMX tracks are gaining popularity as an ‘extreme’ sport that utilizes a dirt track featuring jumps, berms and other obstacles within a few hundred meters to test the bike handling skills of the riders. The existence of BMX or mountain bike parks can discourage informal biking that may otherwise take place in ecologically sensitive areas, thereby preventing further damage and disruption to flora and fauna.

While not yet a common practice, the provision of BMX and Mountain Bike Parks are becoming more frequent in the public sector. There is increased demand for purpose-built facilities, in addition to the desire to reduce riding in inappropriate locations (i.e. ecologically sensitive areas) and ad-hoc construction of bike facilities. The result is that parks and recreation departments are often under heavy pressure from both landowners and sport participants to provide authorized, safe facilities.



However, through consultations, the need for dedicated bike parks has not been identified and it is believed that the existing skateboard park provides opportunity for local extreme/trick cyclists to be engaged in their sport. The design and modification of existing or future skateboard/bike parks should be developed in consultation with local enthusiasts, youth representatives, as well as input from other environmentally focused organizations such as the Tillsonburg Trails Committee, local conservation authorities, etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ Through the park development or redevelopment process, continue to provide introductory skate zones at the neighbourhood park level in order to facilitate casual use of the park by those who want basic skateboarding amenities.
- ☑ The Town should consult with the local skateboarding community and other youth interested in the design and redesign of new and existing skateboard parks to ensure that skateboarding facilities are cost-effective and responsive to current design trends and user preferences.

Guiding Principle 4: Embracing Tillsonburg's Arts, Culture & Heritage

The Town will work with its vibrant arts, cultural and heritage sector to enhance and further develop the creative capacity of Tillsonburg and proudly showcase our roots to visitors.

This Guiding Principle will specifically look at:

- the importance of culture and opportunities available locally;
- policies required to support arts, culture and heritage objectives; and
- the need for arts and cultural facilities such as museums, galleries and heritage resources.





Local Arts, Culture & Heritage Resources

There are a number of arts, cultural and heritage resources within Tillsonburg, the majority of which are owned and operated through the community sector. Town owned cultural facilities include the Tillsonburg Public Library, the Tillsonburg Special Events Centre (discussed in detail in Guiding Principle 3), and the Annandale National Historic Site. The Town also receives input from a number of citizen-based advisory committees with an interest in arts and culture such as the Cultural Advisory Committee, Museum Advisory Board, Library Board, and the Tillsonburg Architectural Conservancy Advisory Committee.

ARTS, CULTURE & HERITAGE

THE TERM 'CULTURE' INCLUDES THE ARTS, CULTURAL INDUSTRIES AND HERITAGE RESOURCES. THE ARTS INCLUDE MUSIC, THEATRE, DANCE, VISUAL ART, MEDIA ARTS AND LITERATURE. THE CULTURAL INDUSTRIES INCLUDE FILM, TELEVISION, MUSIC RECORDING, PUBLISHING AND MULTIMEDIA. HERITAGE RESOURCES INCLUDE ORAL TRADITIONS, CULTURAL LANDSCAPES, ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES, STRUCTURES, ARTEFACTS AND ASSOCIATED RECORDS.

There are a number of other arts and cultural entities in the Town, such as the Station Arts Centre, the Theatre Tillsonburg, Participate Community Arts Program, and the Tillsonburg Historical Society. The Town generally has a good relationship with a number of arts

and cultural representatives as it has traditionally provided supports to allow groups to deliver their programs. For example, the Station Arts Centre was formed with the assistance of the Town and is now a largely self-sustaining organization that delivers a broad range of programming to the community, such as pottery, art classes, photography, etc. and also is able to accommodate rentals within their facility for activities such as yoga.

The Benefits of a Strong Cultural Presence

In recent years, the emergence of the 'Creative City' phenomenon has caused many municipalities to focus more intently on the concepts of arts and culture. The benefits of arts, culture and heritage to a community, both intrinsic and extrinsic, have been widely heralded through numerous studies, and include: encouragement of social interaction; stimulation of creativity and personal thought; contributions to economic development and tourism; the facilitation of healthy lifestyles and understanding of others; etc. In addition, Statistics Canada found that between 1999 and 2004, average household expenditures on cultural goods and services (including: visual arts; performing arts; written media; film, video and music; photography; broadcasting; heritage; library; and other, including collector's items) rose 12.4%.⁶ Canadian households spent an average of \$1,450 on cultural goods and services in 2004,



⁶ Statistics Canada. 2009. *What Canadian households spend on culture goods and services*. Accessed at: www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/87-004-x/2003004/4112754-eng.htm.

representing 2.9% of overall household expenditures. This percentage is slightly lower than the 3.1% seen in the 1999 survey.

As such, household spending on culture is increasing at a slower rate than overall household spending, but still represents a large amount of overall dollars spent within Canada each year. In fact, Statistics Canada’s Survey of Household Spending found that in 2003, Canadians spent over \$22 billion on cultural goods and services. The Conference Board of Canada estimated that the economic impact of Canada’s culture sector was \$84.6 billion in 2007, representing 7.4% of the Gross Domestic Product.⁷ This figure includes all direct, indirect, and induced impacts, which, as an example, may refer to a couple buying tickets to a show (direct economic impact), purchasing dinner at a local restaurant before the show (indirect), and the magazine the waiter at dinner purchases with his or her tips from the evening (induced). The importance of culture in our economy is apparent and seems to be increasing in actual dollars spent, even if not as a percentage of overall spending.



⁷ Conference Board of Canada. Valuing Culture: Measuring and Understanding Canada’s Creative Economy. 2008.

Strengthening Cultural Policies

The Town of Tillsonburg does not currently have any policies that deal specifically with arts and culture programs, facilities, installations, spending, etc. The Town has historically provided grants to the arts and cultural sector. It would be beneficial to have policies which guide funding specific to creative industries. An example of a specific policy could deal with public art, which includes sculptures, paintings or other visual art displayed within municipally-owned and operated facilities, commissioned murals on the side of municipal facilities, etc. This ‘Public Art Policy’ would outline the benefits of public art, contain provisions for public art as elements of municipal spaces, define a process through which public art is selected, and articulate the importance of recognizing local artists. In this way, the Town formalizes a process of community-building with the local visual arts community and in turn creates opportunities in which local artists can be celebrated and supported.

As an example, the City of Toronto has its Percent for Public Art Program, which recommends that a “minimum of one percent of the gross construction cost of each significant development be contributed to public art.” This program is administered by the City’s Planning Department and “works with the private sector to secure public art contributions through development review, Official Plan amendments and re-zonings.” The program allows for on-site contributions (wherein the developer commissions art work to be constructed on the building site), off-site contributions (wherein the contribution is held in the City’s Public Art Reserve Fund to be used in conjunction with other such contributions), or any combination of the two options.

The County Official Plan does not make specific reference to arts or culture, but does address natural heritage which is discussed in Guiding Principle 6. To recognize the importance of the arts, culture and heritage sectors in municipal policy, it is recommended that the Town examine ways to strengthen appropriate parts of its portion of the County Official Plan, as part of the ongoing comprehensive review process, in order to further recognize the great importance of arts, culture and heritage; where applicable, references specific to arts and culture should be incorporated therein.



To make any policies implementable, the Town will need to support them through tools such as a funding strategy that targets investment in the creative industries to maintain and expand the cultural infrastructure through initiatives such as supporting community

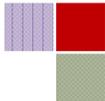
organizations, provision and maintenance of public art, and possibly the development/delivery of arts and cultural programs should gaps exist in current programming provided by community groups. As municipally-owned facilities, the library and Annandale National Historic Site receive funding from the Town. The Provincial Creative Communities Prosperity Fund (through the Ministry of Culture) is an example of a source of external funding and the Town should continually explore such initiatives, in collaboration with its arts and cultural community, to strengthen applications and potentially leverage needed resources into the local arts and cultural sector.

Lastly, the Town may wish to enhance its current public awareness efforts through a marketing plan that is specific to arts, culture and heritage opportunities within Tillsonburg and/or Oxford County.

The existing Community Services Guide provides a wealth of information on available opportunities, both municipally and non-municipally offered; this document could serve as a point of departure for a targeted marketing plan that will allow a greater number of residents and visitors to benefit from the arts, culture and heritage assets the Town has to offer.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ In consultation with the County of Oxford, the Town should examine ways to strengthen appropriate parts of the County Official Plan to further recognize the great importance of arts, culture and heritage; where applicable, references specific to arts, culture and heritage should be incorporated therein.
- ☑ Draft a Public Art Policy that outlines the benefits of public art, a process through which public art is selected, and the importance of recognizing local artists.
- ☑ Work with the local arts and culture community to seek creative ways of funding local initiatives, specifically through the creation of a funding strategy that targets investment in the creative industries.
- ☑ In line with other marketing and branding initiatives proposed through this Strategic Master Plan, enhance efforts targeted to community awareness of arts, culture and heritage opportunities in Tillsonburg.



Bolstering the Arts & Cultural System

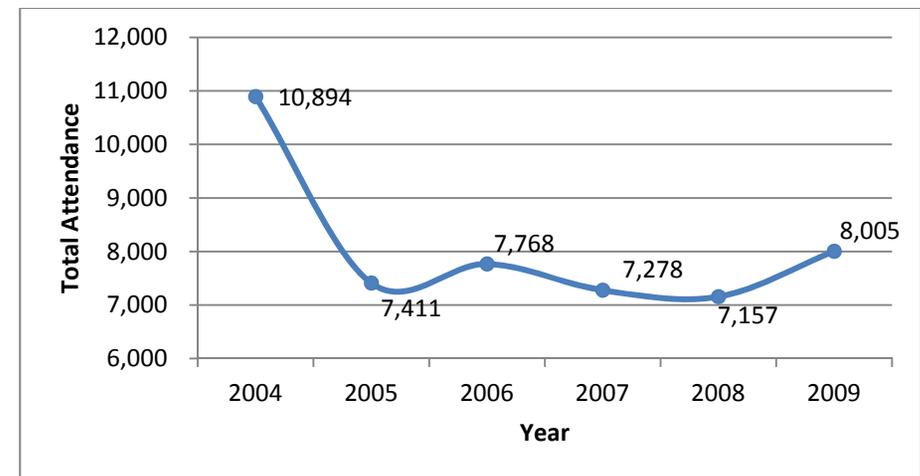
Arts and cultural spaces are specialized areas that require consideration of amenities such as studio and/or workshop space, stages, sinks, storage, etc. depending upon the category of activities taking place (e.g. visual, performance, media or literary arts). To facilitate community-level participation in arts and cultural activities, while also maximizing municipal efficiencies such as cost and offering ‘one-stop shopping’ amenities, the Town should first look to its existing community centres and halls to determine the ability of these facilities to accommodate the arts. The creation of flexible spaces, as advocated throughout this Strategic Master Plan, are particularly effective to allow activities to take place in a manner that maximizes existing assets and could include enhancing facilities such as space within the Tillsonburg Community Centre (e.g. enhancing sound systems in the Lions Auditorium or adding sinks in the Marwood Room), the Tillsonburg Public Library, Annandale National Historic Site or even the Tillsonburg Special Events Centre.

Maximizing usage and performance of the Town’s existing cultural facilities and spaces should thus be a primary focus over the strategic master planning period. In doing so, it is recommended that the Town undertake a Library Master Plan in order to define a vision and framework in which to chart the desired course for library services. Doing so would allow the Library to assess the types of services and programs that it offers, understand key trends in modern delivery of services (e.g. use of technologies, partnering with other agencies such as the Multi-Service Centre or the Livingston Centre, etc.), and provide recommendations on how best to meet the needs of current and future residents.

With regard to the Annandale National Historic Site, this facility functions as a museum housing elements of Tillsonburg’s early history and as a venue to deliver educational programming to a wide range of ages. While the museum has a small complement of 2 full-time staff, it benefits from the services of nearly 100 volunteers who assist in delivering services such as tour guides, set-up of events such as the Lunch & Learn Lectures, hosting opening receptions for new exhibits, administering children’s programming in the summer, and also contribute to the maintenance of the exterior gardens and grounds.

Attendance at the Annandale House, shown below, has fluctuated over the past five years. Attendance is down by 27% since the year 2004, largely due to a decrease in the number of bus tours, though 2009 attendance has rebounded compared to the years since.

Figure 19: Annandale National Historic Site – Total Annual Attendance, 2004-2009



Source: Annandale National Historic Site, Annual Report, 2004-2009.

While it is not recommended that the Town construct new arts and cultural facilities, such as museums or theatres, instead the focus lies on improving its existing facilities and spaces. It is suggested that the Town, in consultation with the local arts and culture sector, begin a process to map existing assets (i.e. both municipal and community-based facilities) and better define requirements.

With regard to the Annandale National Historic Site, staff and volunteers have developed a number of initiatives aimed at increasing awareness, such as creation of a virtual tour, production of newsletters, participation in certain events, and advertising through the Town's Program Guide. Building on these initiatives, the Town should continue to bolster its marketing efforts, particularly at a regional level, as a means to showcase this beautifully restored piece of local heritage and hopefully increase the number of visitors. Continued coordination with Oxford County and South Coast Tourism Associations is recommended to determine the best ways to create regional and provincial awareness of the museum (possibly as part of the arts and cultural marketing plan proposed earlier in this Guiding Principle).

Furthermore, given the large volunteer contingent associated with the Annandale House and the degree of expertise that is associated with them, the Town may consider providing its Museum Advisory Committee with an expanded role or increased autonomy in order to work creatively with the Museum's Curator and Town Council in the decision-making process. The Advisory Committee could also be

tasked with finding ways in which to bolster attendance at the Annandale House through facility improvements (e.g. making the interior or exterior areas more attractive for weddings, gatherings or other community rentals), and providing them with the ability to implement their decisions. Similarly, the Town may consider forming an autonomous executive board of directors to function in a similar role, though final decisions pertaining to the Annandale National Historic Site should remain that of Town Council given municipal ownership of the site.



Given the importance of volunteer and non-profit organizations in the delivery of arts and cultural programming to Tillsonburg's residents, the Town should also continue to investigate ways to support such groups if assistance is requested. This does not always have to take the form of financial contributions, but could also include bolstering communication between the Town and the groups, or between the groups themselves. Enhanced communication would certainly contribute to improved efficiencies in the way that groups

operate (ranging from planned maintenance of gardens to sharing volunteers). The Town can also provide resources through leadership and expertise in certain aspects to train volunteers and allow them to operate sustainably over the long term. When responding to requests for assistance, the Town should rationalize contributions through business planning and adherence to the partnership framework proposed in Guiding Principle 2.

Through consultations, numerous arts and cultural stakeholders have indicated a willingness to work with the Town to find creative solutions that maximize the benefits for the community and the groups themselves. For example, the Station Arts Centre has offered numerous suggestions as how to better utilize its spaces and services, including working hand-in-hand with the Town and the Annandale National Historic Site to promote local history and knowledge through programming. Similarly, the Historical Society has played a significant role in promoting the Town's heritage, and their expertise could be leveraged in incorporating interpretive features within the parks and trails system. Incorporating a wider range of community-based arts and cultural programming at municipal facilities and parks is thus worth considering (e.g. encouraging the Station Arts or Participate Community Arts to utilize the Tillsonburg Community Centre for some of their services).

As such, a process to evaluate community-based facilities (e.g. Legion buildings, museums and galleries, arts centres, etc.) should be undertaken to determine if existing infrastructure can accommodate local needs prior to deciding whether to undertake the construction of a new facility. Heritage buildings also present an excellent opportunity if they can be cost-effectively re-adapted to accommodate leisure programming. Cultural heritage resources contribute to a sense of community, provide continuity between the past and the present, and can serve as ambient, inspirational places for recreation and cultural activities.



The *Ontario Heritage Act* gives the Town the authority to protect buildings of historical or architectural significance. There are a number of properties in Tillsonburg which are designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act*. Heritage designations can help to preserve the essence of an area, increase the intrinsic and/or monetary value of a property, and protect examples of historic architectural styles. Designations can assist in recognizing and enforcing the cultural value of, and community appreciation for, heritage properties while providing protection against inappropriate treatment.

Lastly, it is important that arts and cultural activities are not only relegated to the indoors and thus it is important to provide outdoor venues for such pursuits. The Town's parks system provides a scenic, inspirational and opportune locations for events such as concerts, 'Art in the Park', or casual cultural uses and could be considered at major parks such as the Memorial Park Fairgrounds, Cadman Conservation Area, etc. provided they are fitted with the appropriate amenities. For example, spaces such as

outdoor amphitheatres, stages, band shells, arts venues, dance areas, etc. can accommodate programmed and non-programmed usage, and could effectively complement the Town's natural areas. Groups such as the Festival of Music, Horticultural Society, Historical Society, should be consulted in this regard.

