City of London

PARKS & RECREATION
strategic master plan
2009

Final Report
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Executive Summary

Introduction

The 2009 City of London Parks & Recreation Strategic Master Plan will guide decisions regarding programs and services, recreation facilities and parks infrastructure, and related community investment from now through 2027 with a primary focus on the next ten years (2009-2019). Specifically, this Plan provides a long-term sustainable strategy for managing the City’s parks and recreation resources in a cost-effective manner that is responsive to both the current and future needs of the community. The Plan also identifies what the City provides and sets out how we can make London the best place to live, work and play.

Implementation of this Plan will directly affect the City’s Parks and Recreation, Neighbourhood and Children’s Services, and Parks Planning and Design Divisions. These Divisions are responsible for ten service areas (see below) that are directly addressed in this Strategic Master Plan; recommendations pertinent to each of these streams have been developed.

- Community Investments and Planning
- Community Programs/Spectrum
- Community Programs/Spectrum
- Aquatics
- Community Facilities (Indoor)
- Community Facilities (Outdoor)
- Parks Planning and Design
- Special Events
- Sports Services
- Storybook Gardens
- Golf

As highlighted by the Strategic Master Plan’s community consultation program, it is clear that London offers many high quality programs and facilities such as (but certainly not limited to) the pathway and trail systems and municipal (Spectrum) programming. It is also evident that residents and organizations feel that the City should continue to build on the major strides it has made in recent years.

This Strategic Master Plan was developed by a team of consultants (Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, Tucker-Reid & Associates, and The JF Group) with the assistance of a multi-departmental municipal staff team. The final report was presented to the Community and Protective Services Committee and City Council.

Scope

The primary focus of this Strategic Master Plan relates to the ongoing management and development of the City’s parks and recreation infrastructure, program offerings, and service delivery mechanisms. Key objectives include the promotion of strong neighbourhoods, healthy lifestyles, and sustainable environments through investment in parks and recreation.

In the hierarchy of policies, the City’s Official Plan sets the stage for all else to follow. For example, the Official Plan requires environmental assessments to determine if and how infrastructure projects could be undertaken within an environmentally significant area. This Strategic Master Plan does not in any way undo or be in conflict with either the directions prescribed by the Official Plan or the findings of an environmental assessment.
The integrated nature of parks and recreation planning involves several areas of study that are outside of the Master Plan’s primary focus, including considerations related to arts and culture, environmental management (e.g., natural heritage system and environmentally significant areas), place-making, trails and pathways, urban design, and other civic responsibilities. The Master Plan speaks to these secondary areas of focus – many of which are guided by other documents – and more fully integrates them into the primary context of parks and recreation. It is not the purpose of this Plan to reiterate the content of other policy documents, but rather it recognizes the other processes that are involved. Reference should be made to other municipal documents in order to gain a more complete understanding of the full range of strategies and requirements in all areas indirectly related to parks and recreation.

Planning Context

This document is an update to the Plan that was approved by Council in 2003. As the City has implemented many of the actions from the 2003 Plan, the time was right to re-examine community needs and establish direction and priorities for the coming years.

Further, many elements of programming, infrastructure, and investment have changed in recent years and need to be updated to more accurately reflect the work that the City undertakes. Examples of some of the many infrastructure changes include the pending development of the new North London Community Centre (in partnership with the YMCA and London Public Library), improvements to several major facilities (e.g., North London Optimist Community Centre, Thames Park Pool, Stronach Community Recreation Centre, Storybook Gardens, Wonderland Gardens, etc.), the addition of over 250 acres of parkland and thousands of metres of new pathways, along with several new spray pads, skate parks, soccer fields, dog parks, etc.

In addition, the City has recently adopted a greater focus on neighbourhood-level service delivery, programming, and parks and facility use. By taking on a proactive role in community development, the City has embraced a more holistic approach to service delivery that also leverages the abilities and resources of countless community partners and volunteers. By investing in neighbourhoods, the City is able to help develop leaders, support families, and build community capacity. In this way, downstream costs and impacts (such as crime, reliance on the social safety net, and poverty) are deterred and positive outcomes (such as increased literacy rates, improved health and physical activity levels, and enhanced quality of life) are strengthened.

In terms of demographic statistics, it is important to note that the City’s population (estimated at 355,675 in 2007) is forecasted to grow by nearly 3,300 new residents each year, to a level of 421,200 residents in 2027; this represents a total growth of 65,525 residents over a 20-year period. Older adults, age 55 years and over, are expected to account for 33% of the total population by 2027 (accounting for 76% of the population growth during this timeframe). All other age groups are expected to see less growth in total numbers, particularly the 10-19 age group, which is projected to shrink slightly by 2027. In terms of population distribution, the greatest amount of growth is forecasted to occur in the Southwest, Northeast, and Northwest. Recent trends also point towards greater ethnic diversity, an increase in the number of persons with disabilities, and continued poverty concerns (currently 17% of London residents live at or below the “low income cut-off”).
The Strategic Master Plan was developed within the context of recent strategic planning initiatives and directions of City Council and the Community Services Department, including Council’s Strategic Plan, the London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy (ongoing), the Child and Youth Agenda, the Thames Valley Corridor Plan (ongoing), and the Bicycle Master Plan. The overall creation of this Plan also considered consultation with residents and stakeholders, as well as research and analysis of trends and service provision levels.

The Case for Parks and Recreation

Research has shown that even small investments in parks and recreation yield big economic, social and environmental returns. The City of London contributes to the realization of many community and personal benefits by providing interconnected opportunities for improving community well-being and the overall quality of life of its residents.

In considering the future of London’s parks and recreation system, greater emphasis should be placed on Strong Neighbourhoods, Healthy Lifestyles, and Sustainable Environments, the primary benefits of which are illustrated in the following graphic.

### Strong Neighbourhoods

- Recreation and leisure opportunities are key entry points for belonging in our community by supporting strong families and individuals both young and old in building strong neighbourhoods.
- Neighbourhoods are about people and places and how they work in partnership to make great places to live, work and play.

### Healthy Lifestyles

- Recreation directly benefits individuals and families who participate: learning new skills and knowledge, increasing personal health, reducing stress, developing stronger social skills and bonds of friendship, and staying independent longer.
- Recreation is essential to the social, cultural and economic well-being of the community.
- Creative cities enhance quality of life, marketability of the City, alternate forms of transportation, and create a climate for job creation in the knowledge economy.

### Sustainable Environments

- The City of London values its natural heritage and environment.
- Parks, open space and natural areas are essential to ecological survival and contribute to the overall quality of life in London.
Guiding Principles

The Parks & Recreation Strategic Master Plan supports Council’s values of citizen engagement, open and accountable government, respect and integrity and fiscal responsibility and is a key contributor to the Community Vitality Priority of Council which states that:

“...we shall strive to make London one of the greatest places to live, work, play and visit by focusing on Londoners (our people) and the neighbourhoods in which they live.”

To deliver on Council’s priorities and Departmental mandates, the following guiding principles (core directional statements) were established for the Parks & Recreation Strategic Master Plan.

Accessibility and Affordability

• The City of London shall seek to provide fair, accessible and affordable recreation and leisure opportunities that encourage participation by a diverse community.

Quality of Service

• The City of London shall strive to provide the highest quality of services to its residents.

Quality Infrastructure (Facilities and Parks)

• A strategic and sustainable system of parks and recreation infrastructure is vital to the delivery of parks and recreation services and programs.

Adaptability and Flexibility

• The ability to be continually relevant and flexible is important to meeting the needs of the current and future populations.

Accountability

• Open and accountable government is key to a healthy community. The City values being accessible to residents, listening to their needs and reporting regularly on progress.
Key Directions and Recommendations

Note: Sections 4 to 6 contain a complete listing of all Strategic Master Plan recommendations.

System-wide Recommendations
(i.e., recommendations spanning the various departments and divisions involved in the delivery of parks and recreation services in the City)

Overall, public perceptions are largely positive about the work of the City of London. Nevertheless, continued attention to specific areas is required to enhance services and public approval, including:

- continuing to build and maintain a clean, safe, usable system of parks and recreation facilities that supports healthy and socially active lifestyles and that contributed to neighbourhoods that are strong, liveable, and inclusive;
- continuing to improve communication with community groups and stakeholders;
- establishing a performance measurement system;
- regularly testing (every 3-5 years) the effectiveness of the current delivery system;
- continuing to strengthen the City’s role in supporting volunteerism;
- ensuring that programs, services, facilities and opportunities remain accessible, affordable and inclusive of all residents (including persons of low income, culturally diverse residents, and persons with disabilities) through a variety of mechanisms (e.g., subsidy policies, a wide range of no cost / low cost programs and opportunities, educating about the benefits of participating, providing leadership training toward potential future employment, providing childcare services to enable adults and caregivers to participate, etc.);
- through social marketing and working hand-in-hand with related initiatives and agencies, educating the public on the importance and benefits of participating in leisure opportunities as a way of increasing participation and the overall health of residents;
- adopting a Standardized Partnership Framework that sets out a decision-making process to ensure that new and existing relationships with outside groups provide maximum benefit to the municipality; the Framework should also include a mechanism through which unsolicited proposals can be objectively evaluated; and,
- continuing to protect and enhance the local natural heritage system through restoration, rehabilitation, and renaturalization, as well as stewardship initiatives and community partnerships.
**Service Level Recommendations**  
(*i.e., recommendations that are of interest to specific service areas within the City*)

Building on the Guiding Principles and the objective of ensuring a balanced distribution of recreational opportunities, the Strategic Master Plan recommends a model that accommodates a network of facility types. This approach allows for City and community-serving facilities to be provided at larger multi-use centres, as well as a series of smaller centres that can act as neighbourhood hubs and gathering places at the local level.

The Plan strives to place facilities like gathering/programming spaces, playgrounds, and accessible pathways and trails at the neighbourhood level of distribution. These “neighbourhood hubs” serve as anchors of community life and facilitate and foster broader, more creative interaction within neighbourhoods, along with serving as gathering places for programming, connecting with neighbours, and growing a sense of neighbourhood. For some neighbourhoods, these facilities may be multi-use community centres, for others it may be a community room attached to an arena or pool, while for others it may be space in a place of worship, school, or ethnically-based social club. Where gaps in the municipal inventory exist, the City may need to look to partnerships with other providers to assist in creating access to such opportunities. Implementation of the London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy (once complete) will be critical to moving this concept forward.

In relation to parks and recreation facility and service planning and investment, the following recommendations highlight a few of the more significant projects:

- the development of a Southwest multi-use community centre (including an indoor aquatic centre, twin ice pads, gymnasium, activity rooms, etc.); the provision of two new ice pads would allow for Farquharson Arena to be re-purposed to other community recreational uses, pending further study and analysis;
- site evaluation and selection for the proposed Southeast/East London recreational components (e.g., indoor aquatics, gymnasium, activity rooms, etc.); additional study is recommended to confirm the statement of need and to complete a locational assessment and business case;
- the creation of additional program space in Northwest London at either Medway Arena or another local site;
- further evaluations (e.g., feasibility studies) of several facilities (e.g., Farquharson, Silverwood and Glen Cairn Arenas) that are located within key neighbourhoods and have the potential to serve new and meaningful roles (e.g., re-purposed to include components such as activity and meeting rooms, youth and senior space, gymnasiums, or other activity-specific space);
- as a key priority, addressing the gaps in the Thames Valley Parkway (along all tributaries of the Thames River) and creating connections to bike arterials and feeder routes, along with the implementation of London’s Bicycle Master Plan;
- the development of additional spray pads (some of which may be wading pool conversions), playgrounds, skate parks, off-leash dog areas, basketball courts, and tennis courts to address gaps in geographic distribution;
- increase the provision of additional soccer fields over time, with an emphasis on full size, lit, and irrigated pitches to accommodate demand from adults and competitive youth teams;
City of London

PARKS & RECREATION

strategic master plan

- giving consideration to re-purposing under-utilized ball diamonds and tennis courts to in-demand uses, in combination with expanding and/or improving the playability of other ball diamond sites (where warranted);
- exploring partnership opportunities for the development of outdoor artificial turf fields;
- continuing to incorporate amenities that increase the usability of parks for older residents and residents of different ethnic backgrounds;
- implementation of the parks planning and acquisition policy considerations contained in a recent City report (“Parkland Dedication Requirements, Practices, and Procedures”, 2008);
- establishing a target level of 3 hectares of neighbourhood and district parkland per 1,000 population; in addition, the City should continue to acquire significant natural heritage areas, with the understanding that these strategies may require a mixture of acquisition-based strategies and collaboration with partners; and,
- adding an “Urban Park” category (e.g., plazas, civic squares, civic greens, etc.) to reflect emerging residential growth patterns and a movement toward improved walkability and place-making; alternate funding streams may be required to cover the additional costs associated with this park type.

The following table provides a summary of the recommended facility provision targets and projected needs over the next ten-year period.