At a more neighbourhood scale, the Town should continue to develop outdoor civic spaces that encourage social gatherings and special events. The demand and support for community events was apparent from the consultation process and residents appear to greatly value special events and gatherings delivered by the Town. The Town should continually dialogue with local groups to facilitate community-based programming in its parks (such as art classes run by the Station Arts Centre, dance programs run by Danscene, youth programs provided by the Upper Deck, etc.), which will also serve to increase awareness of the Town's parks and trails system, offer interesting experiences, and can provide a dual benefit of increasing physical activity and cultural expression.



Outdoor civic spaces (particularly gardens and horticultural displays) could also form important parts of a nature-based tourism infrastructure whereby residents and non-residents alike are drawn to destinations offering opportunities for family leisure or personal reflection and enjoyment. Outdoor areas such as parks, plazas, etc. provide an opportunity to offer a differentiated experience in the summer months, as well as facilitating participation in unstructured cultural activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ Undertake a Library Master Plan to assess ways in which to improve utilization and amenity level for patrons, while ensuring that service delivery practices are current and geared to maximizing financial performance.
- ☑ Investigate ways to bolster attendance at the Annandale National Historic Site through facility improvements, enhanced marketing and awareness efforts, etc., which would ideally be undertaken in consultation with local heritage volunteers and the Museum Advisory Committee (the latter whose role and decision-making ability should be expanded).
- ☑ Continue to work with volunteers and organizations to promote community-based delivery of arts and cultural services and strengthen the internal capacity of the creative sector to be self-sustaining over the long term. This could involve an evaluation of the existing supply of appropriate municipal and community-based facilities and services through a comprehensive asset mapping exercise in order to determine their ability to be enhanced to better accommodate arts and cultural programming.
- ☑ Ensure parks and outdoor civic spaces are designed in a manner that facilitates arts and cultural activities, as appropriate, while also providing interpretation opportunities associated with cultural and natural heritage throughout the parks and trails system.

Guiding Principle 5: Focus on Health & Wellness Through Programming

A continued emphasis will be placed on facilitating activities that promote healthy living, physical activity, wellness, skill development, knowledge, and community pride through both structured and unstructured program opportunities.

This Guiding Principle will specifically look at:

- facilitating opportunities which are affordable, accessible and inclusive;
- facilitating healthy lifestyles; and
- key markets such as children, youth and older adults.





A Robust Range of Programs

Health and personal wellness are key indicators of a community's quality of life. The availability of a broad range of physical activities, arts and cultural opportunities, and community events is necessary so that residents of all income brackets, age groups, ethnicities, interests and backgrounds have some form of activity to partake in.

The Town of Tillsonburg is actively involved in the direct delivery of a number of high quality programs spanning multiple target markets. Municipal programming is primarily based at the Tillsonburg Community Centre where there are a range of programs spanning aquatics (e.g. lessons, aquafit, and leisure swims), fitness (e.g. aerobics, yoga, martial arts and personal training) and dance (ballroom, clogging, lessons).

As mentioned in Guiding Principle 1, the Town should continue to focus on these core program areas while also facilitating community-based programming as it presently does with minor sports (who use municipal facilities), the Tillsonburg Seniors Centre (who use space at the Community Centre) and others. Other examples of community-based programs include:

- *Arts and culture* through groups such as the Station Arts Centre, Participate Community Arts, Danscene, Festival of Music, Broadway Cinemas and Theatre Tillsonburg;
- *Children and youth* through groups such as minor sports, Scouts and Guides, the Upper Deck, and service clubs;
- *Sports & Recreation* through groups such as Southwestern Aquatics, golf courses, adult sport leagues, and private fitness and martial arts providers.

Inclusive Opportunities

Providing residents with equitable opportunities to access parks, recreation and cultural opportunities should continue to be a goal that the Town strives towards. With people faced with barriers such as lack of time, limited disposable income, disabilities, unawareness of available activities, communication challenges, etc. it is important that inclusive opportunities to participate are provided to ensure choices are available.

Affordability & Pricing

An individual or household's ability to pay for recreation opportunities generally dictates the type and frequency of participation. Essentially, income is directly correlated with level of participation, with higher income groups tending to have higher participation rates in recreation. Residents and families of low income face particular issues in accessing parks and recreation services as their participation in recreational pursuits require disposable time, access to affordable transportation, equipment costs, user fees, etc. As such, resources required for recreation often come at the expense of spending time and resources on basic security needs such as housing, employment, and food which are higher priority needs and thus can inhibit participation in recreation.

The Town presently has a Fee Assistance policy that reduces program and membership fees by 30% for those in low-income households. To avoid instances where residents of low income restrict their participation due to cost, other special approaches that may be considered include provision of a wider range of no-to-low cost programs and opportunities, creating greater understanding of the benefits of participating, providing leadership training toward

potential future employment and providing childcare services to enable adults and caregivers to participate.

With an increasing focus being placed on facilitating community-based programming, the Town may mandate that groups have access policies in place if they are to use municipal parks and facilities to deliver their programs; the Town could also consider providing groups with the tools to offer affordable and inclusive programming opportunities through a variety of means such as grants, subsidies on certain operational items (e.g. rental rates, advertising, direct subsidization of program costs, etc.). Such tools will need to be explored further in consultation with the community. A continued focus is needed to reach out to low income families and remove barriers to participation. The benefits to the community and the individual are worth the investment of time and funding.



Through consultations with stakeholders, concerns have been expressed regarding the rental rate of prime time ice. However, the Town’s ice rates appear to be in line with provincial benchmarks, with the cost of local ice set at approximately \$160 per prime hour, and discounted

to \$112 per prime hour for minor users. Adult prime rates in Tillsonburg were found to generally be on par with the benchmark average (see the following table), while the prime rental rate for minor sports was approximately 13% lower than the benchmark average. It should also be noted that the variation in ice rental rates is attributable to a number of factors and philosophies employed in

different municipalities, notably the desired level of subsidy or cost recovery and the level of amenity (i.e. provision of a new, modern arena versus an older arena).

Table 2: Comparison of Regional Hourly Ice Rental Rates

Municipality	Youth/Minor Prime Rate	Adult Prime Rate
London	\$165	\$225
Thames Centre	\$156	\$168
Brantford	\$145	\$194
Strathroy	\$144	\$161
St. Marys	\$133	\$162
Centre Wellington	\$127	\$170
Chatham-Kent	\$127	\$158
Ingersoll	\$121	\$146
Tavistock	\$115	\$154
Woodstock	\$115	\$151
Tillsonburg	\$112	\$159
Norwich	\$96	\$142
Haldimand County	\$81	\$171
AVERAGE RATE	\$127	\$167

Notes: Rates are for one hour of prime time ice, inclusive of HST, rounded to the nearest dollar (2010 rates). In municipalities which have differentiated fees for both youth and minor sports, the lower of the two has been articulated.

In order to ensure that ice rates remain competitive within the region, the Town should continue to regularly undertake a comparative analysis of rental rates among neighbouring municipalities in relation to the operating costs of the Town’s two existing arenas. In fact, it is recommended that the Town undertake a Pricing Strategy for the entire spectrum of parks, recreation and cultural services it offers with the view of ensuring a reasonable level of affordability to residents that is balanced with fiscal responsibility to the taxpayer.

Given the financial pressures which are placed upon the Town (largely a result of provincial downloading of a broad range of services), a Pricing Strategy would assist the Town in determining the most appropriate degree to which facilities are subsidized. Municipal taxes contribute a great deal towards the operation and delivery of facilities and programs, though user fees are seen as a way to limit impact on the tax rate. Despite their roles in achieving fiscal sustainability for the Town, user fees can create concerns relating to affordability and fairness in accessing services while potentially negating intrinsic benefits generated by subsidization (e.g. increased physical activity, opportunities for social interaction, etc.).

Furthermore, the Pricing Strategy should also consider the influence of the many non-residents who utilize Tillsonburg's facilities and programs. Non-residents assist in increasing program fill rates and facility usage, though at a level which is subsidized in comparison to local taxpayers. The aim is not necessarily to increase the fees paid by non-residents, but instead ensure that sustainable pricing or funding is in place to maintain Tillsonburg's facilities and programs to a high standard. For example, the Pricing Strategy may examine the benefits and costs associated with imposing non-resident surcharges on certain services, negotiating with adjacent municipalities to contribute towards ongoing expenses in lieu of an imposed non-resident fee, maintaining status quo, etc.

The Pricing Strategy, therefore, would require a comprehensive planning and consultation process to develop a fee structure that applies to, and differentiates between a broad range of users (e.g. youth vs. adults, residents vs. non-residents) and facilities (e.g. sport vs. cultural). The aim of the Pricing Strategy is to balance the Town's ability to maximize utilization of facilities and services with its desired level of fiscal responsibility and cost effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ Continue to ensure that a broad range of low to no cost opportunities are available to the community, as a means to increase access to households who may otherwise not be able to participate in recreation and cultural activities.
- ☑ Work with community groups to ensure that access policies are in place, particularly if these organizations regularly utilize municipal parks and facilities for their programming. In support of this action, the Town could consider providing groups with tools/supports (e.g. financial, human resources, etc.) that would allow the groups to deliver affordable and inclusive program opportunities.
- ☑ Initiate a Pricing Strategy to review the current fee structure in relation to the Town's ability to sustain high quality facilities and services, with a particular focus on areas such as affordability and usage by non-residents.

Accessibility

Under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA), a barrier is defined as anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including physical, architectural, informational, technological, communicational, attitudinal, or policy/practice barrier(s).



The AODA states that municipalities, as well as businesses and organizations, will have to meet certain accessibility standards in the five following areas:

- customer service;
- transportation;
- information and communication;
- built environment; and
- employment.

The range of recreation and cultural activities for people with disabilities has increased significantly in recent years. Providing residents of all ages and abilities with opportunities to recreate is important in achieving inclusivity among all. Furthermore, research suggests that youth with special needs who participate in recreation and cultural activities are more likely to do well in school, have higher self-esteem and good social skills, and are less likely to be involved in criminal activity.⁸ The Town works collaboratively with a number of agencies and associations who offer recreation and cultural services and opportunities to persons with disabilities.

Unfortunately, people with disabilities still face considerable barriers (e.g., transportation, cost, etc.) when it comes to participating in recreation and cultural activities. The household survey found that 13% and 10% of the sample was unable to participate in recreational and culture activities, respectively, due to mobility or health-related issues (as well as older age). Staff and volunteer training is necessary to provide a better understanding of the breadth of disabilities that people are confronted with and the barriers they face.

⁸ Canadian Council on Social Development. (2002; 1984). The Progress of Canada's Children: Crime Prevention Through Social Development: A Discussion Paper for Social Policy Makers and Practitioners.

Thus, it is critical that the various municipal departments strengthen their existing approach to understanding the needs, further develop programs and services, strengthen partnerships and evaluate service effectiveness in including persons with disabilities. The Town is largely compliant with the AODA and utilizes the advice of its Accessibility Advisory Committee to understand and create barrier-free infrastructure, programs and services (though there is room for improvement, such as in some areas of the Tillsonburg Community Centre. A number of community providers, such as the Special Olympics and People First, offer integrated programs and promote programs that are accessible to residents with disabilities.

A potential increase to the number of persons with disabilities requires staff to ensure that Tillsonburg is compliant, works with like minded support groups and continues to increase participation. Similarly, community providers of recreation and cultural services will also need to be cognisant of the needs of persons with disabilities. As recommended earlier in this Guiding Principle, the Town should work with groups to ensure that access policies are in place, which not only includes affordability but also barrier-free and special needs considerations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ Ensure that all parks, facilities, amenities and services are designed in line with provincial accessibility legislation and according to the municipal accessibility standards (with input provided by the Tillsonburg Accessibility Advisory Committee, as necessary).



Distribution of Facilities

While most participants are willing to travel to larger facilities such as the Tillsonburg Community Centre, enhancing locally based opportunities will serve to strengthen neighbourhoods and engage residents in the delivery of services. Participation in parks, recreation and cultural opportunities will strengthen the community by building cohesion, social connections and community pride let alone the benefits accrued to the individual participant. In times where neighbours spend little time together and in a community where diversity is increasing, strengthening neighbourhoods becomes a more critical approach.

As such, the provision of facilities is not based upon numbers and service standards alone. In the view of being a fiscally responsible and sustainable Town, it is important to recognize that all facilities and services cannot be provided on a “walk-to” basis. For example, major capital investments such as arenas or gymnasiums are not appropriate on a neighbourhood scale, nor are facilities such as high quality sports fields. Instead, these capitally and operationally intensive facilities need to be carefully planned and located in a manner that maximizes efficiencies and return on investment to the Town and its community-based providers.

That being said, opportunities for outreach and satellite programming need to be considered at the neighbourhood and community level by making use of more affordable types of facilities, which are inherently more flexible in accommodating multiple uses. For example, parks could be designed in a manner that can accommodate house league or practice sports field programming and also be used for neighbourhood use such as tossing a Frisbee or playing pick-up soccer (yet the field would not have to be designed or maintained to elite standards of play).

Ethnic Diversity

With regard to ethnicity, immigrants constitute approximately 14% of the local population. It is reasonable to expect that Tillsonburg will become more ethnically diversified as the population grows, in line with provincial and regional trends. Shifts in ethnic composition, as with income and education characteristics, influence market demand for parks, recreation and culture facility and program design. For example, demand for non-traditional sports such as rugby or bocce may increase. As discussed in Guiding Principle 6, parks and facilities should be flexibly designed to accommodate a range of interests and future activities, while also embodying designs promoting casual, non-programmed forms of leisure.

Engaging culturally diverse persons and providing equitable access to parks, recreation, and culture services includes understanding and addressing the barriers to participation, offering culturally specific opportunities, providing space to groups to self manage the provision of leisure pursuits and offering introductory experiences to typical Canadian activities. Ideally, the concept of engaging diverse populations would become a corporate goal, thus would apply to the entire spectrum of municipal services, as deemed appropriate by the other Town departments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Foster the development of existing, new and emerging sport, cultural and recreational activities that may be popular with under-represented populations and ensure that these opportunities are available to all local residents.



Planning for Children & Youth

According to data from the 2006 Census, there were 1,515 children between the ages of 0 and 9 and 1,750 youth between the ages of 10 and 19, respectively representing 10% and 12% of Tillsonburg’s total population. Although the number of individuals in these cohorts have generally declined over the past decade, it is still imperative to ensure that the Town’s children and youth are provided with ample leisure opportunities to facilitate healthy social and physical development in their formative years.

The facilitation of positive choices through the provision of spaces (both indoor and outdoor) is seen as a core component of healthy development of local children and youth.

Children

The Town provides a range of children’s oriented programming spanning ice and aquatics (including lessons, parent and tot times, etc.), fitness and dance. Consultations found limited need for, or interest in additional pre-school programs, and although the numbers in this cohort are expected to increase over time, pre-schoolers will still represent one of the lowest percentages of all age ranges in the Town. For this reason, it is not recommended that any additional space for pre-school programming be built but instead utilize existing spaces to facilitate drop-in children’s programs.

The provision of drop-in early development spaces is viewed a beneficial complement to the Tillsonburg Community Centre, as the lack of child supervision can be a barrier to participation for certain facility users (i.e. caregivers can place utilize child supervision services while they use leisure facilities themselves, something which was identified through consultations). Furthermore, these

spaces can introduce children to recreation and leisure activities at an early age, thus making it more likely that they will continue to be physically active as they mature into their teens and eventually adulthood. The Town presently offers a program encouraging caregivers to utilize the Health Club while their child is participating in a program.

It should be noted that the Town previously provided a drop-in childminding service, however, the program was deemed to be infeasible due to the operating cost and low participation rate. If the number of young families does in fact increase substantially (e.g. with the addition of employment in manufacturing or service sectors), then dedicated pre-school space will be a valuable asset to the Tillsonburg Community Centre, though the Town should approach cautiously given its past experience. As such, drop-in childcare should be provided on initially on a trial-basis, and preferably at a cost to the user, to gauge successes prior to making a determination whether to offer the service on a permanent basis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

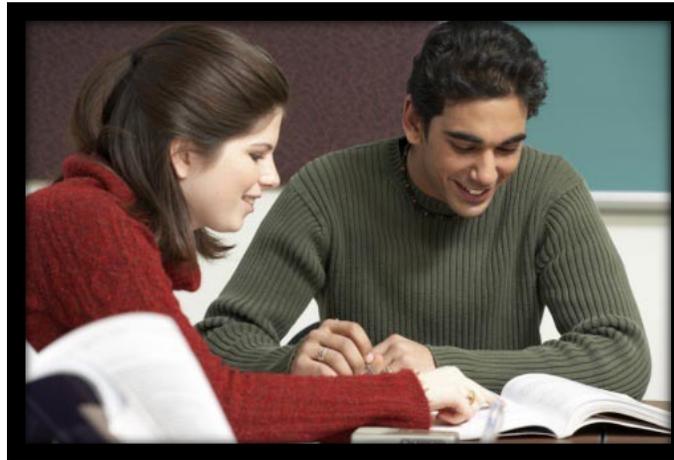
- ☑ Contingent upon population growth and associated market needs, provide drop-in child supervision services at the Tillsonburg Community Centre, initially on a trial basis, in order to reduce barriers to participation among caregivers and their children. The service should consist of drop-in childminding and early childhood development programming to engage children in physical and social activity.