Summary of Inventory, Provision Targets and Needs – Community Facilities

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<th>Current Inventory</th>
<th>Recommended Provision Target</th>
<th>Summary of Facility Needs (2009-2018)</th>
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<td>Community Centres/Facilities</td>
<td>23 facilities offering programs and/or rentals, including:</td>
<td>1 multi-use community centre per 55,000 population 1 neighbourhood community centre per 20,000 population</td>
<td>3 multi-use centres over the next 10 years (including the new North London Community Centre). Repurposing of some neighbourhood facilities is recommended.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• 4 multi-use centres*</td>
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<td>• 19 neighbourhood facilities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Major Non-Municipal Centres include YMCA recreation centres and Boys &amp; Girls Club</td>
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<td>Gymnasiums</td>
<td>7 municipal gymnasiums*</td>
<td>1 municipal gymnasium per 30,000 population</td>
<td>4 gymnasiums (as components of larger community centres) over the next 10 years.</td>
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<td>Arenas</td>
<td>22 ice pads at 12 facilities (includes municipal arenas and Western Fair Sports Centre, for which the City has an agreement) Arenas excluded from inventory include John Labatt Centre (event venue), Ice Park (private), and Thompson Arena (UWO)</td>
<td>1 pad for every 450 registered youth users (target is linked to youth as they represent the largest allocation for prime time ice)</td>
<td>None over the next 10 years.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Indoor Swimming Pools</td>
<td>3 municipal indoor pools* Major non-municipal indoor pools include YMCA recreation centres, Boys &amp; Girls Club and UWO</td>
<td>1 indoor aquatic centre per 60,000 population</td>
<td>3 indoor pools over the next 10 years (including the new North London Community Centre).</td>
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<td>Facility Type</td>
<td>Current Inventory</td>
<td>Recommended Provision Target</td>
<td>Summary of Facility Needs (2009-2018)</td>
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<td>Spray Pads</td>
<td>9 spray pads</td>
<td>1 spray pad per 4,500 children ages 0 to 14</td>
<td>4 to 5 spray pads over the next 10 years.</td>
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| Outdoor / Wading Pools | 12 municipal outdoor pools and 18 municipal wading pools  
The City also provides some support to 2 community pools (Village Green and Woodcrest) | No additional outdoor pools or wading pools are recommended                                   |                                                                                                   |
| Soccer Fields        | 96 municipal fields (a total of 101.5 unit equivalents**)  
65 school fields that are permitted / scheduled by the City  
Total of 166.5 unit field equivalents | 1 soccer field for every 90 registered participants (youth and adult) | Focus more on quality than quantity. A declining youth population will reduce field requirements; however, the need for high quality fields (including artificial turf) will increase. |
| Ball Diamonds        | 83 municipal diamonds (a total of 87.5 unit equivalents**)  
23 school diamonds that are permitted / scheduled by the City  
Total of 110.5 unit diamonds equivalents | 1 diamond for every 80 registered participants (youth and adult) | No additional diamonds are required over the next ten years.                                    |
| Football Fields      | 2 dedicated municipal practice fields and 7 fields shared with soccer and baseball  
19 high school fields allocated through the school boards  
TD Waterhouse Stadium (UWO) is also used for football | A recommended provision target is not set                                                       | City will continue to offer 2 dedicated practice fields. One of the artificial turf fields to be built at City-wide Sports Park will primarily be used by football to meet the need for high quality fields. |
<p>| Tennis Courts        | 66 municipal courts (excluding school and private courts)                             | 1 tennis court per 6,000 population; consider distribution                                  | New courts are required in three areas (Southwest, Northwest, and Southeast). Under-utilized courts may be re-purposed. |
| Basketball Courts    | 19 full courts and 18 half courts for a total of 56 half-court equivalents (excluding school and private courts) | 1 basketball hoop per 750 youth (ages 10-19); consider distribution                            | New courts are required in two areas (Northeast and Southwest), as well as new growth areas.       |
| Skate Parks          | 7 municipal skate parks, including 1 City-wide facility, 1 District facility, and 5 Neighbourhood facilities | As per City of London Outdoor Skate Park Implementation Strategy | Four new District skate parks, expansions to two existing skate parks, and establishment of Neighbourhood skate parks on an as-needed basis. An indoor skate facility could be considered as part of a repurposing of an existing community facility. |</p>
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<td>Play Structures</td>
<td>127 play structures at 111 municipal parks; 7 playgrounds are fully accessible to persons with disabilities (excluding school and private playgrounds)</td>
<td>1 play structure generally within an 800-metre radius of every residential area (without crossing a major arterial road or physical barrier)</td>
<td>New play structures are required in two areas (Southwest and Southeast), as well as new growth areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-Leash Dog Areas</td>
<td>3 off-leash dog areas/parks</td>
<td>demand should continue to be monitored; consider distribution</td>
<td>Two to three new off-leash areas are required to improve distribution (Northwest and South/Southwest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized Facilities</td>
<td>1 Disc golf course at St. Julian Park</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>No current need for further disc golf courses currently identified. 1 BMX bike park to be developed. Consideration should be given to the provision of an indoor skate park as part of a repurposing of a neighbourhood facility. Consideration should be given to the provision of an all-weather, extended season, outdoor multi-sport field for soccer, football, rugby and lacrosse.</td>
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* Does not include the new North London Community Centre to be built in 2010 in partnership with YMCA and London Public Library.

** each lit field/diamond is counted as 1.5 unlit fields/diamonds due to the extended playing time
Financial Sustainability

Over the next ten years (2009-2018), the City’s 2009 Capital Budget identifies annual average expenditures of $23.2 million for parks and recreation facilities. This funding is derived from a number of sources, including the capital levy, debentures, reserves, operations, grants, development charges, etc.

The goal of this Plan is to work within the City’s existing 10-year capital budget; this means implementing all capital recommendations in a timeframe consistent with population growth, and within expected sources of funding. Major capital projects that are expected to be achieved within the funding levels anticipated by the City’s current ten-year capital forecast should generally be pursued prior to undertaking projects that are currently unfunded or that require non-traditional funding approaches. Changing budget pressures, participation rates or demographics, population growth rates, grant programs, and other factors may impact upon the implementation of this Plan. Should additional funding become available, either sooner or in greater amounts, the priority list established in the Strategic Master Plan should be used to guide decisions about the use of this funding.

In implementing the recommendations, it is expected that Council will consider approaches that are financially sustainable, such as partnering with qualified agents, building cost-effective multi-use facilities rather than those designed for a single use, seeking senior government grants and fundraising, etc. Current funding sources will continue to be used and will be supplemented by other approaches, where possible. Prior to approving any capital project, it is expected that an analysis of operating budget implications and partnership options would be undertaken and that sufficient annual operating funds would be allocated to any approved project.
Section 1:  INTRODUCTION

1.1  Plan Overview

The Parks & Recreation Strategic Master Plan provides overall direction and guidance for making decisions about parks and recreation programming, public-use facilities and infrastructure (parks and recreation facilities), and investment in the community. The Plan balances the needs and concerns of the public with the realities of implementation – the outcome of which is a fiscally responsible Plan that meets the highest priority recreation needs of London residents from now through to 2027, with a primary focus on the next ten years. It is a comprehensive framework that provides the foundation for:

- Service excellence;
- Strategic and operational decision-making;
- Communications and engagement;
- Support and capacity-building at the neighbourhood level;
- Partnering; and,
- Resource allocations.

This document is an update to the Plan that was approved by Council in February of 2003. An update of the 2003 Plan was required to account for the many physical, social, and policy changes that have occurred over the past six years. In implementing the previous Strategic Master Plan, City officials and staff have had the opportunity to witness which recommendations are working (and should be maintained), which ones require fine-tuning, and which ones have run their course. This input has been critical, as consistency in the approach between the two Plans has been a key objective. The update to the Plan was developed within the context of the recent strategic planning initiatives and directions of City Council and the Community Services Department. The Parks & Recreation Strategic Master Plan is a key contributor to Council’s Community Vitality priority which states:

“We shall strive to make London one of the greatest places to live, work, play and visit by focusing on Londoners (our people) and the neighbourhoods in which they live”

The basis of recommendations and overall creation of this Plan involved:

- consultation with residents and stakeholders;
- research and analysis of socio-demographic and leisure trends;
- City-wide service provision analysis; and,
- review of the distribution of parks and recreation services and programs.

It also bears noting that many of the Strategic Master Plan’s recommendations are structured to provide ongoing guidance, while others may be one-time events that are based on the best information available at this time.
1.2 About the 2003 Strategic Master Plan

In 2003, Council adopted a Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan for the City of London. Many actions of that Plan have been implemented, while some items have yet to be achieved. With the Plan being six years old, the time has come for an update that revisits the direction, priorities, and accomplishments set forth in the 2003 Plan.

Many of the findings and directions of the 2003 Strategic Master Plan remain relevant to this updated Plan; therefore, it is important to review and understand some of the key conclusions from six years ago. The public consultation process in 2002/03 was extremely extensive and yielded a great deal of constructive feedback.

Since 2003, Council has developed new Strategic Priorities that more clearly identify the system of parks and recreation’s key role in delivering on these priorities. As well, many elements of programming, infrastructure, and investment have changed and need to be updated to more accurately reflect the work Parks and Recreation, Neighbourhood and Children’s Services and Parks Planning and Design undertake. While many of the existing recommendations continue to be relevant, other components need to be reviewed and updated under this new lens.

Recently, a greater focus on the neighbourhood for service delivery, programming, and parks and facility use has been identified through several corporate initiatives. The City’s work in community development and community capacity building has taken on a more proactive role in the past few years. Specifically, the City’s role as an enabler, facilitator, catalyst, educator, promoter and partner has greatly expanded, especially at the neighbourhood level.

Furthermore, modifications to the City’s financial picture occurred in the years since the 2003 Plan was implemented. The introduction of a debt cap, new capital budgets to address emergent needs, prioritization of major capital projects funded by growth-related development charges, as well as changes in Provincial and Federal funding have contributed to a parks and recreation financial plan that was not feasible.

1.3 Key Accomplishments Since 2003

Over the past few years, the City has produced several landmark studies that will guide service provision into the future, including the following:

- Council’s Strategic Plan (2007) outlines the strengths, values and priorities that will guide London until 2010.
- The London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy (2008 and ongoing) engages local residents in neighbourhood improvement planning.
- The Strengthening Neighbourhoods Initiative: Kipps Lane Strategy (2007; action plan development ongoing) has acted as a model for successful neighbourhood capacity building.
- The Child and Youth Agenda (2008; action plan development ongoing) working to achieve “happy, healthy children and youth today; caring, creative adults tomorrow”. The priorities of
In November 2009:

- the Agenda are: ending poverty; making literacy a way of life; leading the nation in healthy eating and healthy physical activity; and, creating a family-centred service system.

- Thames Valley Corridor Plan (ongoing) is a progressive step in ensuring that London’s natural heritage assets are preserved, while enhancing recreational opportunities.

- A Bicycle Master Plan (2005) was created to increase the infrastructure for cyclists, and provide guidelines for the design of new facilities.

- In 2008, an Outdoor Skate Park Implementation Strategy was created to ensure that skate parks were being provided at both the advanced and introductory levels with an appropriate distribution throughout the City.

- London CARes (Community Addiction Response Strategy) was developed to establish an integrated strategy to improve the health of street involved and homeless individuals who live with the effects of poverty, addiction, and mental illness.

In relation to parks and recreation infrastructure, the following are some of the key accomplishments arising out of and since the 2003 Strategic Master Plan:

- a new multi-use community recreation centre is slated for opening in North London in 2010, in partnership with the YMCA and London Public Library;

- redevelopment of the North London Optimist Community Centre (2007);

- expansions to the South London Community Centre (2004), Stronach Community Recreation Centre (2005/06), Earl Nichols Community Centre (2006), and Lambeth Community Centre (2007);

- upgrades to the Hamilton Road Senior Centre and Community Centre and Annex, as well as the East Lions Artisans Centre;

- major lifecycle maintenance projects at facilities such as Carling Heights Optimist Community Centre, Oakridge Arena/Pool, and Earl Nichols Arena;

- Labatt Park – which is the oldest continuously used baseball park in the world – received capital improvements to its grandstand, among other items;

- Storybook Gardens was extensively renovated in 2003, including the addition of a spray pad, enhanced play area, and refrigerated winter skating path, among other changes to the park’s operations and infrastructure. Most recently, a Business Plan (2008) and Task Force were created, which led to the development of several recommendations that will be implemented in the 2009 or 2010 seasons or as funding becomes available;

- thousands of metres of new pathways have been opened, bicycle lanes have been incorporated into new road works, requirements for additional bicycle parking have been accommodated, and many pathway replacement and widening projects have taken place;

- the Thames Park outdoor pool re-design and construction has been initiated;

- new spray pads have been built throughout the City, including at Southeast Optimist, Gibbons, and Lambeth Centennial Parks;

- several new skate parks have been built; including at Victoria Park, White Oaks, Stronach, Naomi Almeida, and Basil Grover Parks;
• several new soccer fields have been added to the City’s inventory;
• two new dog parks have been established; and,
• over 250 acres of parkland have been added to the City’s inventory and several parks have been developed/redeveloped (e.g., Hamlin Park, Lambeth Centennial Park, dozens of neighbourhood parks, etc.).

The City of London has also made several improvements to the way it delivers its services, including (but not limited to) the following:

• The Community Services Department has made strides since the development of the last Strategic Master Plan to improve its approach to service delivery through an internal re-organization that merged Parks Operations into the Parks and Recreation Division. This has lead to greater achievements in planning by allowing a more holistic approach to the delivery of service (customer service and communications), common mandates, service objectives and evidence based focussing of resources.

• The London Community Services Department has developed a brand and key message “Play Your Way” (Enjoy the Benefits of Recreation) that speaks to the benefits of participating in parks and recreation programs and services. This has helped to promote the social, physical, and emotional return to the individual and community in terms of participation and also serves to promote the many facilities and opportunities available.

• The City has continued to reach out to partners – both large and small – to assist in the construction or operation of community facilities, programs and services. The agreements with Western Fair (for the purchase of ice time) and the YMCA and London Public Library (for the operation of the proposed North London Community Centre) are two of the more visible examples. Arrangements with Neighbourhood Resource Centres at several sites have also been met with significant success, as have many other collaborations. In addition, yearly partnerships continue with organizations like Scouts Canada, Saturn of Canada and ReForest London to enhance the City’s park and open space system and amenities.

• London has successfully pursued and hosted a number of major provincial, national, and international events including (but not limited to) the: 2003 Ontario Senior Games – Winterfest; 2004 Ontario Summer and Winter Games; 2005 World Transplant Games; 2006 CN Canadian Women’s Open Golf Championships; 2008 World Under 17 Hockey Challenge; and, 2008 Ontario Senior Summer Games – Actifest.