Youth & Teens

The Town presently offers a limited range of programs specifically oriented to teens though there are community providers such as the Upper Deck and Tillsonburg Voice of Youth (though these are more socially-focused organizations). Empowering youth in the decision-making process is also important, and the Town presently has a Youth Advisory Committee and the Tillsonburg Voice of Youth who provide guidance to the Town on youth-specific topics of importance.

According to the Play Works Partnership, which is a collection of youth-oriented agencies, the benefits of providing opportunities for youth to take chances and make decisions can develop and facilitate: respect for their peers, a sense of belonging, personal growth and development, enthusiasm and fun, enhanced self-esteem and self-image, and development of creative problem-solving skills.

Play Works is responsible for the development of the successful “Youth Friendly Community” accreditation program which a number of provincial municipalities have followed. Accreditation is judged by adherence to a number of criteria, ranging from providing programs, facilities and opportunities for engagement specifically for youth. It is recommended that Tillsonburg strive towards becoming a “Youth Friendly Community” in order to create meaningful opportunities for local youth.



National trends suggest that the number of youth engaged in unstructured, drop-in types of activities is increasing, while youth participation in organized activities is generally declining. The implications of this are that non-traditional opportunities (i.e. outside the scope of minor sports, for example) are required to engage youth and expose them to positive leisure activities.

In Tillsonburg, a gap area has been observed with regard to youth and teen’s programming; while there have been certain successful efforts to address opportunities for this age group (whose interests are diverse and rapidly changing) such as minor sports programs, recent construction of the skateboard park, formation of youth advisory committees, etc., there remains a large proportion of youth who are underserved.

Although there are a number of youth-specific organizations, there are other community groups who could be logical partners that could assist the Town in developing a holistic approach (i.e. both socio-economic and recreational/cultural needs) which is the most effective way of meeting youth needs. For example, the Town’s expertise in recreational programming would allow for initial entry into the provision of a limited number of services to gauge effectiveness, while the services of socially and culturally focused organizations (e.g. Upper Deck, local theatre or arts groups, service clubs, etc.) could be leveraged to round out the delivery spectrum.



Youth centre programming will keep youth engaged during the after school hours before parents have arrived home from work. Ideally, programming should be both fun and skill-building. Programs that offer computer skills have been popular - additionally these skills will be highly transferable for a young person. Music lessons and art programs are popular at youth centres. Although many schools are offering after school athletic opportunities, youth often appreciate the opportunity to engage in recreational sport in a less authoritative, more relaxed environment.

Programming should be offered at a rate that is affordable; most youth centres will engage in a great deal of fundraising or attract sponsorships to ensure that the rates and fees paid are kept at a minimum. Some youth centres have developed creative schemes to raise money; in the case of the Fusion Youth Centre in Ingersoll, youth can opt to volunteer their time in return for the elimination of fees or to pay for meals at the canteen. Additionally, there is a drop-off for old computers at the Fusion centre, which the youth are taught to refurbish. The profits from the re-sale of computers go toward the youth centre. The Town should also communicate that its fee subsidy policy for recreation programs is available to qualifying youth.

It would be worthwhile for the Town to investigate the provision of new youth space, such as through a youth centre that contains opportunities for recreation and cultural programming. The development of youth leisure space should focus upon providing a range of recreation and resource-based opportunities, as well as incorporating sufficient areas for arts and cultural activities, which are channels for creative and personal expression opportunities that youth are consistently seeking. Arts and cultural activities for youth are much different than activities traditionally programmed (which responded typically to more adult-oriented interests), and include

opportunities such as urban art, spoken art, etc. As mentioned, areas that are highly accessible, such as those which are close to schools or near bicycle paths, are generally the most suitable locations for youth facilities.

Furthermore, the interests of 10-14 year olds tend to be much different than those in the 15-19 year age range. It is imperative that youth spaces be designed in a manner that engage youth and make them want to use the facility. Youth, therefore, should be actively engaged in the design and operation of drop-in facilities, thereby empowering them, facilitating positive leadership skills and creating a sense of ownership in the facility. For example, by understanding youth needs, some youth centres in Ontario have provided certain “non-traditional” amenities such as urban art rooms, indoor skateboard parks, music areas, etc.

While youth space is available at the Upper Deck, as mentioned this facility is more socially-oriented and does not necessarily contain all of the components to attract a broad range of youth. As such, the Town should consider the provision of a youth space within the Tillsonburg Community Centre, as this facility is ideally positioned as a centralized site with access to the trails system and a number of youth-oriented amenities such as the skateboard park (and potentially a basketball/ball hockey court as recommended in Guiding Principle 3), and provides opportunities for cross-programming (e.g. youth swims). It is possible that the area currently occupied by the squash courts could be utilized for such purposes (though this Strategic Master Plan also suggests consideration of this space as a wellness studio) though staffing implications will need to be considered, particularly since that space is located in an isolated spot within the Community Centre.



As an alternative, the Town could consider provision of a stand-alone recreational youth facility, potentially as storefront space on a main street or within a strip mall. In any event, the Town would benefit from consulting with its various youth advisory bodies and potential community partners in the design and implementation of a youth space and associated programming.

Incorporating a combination of active and passive outdoor spaces that are geared to youth is also seen as a complement to an indoor youth leisure space. By co-locating outdoor facilities (e.g. arts and cultural spaces, multi-use courts, skateboard parks, open fields, etc.), a broad range of youth-focused activities are consolidated at a single location and attract them to a supervised and/or controlled environment without necessarily making them feel uncomfortable. Outdoor areas should be designed in a manner that makes it a programmable space to encourage a wider range of use.

As a monitoring tool to understand the perceptions and facility/programming needs of youth, it is recommended that the Town undertake broad youth consultations using a youth survey (or a similar tool). Such an initiative should be conducted every five years due to the cost and resources that would be involved with its production, distribution, collection and interpretation. Consultation tools could be distributed/advertised through a number of means such as the Program Guide, along with registration or comment forms for youth programs, distributed to minor sports associations, through schools, etc. Local youth representatives (e.g. Youth Advisory Committee, Tillsonburg Voice of Youth, etc.) could assist with the initiatives and provide skill-building opportunities.

As mentioned, youth should be involved in the design and operation of dedicated youth spaces in order to effectively respond to their needs, provide them with a sense of empowerment and “buy-in”,

and instil leadership values that will hopefully stay with them and encourage them to participate in civic life as adults. The Town may also explore the possibility of providing youth with a new medium for expression (e.g. newsletters, online blog spaces, etc.), possibly in conjunction with library services. Training Town staff to be youth-friendly, particularly at facilities where youth spaces are offered, can also make youth feel welcome and encourage use of facilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ In consultation with local youth and representative organizations, investigate the provision of a new youth centre either at the Tillsonburg Community Centre or other appropriate location. Such a facility should be oriented to recreational, arts and cultural opportunities and if a partner can be found, potentially provide social services as well.
- ☑ Undertake broad consultations with youth every five years through surveys, workshops, etc. to better understand the needs of this target market.
- ☑ Strive towards obtaining accreditation as a “Youth Friendly Community”, as promoted through Play Works.



Planning for Older Adults & Seniors

The Tillsonburg Seniors Centre, located within the Tillsonburg Community Centre, is successfully operated independently of the Town by an organized group of local older adults and seniors governed by an internal Board of Directors. Membership is available to those over 50 years of age, who are provided with a range of programs (social, recreational, fitness, etc.). The Seniors Centre has a large multi-purpose room, an indoor lawn bowling court and shuffleboard room, woodworking shop, a warming kitchen and a small fitness room. While the Town owns the space, it is managed by the Senior Centre’s Board of Directors who delivers the programs.

The older adult market has a diverse range of needs and expectations with regards to recreation and cultural demands. The Baby Boom cohort has been observed to have leisure expectations that are much different than those of their parents. Whereas the “traditional” senior was perceived to be demanding of highly passive activities (e.g. card playing, arts and crafts, shuffleboard, etc.), the “new” senior is expected to maintain their interest in more active forms of leisure (e.g. fitness, hockey, hiking, etc.), although with a lesser degree of intensity than in the past. As ‘new seniors’ reach a point where they physically cannot participate in the more intensive activities, there will still be some that reflect the historical interests for seniors such as card playing and carpet



bowling, but this will represent a smaller portion of the total senior population.

Collectively, it appears that the Town (through the provision of space) and the Seniors Centre (through the provision of programs and services) are serving the needs of local older adults and seniors quite well. It will be important for the Town to continue to ensure that older adults and seniors have access to programming that suits modern day interests (i.e. active living and wellness opportunities).

The provision of active living pursuits for older adults through program and facility delivery will likely improve the quality of life for this age segment and the hope is to contribute to longer, healthier lives. For example, the Aquafit programs at the Tillsonburg Community Centre offer low impact, therapeutic swimming opportunities and are conveniently located on site with Seniors Centre activities (thus cross-programming efficiencies are attained).

The continued provision of multi-purpose spaces (e.g. the Lions Den or Auditorium) that can be utilized by seniors and older adults should consider the types of programs that are currently offered as well as those that may be suitable for this population to ensure that the spaces are appropriate. For example, the Town should build upon the consultation undertaken for this Master Plan and existing relationships with seniors’ groups to ensure that their needs are being considered and addressed wherever possible.



With regard to programming, a focus should continue to be placed upon enhancing the service delivery model for older adults through the development of innovative, inclusive and accessible programs focusing on wellness and active living. Ensuring that older adults and seniors are aware of programs, as well as the fee subsidy policy for recreation programs, will be an important focus for the Town (subsidies should continue to be based upon financial ability to pay, rather than age). Furthermore, non-prime hours at local facilities should be targeted to the seniors market, though recognizing that the current generation are facing many of the same time constraints as their younger counterparts. It is recommended that the Town consult with local seniors and older adults to determine what (if any) programs these age cohorts would like to see offered by the Town to supplement available non-municipal opportunities.

The Tillsonburg Seniors Centre has done well to offer older adult specific programs (which range such as the dance programs, fitness classes, creative arts offerings, multi-media, etc.) which are reflective of gentler active program demands. Furthermore, social resources such as the health care clinics are seen as positive delivery elements and the Seniors Centre should be encouraged to expand upon the provision of such services geared to providing social health opportunities for the older adult demographic. The Town may facilitate this through the provision of ancillary spaces at its facilities with older adult services (i.e. flexible room templates can accommodate temporary clinics, exams, presentations, cultural uses, etc.) or acting as a liaison between older adult organizations and social service providers.

As a means to receive feedback pertaining to the quality and scope of municipal programs targeted to the older adult and seniors segment, the Town should continue to frequently dialogue with representatives of the Tillsonburg Seniors Centre. This could also

take place by way of a formal survey every five years across a broad spectrum of older adult users in order to remain apprised of program demands and areas for improvement. Certain municipalities (e.g. Mississauga, Kitchener, etc.) have also embarked on specific 'Older Adult Studies' which chart a course for dealing with the facility and program needs associated with this demographic.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ The Town should continue to consult with its local older adult and seniors' representatives as a means to enhance existing relationships, understand local needs and preferences as they evolve over time, and determine any programming gaps that the Town can address through community development or direct provision. In effect, this would include continuing to work with the Tillsonburg Seniors Centre to deliver innovative programs and services for the older adult and seniors market, in order to let this community organization grow its membership and service delivery capabilities.

Inactivity & Obesity

Canada is facing a national health care crisis caused by a combination of physical inactivity, increased time in front of the television, computer screens and video games and poor eating decisions within most populations across the country. The combined effect of these unhealthy lifestyle choices has resulted in a dramatic rise in the number of obese and inactive Canadians. While historically these conditions were restricted to adults, it is now becoming increasingly apparent that young Canadians are not active enough to sustain adequate health levels over their lifetime. In fact, there is an increasing body of evidence that suggests that for the first time in history, the current younger generation will not have the longevity or quality of life enjoyed by their parents.



Federal, provincial and municipal governments are responding to this issue by developing strategies to increase awareness about opportunities for greater participation in regular physical activity, as well as to encourage individuals to make wise food choices. The notion of being physically active and maintaining healthy weights through proper diet has become main stream. Tillsonburg has recognized the growing movement that has been initiated by senior levels of government as well as organizations with a mandate to promote and/or support healthy living behaviours.

At the very least, it will be important to be aligned with existing initiatives that can help to encourage residents to eat healthy, be physical active or to participate in recreation and sports endeavours. The Town can make a meaningful difference in the lifestyle choices of the residents over time; as a first step, it is recommended that the Town undertake the preparation of a Physical Activity Strategy that provides guidance and a plan of action to increase physical activity levels throughout Tillsonburg. Such an initiative, or others (e.g. promotion of healthy communities), would benefit from collaboration with other providers and agencies (e.g. sport groups, health units, etc.).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Undertake a Physical Activity Strategy that aims to increase physical activity levels throughout Tillsonburg for a range of ages, interests and abilities.

Guiding Principle 6: A Functional & Sustainable Parks System

Parks, trails and open spaces will be designed and managed in an integrated manner so as to enable sustainable ecological management practices, link residential and employment areas, and provide opportunities for a wide variety of active and passive recreation and cultural experiences.

This Guiding Principle will specifically look at:

- the local trails system;
- the local parkland system and associated needs;
- parkland acquisition strategies; and
- parkland and trail design and amenity considerations.





Parkland Form & Function

Parkland is a valuable component of the urban fabric and its presence enhances the quality of life for the community as a whole. Yet parks and open spaces take many different forms, ranging from manicured parkettes to large tracts of ecologically significant areas, which promote a variety of uses from active recreation and cultural activity to conservation. Primary considerations for the parks system as a whole include (but are not limited to):

- planning the appropriate **function** and **use** for each park;
- achieving a satisfactory **distribution** and **quantum** of parkland to ensure access to residents and maintain the integrity of natural heritage systems; and
- ensuring a high degree of **walkability** and **connectivity** among parks through active transportation infrastructure, key linkages, etc.

As such, it is important to incorporate parks planning through the municipal land use decision-making process. Land use planning in Tillsonburg is guided by the County of Oxford Official Plan, which contains a specific policy section regarding the Town of Tillsonburg. Within the Official Plan are a number of policies pertaining to function, linkages and development standards, as well as a Parkland Classification System (Section 8.6.2.1) which defines a functional hierarchy within the parks and open space system. Such a hierarchy is essential to the sustainable planning of active and passive forms of parkland by directing many aspects of intended park usage as defined through size, form, function and/or level of amenity.

The Parkland Classification System contained within the County Official Plan identifies four typologies of parkland as shown in the following table.

Table 3: Parkland Classification System

Classification	Size	Description	Location	Local Examples
Sub-Neighbourhood Facilities	Less than 0.6 ha	Lands found in residential areas which are accessible by foot and provide spaces for unorganized activities, seating/rest areas and linkages between blocks parks.	Central areas, developed neighbourhoods, and neighbourhoods with parkland deficiencies (service radius of 500 metres).	<i>Bert Newman Park, Maple Lane Parkette</i>
Neighbourhood Park	Typically 1.2 ha to 2.0 ha	Designed for small scale recreation activities and may include basketball courts, ball diamonds, and tennis courts; portions may be retained/transformed into a natural state.	Centrally located to optimize visibility and safety in addition to bicycle and pedestrian access.	<i>Southridge Park, Westmount Park</i>
Community Park	Minimum of 6.0 ha	Support a range of recreation activities that serve the Town and surrounding communities such as major sports fields, open spaces, pools and water features, and playgrounds; portions may be retained/transformed into a natural state.	Directly accessible along arterial or collector roads, bicycle and pedestrian networks, and contain sufficient parking.	<i>Memorial Park, Kiwanis Coronation Park</i>
Town Natural Parks	Not Defined	Naturally significant lands in need of protection or parks requiring naturalization or regeneration, and in some cases, children’s play areas; designed to street frontage to maximize visibility, access and safety.	Located to ensure good distribution, link and incorporate pedestrian and cycle networks; ideal sites consist of lands with topographic variations, ravines and/or watercourse features.	<i>Kinsmen Participark</i>

Source: Oxford County Official Plan

Parkland Supplies

The Town of Tillsonburg owns nearly 80 hectares (almost 200 acres) of parkland distributed across 19 park sites, as shown in the following table. In addition to these lands, the public benefits from a considerable number of open spaces contained at local schools, conservation lands (e.g. the 6.3 hectare Cadman Conservation Area which is owned and managed by the Long Point Conservation Authority) and other privately held properties.