1.4 Planning Process

Under the direction of a multi-departmental municipal staff team, the initial step in the completion of this Plan was a review of what the City has accomplished since the previous Master Plan in 2003, new initiatives that have been launched, and other supplemental research. Other key foundational pieces of this Plan include the community consultation program, a trends analysis, and the updating of the City’s parks and recreation facility inventory.

In addition, working sessions with a Steering Committee consisting of senior staff representatives from affected City Departments and Divisions have been helpful in interpreting background information,
identifying best practices, discussing options, and establishing strategies through which the objectives of the Strategic Master Plan can be achieved. Along the way, presentations and updates on the Plan’s progress have been made to the Community and Protective Services Committee and City Council.

1.5 Report Organization

This document combines research and analysis from a series of background documents which preceded this one; the first established the planning context for the Strategic Master Plan through the review of relevant background documents provided by the City, demographic analysis, trends analysis and community consultations.

The second series contained an infrastructure assessment that analyzed City facilities and parks, and made recommendations based on the findings, as well as a report that looked at programs and initiatives related to the delivery of services. While these background documents do not form an official part of this Strategic Master Plan, they do provide a more complete explanation of the rationale behind the recommended actions and will be of assistance in the ongoing implementation of the Plan.

The Strategic Master Plan is comprised of six (6) sections:

Section 1: Introduction
Describes the broad purpose and structure of the Plan.

Section 2: Strategic Direction/Philosophy Behind the Plan
Presents the City’s vision, priorities, and departmental and division mandates, a description of the parks and recreation service streams, and principles guiding the development of the Plan, as well as an overview of the benefits of parks and recreation.

Section 3: Context
Provides background information for the future of parks and recreation with a review of the key City-wide initiatives informing the plan, socio-demographic and leisure trends, public and stakeholder consultations, and other federal and provincial initiatives of relevance to the plan.
Section 4: System Recommendations
Outlines the initiatives that cut across all service categories, including service excellence, communications/engagement, access and equity, social marketing and promotion, partnerships, and environmental stewardship.

Section 5: Service Level Recommendations
Outlines recommendations for: community investments and planning, community programs/Spectrum, community facilities (indoor and outdoor), aquatics, parks planning and design, sports services, special events, golf, and Storybook Gardens.

Section 6: Implementation and Financial Plan
Presents the implementation strategy documenting priorities and high level cost implications for the recommendations.

Sections 1 to 3 provide a summary of the background research and contextual information, through which the recommendations in Sections 4 to 6 have been derived.
Section 2: STRATEGIC DIRECTION / PHILOSOPHY BEHIND THE PLAN

This section presents the City’s vision, priorities, and departmental and division mandates, a description of the parks and recreation service streams, and principles guiding the development of the Plan, as well as an overview of the benefits of parks and recreation.

2.1 City Council Vision and Priorities

The City plays an active and important role in the development and promotion of recreation, leisure and sport opportunities and is committed to initiatives and community-based projects that “assure the health, safety and well-being of individuals and families while promoting liveable and inclusive neighbourhoods” (Council Strategic Priority – Community Vitality).

It is intended that this Plan provide a long-term sustainable strategy for managing the City’s parks and recreation resources (people and places) in a cost-effective manner that is responsive to both the current and future needs of the community. The Plan also identifies what the City provides and sets out how we can make London the best place to live, work and play.

The Parks & Recreation Strategic Master Plan supports Council’s values of citizen engagement, open and accountable government, respect and integrity and fiscal responsibility.

The Plan will deliver on Council’s 2007-2010 Vision Statement:

“We are a caring, responsive community committed to the health and well-being of all Londoners. The actions we take will be socially, environmentally and fiscally responsible so that our quality of life is enhanced and sustained for future generations. Our people, heritage, diverse economy, strategic location, land and resources are our strengths.

This Vision will produce a high quality of life, valued services and engaged residents and employees.”

The Parks & Recreation Strategic Master Plan is a key contributor to the Community Vitality Priority of Council which states that:

“...we shall strive to make London one of the greatest places to live, work, play and visit by focusing on Londoners (our people) and the neighbourhoods in which they live.”

Other corporate priorities impacting the Strategic Master Plan include:

- **Infrastructure and Renewal** – investing in strategic and sustainable municipal infrastructure. Our goal is to construct and maintain a progressive model of municipal infrastructure that meets the needs of a growing community.

- **Managed and Balanced Growth** – implementing a strategic approach to growth. Our goal is to plan and manage for growth for the long term economic, environmental and social benefit of the community.

- **Environmental Leadership** – valuing our natural heritage and environment. Our goal is to protect a healthy and sustainable environment and encourage an environmentally-sensitive City.
City of London

PARKS & RECREATION

strategic master plan

- Creative, Diverse & Innovative City – capturing the value of London’s heritage, culture, arts and diversity. Our goal is to define and strengthen the City’s unique identity.

- Economic Prosperity – creating an environment for a resilient, diversified and inclusive economy. Our goal is to accelerate growth of a strong and vibrant economy and foster private sector investment in the City.

2.2 Department and Division Mandates

In addition to helping fulfill Council and corporate priorities, the Strategic Master Plan must show adherence to the mandate of the Community Services Department (Parks & Recreation and Neighbourhood & Children’s Services Divisions), as well as the Planning and Development Department (Parks Planning & Design Division).

Realignment of the Community Services Department in 2006 was done in part to recognize the need for a more consolidated and thoughtful effort towards strengthening neighbourhoods and communities in London in support of the Community Vitality priority. Community Services is now better organized to deliver on community capacity building. To build on this, the Parks & Recreation Division strives to move Londoners towards healthier lifestyles through amazing experiences. The Neighbourhood & Children’s Services Division works to strengthen neighbourhoods and create opportunities for individuals to lead healthy, socially active lives.

Mandates of the Community Services Department and related Divisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Services</th>
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<td>Make life better for Londoners today; build a stronger community for tomorrow.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Parks and Recreation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Moving Londoners towards healthier lifestyles through amazing experiences.</td>
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</table>

We do this by sustaining a park system and a network of recreation facilities that offer a variety of opportunities for Londoners to participate in activities which lead to better health and well-being. In Parks and Recreation there are many ways to “Play Your Way”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighbourhood and Children’s Services</th>
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<tr>
<td>staff will work collaboratively with their colleagues and partners, bridging systems to improve the quality of life for all Londoners by:</td>
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- Creating opportunities for individuals to lead healthy, socially-active lives;
- Strengthening neighbourhoods; and,
- Leading the integration of community-wide initiatives.

The City of London cannot work alone if it is to achieve these mandates. The Community Services Department works with many internal partners, including Parks Planning & Design, Facilities Design & Construction, and Financial Planning & Policy, as well as significant external partners like libraries, school boards, private recreation providers, community, sport and cultural groups.
2.3 Benefits of Parks and Recreation

To provide an understanding for the need for parks and recreation opportunities within the City of London, the benefits of parks and recreation must be considered. According to the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association’s (CPRA) Benefits of Recreation Catalogue, “to those involved in the delivery of leisure services, recreation has always been seen as a means to a bigger end.” Research has shown that small investments in parks and recreation yield big economic, social and environmental returns. It is clear that this “benefits” perspective is important and significant for parks and recreation.

The City of London contributes to the realization of many community and personal benefits by providing interconnected opportunities for improving community well-being and the overall quality of life of its residents. In 2003, London City Council declared, through its endorsement of the Parks & Recreation Strategic Master Plan, that:

“Recreation is essential to the social, cultural and economic well-being of the community and shall be a core service of the City of London.”

Community Benefits of Parks and Recreation

The City of London continues to be committed to improving community well-being by investing in recreation, leisure and parks that produce public goods. Public goods are benefits that everyone enjoys, not just those who directly participate. Everyone in our City benefits if:

- Children develop better social skills;
- Youth find ways to positively channel their energies;
- Culturally diverse groups find common social ground recreating together;
- Property values increase because of the quality of nearby green spaces and parks;
- Everyone takes on a stewardship role in protecting the environment;
- Health care costs are reduced because we build healthier populations;
- Businesses are more productive because of healthier workforces;
- New leaders are encouraged and supported;
- Community pride is enhanced;
- Volunteering is encouraged and enhanced;
- Our City attracts new business and economic growth because of its quality of life; and,
- Tourism increases because of the festivals and events held in the City.

Personal Benefits of Parks and Recreation

The most readily apparent benefits of parks and recreation are those that directly benefit individuals and families who participate by allowing them to:

- Learn new skills and knowledge;
- Increase personal health with particular attention paid to inactivity, obesity, disease prevention and overall well-being;
- Reduce stress and increase self-esteem;
- Develop stronger social skills and bonds of friendship;
- Stay independent longer;
- Increase life expectancy; and,
- Enjoy the beauty of parks and open spaces while enhancing quality of life.
2.4 Overview of the City’s Parks and Recreation Service Areas

London’s complex parks and recreation system delivers on Council’s vision and priorities, department and division mandates, and the benefits of parks and recreation. This system is comprised of ten major service streams:

1. Community Investments and Planning
2. Community Programs/Spectrum
3. Community Facilities (Indoor)
4. Aquatics
5. Parks Planning and Design
6. Community Facilities (Outdoor)
7. Sports Services
8. Special Events
9. Golf
10. Storybook Gardens

The municipal role in supporting the principle of services for everyone ranges from one of direct delivery, to purchase of service, to partnership (private and public), to facilitator/enabler and broker or investor.

The City’s role in community investments and planning is one of helping people by investing in neighbourhoods, developing leaders, supporting families, and working with communities. Through this type of upstream investment in our people, neighbourhoods and communities we are working to deter downstream costs and impacts such as crime, reliance on the social safety net, and poverty. Upstream investment will also result in improved outcomes, such as increased literacy rates, improved health and physical activity levels, improved quality of life, etc.

In community programs, the main objective is to provide a broad array of affordable, accessible, introductory recreation and leisure programming. The City might then work with community partners and act as a facilitator of activity by supporting the provision of programming by others for those who may wish to develop a level of excellence. In many cases the City provides the facility (e.g., meeting space, ice rinks, sport fields and playing surfaces) while community associations provide the programming (e.g., arts classes, minor hockey, soccer and football associations). The City also provides programs where gaps exist in the community and where facilities are available (e.g., adult recreational basketball and volleyball leagues).

With respect to community facilities and the two parks service areas (Parks Planning & Design and Community Facilities - Outdoor), these can be described as a network of parks and pathways, and small and large facilities that work together to strengthen neighbourhoods and meet the community development and programming needs of the community. Another important aspect of the Parks Planning and Design service area relates to the planning, protection, and management of the municipal natural heritage system, which is comprised of the Thames River valley and its many tributaries, several Environmentally Significant Areas, significant wetlands and woodlands, smaller woodlots, and open space corridors. In aquatics, the City has an historical investment in the full range of services from introductory swimming to supporting and encouraging excellence in the sport from both a programming and a facility perspective.
In terms of sport services, the City acts as a facilitator or broker bringing together sport groups where demand is expressed. The City matches common interests and identifies opportunities for partnerships and broader associations to assist in meeting demand for new facilities and services.

The City of London provides a central service for special event organizers to obtain permits, approvals and assistance in holding any type of special event in the City. The City facilitates opportunities for Londoners to come together to engage in festivals and events where cultural diversity can be celebrated in a safe, respectful and engaging manner.

The City owns and operates three public golf courses with a 60 year history of providing affordable and accessible golf opportunities for Londoners. Three locations offer a total of 90 holes of golf in a variety of course styles and levels, including a 9 hole barrier-free and accessible course.

Storybook Gardens is an admission-based local learning and recreation facility providing opportunities for interactive play and learning in a unique storybook-themed facility and park environment.

### 2.5 Parks and Recreation Guiding Principles

While each of the service areas is different in terms of level of service delivery and support, there are some fundamental principles to which they all adhere.

The primary principle is that the system affords all Londoners, regardless of age, ability, culture, income or neighbourhood the opportunity to participate in, and share in, the benefits of the City’s parks, facilities and recreational opportunities. This principle plays out differently depending on the stream of service, the demand for the service, the affordability of providing the service and the City’s role in the marketplace.

The system and these roles have evolved over time. However, in considering the future of London’s parks and recreation system we see this continuing with even greater emphasis on the following:

**Strong neighbourhoods**

- Recreation and leisure opportunities are key entry points for belonging in our community by supporting strong families and individuals in building strong neighbourhoods.
- Neighbourhoods are about people and places and how they work in partnership to make great places to live, work and play.

**Healthy lifestyles**

- Recreation directly benefits individuals and families who participate: learning new skills and knowledge, increasing personal health, reducing stress, developing stronger social skills and bonds of friendship, and staying independent longer.
- Recreation is essential to the social, cultural and economic well-being of the community.
- Creative cities enhance quality of life, marketability of the City, alternate forms of transportation, and create a climate for job creation in the knowledge economy.
Sustainable environments

- The City of London values its natural heritage and environment.
- Parks, open space and natural areas are essential to ecological survival and contribute to the overall quality of life in London.

To deliver on Council’s priorities and Departmental mandates, the Parks & Recreation Strategic Master Plan identifies guiding principles (core directional statements) and objectives that will guide recommendations and future decision-making. These guiding principles and objectives are largely complementary and should be considered as a set rather than as separate isolated statements.

### Guiding Principle 1. Accessibility and Affordability

The City of London will seek to provide fair, accessible and affordable recreation and leisure opportunities that encourage participation by a diverse community.

- Provide and maintain accessible facilities, equipment and amenities;
- Foster an environment that invites and encourages resident participation and engagement;
- Be open and accessible to residents and listen to their needs;
- Work to eliminate barriers to participation including physical, economic, cultural, transportation, language and attitudinal barriers;
- Work to ensure that community resources (City-run facilities, schools, playing fields and libraries) remain accessible and affordable to all; and,
- Work to provide programs that are more inclusive, accessible and affordable to promote and support healthy eating and physical activity levels (Child & Youth Agenda).