For this assessment, the focus is placed upon the municipal supply as these are the only lands that the Town can guarantee the provision of access and appropriate amenities; as discussed in Guiding Principle #2, a collaborative approach is required by the Town and all non-municipal partners if the public as a whole is to benefit from local parks and open spaces.

Based upon the current supply, the Town is achieving a healthy service level for its parks, relative to many other communities (as shown in the following table), amounting to 5 hectares per 1,000 residents (a common measure for parkland levels). The majority of parks are associated with Community Parkland which is geared to active and more intensive uses, though neighbourhood level parks are also provided in fairly good supply.

Municipality (Data Year)	Population	Supply (ha)	Service Level
Port Hope (2010)	16,894	191*	11.3 ha/1,000
Owen Sound (2006)	21,600	233.7*	10.7 ha/1,000
St Thomas (2007)	36,110	189.9	5.3 ha/1,000
Haldimand County (2006)	44,786	281.9*	6.3 ha/1,000
Tillsonburg (2010)	16,000	79.9	5.0 ha/1,000
Centre Wellington (2008)	28,326	78.5	4.7 ha/1,000
Saugeen Shores (2009)	13,000	52.5	4.4 ha/1,000
Blue Mountains (2006)	16,531	57.8	3.5 ha/1,000

*includes significant supplies of open space land which are not for active uses

Table 4: Municipal Supply of Parkland

Park Classification	Size	Service Level
Sub-Neighbourhood Parks	0.78 ha	0.05 ha / 1,000
Bert Newman Park	0.10 ha	
Cranberry Park	0.25 ha	
Harvey and Brock Street Parkette	0.02 ha	
Library Parkette	0.10 ha	
Maple Leaf Triangle	0.16 ha	
Mineral Springs Park	0.10 ha	
Pine Street Parkette	0.05 ha	
Neighbourhood Parks	17.32 ha	1.1 ha / 1,000
Glendale Park	1.20 ha	
Gyulveszi Park	3.30 ha	
Kiwanis Coronation Park	8.70 ha	
Southridge Park	1.50 ha	
Trottier Park	1.40 ha	
Westmount Park	1.22 ha	
Community Parks	49.02 ha	3.1 ha / 1,000
Annandale Ball Diamonds	5.67 ha	
Lake Lisgar Water Park	0.75 ha	
Memorial Park	29.60 ha	
Optimist Park	2.00 ha	
Tillsonburg Soccer Park	11.00 ha	
Town Natural Parks	12.70 ha	0.8 ha / 1,000
Kinsmen Particpark	12.70 ha	
TOTAL PARKLAND	79.82 ha	5.0 ha / 1,000

Notes: Service levels are based upon an estimated 2010 population of 16,000 residents and are reflected in Hectares per 1,000 residents. Inventory data has been provided by the Town of Tillsonburg and is current as of November 30, 2010. Totals may not add up due to rounding.



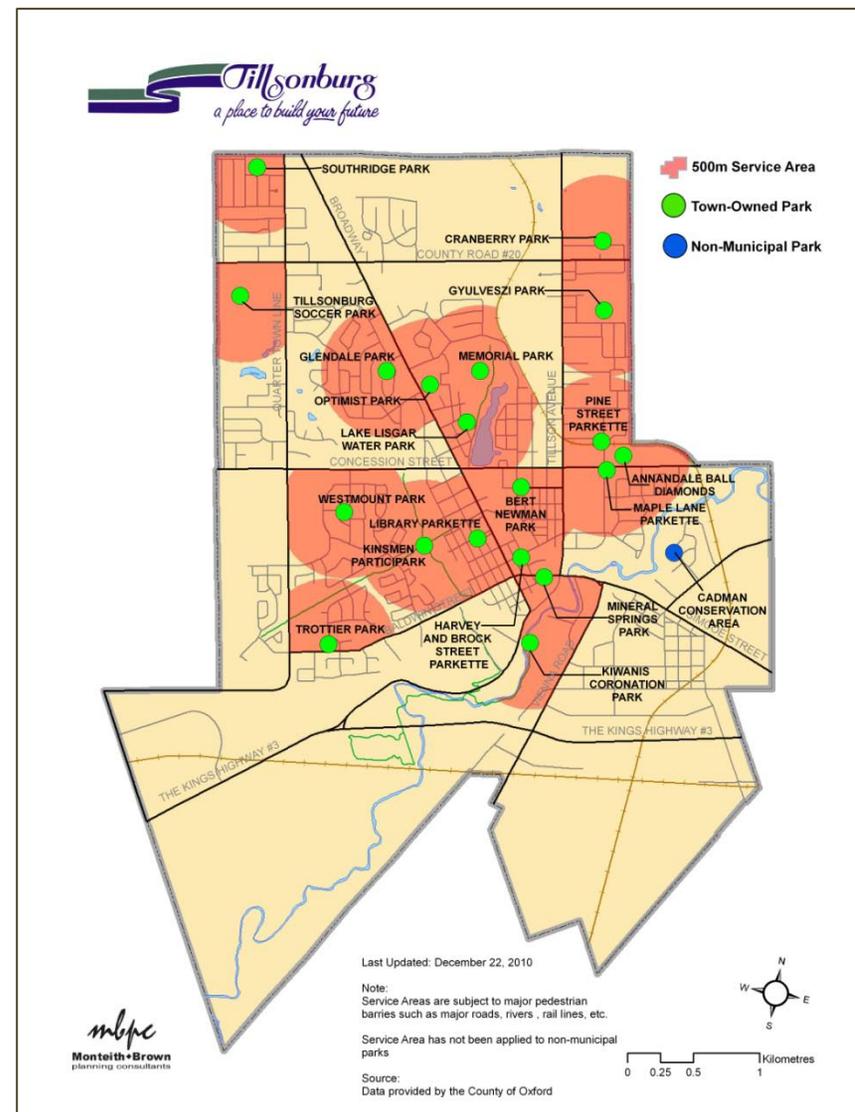
Parkland Distribution

Access to parkland is an important factor in defining quality of life and quality of place. Abundant research has shown that people desire living in areas that are close to parks and open spaces. Ensuring that high quality parkland is distributed appropriately across the community, particularly in areas of high residential populations is critical in satisfying the needs of existing populations while attracting new residents as well.

The County Official Plan has recognized a service radius of up to 0.5 kilometres (500 metres) as a walkable distance to Sub-Neighbourhood Parks. While service radii have not been applied to other parkland typologies, it is important to recognize that all parks benefit from having a walkable catchment area. Walkability is particularly critical for Sub-Neighbourhood and Neighbourhood Parks, but also is important when considering higher-order parks such as Community Parkland whose functions are largely positioned towards “drive-to” activities such as organized sports serving the entire Town.

That being said, it is recommended that all major residential areas in Tillsonburg have the ability to comfortably walk to a park that is no more than 500 to 800 metres away (this generally represents a 5 to 10 minute walk time, plus or minus a few minutes depending upon the ability of the individual). The adjacent map applies a 500 metre radius, consistent with the County Official Plan, with consideration of major pedestrian barriers (such as highways and arterial roads, railways, waterways, etc.) that may impede a person’s desire/safety to walk to the destination. It is noted that using the 500 metre radius (about a 5 minute walk) is considered to be an aggressive provision radius and it is recognized that some gaps are not as critical if applying an 800 metre radius (about a 10 minute walk).

Figure 20: Parkland Distribution



As shown in the preceding map, gap areas are observed north of North Street, east of Broadway (though a neighbourhood park proposed at Bobolink and Tanager Drive would reconcile this once developed), east of Vienna Street (as noted, this is primarily an industrial area), and the newer subdivision west of Quarterline Road and Baldwin Street (though this neighbourhood is served by a community centre and associated lands located on Weston Drive, which are owned and maintained through a condominium-type agreement funded by the surrounding residences).

As shown in the following table, parkland is largely concentrated in the Town’s northeast and southwest areas. Quadrants of the Town are generally based using Concession Street (east-west) and Broadway Street (north-south) as the primary axes. The northeast contains the most amount of parkland at 41.6 hectares distributed across seven parks, containing over half (52%) of the municipal park acreage. Conversely, the southeast quadrant contains the least amount of parkland with only 0.38 hectares available, though it is recognized that this quadrant has a majority of land devoted to commercial and industrial uses.

Table 4: Distribution of Parkland by Area

Area	# of Sites	Total Size (ha)	Average Size (ha)
Northwest	3	13.70	4.57
Northeast	7	41.62	5.95
Southwest	5	24.12	4.82
Southeast	4	0.38	0.10
Total	19	79.82	4.20

Source: Town of Tillsonburg

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ Parkland should continue to be distributed in a manner that facilitates a reasonable degree of walkability from residential areas. As such, parks of any form (i.e. those intended for active or passive uses, but generally excluding environmentally significant components of the natural heritage system which are susceptible to deterioration from human impacts) should be provided within 500 metres to 800 metres of major residential areas, free of pedestrian barriers.

Parkland Needs & Acquisition

As discussed earlier, the most common way to measure parkland service levels is assessing the number of hectares that are provided per 1,000 people. Presently, the Town is attaining a service level of 5.0 hectares per 1,000 residents based upon a total supply of 79.82 hectares which serves 16,000 people.

Generally speaking, parkland service levels can vary dramatically between municipalities and can range anywhere from 2.5 to 7.0 hectares per 1,000 residents, depending upon the types of parks and open spaces included in the calculation. These service level standards are most appropriate for parks which are used for physical or social activity that require unencumbered tablelands, and not necessarily green spaces within the natural heritage system which are geared towards preservation, conservation or contain hazard lands.



For traditional park uses, the existing supply of municipal parks appears to be sufficient at present time as well as over the course of the strategic master planning period. By the year 2021, the service level would be 4.2 hectares per 1,000 assuming no new parkland is added with a forecasted population of 19,127 residents, and by the year 2031, the service level would be 3.7 hectares per 1,000.

This service level would remain satisfactory, relative to what is being provided in many other communities, the Town of Tillsonburg should continue to strive to maintain a high level of parkland as new parks would undoubtedly need to be provided to address geographic distribution and leverage the ability of the Town to secure new parkland (or cash-in-lieu thereof) through dedications.

Given the adequate supplies of parkland, the Town should adopt a service target of providing 3.0 hectares of parkland per 1,000 *new* residents which would result in a need for 15 hectares of new parkland by the year 2031 (and translate into an overall provision of nearly 4.5 hectares per 1,000 based on 21,500 residents at that time). The preferred course of action is to focus new parkland on the basis of geographic distribution, which would be warranted where new populations are expected to generate needs (i.e. in newly developing residential areas). A focus on improving and enhancing existing parks to respond to new pressures will also a key point of emphasis moving forward.

There are several provincial and municipal regulations, policies, and guidelines governing the acquisition and location of parkland, with the *Planning Act* and the County of Oxford Official Plan being the primary tools for implementation. The *Planning Act* (R.S.O., 1990) establishes a framework for the dedication of parkland and possible alternatives to the dedication of land for park and recreation purposes. The *Planning Act* requires that lands dedicated to the

Town as park, or purchased by the Town using cash-in-lieu, must be used for “park or other public recreational purposes”, which not only includes land acquisition, but also the erection or repair of buildings and the acquisition of machinery. The *Provincial Policy Statement* (2005) issued under the *Planning Act* also provides direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development, including guidance on public spaces, parks and open spaces.

Municipal parkland policies contained in Section 8.6.2.3 of the County Official Plan enable the Town to require parkland dedication and identify criteria by which this land is assessed, including factors to be considered when seeking cash-in-lieu of parkland. The County Official Plan prescribes conveyance for park purposes in residential areas at 5% of land or 1 hectare per each 300 dwelling units proposed (or cash-in-lieu thereof). It is recommended that the Town apply whichever conveyance requirement which generates the greatest amount of parkland. With respect to industrial / commercial lands, a 2% conveyance (or cash-in-lieu thereof) is articulated and should continue to be collected. It is recommended that when additional parkland is not required, cash-in-lieu should be collected based upon the cost of land prior to building permit(s) being issued (i.e., when land is fully serviced in order to maximize cash-in-lieu received).

There may also be opportunities to acquire lands if commercial, industrial or institutional lands become available for sale, particularly if the intent is to reconcile gap areas or find space for higher order parks (such as Community Parks). For example, if a local school board considers closure and sale of underutilized or aging schools, the Town should strongly consider the acquisition of such property for the purposes of utilizing it as parkland, or possibly capitalizing on the school facility itself for programming (e.g.,



gymnasium, arts space, and/or renovating to include other needed facilities). This is a practice that is consistent with historical precedent whereby the Town acquired a former school and now leases it to the Ontario Provincial Police for training.

In order to maintain a healthy supply of parkland, the Town may also consider employing a number of alternative acquisition initiatives to maintain and fund an acceptable supply of parkland, sports fields and trail lands which are supplementary to parklands received through dedications. A few alternative acquisition measures to consider, among others, may include:

- municipal purchase or lease of land;
- land exchanges or swaps, particularly if development is to occur in natural areas highly valued by the community;
- off-site conveyance of parkland;
- establishment of a Parks Foundation (i.e., community, corporate and/or municipal donations to be put toward parkland acquisition);
- reallocating surplus municipal lands to parks use;
- seek to purchase 'over-dedication' of parkland associated with new development and/or infill areas; and
- partnership/joint provision of lands with local partners.

The County Official Plan necessitates that conveyed parkland should generally be flat, open land; the Official Plan also states that if sufficient table land exists in a specified area, the Town may choose to acquire lands containing features such as ravines, woodlots and other vegetation as part of the required parkland contribution. Research suggests that environmental policies mandated through various municipal, regional and provincial channels should be sufficiently strong to protect many of these areas from

development. The Town should define conveyance/development restrictions in the Official Plan if areas are classified as hazard and environmental protection areas (EPAs) or if they are adjacent to defined wetlands, areas of natural and scientific interest (ANSIs) and environmentally sensitive areas (ESAs).

As such, the Town should only accept hazard lands if there is a potential to connect to another park or trail system as the Official Plan also states that "lands which are constrained for development will not necessarily be accepted for parkland or leisure purposes." Cash-in-lieu of encumbered lands may be a better option for the Town, but the decision will need to be made on a case by case basis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ Adopt a service target of providing 3.0 hectares per 1,000 new residents, which would require a total of 15 hectares of new parkland by the year 2031 and should serve new residential populations and existing gap areas.
- ☑ In order to sustainably acquire and fund future parks, sports fields and trail lands, the Town should utilize a range of alternative acquisition tools over and above Planning Act policies. In this way, the Town can creatively manage the supply of parkland in a manner that involves community participation and maximizes fiscal efficiency for the municipality.



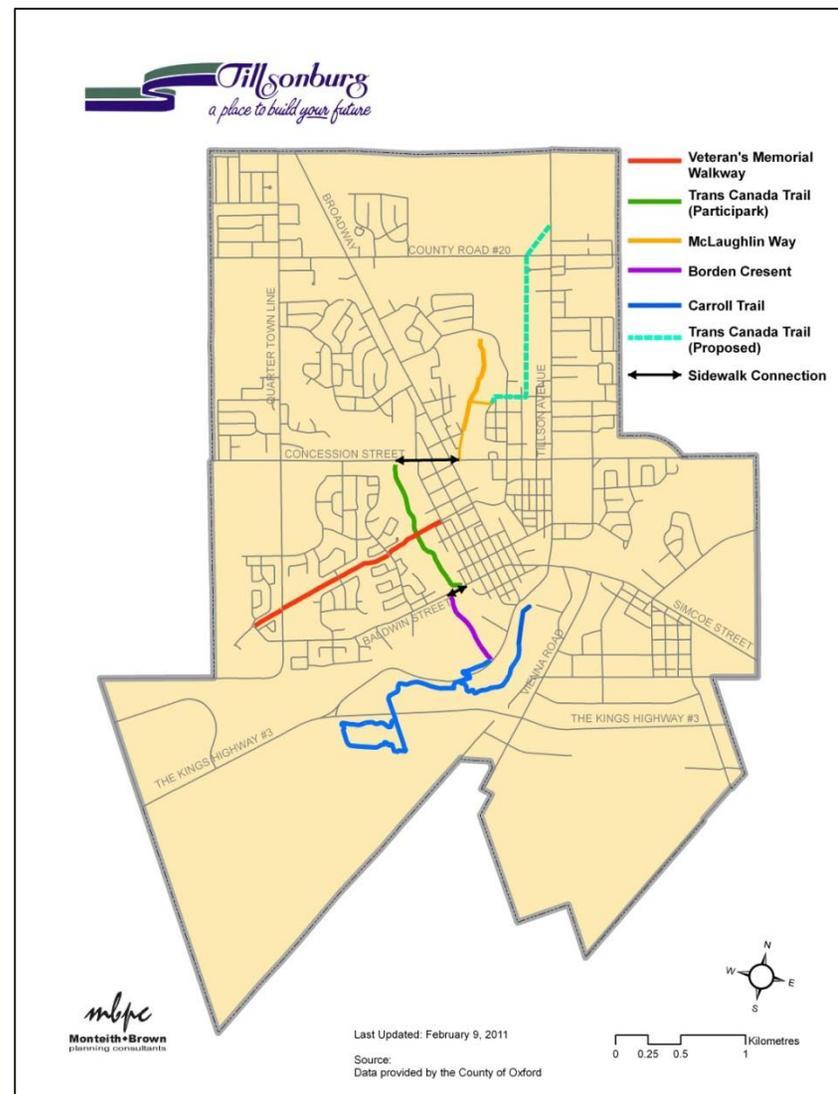
Connectivity Through Trails

As discussed in the previous paragraphs, distribution of parkland is an important factor. Equally as important is the functional connection between individual parks and open spaces from both an anthropogenic (human) perspective and an ecological perspective. Linear parks and the trails systems are the most common ways of connecting parks to each other, as well as to key destinations throughout a municipality such as residential and employment areas, retail locations, schools, community gathering spaces, etc.