### Guiding Principle 2. Quality of Service

The City of London will strive to provide the highest quality of services to its residents.

- Create an environment that promotes staff excellence in service delivery;
- City of London staff should meet program standards in their fields; and,
- Continue to develop and implement operations, programs and resources that operate with integrity, are continually evaluated relative to outcomes, and respond to evolving resident needs.
### Guiding Principle 3. Quality Infrastructure (Facilities and Parks)

A strategic and sustainable system of parks and recreation infrastructure is vital to the delivery of parks and recreation services and programs.

- Work towards providing appropriate and consistent service levels across the City;
- Construct and maintain a modern and progressive system of parks and recreation infrastructure that meets the needs of a growing community;
- Maximize utilization of existing resources, through investment in rehabilitation and renewal; and,
- Maximize utilization of existing resources by investing strategically in their redevelopment or repurposing:
  - In planning and design – consider longer term community needs; and,
  - Compare costs and benefits of facility renewal against new construction.

### Guiding Principle 4. Adaptability and Flexibility

The ability to be continually relevant and flexible is important to meeting the needs of the current and future populations.

- Develop facilities, amenities and programming that are flexible, serve multiple users and can be linked to broader community strategies and initiatives related to health, economy, development, transportation, education and growth management;
- Construct and maintain a modern and progressive system of parks and recreation infrastructure that meets the needs of a growing community; and,
- Respond to evolving resident needs and strive to remain continually relevant in the types of programs, facilities and investments that London undertakes.

### Guiding Principle 5. Accountability

Open and accountable government is key to a healthy community.

- The City values being accessible to residents, listening to their needs and reporting regularly on progress.
- Continue to develop ways to meaningfully engage the public in decision;
- Exercise fiscal and social accountability in all endeavours;
- Continue to deliver consistent and responsive customer service to Londoners; and,
- Publicly report on performance and results on a regular basis.
Section 3: CONTEXT

This section provides background information for the future of parks and recreation with a review of the key City-wide initiatives informing the plan, socio-demographic and leisure trends, public and stakeholder consultations and other federal and provincial initiatives of relevance to the plan.

3.1 Recent City-wide Initiatives

Recreation and parks programs, policies and services contribute to a great extent to the success of many City-wide and community-specific priorities.

The foundation of the Strategic Master Plan is the balanced geographic distribution of recreational opportunities. Although the distribution of all recreational opportunities cannot exist at a neighbourhood level, appropriately located higher order recreational facilities such as indoor swimming pools, gymnasiums, arenas, lit sports fields, city and district parks, golf courses, etc. will be accessible to all Londoners.

The Plan strives to place facilities like gathering/programming spaces, playgrounds, and accessible pathways and trails at the neighbourhood level of distribution. These “third places” or “neighbourhood hubs” serve as anchors of community life and facilitate and foster broader, more creative interaction within neighbourhoods. These “third places”, which refer to social surroundings separate from the two usual social environments of home and the workplace, will serve as gathering places, for programming, for connecting with neighbours, and for growing a sense of neighbourhood. For some neighbourhoods, these facilities may be multi-use community centres, for others it may be a community room attached to an arena or pool, while for others it may be space in a place of worship, school, or ethnically-based social club.

The Plan can contribute to all of the initiatives listed below by identifying areas in need of gathering spaces and by guiding community programming, investments and planning.

The following is a summary of the key current initiatives involving the Community Services Department:

**London’s Child and Youth Agenda** (August 2008) was developed by a partnership of 125 organizations and individuals with a vision to achieve “happy, healthy children and youth today; caring, creative adults tomorrow”. The priorities of the Agenda centre on:

- Ending poverty;
- Making literacy a way of life;
- Leading the nation in healthy eating and healthy physical activity; and,
- Creating a family centred service system.

The City of London led the development of the Agenda and is taking an active part in implementing each of the four priorities with the Child and Youth Network partners.

Access to physical space directly impacts every aspect/priority of the Child and Youth Agenda. The desire to promote literacy is about creating an awareness of existing resources (such as libraries) and the
existence of physical space where programs (such as ESL, learn to read, educating children, finding jobs, etc.) can all take place. Addressing issues like proper nutrition requires access to space where people can learn about nutrition or where community kitchens can be established to teach people how to buy better and cook better, while building relationships in the process. Increasing physical activity also means having a space to program physical fitness – be it indoors or out. The steps to promote a healthy lifestyle could involve helping to create sports leagues, organizing programs, or even promotional campaigns to increase daily physical activity and healthy eating.

**London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy** (2008 and ongoing) recognizes that the heart and essence of every City are its neighbourhoods. To that end the Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy is being developed as a resident-driven, inclusive process that has engaged a diverse group of London residents from all neighbourhoods.

The Resident Task Force, facilitated by City of London staff from Community Services, Planning & Development and the Environmental & Engineering Departments, will develop a Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy and Implementation Plan for all neighbourhoods in 2009.

The Resident Task Force has created a vision for London’s neighbourhoods which states that:

*Our London is a City of neighbourhoods.*

*Our London neighbourhoods will be empowered, sustainable, safe and active communities. We will care for and celebrate each other while encouraging diversity and inclusiveness in our neighbourhoods.*

*Our neighbourhoods will be environmentally and socially responsible and will have available green space, vibrant local economies and accessible amenities of daily life.*

(Note: The Resident Task Force will bring the Strategy to City Council for endorsement.)

The basis of strategy development will build on both the social and physical infrastructure, as these two features were seen as essential ingredients in creating strong, vibrant communities.

The Strategic Master Plan supports this work by providing recommendations about how the City can provide support and capacity-building assistance, as well as recommendations around locating parks, pathways and facilities at the neighbourhood level.

The City of London has already had many successes in inspiring neighbourhood residents to mobilize and take action, thereby improving their quality of life. One such example is the **Kipps Lane Strategy**, which is currently (2008 and 2009) underway. This process will serve as a template for other neighbourhoods that might need some assistance in mobilizing residents for the benefit of their respective neighbourhoods. The long-term goals of the Strategy include the creation of a community development map of assets and neighbourhood action plans driven by neighbourhood facilitators through the Kipps Lane Resident Working Group.

The Community Services Department has played a role in providing affordable recreation opportunities as an impetus for greater social engagement in this neighbourhood and in many others across the City. It is expected that the City will continue to play a strong role in future local and neighbourhood strategies of this type.
The “in motion @” plan (being led by the City of London, Middlesex London Health Unit, and University of Western Ontario Faculty of Health Sciences, in partnership with other agencies) seeks to increase physical activity and healthy lifestyles. The pillars of the plan include:

- Education and communication;
- Community development and capacity building;
- Supportive environments; and,
- Healthy public policy.

City of London staff is involved in each pillar to deliver the message regarding active lifestyles, providing safe and appealing infrastructure, and implementing programs and services that touch on the active theme. Linkages exist with the Child and Youth Agenda priority of “Healthy Eating, Healthy Physical Activity”.

Youth continue to be considered a key priority of the Community Services Department. Although demographic projections indicate that the youth population will decline slightly over the next 18 years, the investment in youth is clearly recognized as an investment in the future health and strength of the community. Public and staff input centred on ensuring that youth:

- remain engaged by building youth leadership and capacity-improving access to opportunities (be they direct provision of programs, youth-directed activities or youth-centric spaces); and,
- enjoy a full range of choices including competitive and non-competitive sports, arts and creative expression and social opportunities.

The goal is to increase youth participation, gain better health outcomes, build capacity for the future, and fully engage youth in self-directed activities. London has been designated one of Ontario’s Youth Friendly cities by the PlayWorks Partnership and many activities are already ongoing or underway with support and/or leadership from City of London, including:

- National Youth Week Activities;
- Creation and maintenance of a youth portal: “YouthWeb” www.london.ca/youth;
- A collaboration of agencies supporting youth: London Youth Service Providers (LYSP);
- City-wide vehicle for youth to organize in support of youth: London Youth Council;
- Kipps Lane Youth Mentorship Initiative;
- Youth leadership development programs (Leader in Training Programs and Targeted Leadership Program);
- Summer and year round activity programs for teens; and,
- Cooperative training opportunities for youth and youth workers.

A number of community partners (including the City) are involved in implementing the “Working Together to Support London Seniors – Community Action Plan” in an effort to recognize the aging population and the related increases in demands for supports and services. The older adult population will grow significantly over the next 20 years (an increase of approximately 50,000 residents over 55 years of age); the Community Services Department needs to be prepared for this increase from service provision and resourcing perspectives.
Areas to be addressed in this Action Plan include:

- Transportation
- Fraud, Crime and Abuse
- Access to Information
- Housing, Home Care and Long-term Care
- Employment and Volunteering
- Recreation and Leisure Opportunities
- Isolation
- Income Supports and Cost of Living
- Health and Mental Health Supports

There are also other City and external initiatives underway that may impact the Parks & Recreation Strategic Master Plan. The progress and relationship of these to the Plan will need to be monitored. Some such initiatives include:

- Thames Valley Corridor Plan;
- Outdoor Skatepark Implementation Strategy;
- Southwest Area Plan and other Area Planning projects;
- Downtown Master Plan and other Master Plan projects; and,
- Urban Design Work Program / Placemaking Guidelines and Demonstration Project;

3.2 Socio-demographic Trends

Total Population

In 2006, Statistics Canada reported the City of London’s population to be 352,393, representing growth of nearly 16,000 people (5%) since 2001. The 2007 estimate of the City’s population is 355,675.
The City’s population forecasts between 2007 and 2027 suggest an annual growth rate of just under 1%, which translates into slightly more than 3,000 new residents each year. Ultimately, the City is forecasted to have 421,200 residents by 2027, representing 18.4% growth over 2007 (a total of 65,525 residents). It should be noted that the projections in this section are only an informed estimation of the future. They are not accurate predictions of the future and should be used accordingly.

Population by Age

With regard to population growth by age group, older adults age 55 years and over are expected to account for 76% of the population growth between the years 2007 and 2027; this age group currently accounts for 25% of the City’s total population and this proportion will grow to 33% by 2027. This aging of the population is a trend that is being witnessed province-wide.

The 20-39 age cohort will grow by 13% and the number of youth between 0 and 9 years will grow by 11%; however, neither of these groups will grow as fast as the City’s overall population, resulting in a reduced proportion of the population. The only age cohort that is declining in total numbers is the 10-19 age group, which is projected to shrink by 4% by 2027.

City of London Population Forecasts by Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Population Estimates &amp; Projections</th>
<th>Total Population Change (2007-2027)</th>
<th>% of Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007 (est.)</td>
<td>2017 (proj.)</td>
<td>2027 (proj.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 to 9 years</td>
<td>37,890</td>
<td>39,700</td>
<td>41,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 19 years</td>
<td>46,775</td>
<td>41,900</td>
<td>44,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 39 years</td>
<td>101,470</td>
<td>112,900</td>
<td>115,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 to 54 years</td>
<td>80,300</td>
<td>75,200</td>
<td>80,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 to 64 years</td>
<td>39,480</td>
<td>51,100</td>
<td>48,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+ years</td>
<td>49,760</td>
<td>67,800</td>
<td>90,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City – Total</td>
<td>355,675</td>
<td>388,600</td>
<td>421,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Custom Data Request prepared by Traffic Zone (Sept. 2007)

Population Distribution

The City has been divided into six smaller territories or “collections of neighbourhoods” for a more detailed analysis. This is a slight departure from the five “Plan Areas” that were identified in the 2003 Strategic Master Plan; however, the intent is the same – to better assess the spatial distribution of recreation services for the purposes of this Plan (e.g., facilities per population). All Plan Areas are generally similar in population and, where possible, have been defined by major physical barriers such as the Thames River. The application of the Plan Areas is not intended to suggest that each area should contain the same service provision levels, as the needs and capacities of each area are unique.
The following table lists the expected population growth for each of the Plan Areas. The Plan Areas that are expected to grow by the largest proportions and total people are the Northeast, the Northwest and the Southwest.

City of London Population Forecasts by Plan Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan Area</th>
<th>2007 (estimate)</th>
<th>2017 (projection)</th>
<th>2027 (projection)</th>
<th>Change (2007-2027)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>73,026</td>
<td>72,992</td>
<td>75,046</td>
<td>2,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>34,714</td>
<td>49,094</td>
<td>55,099</td>
<td>20,385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest</td>
<td>57,615</td>
<td>66,978</td>
<td>75,700</td>
<td>18,085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>58,046</td>
<td>56,263</td>
<td>55,637</td>
<td>-2,409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>51,865</td>
<td>54,366</td>
<td>58,725</td>
<td>6,860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>80,409</td>
<td>88,908</td>
<td>100,993</td>
<td>20,584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City – Total</td>
<td>355,675</td>
<td>388,601</td>
<td>421,200</td>
<td>65,525</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Key Demographic Observations

The 2006 Census shows a growing diversity of Londoners. 20% of London residents have a mother tongue other than English or French and the total immigrant population is growing. 21% of the local residents were born in a country other than Canada and visible minorities represent 14% of the population; the characteristics of visible minorities in London are shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visible Minority</th>
<th>Residents in London</th>
<th>% of the London Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arab</td>
<td>7,700</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin American</td>
<td>7,700</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>7,600</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>6,300</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asian</td>
<td>6,200</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Identity</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East Asian</td>
<td>3,700</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Asian</td>
<td>2,200</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Visible Minority</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census

A profile on children, youth and families in London, based on 2001 Census data, indicated that:

- 17% of London residents are considered low income and live at or below the Low Income Cut Off (LICO), which can be defined as spending 20 more percentage points on food, shelter and clothing than the average family;
- 46% of families living below LICO are led by lone parents;
- 51% of families living below LICO are immigrants;
- 41% of the users of the Food Banks are children and youth;
- 25% of the users of Food Banks have no income; and,
- a child born in London today has a 20% chance of living in poverty.