In addition to over 15 kilometres of cycling trails (that generally run along roads around the perimeter of the Town), the following trails are accessible to the public in Tillsonburg:

- The **Trans Canada Trail (Participark)** is a limestone surfaced trail spanning 2 kilometres from Concession Street to Baldwin Street. Another 2 kilometres will be added to this trail by extending it north past Fourth Street.
- **Veteran’s Memorial Walkway** is a 3.6 kilometre paved trail running from the intersection of Bridge and Rolph Streets to Quarterline Road.
- The **Carroll (Tillsonburg Golf Course) Trail** spans 5 kilometres of both limestone and paved surfaces, with access provided through Coronation Park.
- **McLaughlin Way** is 0.7 kilometres in length that is accessed just south of the Lake Lisgar Water Park, and contains limestone surfacing.
- Containing stone and natural surfacing, the 0.2 kilometre **Borden Crescent Walking Trail** is accessed from John Pound Road or Baldwin Street.

Figure 21: Tillsonburg Trail Routes



Trends research undertaken across the province suggests that walking is the second most popular leisure activity, behind only reading. Furthermore, the propensity to identify walking as a favourite leisure activity increases with age, though trails are generally flexible enough to accommodate activities for a range of resident profiles (e.g. the intensity of use on a trail can vary from walking to brisk walking to jogging or running) while also permitting unprogrammed fitness or active living opportunities for all ages. With an aging population and a number of publically accessible trails, it would appear that the Town of Tillsonburg has positioned itself favourably to meet the long-term trail-related needs of its community, though improvements will certainly need to be considered throughout the future as trail preferences and needs emerge.

Consultations undertaken as part of the master planning process revealed the clear value that residents place on the local trails system. In Tillsonburg, the Strategic Master Plan's household survey found that trail-related activities such as walking and cycling/mountain biking were in the three most popular activities, with the sample's participation respectively standing at 84% and 40%. The sample placed a great deal of importance on trails and pathways (ranking second only to natural areas and open spaces), though satisfaction with trails ranked third out of five components of the recreation and cultural system. Respondents also ranked the provision of unpaved and paved trails as some of their highest priorities for directing municipal investment.

Combined with comments received from the Community Search Conference and the other public consultations, it is clear that



residents want trail developments to remain a core municipal service and would like to see upgrades with regards to expansion and connectivity within the trails system. The Town, therefore, should continue to implement findings from its Trails Master Plan (2008) in order to bolster the local trails system. To this end, the

Town will have to continue to work collaboratively with residents, community groups, and regional and provincial stakeholders (e.g. Conservation Authorities, Ministry of Natural Resources, neighbouring municipalities) in developing a connected and multi-faceted network of trails. Undertaking upgrades and extensions will provide a greater level of connectivity within the communities of Tillsonburg, as well as offering opportunities for active transportation and wellness activities.

A recent amendment to Subsection 51 (25)(b) of the *Planning Act* (affecting the conveyance of land for pedestrian and bicycle pathways) now permits the dedication of parkland to be used for “pedestrian pathways, bicycle pathways and public transit rights of way” as a condition of plan of subdivision

approval, at the municipality's discretion. This amendment to the *Planning Act* is reflective of recent trends, as evidenced by a survey conducted by the American National Association of Homebuilders, which found that trails are the most desired feature in a community, especially in new subdivisions.⁹ Respondents to that survey indicated they would choose a new community based on the type and extent of the trail system. Trails are a cost-effective method to increase physical activity levels and support positive interaction between the community and the natural environment.

⁹ (National Association of Homebuilders (2002). *Home Buyers Survey*. Available online at www.nahb.org).



Trails are as much of a recreational facility as arenas, parks and sports fields. They are multi-seasonal facilities, particularly if they can accommodate winter activities such as cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, etc. and returning to designated hiking / cycling trails in the spring, summer and fall months. The Town should continue to place a high importance on its trail facilities by making multi-use, multi-seasonal trail development a high priority.

Trails should be seen as a key facility type that promotes sustainability through the protection of areas of environmental interest and significance, encouraging physical activity and promoting active transportation opportunities (e.g., walking, biking, hiking, inline skating, cross country skiing, running, etc.). For example, provision of a variety of trail types (e.g., nature trails, soft surface and paved trails, on-road and boulevard trails, etc.) are all important in a leisure and active transportation trail system. Regularly evaluating ways to improve connectivity through new trail development while ensuring that existing trailways are well maintained (so that users do not avoid utilization due to poor trail conditions) should continue to be areas of focus for the Town.

The focus on active transportation has been increasing in recent years due to awareness of the health benefits of physical activity as well as the rising cost of transportation (driven largely by prices in energy commodities). Municipalities are attempting to incorporate active transportation infrastructure in the hopes of providing residents with a way to access employment and essential services that does not necessarily involve driving, which is particularly important in a community within which public transportation (e.g., buses) is not available. As mentioned, the provision of an interconnected walking and cycling network that serves a basic transportation need as well as a leisure purpose is beneficial for residents ranging from the everyday commuter to the grocery

shopper to the park enthusiast. This ideology is supported through the County Official Plan which encourages alternative modes of transportation, other than the automobile, while also encouraging the safe use of bicycles for both recreational and utilitarian purposes (Section 8.7.1). As per the Trails Master Plan, the addition of bicycle lanes is also recommended along designated streets at the time of future road works such as maintenance or expansions, though finding ways to integrate bicycles on more local trail routes are also encouraged.

The convenience factor of trails is also important through the provision of trail-related amenities such as benches, washrooms, etc. Parking at key trailheads is another important consideration, thus it is recommended that the Town continue to make every effort to acquire suitable parking and amenities (e.g., washrooms, benches, etc.) at key access points. It is preferred that the Town avoid the acquisition of dedicated parking areas through parkland conveyances, however, in some instances this may be unavoidable (in which case, receipt of cash-in-lieu is the preferred option).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ Continue to implement the strategies and recommendations contained within the Trails Master Plan.
- ☑ Continue to develop the trails system in a manner that facilitates connectivity, amenity and comfort, multi-seasonal usage and embodies principles of Active Transportation.



Parkland Design & Amenities

The design of parkland is a critical component in determining whether or not parks will be used. For example, high quality parkland which can facilitate a range of uses, is easy to maintain, provides a safe and comfortable atmosphere, introduces people to natural heritage, and brings a range of benefits to both users and the Town. Section 8.6.2.2 of the County of Oxford Official Plan prescribes a number of development standards for municipal parks, ranging from integration of bicycle facilities, landscaping and lighting, traffic, accessibility, and integration of natural features. Some of these elements will be discussed in greater detail in the following pages.

Park Size

The Town presently has a number of small Sub-Neighbourhood Parks/parkettes which are below 0.5 hectares in size. These small parks help in ‘connecting’ the parks system to the rest of the community and can align with trends that suggest parks be increasingly walkable (e.g. to better serve an aging population, and increasing walkability and placemaking objectives). Unfortunately, these parks can also be too small to provide for satisfactory leisure activity to take place within the confines of the park unless it is the only option to fill a gap or serve areas of high density. They are also much more costly to maintain on a square footage basis compared to larger parks due to the fact that they are decentralized and cannot generate economies of scale in operation.

As such, the provision of parks no less than 1.2 hectares is encouraged in order to be able to provide children’s play activities as well as being able to accommodate activities for other age and interest groups, such as informal playing fields, minor skateboard or

waterplay apparatus, picnic or seating areas, etc. Parks less than 1.2 hectares in size should only be provided if they are designed as ‘urban parks’ such as plazas, civic squares and greens whose compact, flexible and robust design better addresses leisure opportunities than the traditional parkette design. For any development of urban parks, the Town may have to consider alternative funding streams to cover the additional costs and weigh the benefits of small park design versus its fiscal impact through business planning and site specific analysis.

Design & Operational Considerations

The design of active and passive parks should also incorporate elements that cater to social interaction, wellness, and individual physical activity, through features such as exercise / stretching stations, personal reflection/meditation gardens, vertical differentials along pathways (i.e. hilly terrain, stair zones with associated wheelchair ramps), etc.

In selecting potential park sites, a number of factors will influence the decision-making process including, but not limited to:

- topographical and geological considerations;
- potential to protect ecological functions, wildlife and native plant species abutting parks;
- location and access to the area , particularly relative to other land uses;
- the ability to support the desired recreational infrastructure;
- visibility/public frontage;
- role in the cultural and recreational fabric of the community; and
- potential for trail or natural system linkages.

New and replacement parks and trails infrastructure should continue to be designed and constructed on a cost-effective basis, meaning that all infrastructure, elements and facilities installed should generally be selected based on locally available replacement parts and services and should utilize a standard agreed-upon selection of component parts to support ease of maintenance and repair. Examples include the use of standard benches, playground equipment and light fixtures for which parts are readily available through local manufacturers. Any use of non-standard materials and equipment is to be based on a full understanding and justification of the operational ramifications and cost increases that will accrue to the relevant municipal department.

The provision of ‘purpose-built’ landscapes which provide a special role to the citizen and park user are beneficial to engage the sensory and functional elements of the park. For example, providing experiential/healing gardens, customizing designs for skateboard/BMX parks, and barrier-free playgrounds all appeal to a particular sense or ability. In addition, the inclusion of end users in the design of these facilities will help to promote long-term feelings of ownership and ongoing usage patterns. Incorporation of public art into the future design of public and private spaces is encouraged in order to facilitate civic pride and create local identity at key points in the parks system.

As the population grows and new facilities and services are provided, the Town will need to ensure that ongoing quality controls remain at satisfactory levels. The need for operating

resources (e.g., staff, equipment, etc.) will be required to keep pace with added demands for a bolstered leisure delivery system. Ensuring quality is an utmost priority to ensure that residents and users are satisfied with municipal services, thereby engaging them to participate and use parks, facilities and programs.

An additional design consideration is the addition of interpretive and historical signage to guide residents and visitors through the Town’s extensive natural heritage assets, including trails, protected areas, and areas of interest.



Safety

New and existing parks should continue to be designed with patrons’ safety in mind, through the application of CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design), developed by CPTED Ontario, and other design principles. The Town’s existing playground replacement program should continue to be a high priority to ensure ongoing maintenance and replacement activities are conducted in a timely manner. High volume areas should

be appropriately lit, limited visibility areas should be minimal in number, and neighbourhood level parks should be designed so that surrounding residents and streets have visibility into the park, thus discouraging illicit activities. Maintenance of parks and open spaces is now accepted in the industry as a key component of perceived safety in parks and in deterring inappropriate behaviour.

The establishment of a citizens’ watch or ambassador program is also recommended to engage the community to help watch over



parks for illegal activities, functioning similar to a Neighbourhood Watch program or community patrol. Any community-based watch program which is to be implemented should be designed in consultation with local Police prior to engaging citizens to actively watch/patrol parks. When designing new parks or features within existing parks, the Town should work with the Ontario Provincial Police on certain park designs and the application of CPTED principles.

Environmental Integration

In recent years, the trend to integrate natural features into park settings has been increasing, as environmental protection becomes increasingly recognized by society. Many municipalities are making efforts to provide passive areas that incorporate native plant species, conserve woodlots, and ensure that certain areas of new active parks remain in a natural state. With the interest in outdoor recreation, many municipalities are also designing parks to include provisions for bird watching, wildlife viewing and capitalizing on eco-tourism opportunities.

Given the natural function of the parks system, municipal parkland inherently plays a key role in the protection of natural landscapes and allows for the interpretation of key features. By incorporating natural heritage areas within the parks system, residents are exposed to natural features and can facilitate their awareness of key environmental topics. The natural heritage system is discussed in greater detail in subsequent pages.

Accessibility, Comfort & Other Amenities

Ensuring that parks are accessible will encourage a wide range of users. In this context, the term accessible can refer to spatial distribution and ability/preference of the resident using the park. For example, locating parks along trail routes, providing bicycle racks and adequate vehicular parking, providing spaces for unstructured play or gatherings, and/or incorporating barrier free designs (as directed through the County Official Plan Sections 8.6.2.2 and 8.74) are considerations that will serve the needs of a broad range of users. Due to the size and dispersion of land uses within the Town, connectivity and active transportation are key considerations as means of promoting low cost and unprogrammed recreation opportunities.

Wherever possible, the Town should continue to cluster the same type of playing fields together to increase a sense of form and function, similar to the existing Tillsonburg Soccer Park or Memorial/Optimist Park templates. Major Parks should also include washrooms, electrical outlets, benches and safe, pedestrian-friendly pathways, bicycle racks, etc. The Town currently provides washroom facilities (permanent or portable) at a number of park sites. Washrooms are generally provided at parks where major sporting facilities (e.g., soccer fields, ball diamonds) are located and along key destinations in the trails system. The Town should continue to consider permanent or portable washroom facilities at heavily utilized park and trail locations as these conveniences can attract a greater use by individuals and families.

Unstructured Recreation Areas

A greater emphasis should be placed on providing more informal space in new parks in order to promote unstructured and organized activities, as well as emerging interests. Time-pressed individuals are seeking areas where they can enjoy park uses at their own convenience. Informal play fields have been observed to be popular, particularly at the neighbourhood-level for activities such as pickup field sports, playing musical instruments, kite flying, sunbathing, etc. The Town also provides picnic tables and pavilions at a number of parks which offer a venue for gatherings. Picnicking has been observed to be a use that is re-emerging in popularity, largely driven the desire for family leisure opportunities and ethnic diversification (picnicking has been observed to be a popular leisure activity for many new comers to Canada).



The key to the success of unstructured recreational areas is the flexibility that is afforded for the types of uses that can be pursued. These types of parks can bring people together to participate in physical activity, showcase cultural diversity through festivals and special events.

Community parks are ideally suited to contain unstructured areas for recreation, although a neighbourhood park is also a place for unorganized activities, albeit at a smaller scale.

Off-Leash Dog Parks

With municipal by-laws regulating the use of leashes, dedicated off-leash areas provide pet owners with the opportunity to exercise and socialize their dogs in a controlled area. Dog parks should not be viewed as being facilities strictly for pets; observations in other municipalities suggest that they are much a venue for exercise and social interaction for residents. Off-leash areas can be designed as traditional open space parks or as natural park areas with trails and corridors for walking.

The Town should be prepared to respond to requests for additional facilities and should consider the following criteria, at a minimum, in location and design:

- safety of other park users and residents;
- an appropriate buffer from residences, schools and environmentally areas; and
- provision of benches, lighting, water fountains, waste containers, etc.

As a relatively new level of service, a provision target has not been established for leash-free dog parks. These types of parks are best established by way of opportunity and are ideally developed when an affiliated organization (e.g. the Ad Hoc Dog Park Committee, Pawsitive Park Association, etc.) is willing to take responsibility for their operation and/or enforcement.

Community Gardens

Gardening is one of the most popular forms of leisure activity in Canada and visits to public gardens and historic sites is expected to increase as the population ages and demands more passive types of outdoor leisure activities. Both public gardens (e.g., floral displays,



thematic displays, etc.) and allotment gardens (e.g., community garden plots, “Plant a Row – Grow a Row” programs, etc.) are being increasingly implemented in many municipalities.