It is also important to note that Statistics Canada indicates that 1.9 million Canadians reported having a disability in 2006. 15.5% of Ontarians reported a disability, up 2% from 2001. Based on these percentages, approximately 56,400 of London’s current residents would report having a disability. It is anticipated that with the aging population, the percentage of persons with disabilities could increase to 20% in the future.
3.3 Leisure Trends

Effective planning for London’s current and future residents requires the identification and constant monitoring of existing and emerging trends that could potentially affect facility and program needs. Understanding trends related to demographics, participation, and facility provision can help the City anticipate shifts in the demand for recreation and parks opportunities. The following is a high level summary of major trends in participation, demand and the delivery of recreation and parks facilities and services, based largely on information collected from recent provincial and national research.

Societal Trends Impacting Parks & Recreation

- High levels of physical inactivity in all age groups – less than half of Canadian children are active enough to achieve optimal growth and development; physical inactivity costs Canadians $1.6 billion and $3.7 billion annually in direct and indirect costs.
- Health and obesity are becoming a national crisis – the proportion of obese children has increased threefold in the past 25 years. Today’s children will be the first generation with a life expectancy shorter than their parents.
- Aging population (baby boomers are reaching retirement age) – there is significant segmentation amongst older adults and seniors, with demands ranging from active recreation activities to more traditional and passive activities.
- Increasing ethnic diversity – more than half of Ontario’s population growth between 1996 and 2006 can be attributed to immigration; this percentage was closer to one-third in London.
- Heightened awareness of the need to accommodate people with disabilities (not just through facility design, but also programming, customer service, signage, etc.), particularly given the pending regulations for the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.
- Busy lifestyles and a lack of free time – commuting, home-based occupations, night shifts, and weekend work are creating the need to have leisure services open later and the need to promote drop-in opportunities.
- Income disparities and continued need for affordable leisure opportunities – older adults have more disposable income to spend on leisure pursuits, while young families, youth, and economically disadvantaged individuals may find it difficult to afford to pursue a healthy lifestyle through participation in recreation; this may result in a need for more subsidies to assist those that are on fixed incomes and also a movement away from age-based subsidies for those that can afford to pay for services.
- Fewer volunteers are doing more work – the sport and recreation sector is traditionally very reliant on volunteers and this requires constant recruitment, training, and recognition.
- Increasing expectations of residents in terms of both quantity and quality of opportunities.
- Increasing awareness of the importance of recreation as a tool to support marginalized residents (e.g., homeless).
Participation Trends Impacting Parks & Recreation

- Growth in unstructured, self-scheduled activities.
- Participation in many organized sports is holding steady or even losing ground. Approximately 50% of children and youth and 28% of adults participate directly in sport in Canada, but as the community ages and less growth is seen in younger age groups, sport participation rates are not expected to increase as fast as the overall population. For example, participation in ringette and girls hockey is on the rise, while participation by boys in organized hockey is declining.
- Emerging (non-traditional) recreation activities, particularly in communities that are becoming more ethnically diverse.
- Increasing pressure for elite sport facilities for both training and competition (such as indoor turf complexes, track and field facilities, aquatic competitive use pools, etc.), as well as year-round opportunities for recreational and competitive sports (such as soccer, hockey, football, etc.).
- High levels of interest in pathways and trails, swimming, and other activities that can be done by all ages and levels of ability.
- Increased environmental awareness and stewardship, including park naturalization.

Design Trends Impacting Parks & Recreation

- Existing recreational infrastructure is aging, creating customer service and funding challenges – the majority of recreation facilities in Ontario are over 25 years old and 30% to 50% of these are near the end of their useful life.
- National trends show a general preference for multi-use community facilities over single-use facilities as many users prefer a choice of amenities/services/activities in one location. At the same time, the demand for neighbourhood-level facilities (e.g., gathering/programming spaces, playgrounds, and accessible pathways and trails) remains important to Londoners.
- Increased emphasis on resource-sharing, such as partnerships and other collaborative arrangements.
- “Green” construction and facility retrofitting (many municipalities are adopting minimum LEED requirements), which can result in increased capital costs, but lower operating costs in the long-run.
- Urban design trends emphasize the importance of plentiful greenspace and parks within individual neighbourhoods. Walkability and urban design that is conducive to alternative modes of transportation are gaining popularity as well.
- Growth in passive recreational use of pathways and trails leads to demand for amenities (drinking fountains, washrooms, outdoor exercise equipment, benches etc.).
- Use of all-season sport surfaces and field lighting to increase capacity of existing sport fields.
3.4 **Community Consultation**

Community consultation was an important component in the development of the Parks & Recreation Strategic Master Plan. The consultation program undertaken as part of this Strategic Master Plan provided insight into public perceptions, expectations, and demands in London as well as a review of the strengths and weaknesses of the parks and recreation system. The consultation program for this Plan consisted of:

- A Stakeholder Group Workshop with over 120 representatives from sport groups, neighbourhood/community groups, service clubs, cultural groups, agencies and educational institutions;
- Two open public meetings;
- Focus groups with key City staff; and,
- Interviews with Mayor, Controllers and City Councillors.

Information from the household telephone survey undertaken for the 2003 was also reviewed.

Residents noted that London has many high quality facilities (e.g., multi-use community centres, municipal golf courses and venues such as the John Labatt Centre). There is also a lot of praise for the outdoor parks and pathway and trail systems and municipal programming.

The following are themes that were consistently heard throughout the consultation process. Please note that these items were those that were raised most frequently during the public participation program and may not represent the entire range of input received.

**Overall Strengths**

- Abundance of parkland and greenspace in most neighbourhoods;
- High quality and responsiveness of existing facilities;
- Multi-purpose pathway system;
- Diversity of leisure programs;
- Municipal golf courses;
- Signature parks (e.g., Springbank Park, Victoria Park); and,
- Subsidy / Financial Assistance program.

**Opportunities for Improvement**

**Service Delivery**

- The public and stakeholders are interested in more opportunities to consult and communicate with the City;
- More publicity and advertising for programs and facilities was requested; and,
- Challenges were identified regarding access to, and the shared use of, schools.

**Programming**

- Affordability must continue to be a key objective; and,
- More programs for youth should be a priority.
Indoor Recreation Facilities
- Gaps in facility distribution (Southwest, Southeast, East, and Northwest were frequently raised);
- While larger multi-use facilities are great, there is a desire for more neighbourhood-based facilities;
- There is growing demand for indoor soccer facilities;
- There is a desire to re-examine single pad arenas and their ability to become repurposed as more multi-use, neighbourhood facilities; and,
- Linking facilities with pathways and bus routes is desired.

Outdoor Recreation Facilities, Parks, and Trails
- Completion of pathway and trails network should be a priority;
- Bike lanes are in demand, but safety is an issue (improve public awareness, provide or encourage development of lock-up facilities);
- Neighbourhood focus for parks and playgrounds must continue;
- Improvements to parks and support amenities are being requested;
- Sport field maintenance and upgrades should be considered, even if it means reducing the number of fields (e.g., baseball); and,
- Requests were received for a larger skate park, dedicated football field, more spray pads, indoor pools, soccer fields, and prime time ice at arenas.

3.5 Other Considerations

Strides have been made by federal and provincial governments (primarily through policies) that should be considered by the City of London in forming any recommendations and policies regarding parks and recreation participation:

- The Canadian Sport Policy (2002) outlines areas through which sport impacts Canadian society, including social and personal development, health, culture, education, economic development, and entertainment. The policy is based upon four key goals: enhanced participation, enhanced interaction, enhanced excellence, and enhanced capacity.

- The True Sport Movement’s goal is to make sport one of Canada’s most valued public assets and in the process, contribute immeasurably to the social fabric of Canadian society. Community sport has great potential to enrich the lives of those who participate and to help build strong, vibrant communities. “The London Declaration: Expectations for Fairness in Sport” was signed in London, Ontario in 2001 by the then Ministers of Sport in recognition of renewed emphasis on the ethical foundations of sport. Staff from the Parks & Recreation Department endorsed the True Sport Movement in 2006 and endeavour to promote the movement and to foster growth amongst program participants and community sport organizations.

- Active 2010 was created by the Provincial government with the goal of increasing participation in sport and physical activity throughout Ontario. The strategy presents numerous benefits of regular activity, including: increased longevity; psychological well-being; increased labour force productivity; and support for the economic growth of cities.
• The Integrated Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy draws connections between several health determinants including physical activity, healthy eating, and living tobacco free. The strategy sets targets for all Canadians, with specific emphasis on children, youth, aboriginals, and vulnerable Canadians.

• In January of 2009, People for Education put together a document called “Ontario’s Urban and Suburban Schools: A Prescription for Change”, which compiles policy recommendations for the Provincial government concerning the role of schools in the community. This document recommended that municipalities and school boards establish offices to coordinate local frameworks for services and planning, which includes the coordinated use of school buildings. The document stated that school boards should provide leadership, guidance and support to administrators to create welcoming schools that reach out to the community. The Province is currently in the midst of announcing changes that will enhance community access to school facilities.
Section 4: SYSTEM RECOMMENDATIONS

This section outlines the initiatives that cut across all service categories, including service excellence, communications/engagement, access and equity, social marketing and promotion, partnerships, and environmental stewardship.

4.1 Service Excellence

The City of London is committed to service excellence and strives to provide and enable programs and services that are meaningful, produce benefit to participants and the community, and are delivered effectively with a commitment to continuously improve the level of service. Staff strive to be innovative, creative and in touch with community needs and expectations.

The City serves the public in providing and facilitating a wide range of parks and recreation facilities and experiences. Programs and facilities are well used and the public holds the services in high regard. The City aims to maintain and build upon this foundation of public approval by being clear about the work of the City, its mission, vision and service objectives. Articulating and refining the City’s service delivery model and priorities will assist municipal staff in continuing to place resources where they are needed and will be most effective.

The role of the City of London, in providing balanced service delivery, is to review and respond to the entire spectrum of parks and recreational needs in the community. This role requires the City to:

- Build and maintain a clean, safe, usable system of parks and recreation facilities that support healthy and socially active lifestyles and where neighbourhoods are strong, liveable and inclusive;
- Understand demographics, community issues and emerging trends;
- Identify needs and partner with key providers and stakeholders;
- Determine gaps and needed improvements;
- Build community partner capacity to provide services and programs independently;
- Work to include all residents, as well as pay particular attention to under-represented and underserved groups;
- Directly provide facilities and programs where gaps exist or the capacity to provide is not present in the community;
- Play an ongoing supportive role to community groups and partners;
- Provide support for recruiting, training and recognizing volunteers;
- Provide a staff team that is dedicated and well skilled;
- Build and foster partnerships in the delivery of services;
- Meaningfully engage the community in planning, decision-making and program / service delivery; and,
- Continually evaluate service delivery effectiveness and make needed changes to be both proactive and responsive.

While public perceptions are positive about the work of the City of London, continued attention to some specific areas outlined below is likely to enhance services and public approval.
Performance Measurement and Testing the Effectiveness of the Current Delivery System

Entrenching evidence-based decision-making processes will demonstrate when the City is meeting or exceeding the mark in terms of quality assurance, community and user satisfaction, community engagement levels, human resources efficiency, customer service and the delivery on community priorities (environment, inclusiveness, etc.). The development of performance measures and comparison of results year after year will clearly demonstrate the City’s commitment to service excellence. A full review of the effectiveness of the model should be executed every 3-5 years.

Communication with Community Groups and Stakeholders

City Staff has formed strong relationships with stakeholders and partners and works together with the community to ensure that parks and recreation services are delivered in a thoughtful fashion. Staff works to ensure that these groups and stakeholders are supported in their endeavours and are consulted on any potential policy and procedural changes that may be under development. In some cases regular meetings are held to consider the collective approach to service delivery. The City has an “open door policy” to work on any emerging issues the groups may bring up. There is a continuing effort to strengthen communications with community groups and stakeholders and it is suggested that a communications audit form the basis of these improvements.

Recommendations – Service Excellence

1. Continue to support community development and customer service initiatives in order to:
   - increase partnership opportunities;
   - develop a more community-based delivery system;
   - modify direct programming in response to the current needs of the community; and,
   - encourage resident participation and engagement.

2. In defining its role in a strength-based delivery system, the City should be responsible for providing the following core services:
   - the supply and maintenance of a system of parks and recreation facilities capable of serving the needs of residents;
   - the provision of services and programs to serve specific groups where the City is the agency that is the best positioned to deliver them; priority should be given to those programs and services that reach the greatest number of residents and/or provides the greatest public benefit;
   - the supply and maintenance of appropriate areas of open space/parkland for passive and active pursuits and the protection of significant environmental features;
   - the provision of staff to co-ordinate and program core services including planning, research, facility allocation, customer service, community development functions, etc.; and,
   - research and response to social issues and emerging trends with respect to service delivery.

In addition, the City may become involved when:
   - there is no other available and/or appropriate provider of a service for an identified activity;
   - for reasons of legislation or public safety, the services are best provided by the City;
   - the program is seen as a priority by the public and operation by an alternative provider would not be acceptable to the public; or
   - revenue-generating opportunities are significant or can be self-sustaining to the overall operations and programs.
3. On an ongoing basis, the effectiveness of the City’s service delivery model in meeting community needs should be monitored. The model should be reassessed every three to five years or as necessary by developing and assessing performance measures, efficiencies, quality assurance, service satisfaction and the City’s ability to respond to service priorities.

4. Strengthen the City’s role in supporting volunteerism, including the definition of roles, responsibilities and parameters for volunteer involvement in the delivery of parks and recreation services. As a general principle, the City will support volunteers by assisting with training, organizational development, providing advertising (e.g., Spectrum) and promoting increased recognition through organizations engaged in recreation, leisure and sport delivery.

5. Develop a performance measurement system by which the level, quality, and effectiveness of service delivery can be strategically and operationally evaluated and assessed on an ongoing basis. The performance indicators should be based upon a benefits-driven approach that promotes positive end results for the entire community.

6. Review services and programs to identify the benefits that each one delivers and make continuous efforts to maximize the delivery of these positive outcomes and address gaps in delivery.