Many principles related to the New Urbanism planning movement involve centring significant residential and commercial areas around key focal points, including public gardens and parks. It is envisioned that by creating such “destinations”, people will be drawn to utilize the public space and, thus, fosters vibrancy and economic prosperity through socialization and the creation of a positive ambiance in the community node.

Community allotment gardens involve community members directly maintaining their plots – more municipalities are allocating space in municipal parks for allotment gardens. These gardens encourage social interaction, horticultural education and awareness of the benefits of healthy diets, while they can also create enhanced safety due to the presence of gardeners during the early morning and evening hours. Community gardens fit well with the Town’s aging population as older residents may be more inclined to participate in such activities.



It is recommended that the Town facilitate discussions with groups which bring forth an interest in developing an allotment garden program (e.g. the Tillsonburg Horticultural Society) and secure a site for the purposes of a community allotment garden, on a trial basis. If sufficient demand for the garden persists after the trial period

expires, additional sites should be secured using a combination of municipal and community funding with the understanding that the Town will have minimal involvement in the establishment and operation of the gardens. The Town or community organizations may also be able to leverage funding from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs’ Ontario Market Investment Fund which promotes local food sources.

Other Emerging Activities in Parks

Evolving preferences and participation trends are driving the need for new types of spaces for both structured and unstructured activities. Undoubtedly, there will be other activities (e.g. bocce courts, cricket pitches, fields for Ultimate Frisbee, etc.) which the Town may be pressed for additional indoor and outdoor facilities which are not currently of sufficient demand to warrant a specific analysis in the Strategic Master Plan. However, the Town must be prepared to appropriately respond to future requests. These demands may arise for existing activities / facilities or for those that evolve according to future trends and preferences.

When requests are brought forward for investment in non-traditional, emerging and/or non-core municipal services, the Town should evaluate the need for these pursuits on a case-by-case basis. This should involve an examination into (but not be limited to):

- local/regional/provincial trends pertaining to usage and popularity of the activity/facility;
- examples of delivery models in other municipalities;
- local demand for the activity / facility;
- the ability of existing municipal facilities to accommodate the new service;



- the feasibility for the Town to reasonably provide the service / facility as a core service and in a cost-effective manner; and/or
- the willingness and ability of the requesting organization to provide the service if provided with appropriate municipal supports.

Signage

The provision of appropriate signage is another key component of good park and trail design. Signage is an important element in promoting recognition and stewardship in the community. Without proper and consistent signage, park users may be confused about the property's ownership. Signage is also important as part of the tourism infrastructure that directs tourists easily to destinations and encourages them to return because of the ease of travel – they are also one of the first impressions of a site. Signs develop a sense of place and combined with good urban design, can create unique districts and foster aesthetic development and enjoyment.

Signs also provide interpretive information that connects a user to the park and may encourage the person to take further interest in their surroundings. A good sign is clear, attractive and designed in context to its surroundings (in this case, parks and open spaces). Signs should clearly state the park's name as well as an address for emergency purposes or the names of any local organization that helped to fundraise for the park (e.g. as the Town has done with the Optimists, Kinsmen, Kiwanis, etc.).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ Avoid the provision of Sub-Neighbourhood Parks (or parks under 1.2 hectares in size) unless deemed to be absolutely necessary to promote connectivity or address needs in areas of high density/land scarcity.
- ☑ Strive to provide parks and trails which are safe (e.g. incorporating CPTED principles), comfortable (e.g. providing benches, shade and washrooms) and well signed (with appropriate branding, identification, interpretive and/or routing information).
- ☑ Continue to provide non-programmed spaces within appropriate municipal parks which can be used for the purposes of community gatherings, picnicking, or unstructured physical and cultural activity.
- ☑ In collaboration with appropriate community organizations, undertake pilot projects for the provision of an off-leash dog park and a community garden. Additional sites may be considered if warranted by demand and supported through community involvement.
- ☑ Create a Parkland Design Standards Manual that provides the development industry with technical guidance on the design of parks and park amenities, such as dimensions of sports fields and play areas, materials to be used, lighting standards, etc. in order to ensure consistency in park design and operations.

Natural Heritage System

Tillsonburg has a number of significant ecological areas that comprise its natural heritage system, which is defined by the County of Oxford Official Plan as being “a system made up of natural heritage features and areas, linked by corridors which are necessary to maintain biological and geological diversity, natural functions, viable populations of indigenous species and ecosystems.” Section 3.2 of the County Official Plan pertains to the natural heritage system and environmental resources

Many municipalities are making efforts to provide passive areas that incorporate native plant species, conserve woodlots, and ensuring that certain areas of new active parks remain in a natural state. With the interest in outdoor recreation, many municipalities are also designing parks to include provisions for bird watching, wildlife viewing and capitalizing on eco-tourism opportunities. The core components of the natural heritage generally consist of:

- Significant woodlots;
- Wetlands and lakes;
- Watercourses and valley lands;
- Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSIs); and/or
- Significant areas of flora and fauna; and
- Areas containing endangered species (vegetation, amphibian, wildlife, etc.).





Given the natural function of the parks system, municipal parkland inherently plays a key role in the protection of natural landscapes and allows for the interpretation of key features. In recent years, the trend to integrate natural features into park settings has been increasing, as environmental protection becomes increasingly recognized by society; in the Tillsonburg context, the County Official Plan contains provisions that encourage the protection and planting of native vegetation, a policy which the Town can integrate through incorporating natural heritage features within the parks system. The Town already integrates natural heritage features along some of its trail routes, and such practices are recommended so long as environmental management principles are considered to ensure minimal disturbance on ecologically sensitive areas.

In doing so, residents are exposed to natural features and can facilitate their awareness of key environmental topics. Furthermore, preservation of environmentally significant areas and continuing to integrate natural environment features into active parkland design will contribute greatly to the quality of life for residents and further the Town's efforts in contributing towards effective sustainable development policy. The Town should also continue to bolster tree cover through the parkland design process; trees play an important role in the quality of life and environment, and tree plantings should be encouraged wherever appropriate in both park and other urban settings (e.g. boulevards, parking lots, etc.).

The success of developing a sustainable parks system is achieved on both a governmental and an individual level, therefore, educating the public and promoting the benefits of parks is key to facilitating environmental stewardship. The Town, in conjunction with local conservation authorities and/or other community partners, should continue to develop environmental education initiatives that inform the community about the role of the individual in enhancing

ecological processes and teach them how to live sustainably within their immediate environment. As an example, an astonishing natural event occurs every year at the Cadman Flats where trout can be observed to be jumping during their annual migrations. Introducing residents and tourists to such an event promotes local interest and knowledge in the natural heritage system, and could even be expanded upon by creating walking tours that showcase other parts of the ecosystem as well.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ Continue to expand upon the existing natural heritage and trail systems as a means to develop corridors that serve ecological, passive recreational and active transportation purposes.
- ☑ Continue to design parks that incorporate natural, indigenous vegetation features in order to foster an appreciation for such areas and maintain crucial ecological functions
- ☑ The Town should continue to work closely with the local Conservation Authorities to remain apprised of planned recreation amenities and trails within conservation areas, in order to maximize opportunities and linkages available to residents. Collaboration on programming is also recommended to encourage understanding and stewardship of natural areas.

The Memorial Park / Lake Lisgar Hub

There are a number of centrally located amenities and services which are provided out of the Memorial Park, Optimist Park and Lake Lisgar Park sites. Lake Lisgar is a valuable component of the parks and open space system in Tillsonburg. Collectively, these areas form the heart of community activity in the Town, with access provided to the Tillsonburg Community Centre, the Tillsonburg Fairgrounds, a number of sports fields, the Lake Lisgar Water Park, play areas and access to the trail network. While a number of these amenities have been discussed elsewhere in the document, a focus is placed upon Lake Lisgar and the Tillsonburg Fairgrounds in this Guiding Principle.

Lake Lisgar is also strategically located within the Town's trails system, with access directly to the McLaughlin Way Trail which is a connection to the Trans Canada Trail. As such, the Lake can benefit the Town from a recreational, aesthetic and tourism perspective. Currently, only limited use occurs directly within the lake (largely rowing) as swimming is directed to the adjacent outdoor aquatic complex. The Town should evaluate ways in which to improve or enhance the Lake Lisgar park area, possibly through undertaking a waterfront development/revitalization study that would be closely aligned to economic development and tourism objectives. Potential uses for the water itself should also be evaluated (e.g. rowing) and the process should involve the community and appropriate organizations such as the BIA, trail users, Historical Society, Rowing Club, etc. Concurrent to this process, the Town should develop a regional marketing plan for the Lake Lisgar Water Park given that this is a unique facility that provides family-oriented activities that can also be marketed as a tourist destination within Tillsonburg (and further diversify the facility's revenue stream).

Figure 22: Aerial View of Memorial/Optimist Park & Lake Lisgar



Source: Aerial imagery provided by the County of Oxford. 2010.

Also within this hub is the Tillsonburg Fairgrounds, located adjacent to Memorial Park and the Tillsonburg Community Centre. Presently, the Fairgrounds are home to a grandstand and horse track, which encircle two ball diamonds. A number of buildings and livestock barns are also located on site. The land itself is owned by the Town of Tillsonburg but is actively managed by the Tillsonburg Agricultural Society/Fair Board who put on annual events such as the Tillsonburg Fair, Spring Fling, Rocktoberfest, demolition derbies, etc.



Based on the current configuration of the Fairgrounds, it appears as though the site is over-programmed with competing uses. For example, a ball diamond is situated directly across from the grandstand and limits the type of use that could occur on the field given that fair and special event uses would damage the ball diamond's playing surface.

As such, it is recommended that the Town work with the Agricultural Society and local ball organizations to develop a vision for the Fairgrounds. As proposed in Guiding Principle 3, the development of a ball diamond complex may negate the need to have a ball diamond within the Fairground, therefore, releasing the space to be repurposed to another use (preferably one that is complementary to the Agricultural Society's programs/events). For example, the ball diamond could be repurposed to function as open space that could be used as a community gathering space (e.g. for Canada Day celebrations, arts and cultural events, and concerts, particularly if a band shell is provided) or for Fair-related functions. The degree to which the space is repurposed/enhanced would need to be determined through a concept design and business planning process in order to fully understand the costs involved, as well as the ultimate benefit to the community.

It is important, however, that the Town fully understands the long-term intention of the Agricultural Society to remain at the Fairgrounds. As discussed in the assessment of the Tillsonburg Special Event Centre (see Guiding Principle 3), the Agricultural Society has examined alternative locations to hold the Fair and other events. Clearly, the vision for the Fairgrounds site would be much different if the Agricultural Society were to relocate, however, if the current Fairgrounds were enhanced to meet the needs of Agricultural Society then there is every reason to believe that they would not need to move.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ Undertake a waterfront development/revitalization study for Lake Lisgar that defines ways to improve the area to facilitate recreational, cultural, aesthetic improvement and economic development opportunities as a means to showcase the natural beauty of this important municipal asset.
- ☑ In consultation with the Tillsonburg Agricultural Society, local baseball and softball organizations, and other community representatives, develop a vision and concept for the Memorial Park/Tillsonburg Fairgrounds in order to provide a functional community gathering place. Any costs associated with improving the site according to the developed vision should be rationalized through business planning and partnership evaluations prior to implementation.



Tillsonburg Cemetery

The Tillsonburg Cemetery dates back to the Town’s early history, serving as the Tillson family cemetery (where the remains of the Town’s founders are still located there) before being opened to the public and subsequently expanded in the late 1870s. As such, the Cemetery is an important component of the Town’s cultural heritage system.

The municipally-owned Cemetery offers traditional burial grounds and two columbarium walls, set in a landscape of rolling hills and treed areas. Cemetery maintenance operations, which are carried out by Town Staff, are generally less intensive and more affordable compared to other municipal facilities since the primary activities are typically associated with landscaping (grass and vegetation maintenance). In this lens, it will be important for the Town to continue to maintain the Tillsonburg Cemetery in a manner that ensures its aesthetic quality.

The unique historical amenity of the Cemetery is such that it can be viewed as an interpretive resource to link current and future residents to the past. The Tillsonburg Historical Society or Pioneer Cemetery Ad Hoc Committee, as examples, could be engaged in a collaborative process aimed at enhancing the Cemetery and potentially providing interpretive programming (e.g. historical walking tours, movie nights, etc.). Similarly, certain municipalities have positioned cemeteries to function similarly as passive parkland, through the integration of trails and pathways, gardens and reflective areas, common gathering areas, etc.

To better position the Tillsonburg Cemetery as a place of historical appreciation and community pride, it is recommended that the Town undertake a comprehensive Cemetery Revitalization Plan. At

a minimum, this initiative should provide guidance with regard to the types of uses (if any, beyond the traditional mandate) that are envisioned, the refurbishments and enhancements that would be required, and the marketing and awareness strategy that would take place to promote the revitalized Cemetery. Concept designs and landscaping plans would also be beneficial in this regard.

It should be noted, however, that there is an existing Cemetery By-law which governs use and restricts activities such as picnicking, dog-walking and inline skating/skateboarding. The By-law is cognisant of the Cemetery’s traditional mandate, though if the vision is repositioned, the By-law will need to be amended accordingly. It is emphasized that regardless of a change in vision, the Cemetery is to remain in operation for the foreseeable future and thus any proposed activities/uses must be respectful of the Cemetery function and intensive or disruptive activities should continue to be discouraged.

For example, jogging has been observed in the Cemetery which represents an activity that is respectful of the space. The Revitalization Plan may consider ways to bolster and encourage this activity in order to use the Cemetery in fulfilling the Town’s mandate of promoting healthy communities through physical and community activities (consideration may also be given to creating a link between the Cemetery and the Carroll Trail to increase access, and thus awareness of the site and its historical significance). As mentioned, the cultural heritage and opportunity for historical interpretation is one of the key draws of the Cemetery though it will be important to support this use by establishing a sense of place, potentially through enhancements to landscaping and built structures. Furthermore, comments have been received about the street layout in the Cemetery being confusing and thus the Town

could consider naming streets or providing additional maps/signage so that visitors are easily able to navigate throughout the Cemetery.

As part of the proposed Cemetery Revitalization Plan or a separate analysis, sustainable operations, maintenance and management of the Tillsonburg Cemetery should also be considered that are mindful of environmental and economic efficiencies. As mentioned, cemeteries can be low cost items relative to other capially-intensive infrastructure, yet the Town should continue to strive towards fiscally-efficient improvements in its operations. With regard to environmental sustainability, a trend of “conservation burials” (also referred to as “green burials”) is crossing into North America from Europe which involves no embalming fluids, biodegradable caskets, no vaults and typically internments are situated in natural areas (though green burials can still occur in the traditional cemetery setting).

Other “green” cemetery practices may include incorporation of indigenous vegetation (and avoiding invasive species) and habitat areas, composting landscaping waste, careful planning of trails and internment areas, carbon-neutral operations, etc. Lastly, as the Town’s population diversifies in terms socio-economic characteristics, the Tillsonburg Cemetery should continue to be positioned as an inclusive space that can accommodate a wide range of religious, social or cultural beliefs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☑ Undertake a Revitalization Plan for the Tillsonburg Cemetery in order to maximize the existing cultural heritage of the site, assess if additional passive uses should be accommodated within the Cemetery, and identify any needed improvements to lands and services which are required. Consultation with appropriate community organizations (such as the Historical Society and Cemetery Board) and the general public will be required throughout this process.
- ☑ Assess ways in which to integrate sustainable operations and management practices within the Tillsonburg Cemetery in order to promote environmental and fiscal efficiencies.

Implementing the Strategic Master Plan

This Section provides a summary of recommendations contained within the Strategic Master Plan, organized broadly in terms of their applicable Guiding Principle. The suggested timing and potential resource implications for each of the recommendations are also identified.



The Implementation Strategy is intended to guide the Town in achieving the recommendations contained within the Community Parks, Recreation & Cultural Strategic Master Plan.

The timing assigned to individual recommendations (i.e. short, medium or long term) is considered to be an estimate that largely relies upon the Town achieving forecasted population thresholds as identified in the Strategic Master Plan. It is not the intent of this Strategic Master Plan to recommend timing of actions but rather to provide a general indication of when the need to implement the recommendations could be considered along with other future variables. The Town should use a combination of service level targets, historical demand indicators and adherence to fiscally responsible business practices prior to determining the type and timing of recommended facilities and services.

Timing of recommendations fall under the following categories:

- **Short-Term** – Years 2011 to 2014
- **Medium-Term** – Years 2015 to 2019.
- **Long-Term** – Years 2020 to 2031
- **Ongoing** – Years 2011 to 2031 (i.e. over the entire course of the Strategic Master Plan’s twenty year planning period)



Resource implications have been developed with the assistance of municipal Staff and are considered to be preliminary estimates. Implementation of recommendations will be attained through annual budgeting exercises, and are subject to further refinement through municipal business planning exercises. Any costs identified in the Strategic Master Plan are stated in 2011 dollars.

As stated in Guiding Principle 1, the Town should annually review and assess the recommendations set out in this document in order to ensure that they remain relevant. This will require monitoring of parks and recreation activity patterns, conducting annual review of the achievements of the plan, tracking satisfaction levels of residents and customers, and undertaking a new Strategic Master Plan at the end of the planning period.



Implementation Tables

Guiding Principle 1: Striving for Service Excellence

Tillsonburg will continue to strive to provide parks, facilities and services in a manner that is sustainable, innovative, fiscally-responsible and driven by customer service.

Topic Area		Timing	Resource Implications
Municipal Role	1-1. Continue to be a direct provider of a robust range of programs and services which fall within the Town’s core mandate, while also acting as a facilitator of parks, recreation and cultural opportunities through the provision of space and other supports that indirectly support programming offered through the community sector.	Ongoing	Time to liaise and coordinate with community-based providers; capital and operating efficiencies attained with fewer municipal services to offer. Resource impacts will vary upon the extent of direct vs. indirect provision.
	1-2. Conduct an annual review of the municipal and community-based program inventory, and identify if there are any major gaps. Based upon this review, the direct provision of non-core facilities and services may be considered if required to fill program gaps that cannot reasonably be provided through the community sector, so long as market need can be quantified and justified through business planning.	Ongoing	Resource impacts will vary upon the number of programs directly offered by the Town; will need to be confirmed through business planning
Maximizing Performance	1-3. Continue to ensure awareness of best practices in service delivery by assigning staff to track current and innovative trends. These staff or staff teams should also be used to evaluate progress made on the implementation of the Strategic Master Plan, in light of their understanding of best practices.	Ongoing	Staff time <i>(also ties into Recommendation 1-19)</i>
	1-4. Incorporate appropriate new technologies in delivering parks, recreation and cultural services, which are aimed at improving internal performance and customer service.	Ongoing	Staff time and other resource implications will depend upon the number and scale of initiatives undertaken
	1-5. Investigate involvement in provincially and nationally recognized quality assurance programs such as Communities In Bloom, High Five, etc.	Ongoing	Staff time and other resource implications will depend upon the number and scale of initiatives undertaken
	1-6. Review Departmental policies and procedures, preferably on an annual basis, to ensure relevancy to current community and operational requirements.	Ongoing	Staff time



Topic Area		Timing	Resource Implications
	1-7. Establish a simple set of quantifiable targets and performance measures that can gauge the efficiency and effectiveness of services, and eventually programs, which are offered by the Town. These measures can be refined and expanded upon over time to respond to changing consumer expectations and Departmental operating practices.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Staff time to develop, implement and review performance measures on an annual basis. Capital resources may be required to set up infrastructure required to track inputs and outputs.
	1-8. In consultation with local user groups, establish an Ice Allocation Policy to formalize equitable access to municipal arenas. Allocation Policies may also be created for other municipal facilities (e.g. sports fields, gymnasium, etc.) should the need arise to do so.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Staff time to consult with users and develop the Policy
	1-9. The Town should require groups who regularly using municipal facilities to provide participant data, including names and addresses, to adequately plan for facility access requirements, through tracking, monitoring statistics application of performance measures.	Ongoing	Staff time to collect participant data and other pertinent information from user groups
Customer Service	1-10. Continually investigate ways in which to enhance the way in which services are being delivered to customers, with a continued view on quality. As such, the Town should be willing to explore new approaches and technologies which will aid Staff in their ability to administer the high quality customer services that residents now associate with municipal facilities and programs.	Ongoing	Staff time associated with evaluations. Financial resources may be required depending upon integration of new systems.
	1-11. Undertake a Customer Satisfaction Survey at regular intervals to provide important insights into how the public perceives the availability and delivery of municipal parks, recreation and cultural services.	Ongoing	Staff Time to prepare, administer and analyze survey
	1-12. After consulting with the general public, Town Staff, and the identified Council advisory committees, investigate the need to rename the Community Services Department to better reflect and articulate the role of municipal parks, recreation and cultural services.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Staff Time
Marketing & Awareness	1-13. Update the municipal corporate communications program and undertake enhanced marketing and public awareness efforts, after considering the return on investment of these initiatives through business planning.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Staff time to update communications strategies
	1-14. Undertake a Marketing Strategy to promote local and regional awareness of parks, recreation and cultural assets in Tillsonburg, which at a minimum should consider the Lake Lisgar Water Park, the local trails system and the Annandale National Historic Site.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Staff time and/or Consulting Fees to create the Marketing Strategy



Topic Area		Timing	Resource Implications
	1-15. Ensure that all municipal staff are aware of corporate objectives and key services which can be disseminated to the customer by increasing interaction between all levels of staff (i.e. from Management to the Front-Line, and between all staff operation depots).	Ongoing	No resource implications are anticipated as this is expected to be accommodated within current roles, responsibilities and workloads
	1-16. Develop an annual communications plan that addresses key messages to target audiences, and the associated communication media. This communications plan should also look at cross promotion of messages between the Town and user groups, as well as any information sharing opportunities between all stakeholders in recreation and leisure service delivery.	Medium-Term (2015-2019)	Staff time to develop the communications plan
	1-17. Bolster information disseminated to the community through the Recreation & Leisure Program Guide, newsletters, the Town website, social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter), and word-of-mouth.	Ongoing	Staff time to disseminate information. Financial resources may be required depending upon the chosen advertising medium.
	1-18. The Town should ensure that its marketing methods for reaching youth are current, innovative and targeted (through use of social media, working with the schools for print advertising, word-of-mouth, etc.).	Ongoing	Staff time to disseminate information. Financial resources may be required depending upon the chosen advertising medium.
Regular Strategic Planning	1-19. Conduct annual reviews (e.g. at the time capital and operating budgets are being prepared/reviewed) which monitor progress made on the Strategic Master Plan’s recommendations, with key consideration given to alignment to the Town’s Corporate Strategic Plan. Doing so will allow the Town to remain apprised of their status and reaffirm the need for the facilities and services which are articulated in the Strategic Master Plan.	Ongoing	Staff time to track progress on implementing recommendations
	1-20. Prepare an update to the Community Parks, Recreation & Cultural Strategic Master Plan after five years have elapsed in order to ensure that the future population profile and future best practices in municipal delivery of services align with the recommendations contained herein.	Medium-Term (2015-2019)	Consultant Fees \$60,000



Guiding Principle 2: An Integrated & Collaborative Approach

In order to best meet the needs of our residents, the delivery of high quality spaces and programs will be viewed holistically and implemented by working hand-in-hand with a range of municipal departments, supporting volunteers, and establishing strategic partnerships that will maximize the public interest through a community-development approach.

Topic Area		Timing	Resource Implications
Fostering Volunteerism	2-1. Continue to support the volunteer sector through appropriate community development and capacity building initiatives. For the latter, a 'Volunteer Management Strategy' should be developed in consultation with local stakeholders that defines roles and provides direction on topics such as recruitment, selection, retention, training, supervision and recognition.	Ongoing	Staff and financial resources will need to be determined through business planning and would depend upon the types of support offered by the Town <i>(also ties into Recommendation 2-12)</i>
	2-2. Build upon existing databases of volunteer groups to facilitate volunteer-based networking opportunities (e.g. sharing resources and combining training opportunities) across the entire Town and possibly with other volunteer agencies in the Tri-County area. Efforts should be made to ensure that all information in the database is kept up-to-date and accurate.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Staff time to assist in the development of a database
	2-3. Continue to host annual volunteer events with the aim of increasing coordination and development opportunities among volunteer groups. The meetings should allow groups to provide feedback to each other and to the Town, educate them on best practices in community-based delivery of services, and discuss successes and challenges of implementing the proposed Volunteer Management Strategy. Additionally, the Town should consider customizing recognition efforts to individual volunteer sectors (e.g. service clubs, arts and cultural groups, minor sports, etc.) to provide more targeted coordination and development opportunities within the volunteer sector.	Ongoing	Staff time and financial resources, the latter which will vary depending upon the number and type of events
Supporting Town Staff	2-4. Continue to ensure that municipal facilities, services and programs are supported by appropriate staff resources. Given the growth and complexity within the municipal parks, recreation and cultural system, undertake a process to develop appropriate staffing standards that reflect service levels. These standards should lead to a 'Long-Term Staffing Review' to ensure support for Departmental objectives.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Staff time and/or Consulting fees for the staffing review



Topic Area		Timing	Resource Implications
	2-5. The Town, through its Council and Staff, should assume a leadership role in building the capacity of the local community to deliver recreation and cultural services by facilitating access to space, coordinating the delivery of municipal and community-based programs, and providing financial, logistical and promotional support as necessary.	Ongoing	Varying degrees of Staff time and financial resources depending upon the type and scale of initiatives undertaken
	2-6. Formalize a 'Code of Conduct' that governs the staff and volunteer approach to work.	Medium-Term (2015-2019)	Staff time to develop Code of Conduct
	2-7. Ensure that the Strategic Master Plan's Guiding Principles and Recommendations can be effectively fulfilled by providing the necessary staff resources. The need for additional staff resources will need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis associated with the implementation of individual actions contained within the Strategic Master Plan.	Ongoing	Staff time and financial resources, of varying degrees depending upon the number of facilities, programs and services delivered through the Town
	2-8. Identify the needed skills and competencies, provide opportunities for staff development through training and professional development, and identify departmental and individual training plans.	Ongoing	Varying Staff and financial resources depending on the number and types of professional development initiatives
Partnership Potential	2-9. Continue to explore ways with local partners in order to fill local gaps in programming through the balanced and inclusive provision of opportunities for residents of Tillsonburg. Where appropriate, this should include conducting regular meetings with partners to discuss implementation of partnership agreements, and where necessary, revisit and/or strengthen agreements to maximize benefits to all parties and the general public.	Ongoing	Staff time to solicit, respond to and/or negotiate partnership agreements. Financial and operational implications of individual partnerships will need to be determined on a case-by-case basis.
	2-10. Continually evaluate ways to strengthen agreements with the Thames Valley and London District Catholic School Boards to increase access to indoor and outdoor leisure spaces. A particular focus should be placed on updating the types of uses that are permitted to occur through the joint use agreement that governs usage at the Glendale High School gymnasium.	Ongoing	Staff time to liaise with the school boards and discuss access arrangements



Topic Area		Timing	Resource Implications
	2-11. Requests for facilities and services that are not part of the Town’s core mandate should be evaluated based on anticipated municipal role, quantifiable measures of demand and costs to the Town, and other long-term implications prior to deciding whether or not to partner in the public interest. As part of this process, the Town should develop a standardized process or framework for evaluating and responding to requests for partnerships, with the view of maximizing public interests.	Ongoing	Staff time to evaluate and respond to partnership requests
Community Development	2-12. Encourage a Community Development Model through engagement and the provision of appropriate supports (e.g. financial, logistical, expertise, etc.) as a means to empower the Tillsonburg community, continually develop their internal capacity, and enhance their capacity to sustainably deliver programs and services over the long-run.	Ongoing	Staff time and financial resources, of varying degrees depending upon the community development approaches employed by the Town
	2-13. Assist groups in developing templates that can track operational measures such as capacity and fill rates, patron satisfaction, financial performance, etc. as a means to improve their internal service delivery practices.	Medium-Term (2015-2019)	Staff time and financial resources, to be determined through business planning
	2-14. Maximize synergies within the Community Services Department and the rest of the Town of Tillsonburg through joint planning, integrated communications and the sharing of resources, where possible.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	No resource implications are anticipated as this is expected to be accommodated within current roles, responsibilities and workloads
	2-15. Ensure that elements of the parks, recreational and cultural system are aligned with goals and priorities associated with economic development and tourism objectives.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Staff time
	2-16. As part of the proposed Marketing Strategy, ensure the inclusion of a specific Sport & Cultural Tourism Policy that creates a framework for assessing the ability of local facilities and services to serve a broader market, potential partnerships, funding opportunities, and the benefits that would be incurred through the promotion of sport and cultural tourism objectives	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Staff time and/or Consulting Fees to create the Sport & Cultural Tourism Policy <i>(also ties into Recommendation 1-14)</i>



Guiding Principle 3: Innovative & Appropriate Infrastructure

Parks, recreation and cultural facilities will be provided in an inclusive and integrated manner, to create opportunities for multi-use, multi-generational, and multi-seasonal experiences that meet the diverse needs of Tillsonburg’s population.

Topic Area		Timing	Resource Implications
Funding Infrastructure	3-1. Continue to explore broad ways in which to fund the development and operation of parks and facilities, through use of a variety of funding mechanisms and community involvement which, at a minimum, could consist of user fees, grants, fundraising, development charges, and cost-sharing agreements with other parties.	Ongoing	Staff time to evaluate the best ways of funding capital and operating expenditures <i>(also ties into Recommendation 5-3)</i>
	3-2. The Town should approach adjacent municipalities to develop a cost-sharing approach associated with operating the Tillsonburg Community Centre given the share of non-residents that it serves.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Staff time <i>(also ties into Recommendation 5-3)</i>
	3-3. Provide assistance, as necessary, to local community groups in finding alternative revenue streams as a means to facilitate their ability to fund the delivery of facilities and programming over the long-term.	Ongoing	Staff time to assist groups
Energy Utilization	3-4. Continually evaluate ways in which to maximize energy efficiency and water conservation at local facilities, in line with current best practices, particularly at the time of capital renewal/upgrade projects.	Ongoing	Potentially higher capital investment could be partially offset by operational savings
Tillsonburg Special Events Centre	3-5. Prior to making additional investments in the Tillsonburg Special Events Centre, the Town should define its desired vision for the facility. This should involve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a detailed feasibility study, partnership evaluation, business plan and/or concept design process that defines the vision for the facility, the desired uses and market demand, and the costs involved of fulfilling the vision; or considering divestiture of the facility should the business planning exercise render investments as being unsustainable or beyond the fiscal means of the Town over the long-term. 	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Consulting Fees for Study \$40,000 Operational Savings and Capital Gains from Proceeds of Divestiture (to be determined at a future time, if this course of action is pursued)



Topic Area		Timing	Resource Implications
	3-6. If the vision is to continue to operate the facility for local and/or regional events, appropriate capital investments should be made to the building that support the desired uses, while operational investments will also need to be made in terms of marketing, promoting and managing the facility (the latter which would require dedicated staff resources with expertise in facility management). Consideration should also be given to divestiture of the facility should the business planning exercise render investments as being unsustainable or beyond the fiscal means of the Town over the long-term.	Short to Medium-Term (2011-2019)	Resource implications to be determined through business planning and concept designs
Tillsonburg Community Centre	3-7. In addition to other recommendations contained throughout this Strategic Master Plan that pertain to the Tillsonburg Community Centre’s individual components, the Town should undertake a business planning and/or concept design process to investigate opportunities in which to modernize the facility in a manner that responds to the needs of current and future populations. At a minimum, the Town should consider opportunities to improve accessibility for patrons, level of amenity, and operational efficiencies.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Consulting Fees for business plan and concept design \$35,000
	3-8. The Town should modernize the existing indoor pool facility at the Tillsonburg Community Centre, as appropriate, to bring it up to a standard that is more reflective of current aquatic demands. At a minimum, this would include the provision of family change rooms and/or other leisure components, such as a warm water therapy/teaching tank in order to attract a greater number of families and casual users to the facility. A business planning exercise should be undertaken to confirm costs involved in relation to market demand.	Medium-Term (2015-2019)	Resource implications to be determined through business planning and concept designs
	3-9. Consider reconfiguring program and meeting spaces within the Tillsonburg Community Centre as a means to accommodate certain smaller-scale gymnasium activities, thereby, freeing up time at the Glendale gym for additional uses.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Resource implications to be determined through business planning and concept designs
	3-10. The Town should undertake a comprehensive examination into the reconfiguration/expansion of its Health Club and squash courts in order to provide a higher quality, higher performing level of service geared to addressing the fitness-related needs of future residents and facility users.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Resource implications to be determined through business planning and concept designs
Arenas	3-11. No new arenas are recommended over the strategic master planning period. Arena needs should be re-evaluated as part of a five-year review and update of this Strategic Master Plan and consider registration data that is provided by user groups as part of a proposed Ice Allocation Policy that is to be created by the Town.	Medium-Term (2015-2019)	Arena assessment should be tied to the update of the Strategic Master Plan