4.2 Communications / Engagement

City of London staff exist to provide and enable meaningful programs and services that respond to current leisure trends and needs within the City. To this end, staff engage residents, business, likeminded organizations and community groups on a regular basis to continue to focus on investments that enhance local capacity and support accessible, responsive programming – particularly in neighbourhoods with higher numbers of vulnerable children, youth and families. Meaningful programs and services cannot be provided without open dialogue with the people that the City serves.

In addition, the City engages in joint projects where its expertise can lead to positive outcomes for the community in several different ways. An example is the provision of land and resources for the development of community gardening. This initiative benefits our community in several different ways. Community gardens:

- is a greening strategy;
- strengthens the stewardship and protection of open space;
- is an educational opportunity;
- provides food security for our vulnerable populations; and,
- provides healthy and fresh food choices to individuals and families.

There are many synergies and collaborative opportunities that can provide benefits to the community in addition to those directly associated with parks and recreation. The City has seen many successes as a result of community engagement in support of community priorities. This reinforces the ability of collaborative partnerships to deliver on many fronts.
The notion of community development and engagement implies a collaborative approach whereby all parties first seek to listen and understand and then determine how best to act together. The City and the community must continue to work collaboratively in order to sustain strong connections and seek solutions based on common goals and understanding.

### Recommendations – Communications / Engagement

7. Identify and communicate the Community Services Department’s role in supporting corporate and community initiatives.

8. Undertake a communications audit and develop and execute a meaningful communications plan, in cooperation with community groups and stakeholders.

9. Build on engagement strategies by developing a plan to systematically seek input from various groups and participants to ensure that programs and services are meeting expectations and that the City remains flexible in responding to needs.

10. The City should act as an “information broker” and share its knowledge and expertise with the community to aid in capacity building and the identification of necessary and redundant services. In order to accomplish this, the City should ensure that its information resources are accurate, relevant, and accessible to residents and the City’s partners in recreation.

11. In an effort to enhance customer service and capitalize on existing synergies, the Community Services Department should play a lead role in enhancing communication and coordination among the civic partners involved in the delivery of recreation and parks.

12. Promote and advocate the importance and values of recreation to residents and the City’s partners in recreation.

### 4.3 Access and Equity (Services for All)

This theme area is based on the goal of ensuring that programs, services, facilities and opportunities are accessible, affordable and inclusive of all residents.

The provision of recreation and parks facilities, programs and services brings with it the challenge of including the needs of a culturally diverse population, persons with disabilities and low income residents by ensuring that all residents’ needs are understood and, further, that any barriers to full participation are identified and addressed. All residents need to feel included by being heard in the development of programs and services and “counted in” through service and program provision and employment opportunities. Particular focus is required for the term of this Strategic Master Plan to include persons of low income, culturally diverse residents, and persons with disabilities.

The City of London fully recognizes its role and responsibility in including all of its residents in the provision of service and has responded by developing respective corporate strategies, policies, and concrete actions to fully meet this vision.
For example, including persons from culturally diverse backgrounds involves understanding and addressing the barriers to participation, possibly providing space for groups to self-manage the provision of recreational activities, and offering introductory experiences to typical Canadian recreation pursuits.

Residents with low incomes face particular barriers in accessing parks and recreation services, including: lack of transportation, family support, awareness, safe places to play, childcare and the inability to place a priority on participation in recreational pursuits spending time and money on security needs (housing, employment, food) instead. Special approaches must be taken to include residents of low income, including: subsidy policies, a wide range of no cost / low cost programs and opportunities, educating about the benefits of participating, providing leadership training toward potential future employment, and providing childcare services to enable adults and caregivers to participate.

The City’s role in better serving under-represented residents and groups can best be described as follows:

- **Organizational Commitment**: The City states that programs and services are for all and inclusion is paramount to the success of program and service provision.
- **Organizational Policy and Plans**: Policies state the importance of access, equity and inclusion in the provision/enabling of programs and services. There are plans developed to address where the gaps in service provision exist.
- **Informed Leadership**: The leaders within the corporation and the champions within the community are well informed and play a role in promoting the balanced provision of service and inclusion of all under-represented groups.
- **Representation in Decision-Making & Governance**: The City’s leadership, staff, advisory committees and volunteers reflect the community it serves.
- **Effective Partnerships**: Community partners are identified and assisted in building capacity where it is needed and role clarity is evident.
- **Service Planning & Evaluation**: Services and initiatives continue to be provided that address gaps in service provision to under-represented groups. Further that the effectiveness of the services is determined and results are distributed to like-minded organizations and the public annually.
- **Communications, Language, Promotion and Publicity**: Barriers to participation are reduced through the use of plain language in communications, City reports, promotion and publicity. Access to interpretation and translation services, as well as physical access, is recognized as essential to full participation.
- **Human Resources**: Policies and practices with respect to recruitment, retention, promotion, training and development of staff and volunteers enable a barrier-free workforce that reflects the community it serves.

It is critical that the Department strengthen its existing approach to understand needs, develop programs and services, strengthen partnerships, and evaluate its effectiveness in including under-represented groups. The City is compliant with provincial accessibility legislation and follows the advice of the Accessibility Advisory Committee to understand and create barrier free infrastructure and services.
### Recommendations – Access and Equity (Services for All)

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Continue to work with community partners to ensure that persons with disabilities have full access to the parks and recreational system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Require all organizations receiving funding from the City for the delivery of parks and recreation services to be committed to the City’s policies on accessibility (e.g., that they have formal accessibility plans in place).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Recreation programs, facilities, and parks must be designed with accessibility in mind, including adherence to the requirements under the <em>Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Ensure that City staff involved in programming and service delivery for persons with disabilities receive proper training and on-going professional development opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Continue to implement and periodically update municipal policies on inclusion of people with disabilities and facility accessibility standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>In planning new facilities, geographic accessibility should be a basic requirement (e.g., locating facilities so that the largest number of persons can reach the facility on foot, by bicycle, and by public transit).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>In the Spectrum Guide and other Departmental publications, include a statement – translated into the predominant languages other than English – that the Community Services Department seeks to be fully inclusive and the processes by which residents can access services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Formalize an approach to providing seamless communications through the use of translation services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Develop a departmental policy to ensure that all advisory and project related committees working with the Community Services Department represent the community they serve, including (where relevant) members of different sexes, age groups, income levels, cultures, and abilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Develop a policy and identify the resources required to provide translation and interpretive signing (where appropriate) at community meetings in order to fully engage under-represented groups and individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Periodically review grant programs for self-managed service organizations to ensure that the funding criteria are aligned with the needs of under-represented groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Through inclusive forums, provide staff with information and first hand testimonials on the barriers under-represented groups face in accessing services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Implement a training program for staff to gain the skills and competencies needed to fully engage under-represented populations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Continue to systematically execute observational audits in parks and recreation facilities on a regular basis to determine how parks and facility use is changing and how best to serve changing needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Post the listing of organizations that provide support to under-represented groups (including the goals of the organizations and their contact information) in Spectrum, other appropriate publications, and on the City website.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Recommendations – Access and Equity (Services for All)

28. Ensure that partnership agreements are aligned with the needs of under-represented residents and that services are provided in a balanced fashion (recognizing that different approaches may be taken to advance different populations toward the same outcome).

29. Foster the development of existing, new and emerging sport and recreational activities that may be popular with under-represented populations.

30. Expand child-minding services during program and recreational opportunities to enable access for parents and caregivers, primarily in low-income areas.

31. Continue to offer a range of youth leadership training opportunities. Where necessary, especially in low-income neighbourhoods, these programs should be subsidized or provided at no charge in order to reduce fiscal barriers and increase employment opportunities for youth.

32. Develop simple but meaningful performance measures (inputs, outputs, efficiencies and effectiveness) with respect to including under-represented groups and report annually to respective groups and stakeholders.

33. Continue to place high priority on the subsidy program and financial policy to reduce financial barriers to participation. Expand the policy into a broader Access Policy in order to consider equipment, transportation and other barriers.

34. Continue implementing the Pricing Framework aimed at developing standardized and simplified approaches to setting fees for facilities and programs. Eliminate all user fee discounts that are based on age, with the exception of those for children and youth.

35. Engage a full range of under-represented groups in the development of new and in the review of existing programs and services.

36. Provide staff training to ensure that plain language is used in all reports, presentations and publications in the future.

37. When pursuing major sporting, cultural or special events, the City’s primary responsibility should be to the needs of local residents and the facility requirements identified in this Plan. Although it is recognized that special events and tournaments often provide economic benefits to local recreation organizations and the City as a whole, any new facilities that may be required should meet the recreational activity needs of Londoners first and foremost.

38. Continue to expand and improve access to the City’s pathway system because it provides low-cost, accessible, multi-generational recreation for all neighbourhoods.
4.4 Social Marketing and Promotion

The City places a high priority on listening to the public, offering consistent messages about embracing healthy and active lifestyles, and communicating the full breadth of parks and recreational opportunities.

Parks and recreation service providers play a key role in educating the public about the importance and benefits of participating in leisure opportunities. It is felt that if residents understand the importance of embracing an active and healthy lifestyle and the City continues to provide/enable accessible, safe and enjoyable programs and services, participation will increase and the overall health of the residents will improve.

At a minimum, users and non-users of programs and services must have the opportunity to have open and ongoing dialogue with the Department about accessing programs and services, emerging trends, community and individual involvement, current and future needs and potential partnerships. The City must use all of its communication and listening tools to maximize communications and influence residents and stakeholders.

To market programs and services successfully, the City must clearly understand the social issues and pressures and the direction in which the community is moving. Recognizing public attitudes and current behaviours will assist in developing meaningful communications and social marketing programs. The outcomes/benefits of the programs and services must be communicated.

**Recommendations – Social Marketing and Promotion**

| 39. | Place greater emphasis on social marketing and messaging relating to physical activity and healthy lifestyles – “activity” “participation” “engagement” might be considered key themes. This can be achieved by implementing initiatives such as “in motion ®”, London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy, Child and Youth Agenda (Healthy Eating, Healthy Physical Activity), and working hand-in-hand with youth, older adults and other key groups. |
| 40. | Consider the use of the parks, pathways and trails networks for interpretive signage, promoting community events and opportunities for engagement. |
| 41. | Undertake seasonal publicity campaigns to promote the start-up of programs. |
| 42. | In all appropriate publications, describe (in English and other primary languages) how residents can find out more information on what is going on in their neighbourhood and the broader community. |
4.5 Partnerships

Partnerships will continue to play an important role in London’s future delivery of municipal parks and recreation facilities and services. Economic pressures will continue to prompt the City to pursue partnerships as a means of containing capital and operating costs, sharing risks, increasing the speed with which new projects can be brought online, expanding the availability of capital, increasing revenues, enhancing facility maintenance, and improving the cost efficiency of service delivery. As the breadth of programming demands expands, the City will be required to create relationships with outside interests to gain access to new funding opportunities, enhanced management expertise and other resources that may be otherwise unavailable. Also, the City will inevitably be approached with partnership proposals that will arise from community groups, not-for-profit organizations or the private sector.

In all likelihood, the number and variety of partnerships that London will consider will increase for the foreseeable future. To adequately prepare the City to effectively manage this trend, it is recommended that the City adopt a Standardized Partnership Framework that sets out a decision-making process to ensure that new and existing relationships with outside groups provide maximum benefit to the municipality. Furthermore, a search, selection and monitoring approach should be uniformly applied to relationships with all external entities. The Framework would set out a defined process that is fair, equitable and transparent and that outlines clearly the expectations and obligations of organizations – private sector entities, community groups, etc. - wishing to partner with the municipality. The Framework should also include a mechanism through which unsolicited proposals can be objectively evaluated.

The implementation of a standardized approach to search for and select appropriate partners would demonstrate the City’s resolve in utilizing partnerships to enhance service provision as well as to seek alternate revenues to reduce capital and operating costs as an integral part of its future service delivery strategy.

### Recommendations - Partnerships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>Continue to enter into partnerships with public, not-for-profit, and/or private organizations to enhance the parks and natural heritage system and to support community led projects that add benefit to local neighbourhoods and the City overall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>Where appropriate, consider entering into partnerships with public, not-for-profit, and/or private organizations in developing, financing, operating, and/or maintaining recreation facilities and parks or services in an effort to reduce the burden on the tax base, while expanding services, improving cost efficiency, customer service, and accessibility for the residents of London.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>Adopt a Partnership Framework that standardizes the approach through which London develops relationships with outside entities for the development of leisure facilities or the delivery of recreation services. The framework should establish a clear approach for identifying potential projects suitable for partnerships, for assessing the suitability of partners, and for undertaking the partnership search, selection, and monitoring tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>Assess requests for financial assistance, facilities or programs in the area of recreation and parks through the application of a standardized framework, as per the unsolicited proposal framework.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recommendations - Partnerships

47. Consider adopting a policy through which organizations receiving core funding from the City enter into “Purchase of Service” agreements.

48. Identify the Community Services Department’s partners in recreation and bring them together on a regular basis to lend support through community development initiatives, promotion, grant assistance, service partnerships, funding, etc.

49. Bring the Community Services Department’s funding partners together on a regular basis and acquaint them with the City’s identified facility and program priorities. Included in this list would be Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, the United Way, the London Community Foundation, Jump Start, Kids Sport, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, provincial sport organizations, etc.

50. Acquaint community partners with existing sources of municipal and non-municipal funding and work with other funding partners to offer periodic funders forums.

51. Require all community partners receiving municipal core funds to report on and define how their service addresses the key priorities.

52. Encourage the City’s partners to establish methodologies that measure the effectiveness of the services delivered.

53. Require all service partners receiving municipal funds to define and report on service outcomes.

54. In order to maximize the effectiveness of the City-School Board partnerships, give consideration to the following:
   - undertake further discussions with School Boards to ensuring efficient public access to schools for municipal recreation programs and user groups; and,
   - encourage coordinated planning of community recreation and school facilities.

55. Continue to consult partners on a regular basis and seek to increase the flow of information in order to become better aligned with community priorities, strengthen relationships, and avoid duplication of service.
4.6 Environmental Stewardship

One of Council's priority areas is to protect a healthy and sustainable environment and encourage an environmentally sensitive city. The City of London is committed to taking a leadership role in addressing the environmental impacts of its operations. The provision of a safe and clean parks and open space system strengthens the liveability and vibrancy of the City, while making London a place where people of all ages are engaged in healthy lifestyles.

Through the Planning and Development Department, the City's Parks and Horticulture Services staff provide property management services and program support to the community's parks and open space system and civic and recreation facilities for the benefit of Londoners in the enjoyment of active and passive recreational pursuits. These functions include ground maintenance, program support to existing and emerging recreational activities, and environmental stewardship initiatives.

London's parks and open space system has consistently been rated by the public as one of the City's best assets, both for its quality of design and quality of maintenance. The mix of neighbourhood parks, community sport complexes, and environmentally significant areas receive high praise from residents, as do the City's many environmental stewardship initiatives. The coordination of community partnership projects in parks has also been a great success.

In terms of the local natural heritage system (e.g., environmentally significant areas, woodlots), the City will continue to support its protection and enhancement through restoration, rehabilitation, and renaturalization, as well as through stewardship initiatives and continued community partnerships. Alignment of the recommendations between this Strategic Master Plan and the Thames Valley Corridor Plan (currently being prepared) will be important in this regard.

**Recommendations – Environmental Stewardship**

56. New capital projects should be in accordance with principles of environmental and financial sustainability.

57. In designing and managing its facilities, parks and open spaces, the City should take into consideration "green" technologies and design principles that will assist in reducing environmental impacts and realizing energy efficiencies over the long term. Over time, this will require the development of strategies and operational initiatives aimed at addressing issues such as climate change and emission/carbon reduction.

*Note: Additional recommendations directly related to Environmental Stewardship can be found in Section 5.*
Section 5: SERVICE LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

This section outlines recommendations for: community investments and planning, community programs/spectrum, community facilities (indoor and outdoor), aquatics, parks planning and design, sports services, special events, golf, and Storybook Gardens.

While the previous section focuses on initiatives and recommendations that span the various departments and divisions involved in the delivery of parks and recreation services in the City of London, this section contains recommendations that are of interest to specific service areas within the municipality. Consistent with the City's categorization of its parks and recreation “service bundles”, discussion and recommendations have been organized under the following headings:

- Community Investments and Planning
- Community Programs / Spectrum
- Community Facilities (Indoor)
- Aquatics
- Parks Planning and Design
- Community Facilities (Outdoor)
- Sports Services
- Special Events
- Golf
- Storybook Gardens

To help guide the assessment of current and future recreation facility provision needs, per capita targets – in some cases linked to specific age groups or participants – have been established. These provision targets have been developed with consideration to existing service levels, demand factors, and public input. Although some targets may be similar to standards accepted in other municipalities, consideration of local factors has allowed for the targets to be adjusted so that they are unique to the City of London. These targets should be interpreted as general guidelines for determining facility needs; a full understanding of all demand factors is required before applying them as a basis for identifying future needs. Provision targets apply to some, but not all, service bundles.

5.1 Community Investment and Planning

Through community investment and planning, the City provides opportunities to build social infrastructure and strengthen neighbourhoods as key strategic investments in the health and well being of our local communities. Upstream investment in our people, neighbourhoods, and communities will assist in deterring downstream costs and impacts to our community (e.g., crime, reliance on social safety net, and poverty), while creating and strengthening positive outcomes (e.g., increased literacy rates, improved healthy and physical activity levels, and enhanced quality of life).

By continuing to focus on investments that enhance local capacity and support accessible, responsive programming, particularly in neighbourhoods with higher numbers of vulnerable children, youth and families, we promote social inclusion and provide Londoners with ways to engage with others in a location that may be more comfortable or acceptable to them.

The City believes strongly in liveable and inclusive communities. Steps to build equally social and physical infrastructure are essential to support strong, vibrant communities. We recognize that neighbourhoods are about people and places and how they work in partnership to make great neighbourhoods great places to live, work and play. Strong neighbourhoods contribute to the quality of
life for everyone – clean and safe streets, a vibrant local economy, walkable communities with nearby amenities and green space, and a strong feeling of support and connectedness amongst neighbours. Leadership within the community is critical in developing and sustaining a healthy and vibrant community.

Just a few of the responsibilities of this significant service area include:

- the provision of grant and core funding that address a wide range of community interests and innovative new projects;
- facilitating coalitions and networks of community organizations and agencies;
- grassroots neighbourhood development and support;
- youth Leader-in-Training and mentorship programs;
- employment and training of recreation service leaders;
- subsidies for child care fee and wage subsidy to licensed child care providers;
- special need supports for children; and,
- supporting neighbourhood and volunteer projects and initiatives.

As discussed later under the Community Facilities (Indoor) service area, a network of facility types is the preferred approach, as this allows for City and community-serving facilities to be provided at larger multi-use centres, as well as a series of smaller centres that can act as neighbourhood hubs and gathering places at the local level. The provision of sufficient local community spaces is an integral part of building strong, cohesive neighbourhoods.

At the same time, it is recognized that strengthening neighbourhoods requires a collaborative approach. The demand for increased accountability and open and clear communication between the City of London and its residents is paramount. Community leadership is also a critical component to developing and sustaining a healthy and vibrant community. Engaging local residents in the planning and implementation of municipal strategies can capitalize on local knowledge and expertise and also creates greater ownership, which can lead to long-term sustainability. Having dialogue with neighbourhood residents in this way will develop constructive long-term relationships between resident leaders and municipal government officials and these “people-based” relationships will help the community to interface with local government when issues come forward in the future.

**Recommendations – Community Investments and Planning**

58. Continue to foster an environment that invites and encourages resident participation and engagement, that is accessible to residents, and that listens to their needs.

59. Wherever possible, community development strategies and priorities should be resident-led in order to take into account local knowledge and expertise, and to be sustainable.
Recommendations – Community Investments and Planning

60. In relation to community development, continue to:
   • direct or redirect appropriate resources to community development;
   • develop training models and allocate staff resources to community development and community capacity building;
   • advise groups on governance, meeting legislative requirements, codes of conduct for board membership, board recruitment strategies, leadership and auditing practices etc.;
   • assist in volunteer recruitment and training; and,
   • assist groups in identifying sources of funding.

61. The City should play its part in the London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy by:
   • embracing the vision of the Resident Task Force and integrating that vision into appropriate decision-making processes;
   • continuing to understand neighbourhood parks and recreation needs;
   • working closely with emerging groups in order to build community leadership for the long term and develop community capacity;
   • acting as a continual resource as neighbourhood groups initiate, implement and evaluate their work;
   • increasing opportunities for community members to participate in public planning and be involved and engaged in their neighbourhood and in their city;
   • building stronger and more vibrant neighbourhoods where all individuals feel safe and proud to live;
   • increasing social interaction/connection/engagement of all Londoners so that more people are comfortable where they live and play; and,
   • investing in the implementation of the Strategy.

62. In neighbourhoods where the provision of gathering places and programming space at City-owned sites is not achievable, stronger partnerships with the school boards, YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, places of worship, and/or ethnic-based social clubs should be fostered and nurtured.

63. A balanced distribution of recreation programs, facilities, parks, and open space should be sought – with service at both the community and neighbourhood levels – recognizing that different locations may serve different needs.

64. Prior to undertaking lifecycle improvements to recreation facilities, the City should consider overall community needs and the potential to accommodate these needs within the facility undergoing renewal and/or expansion. It is understood, however, that lifecycle improvements may need to proceed in advance of overall community identified needs due to the necessity to balance financial constraints with the need to maintain safe and properly functioning facilities.

Note: Additional recommendations directly related to this service area can be found in Section 5.3.
5.2 Community Programs / Spectrum

Access to quality recreation programs is an essential component of liveable neighbourhoods and a vital community. Community programs – commonly referred to as “Spectrum programs” based on the name of the City’s biannual leisure guide – provide individuals, neighbourhoods and the broader City with the opportunity to benefit from recreation participation through delivery of accessible, diverse and affordable physical, arts/cultural and special interest recreation programming. The City employs a mixed program model consisting of directly delivered programs, partnerships with community recreation providers, and purchase of service contracts. The City plays an important role in providing affordable opportunities for residents to be introduced to a variety of recreation pursuits and connecting residents who wish to become more expert with the appropriate organization.

In 2007, the City’s directly provided registered programs (i.e., Spectrum) reached over 27,000 unique users (representing 8% of the City’s population and generating a total of 315,000 visits to local facilities. 493,000 additional visits resulted from drop-in programming (one-half of which is public swimming). These figures do not include “permitted activities”, which are community-led programs utilizing municipal facilities and parks.

**Recommendations – Community Programs / Spectrum**

65. The City, in cooperation with other program providers in London, should work towards ensuring that the following program needs are addressed. The responsibility for program delivery should be based on the strengths of the providers (e.g., the characteristics of each provider – such as their expertise, accessibility, accountability, mandate and values, cost effectiveness, etc. – should be considered to determine who is in the best position to deliver a specific program to the public). Program areas are listed in general order of priority:

- youth drop-in opportunities including, but not limited to, open gym time, computer access, and other unstructured activities;
- active living and wellness programs for older adults (e.g., walking, dancing, aerobics, exercise, yoga, martial arts, stretching to improve curling, golf, cardiac care, or osteoporosis, etc.);
- swimming programs;
- introductory sport and activity programs in addition to considering the recreation and sport needs of new communities;
- family-oriented recreation opportunities, programs and events;
- cultural programs for youth, adults, and older adults (e.g., theatre, dance, music, art, etc.);
- specialized child and youth summer camps (e.g., sport camps – swimming in morning and golf in afternoon, etc.); and,
- golf, including lessons and off-season programs.

The above list is not intended to be definitive or absolute, but rather provides an indication of the general types of programs that are currently, or expected to be, in demand within the City of London.
Recommendations – Community Programs / Spectrum

66. Encourage and support the community in their efforts to advance initiatives which the City is not engaged in nor likely to be, but which may increase in popularity, such as, but not limited to:
   - off-season training programs;
   - adult self-improvement and educational courses; and
   - “extreme sporting” programs (e.g., mountain biking, etc.).

67. The City’s role with regard to programming should continue to be to:
   - take the lead responsibility for ensuring that the core program needs are satisfied, either directly or indirectly;
   - support and assist the provision of programs by community organizations and other agencies, based upon the strengths of the provider and the ability to delivery programs in a balanced, efficient and effective manner to address both the needs of priority groups and the greater community;
   - offer direct programming for core services when no alternative provider is available and/or where the municipality is deemed to be the most appropriate provider (e.g., aquatics, children’s playground programs, etc.); direct programming should focus on programs that have broad community appeal, that offer an introductory level of skill, and that provide a balance of physical, cultural, artistic, educational, and special interests;
   - encourage other organizations and providers to diversify the supply of non-core programs;
   - coordinate the efforts of community organizations through sharing of resources and involving all parties in the assessment of program needs;
   - continually review program needs through the implementation of a formalized procedure;
   - act as an “information broker” by centralizing information about program providers and opportunities within the community in an effort to provide enhanced customer service and to identify gaps and duplications in leisure programming;
   - offer opportunities for promoting and publicizing recreation and leisure program opportunities available from both municipal and non-municipal providers throughout the City;
   - support the recruitment, training, and recognition of volunteers in the provision of recreation programs in London; and,
   - continue to establish and/or review formal policies and/or guidelines regarding Purchase of Service agreements with non-municipal groups and organizations for program development and delivery.

68. Continue to review the interest and registration numbers of directly provided programs and make changes based on new trends and varied interests. Further, a balance of programs should continue to be offered for all ages and abilities and priority should be placed on locally-based opportunities.
5.3 Community Facilities and Gathering Places (Indoor)

The Community Facilities (Indoor) Service Area is responsible for providing affordable, accessible, and quality community recreation facilities (e.g., community centres, arenas, etc.) for programming, rentals, community-based services, and neighbourhood / community functions. Often these facilities serve as neighbourhood gathering places.

The City of London manages and maintains dozens of community facilities with a wide range of sizes and functions. The City has recently been renewing and even expanding several of its aging facilities, many of which were built in the 1960s and 70s during the government funding program of the time.

Many of the Strategic Master Plan’s recommendations pertaining to indoor recreational infrastructure are contained in this service area, but there are strong links to the other service areas, including Aquatics and Community Investments & Planning. Through the careful analysis of supply and demand factors (including public input, demographic and participation trends, etc.), as well as consideration of projects currently being undertaken by the City, existing and future facility needs have been identified.

Summary of Inventory, Provision Targets and Needs – Indoor Community Facilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility Type</th>
<th>Current Inventory</th>
<th>Recommended Provision Target</th>
<th>Summary of Facility Needs (2009-2018)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Centres/Facilities</td>
<td>23 facilities offering programs and/or rentals, including:</td>
<td>1 multi-use community centre per 55,000 population</td>
<td>3 multi-use centres over the next 10 years (including the new North London Community Centre). Repurposing of some neighbourhood facilities is recommended.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 4 multi-use centres*</td>
<td>1 neighbourhood community centre per 20,000 population</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 19 neighbourhood facilities</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Major Non-Municipal Centres include YMCA recreation centres and Boys &amp; Girls Club</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gymnasiums</td>
<td>7 municipal gymnasiums*</td>
<td>1 municipal gymnasium per 30,000 population</td>
<td>4 gymnasiums (as components of larger community centres) over the next 10 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arenas</td>
<td>22 ice pads at 12 facilities (includes municipal arenas and Western Fair Sports Centre, for which the City has an agreement).</td>
<td>1 pad for every 450 registered youth users (target is linked to youth as they represent the largest allocation for prime time ice)</td>
<td>None over the next 10 years.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arenas excluded from inventory include John Labatt Centre (event venue), Ice Park (private), and Thompson Arena (UWO)</td>
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* Does not include the new North London Community Centre to be built in 2010 with YMCA and London Public Library.