Topic Area		Timing	Resource Implications
Outdoor Ice Skating	3-12. Work with community and neighbourhood groups to encourage residents to maintain natural ice rinks on municipal land for public use, particularly at future multi-use courts and existing parks and open spaces which are suitable to accommodate the use.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Staff time and financial resources depending upon the type of municipal involvement
Outdoor Aquatics	3-13. While no new <u>major</u> outdoor aquatic infrastructure (e.g. pools or splash pads) is recommended for construction over the next twenty years, the Town should consider the provision of basic cooling amenities at strategic park locations to increase access/geographic distribution to neighbourhoods containing higher populations of children (any impacts to the Lake Lisgar Water Park should be studied prior to their provision).	Medium-Term (2015-2019)	Capital and operating requirements will depend upon the amenity level provided
Gymnasiums	3-14. As part of the two year review for the Glendale Gymnasium Agreement, the Town should try to maximize the number of Permitted Activities that can occur in order to keep pace with demands for new and emerging gymnasium activities. Community access to other local school gymnasiums should also be pursued by working with the respective School Boards.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Staff time
	3-15. The Town should work with Tillsonburg Minor Soccer and the Thames Valley School Board to facilitate greater access to the Glendale High School gymnasium as a means to develop indoor soccer programming. This approach should also be undertaken with other user groups who are looking to deliver indoor recreation or dry-land training programs.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Staff time
Meeting Space	3-16. Continue to offer a variety of community program and rental opportunities out of existing and newly developed municipal facilities, to the greatest degree possible, while exploring opportunities to enhance these spaces in a manner that promotes a more diverse and flexible range of uses. If warranted by need, the Town should also evaluate the merits of obtaining underutilized or vacant community buildings that could provide increased program opportunities.	Ongoing	Staff and financial resources will need to be determined through business planning and would depend upon the improvements undertaken by the Town

Topic Area		Timing	Resource Implications
Sports Fields	3-17. To address the long term need for soccer fields, the Town and Tillsonburg Minor Soccer should collaboratively assemble lands capable of holding a minimum of two soccer fields, preferably adjacent to the Tillsonburg Soccer Park. Tillsonburg Minor Soccer should also be encouraged to install additional field lighting as a means to increase the effective capacity and supply. Subsequent to these actions, soccer field needs should be re-examined as part of the five year review and update of the Community Parks, Recreation & Cultural Strategic Master Plan to confirm the need for additional facilities based upon future trends and market characteristics.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Full Lit Soccer Field with Irrigation/Drainage Capital Cost: \$375,000 per field
	3-18. The Annandale Ball Diamonds should be relocated to an alternative location where they can be reconstructed with appropriate field dimensions and playing standards required to meet the needs of local ball organizations. As such, consultations with local user groups will be required prior to relocating and redesigning the Annandale Ball Diamonds.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Major Lit Ball Diamond with Irrigation/Drainage Capital Cost: \$400,000 per field
	3-19. The Town should consider repurposing and/or relocating the ball diamond from Memorial Park as well as at least at least one of the Fairgrounds diamonds. This would allow a greater diversity of events to occur (e.g. at the Fairgrounds) and alleviate vehicular parking pressures associated with the sports fields and the Tillsonburg Community Centre.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Major Lit Ball Diamond with Irrigation/Drainage Capital Cost: \$400,000 per field
	3-20. The Town should continue to work with the local School Boards to ensure that community access is maintained to sports fields located on school property. In the event that local organizations are unable to access school-owned sports fields, or sports fields which are not maintained to a satisfactory level of play, the Town should investigate options to develop at least one multi-use field that gives scheduling priority to field sports other than soccer.	Ongoing	Staff time
Hard Surface Courts	3-21. The Town should provide one additional tennis court at Optimist Park, and construct a basketball/ball hockey court at the same location in order to take advantage of amenities already offered at the park site.	Short-Term <i>(Basketball, 2011-2014)</i> Medium-Term <i>(Tennis 2015-2019)</i>	Basketball Court Capital Cost: \$40,000 Single Tennis Court Capital Cost: \$85,000
	3-22. A In the design of new hard surface courts at neighbourhood-level parks, consider the integration of multi-use templates which allow a variety of uses that can be pursued year-round.	Ongoing	Potential efficiencies in reducing the number of courts required to serve neighbourhoods

Topic Area		Timing	Resource Implications
Playgrounds	3-23. The Town should provide playgrounds within 500 to 800 metres of all major residential areas to ensure walkability to these neighbourhood-level facilities. At present, this would imply that a gap exists for neighbourhoods located south-east of the Concession Street and Broadway Street intersection, thus opportunities to address this gap should be explored through municipal and school board properties in the vicinity.	Ongoing	Standard Creative Playground Capital Cost: \$100,000
	3-24. At least one fully accessible (barrier-free) playground should be provided at the Tillsonburg Community Centre or Lake Lisgar Water Park site to ensure that children with special needs and disabilities have a venue for unstructured physical activity. Opportunities to integrate barrier-free features at existing playgrounds should also be considered through the playground update process.	Medium-Term (2015-2019)	Fully Accessible Playground \$200,000
Skateboard & Bike Parks	3-25. Through the park development or redevelopment process, continue to provide introductory skate zones at the neighbourhood park level in order to facilitate casual use of the park by those who want basic skateboarding amenities.	Ongoing	Capital and operating requirements will depend upon the amenity level provided
	3-26. The Town should consult with the local skateboarding community and other youth interested in the design and redesign of new and existing skateboard parks to ensure that skateboarding facilities are cost-effective and responsive to current design trends and user preferences.	Ongoing	Staff time

Guiding Principle 4: Embracing the Arts, Culture & Heritage

The Town will work with its vibrant arts, cultural and heritage sector to enhance and further develop the creative capacity of Tillsonburg and proudly showcase our roots to visitors.

Topic Area		Timing	Resource Implications
Strengthening Policies	4-1. In consultation with the County of Oxford, the Town should examine ways to strengthen appropriate parts of the County Official Plan to further recognize the great importance of arts, culture and heritage; where applicable, references specific to arts, culture and heritage should be incorporated therein.	Ongoing	Staff time to liaise with County planners and develop appropriate policies

Topic Area		Timing	Resource Implications
	4-2. Draft a Public Art Policy that outlines the benefits of public art, a process through which public art is selected, and the importance of recognizing local artists.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Staff time
	4-3. Work with the local arts and culture community to seek creative ways of funding local initiatives, specifically through the creation of a funding strategy that targets investment in the creative industries.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Staff time to create funding strategy
	4-4. In line with other marketing and branding initiatives proposed through this Strategic Master Plan, enhance efforts targeted to community awareness of arts, culture and heritage opportunities in Tillsonburg.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Staff time to update communications strategies <i>(also ties into Recommendation 1-14)</i>
Bolstering the Arts & Cultural Sector	4-5. Undertake a Library Master Plan to assess ways in which to improve utilization and amenity level for patrons, while ensuring that service delivery practices are current and geared to maximizing financial performance.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Consulting Fees \$30,000
	4-6. Investigate ways to bolster attendance at the Annandale National Historic Site through facility improvements, enhanced marketing and awareness efforts, etc., which would ideally be undertaken in consultation with local heritage volunteers and the Museum Advisory Committee (the latter whose role and decision-making ability should be expanded).	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Variable Staff time and financial resources depending upon the types of marketing efforts undertaken
	4-7. Continue to work with volunteers and organizations to promote community-based delivery of arts and cultural services and strengthen the internal capacity of the creative sector to be self-sustaining over the long term. This could involve an evaluation of the existing supply of appropriate municipal and community-based facilities and services through a comprehensive asset mapping exercise in order to determine their ability to be enhanced to better accommodate arts and cultural programming.	Medium-Term (2015-2019)	Staff time and/or Consulting fees for asset mapping exercise
	4-8. Ensure parks and outdoor civic spaces are designed in a manner that facilitates arts and cultural activities, as appropriate, while also providing interpretation opportunities associated with cultural and natural heritage throughout the parks and trails system.	Ongoing	Variable financial resources depending upon the type and scale of park developments



Guiding Principle 5: Focus on Wellness Through Programming

A continued emphasis will be placed on facilitating inclusive activities that promote healthy living, physical activity, wellness, skill development, knowledge, and community pride through the collaborative delivery of structured and unstructured opportunities to key markets such as youth, older adults, newcomers and families.

Topic Area		Timing	Resource Implications
Affordability & Pricing	5-1. Continue to ensure that a broad range of low-to-no cost opportunities are available to the community, as a means to increase access to households who may otherwise not be able to participate in recreation and cultural activities.	Ongoing	Staff time and financial resources, the degree to which will depend upon the number and types of programs offered
	5-2. Work with community groups to ensure that access policies are in place, particularly if these organizations regularly utilize municipal parks and facilities for their programming. In support of this action, the Town could consider providing groups with tools/supports (e.g. financial, human resources, etc.) that would allow the groups to deliver affordable and inclusive program opportunities.	Ongoing	Staff time and/or financial resources, the degree to which will depend upon the types of supports offered
	5-3. Initiate a Pricing Strategy to review the current fee structure in relation to the Town’s ability to sustain high quality facilities and services, with a particular focus on areas such as affordability and usage by non-residents.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Staff time and/or Consulting Fees for the pricing review
Accessibility	5-4. Ensure that all parks, facilities, amenities and services are designed in line with provincial accessibility legislation and according to the municipal accessibility standards (with input provided by the Tillsonburg Accessibility Advisory Committee, as necessary).	Ongoing	No resource implications are anticipated as this is expected to be accommodated within current roles, responsibilities and workloads
Emerging Activities	5-5. Foster the development of existing, new and emerging sport, cultural and recreational activities that may be popular with under-represented populations and ensure that these opportunities are available to all local residents.	Ongoing	Staff time and financial resources, the degree to which will depend upon the number and types of programs offered
Meeting the Needs of Children & Youth	5-6. Contingent upon population growth and associated market needs, provide drop-in child supervision services at the Tillsonburg Community Centre, initially on a trial basis, in order to reduce barriers to participation among caregivers and their children. The service should consist of drop-in childminding and early childhood development programming to engage children in physical and social activity.	Medium-Term (2015-2019)	Staff time and financial resources, the degree to which will depend upon utilization and cost recovery of the service



Topic Area		Timing	Resource Implications
	5-7. In consultation with local youth and representative organizations, investigate the provision of a new youth centre either at the Tillsonburg Community Centre or other appropriate location. Such a facility should be oriented to recreational, arts and cultural opportunities and if a partner can be found, potentially provide social services as well.	Medium-Term (2015-2019)	Capital and operating implications will need to be confirmed through business planning, based upon the type of space developed and the role of partners
	5-8. Undertake broad consultations with youth every five years through surveys, workshops, etc. to better understand the needs of this target market.	Ongoing	Staff time to develop, administer and analyse consultation efforts
	5-9. Strive towards obtaining accreditation as a “Youth Friendly Community”, as promoted through Play Works.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Staff time and financial resources, the degree to which will depend upon efforts and initiatives undertaken
Serving Older Adults & Seniors	5-10. The Town should continue to consult with its local older adult and seniors’ representatives as a means to enhance existing relationships, understand local needs and preferences as they evolve over time, and determine any programming gaps that the Town can address through community development or direct provision. In effect, this would include continuing to work with the Tillsonburg Seniors Centre to deliver innovative programs and services for the older adult and seniors market, in order to let this community organization grow its membership and service delivery capabilities.	Ongoing	Staff time to liaise with groups, potential financial resources for direct program delivery (to be confirmed through business planning)
Promoting Physical Activity	5-11. Undertake a Physical Activity Strategy that aims to increase physical activity levels throughout Tillsonburg for a range of ages, interests and abilities.	Medium-Term (2015-2019)	Staff time and/or Consulting fees

Guiding Principle 6: A Functional and Sustainable Parks System

Parks, trails and open spaces will be designed and managed in an integrated manner so as to enable sustainable ecological management practices, link residential and employment areas, and provide opportunities for a wide variety of active and passive recreation and cultural experiences.

Topic Area		Timing	Resource Implications
Park Distribution	6-1. Parkland should continue to be distributed in a manner that facilitates a reasonable degree of walkability from residential areas. As such, parks of any form (i.e. those intended for active or passive uses, but generally excluding environmentally significant components of the natural heritage system which are susceptible to deterioration from human impacts) should be provided within 500 metres to 800 metres of major residential areas, free of pedestrian barriers.	Ongoing	No resource implications are anticipated as this is expected to be accommodated within current roles, budgets, responsibilities and workloads
Parkland Supplies	6-2. Adopt a service target of providing 3.0 hectares per 1,000 <i>new</i> residents, which would require a total of 15 hectares of new parkland by the year 2031 and should serve new residential populations and existing gap areas.	Ongoing	Standard operational implications associated with parkland acquisition and maintenance costs
Parkland Acquisition	6-3. In order to sustainably acquire and fund future parks, sports fields and trail lands, the Town should utilize a range of alternative acquisition tools over and above Planning Act policies. In this way, the Town can creatively manage the supply of parkland in a manner that involves community participation and maximizes fiscal efficiency for the municipality.	Ongoing	No resource implications are anticipated as this is expected to be accommodated within current roles, budgets, responsibilities and workloads
Trails System	6-4. Continue to implement the strategies and recommendations contained within the Trails Master Plan.	Ongoing	Trails Master Plan recommendations will be assessed through capital planning
	6-5. Continue to develop the trails system in a manner that facilitates connectivity, amenity and comfort, multi-seasonal usage and embodies principles of Active Transportation.	Ongoing	Variable costs depending upon actions and improvements undertaken
Parkland Design	6-6. Avoid the provision of Sub-Neighbourhood Parks unless deemed to be absolutely necessary to promote connectivity or address needs in areas of high density/land scarcity.	Ongoing	Operational savings associated with maintaining fewer but larger parks
	6-7. Strive to provide parks and trails which are safe (e.g. incorporating CPTED principles), comfortable (e.g. providing benches, shade and washrooms) and well signed (with appropriate branding, identification, interpretive and/or routing information).	Ongoing	Variable costs depending upon actions and improvements undertaken

Topic Area		Timing	Resource Implications
	6-8. Continue to provide non-programmed spaces within appropriate municipal parks which can be used for the purposes of community gatherings, picnicking, or unstructured physical and cultural activity.	Ongoing	Standard operational implications associated with parkland acquisition and maintenance costs
	6-9. Create a Parkland Design Standards Manual that provides the development industry with technical guidance on the design of parks and park amenities, such as dimensions of sports fields and play areas, materials to be used, lighting standards, etc. in order to ensure consistency in park design and operations.	Medium-Term (2015-2019)	Staff time and/or Consulting fees
Piloting Projects in Parks	6-10. In collaboration with appropriate community organizations, undertake pilot projects for the provision of an off-leash dog park and a community garden. Additional sites may be considered if warranted by demand and supported through community involvement.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Staff time and financial resources (to be determined through business planning) to assist groups in getting projects off the ground
Natural Heritage	6-11. Continue to expand upon the existing natural heritage and trail systems as a means to develop corridors that serve ecological, passive recreational and active transportation purposes.	Ongoing	Standard operational implications associated with parkland acquisition and maintenance costs
	6-12. Continue to design parks that incorporate natural, indigenous vegetation features in order to foster an appreciation for such areas and maintain crucial ecological functions	Ongoing	No resource implications are anticipated as this is expected to be accommodated within current roles, budgets, responsibilities and workloads
	6-13. The Town should continue to work closely with the local Conservation Authorities to remain apprised of planned recreation amenities and trails within conservation areas, in order to maximize opportunities and linkages available to residents. Collaboration on programming is also recommended to encourage understanding and stewardship of natural areas.	Ongoing	Staff time to liaise with Conservation Authority
Lake Lisgar	6-14. Undertake a waterfront development/revitalization study for Lake Lisgar that defines ways to improve the area to facilitate recreational, cultural, aesthetic improvement and economic development opportunities as a means to showcase the natural beauty of this important municipal asset.	Medium-Term (2015-2019)	Staff time and/or Consulting fees
Memorial Park Fairgrounds	6-15. In consultation with the Tillsonburg Agricultural Society, local baseball and softball organizations, and other community representatives, develop a vision and concept for the Memorial Park/Tillsonburg Fairgrounds in order to provide a functional community gathering place. Any costs associated with improving the site according to the developed vision should be rationalized through business planning and partnership evaluations prior to implementation.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Staff time and/or Consulting fees



Topic Area		Timing	Resource Implications
Tillsonburg Cemetery	6-16. Undertake a Revitalization Plan for the Tillsonburg Cemetery in order to maximize the existing cultural heritage of the site, assess if additional passive uses should be accommodated within the Cemetery, and identify any needed improvements to lands and services which are required. Consultation with appropriate community organizations (such as the Historical Society and Cemetery Board) and the general public will be required throughout this process.	Short-Term (2011-2014)	Staff time and/or Consulting fees
	6-17. Assess ways in which to integrate sustainable operations and management practices within the Tillsonburg Cemetery in order to promote environmental and fiscal efficiencies.	Ongoing	Staff time