A facility provision model with a greater neighbourhood-focus is recommended in this Strategic Master Plan. While there remains considerable merit in pursuing community level and City-wide improvements to London’s recreational inventory (e.g., multi-use community centres, indoor aquatic centres, arenas, etc.), residents have stated a desire for programs, pathways and trails, and indoor and outdoor gathering spaces that are situated within or closer to their neighbourhood.
Critical to this concept is ensuring that there are “neighbourhood hubs” or gathering places that serve as anchors of community life and facilitate and foster broader, more creative interaction within neighbourhoods. For some neighbourhoods, these hubs or gathering places may be multi-use community centres, a community room attached to an arena or pool, a park/green space or water course, space in a place of worship, school, or ethnically-based social club or a local neighbourhood business. Where gaps in the municipal inventory exist, the City may need to look to partnerships with other providers to assist in creating access to such opportunities.

As part of this objective, the Strategic Master Plan recommends further evaluations of several facilities that are located within key neighbourhoods. The assessment of arena facilities indicates that overall demand for ice activities is not increasing nearly as fast as London’s population and – coupled with the issue of increasing lifecycle costs associated with an aging infrastructure – there is a need to evaluate the City’s long-term supply of arenas. While additional research may be required to confirm the City’s future arena needs, each of these facilities presents an opportunity to serve a much broader role within their local neighbourhood should they be renovated or re-purposed to include components such as activity and meeting rooms, youth and senior space, gymnasiums, or activity-specific space. Feasibility studies for each of these facilities are recommended.

In terms of major capital expenditures, this Strategic Master Plan recommends the development of a Southwest multi-use community centre (including an indoor aquatic centre, twin ice pads, gymnasium, activity rooms, etc.) as the highest priority; the acquisition of a suitable site is a critical first step in this process. The provision of two new ice pads would allow for Farquharson Arena to be re-purposed to other community recreational uses, pending further study and analysis.

Site evaluation and selection is also required for the proposed Southeast/East London recreational components (e.g., indoor aquatics, gymnasium, activity rooms, etc.); additional study is recommended to confirm the statement of need and to complete a locational assessment and business case. Although both projects are highly important and long-awaited, the development of a major community centre in the Southwest is seen as the first priority project proposed before Southeast/East London. The lack of nearby municipal facilities and alternate recreation providers in the Southwest, combined with the area’s large and growing population base, all contribute to the significant need in this community. It is recognized that additional study is required to determine the preferred facility provision approach in the Southeast/East, which could influence location(s), timing, and/or partners.

Although overall supply is adequate, the City’s arenas are aging and many facilities are not operationally efficient. Farquharson, Silverwood and Glen Cairn Arenas should be further evaluated to determine the potential and benefit of re-purposing them into non-ice community or neighbourhood-serving facilities (e.g., with flexible programming space such as gymnasiums and/or meeting rooms, or activity-specific centres such as an indoor skate park or indoor soccer). Replacement of these ice pads (four in total) is recommended at the proposed Southwest Community Centre (two pads), while ongoing monitoring of arena demand is required to determine an appropriate response to the other two ice pads.

Lastly, Northwest London is also deficient in community space and an additional space at either Medway Arena or another site in the Northwest is recommended (e.g., a gymnasium for active sports and community activities; note: a community kitchen is being built in 2009 as part of the infrastructure renewal of Medway Arena).

The locations and general service radii of community facilities and arenas are illustrated on the following pages, including significant non-municipal providers.
## Recommendations – Community Facilities (Indoor)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>69. Monitor and regularly report on facility usage levels and capital maintenance requirements for facilities, particularly older assets.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70. Adopt the facility provision targets proposed in this Plan. The purpose of the targets is to provide a general guideline for determining facility needs based upon population and/or participation thresholds.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Centres</td>
<td>71.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71. Pursue the development of a multi-use community centre in <strong>Southwest London</strong>, containing gymnasiums, activity rooms, indoor aquatics, outdoor fields/amenities, and other components to be confirmed through further study. Securing an appropriate site for this facility should be a high priority for the City. Partnerships for facility construction and/or operation should also be pursued. Site should be large enough to accommodate a twin pad arena if participation rates increase or older facilities are closed. As a first priority, the City should acquire an adequate land base or enter into an acceptable partnership for the proposed new multi-use community centre in the Southwest and resolve how a multi-use community centre is to be developed in the Southeast/East (e.g., Greenfield site, redevelopment of an existing site, or a partnership agreement).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72. Resolve how proposed new recreational and community centre components (gymnasium, activity rooms, and other components to be confirmed through further study) are to be developed in the <strong>Southeast/East</strong> (e.g., Greenfield site, redevelopment of an existing site, or a partnership agreement).</td>
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<tr>
<td>73. Pursue the securing of a site(s) for the various recreational components in the <strong>Southeast/East</strong> to accommodate a gymnasium, activity rooms and other components to be confirmed through further study. To address this need, three options should be considered: (1) Argyle Arena should be evaluated as a possible location (this would require cooperation with the school board and the relocation of parking and tennis courts); (2) the potential for a partnership with the Bob Hayward YMCA facility for improved community access and municipal programming (similar to the North London Community Centre); and (3) the development of a new facility on a greenfield site (with sufficient space to accommodate sports fields on-site as well).</td>
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<tr>
<td>74. Continue to maintain and improve neighbourhood infrastructure and gathering places by allocating capital budget funds to improvements on an annual basis.</td>
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<tr>
<td>75. <strong>Northwest London</strong> continues to be deficient in community centre space. Consideration of an expansion to Medway Arena (to include additional program space for active sports and community activities; this would require a redesign of the site) or development of another site is recommended.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendations – Community Facilities (Indoor)</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Community Centres</strong> (continued)</td>
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<tr>
<td>76. <strong>Once</strong> a new twin-pad arena is opened as part of the proposed Southwest community centre, the City should consider decommissioning Farquharson Arena, and, after consultation with the public, possibly redevelop it as a minor multi-use community centre or an activity-specific centre without ice (e.g., multi-use program space, indoor skate park, indoor soccer, etc.). A feasibility study should be undertaken to establish additional direction and identify potential partners for the Farquharson Arena redevelopment. (see also arena recommendations)</td>
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<tr>
<td>77. <strong>Ensure</strong> maximization of existing facilities, particularly activity-specific centres, small centres, fieldhouses, and gymnasiums.</td>
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<tr>
<td>78. <strong>The design</strong> of new and renovated community centres should allow for flexibility in future use, including the potential to accommodate older adult-specific space and selected non-recreational municipal services (e.g., bill payment, information services, etc.).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Arenas</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>79. <strong>Pursue</strong> the construction of multiple ice pads within the proposed community centre in the Southwest** (subject to stable City-wide ice demand projections and cost inefficiencies associated with older municipal arenas). Remove Farquharson Arena from the arena inventory and convert it into a non-ice community facility (further study required; options include multi-use program space, indoor skate park, indoor soccer, etc.). (see also community centre recommendations)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>80. <strong>Should arena demand decrease</strong> below current levels, cost benefit assessments of Silverwood and/or Glen Cairn Arenas should be undertaken and consideration given to decommissioning the arenas and re-purposing one or both of these sites as broader community facilities (with or without ice), with the intent of making them more multi-use and capable of providing neighbourhood programming space. Consideration may also be given to replacing these two single pad arenas with a twin pad at the proposed Southeast/East community centre, should the site allow and demand be sufficient. (see also community centre recommendations) Feasibility studies should be undertaken to establish additional direction and identify potential partners for these projects.</td>
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<tr>
<td>81. <strong>Establish</strong> repurposing plans for older arenas as they become obsolete, including but not limited to redevelopment as indoor sports fields, indoor skate parks, etc. Continue to collect registration data (particularly for adult user groups) and monitor the usage of all arenas to assist in projecting future needs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>82. <strong>Maintain</strong> the ice rental agreement with the Western Fair Sports Centre.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gymnasiums</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>83. <strong>Include</strong> a gymnasium as part of the proposed Southwest multi-use community centre.</td>
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<tr>
<td>84. <strong>Include</strong> a gymnasium as one part of the proposed recreation components in the Southeast/East.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
5.4 Aquatics

The City’s Aquatics Services provide London families and individuals of all ages with opportunities to participate in unstructured aquatic activities and structured swimming programs (including progression of instruction, leadership development, fitness, and recreational swimming) at the City’s indoor and outdoor pools, wading pools, and spray pads. Equally important is the provision of educational and outreach programs for drowning prevention, water safety, and sun protection awareness.

A provision target of one municipal indoor pool location for every 60,000 population is recommended; this translates into a shortage of three indoor pools. To resolve this under-supply, an indoor aquatic centre is planned to serve the North end of the City (North London Community Centre, in partnership with the London YMCA and London Public Library). It is recommended that an indoor aquatic centre be considered for the proposed Southwest multi-use community centre, followed by one to serve Southeast/East London. Further evaluations are required to determine the preferred sites and designs of these facilities.

The locations and general service radii of indoor and outdoor aquatic facilities are illustrated on the following pages, including significant non-municipal providers.
Outdoor pools are important neighbourhood resources, but they do have a number of significant limitations. In particular, the short season (9 to 12 weeks), susceptibility to changing weather, and the demand for heated water reduce the desirability of building any new, or rebuilding some of the older outdoor pools.

The assessment of outdoor pool facilities indicates that overall demand is not increasing nearly as fast as the demand for year-round indoor pool facilities; this Strategic Master Plan recommends an increase in the number of indoor pools in order to better serve current and future populations. Coupled with increasing lifecycle costs associated with an aging infrastructure, there is a need to evaluate the City’s long-term supply of outdoor pools.

Many municipalities across Canada are beginning to close outdoor pools and replace them with fewer, but better, indoor pools or cost-effective outdoor water play features (spray pads). Indoor pools offer year-round venues for recreational swimming and instructional programs and may be a better place to spend infrastructure life-cycle renewal funds. Since the recommended indoor pool provision target recognizes the supply of existing neighbourhood outdoor pools, any change to the number of outdoor pools should not occur until indoor pool provision has been reviewed.

While additional research may be required to confirm the City’s future pool needs, each of these older outdoor pools (many of which are often tied to other community facilities) presents an opportunity to serve a much broader role within their local neighbourhood should they be renovated or re-purposed to include components such as spray pads, activity and meeting rooms, youth and senior space, gymnasiums, or activity-specific space. Feasibility studies for each of these facilities are recommended when major repairs or scheduled lifecycle maintenance items are required to the pools and/or their adjacent community facilities.

Given aquatic trends and London’s supply of outdoor pools, operational inefficiencies, and rising lifecycle costs, no additional municipal outdoor pools are recommended. Furthermore, the City should consider the gradual replacement of some of the older outdoor pools with: (1) the construction of indoor replacement pool(s) serving a collection of neighbourhoods; (2) renewal of an aging outdoor
pool; or, (3) consulting with the neighbourhood to determine specific site needs. It is also recommended that the City continue its program of decommissioning park site wading pools (or converting them to spray pads).

Four to five more spray pads (for a total of 13 to 14) are required by 2025, with an emphasis on locating them in underserved areas (presently Northeast and Northwest London); some of these projects may be wading pool conversions.

**Recommendations - Aquatics**

89. Include an indoor aquatic complex as part of the proposed Southwest multi-use community centre.

90. Develop site evaluation criteria to identify an appropriate location for an indoor pool in the Southeast/East, with consideration being given to co-locating the pool with the proposed community centre in the area. (see also community centre recommendations in Section 5.3)

91. When new municipal indoor aquatic facilities are developed, the City should confirm the viability of neighbourhood outdoor pools in the vicinity and evaluate their continued operation given the year-round accessibility to aquatic services provided by the indoor pool.

92. Construct four to five more spray pads (for a total of 13 to 14) by 2025, with an emphasis on locating them in underserved areas, including but not limited to the Northeast and Northwest Planning Areas. Some of these projects may be wading pool conversions.

93. Engage the community in designing and fundraising for the development of new spray pads.

94. Do not develop any additional wading pools.

95. Continue a program of decommissioning park site wading pools (or converting them to spray pads), when they have reached the end of their lifespan, with the exception of areas where there is a demonstrated need to maintain accessibility and meet community demand.

96. Do not develop any additional outdoor swimming pools.

97. The operation and usage of existing outdoor swimming pools should be evaluated prior to undertaking any major repairs or site redevelopment. In cases where the actual costs for renewal / replacement of outdoor pools exceed the anticipated renewal costs, the City should compare affordability of outdoor pools in terms of value and benefits to the community with the benefits of investing in indoor pool facilities that would serve the broader community.

98. Prior to the removal of older outdoor pools from the City’s inventory, consideration should be given to their replacement with new indoor pool(s) serving a collection of neighbourhoods. Where co-located with an arena, a more extensive site redevelopment plan is possible as a potential multi-use facility (see also community centre and arena recommendations). Feasibility studies and community consultations should be undertaken when major repairs or scheduled lifecycle maintenance items are required to the pools and/or their adjacent community facilities in order to establish additional direction.

99. All outdoor pool upgrades and renewal projects should include ramps, accessibility features, and heated water.
Recommendations - Aquatics

100. Develop a public education campaign on the need for all families to learn to swim including drowning and water incident prevention messaging. Targeted presentations and assisting families to access pools and swimming lessons should also accompany the public education plan.

101. Continue to pursue partnerships for the provision of access to non-City owned aquatic facilities.

Note: Additional recommendations directly related to this service area can be found in Section 5.3.

5.5 Parks Planning and Design

The Parks and Natural Areas Planning and Design service area is part of the City’s Planning and Development Department. It provides direction for many planning, design and development activities within the City’s parks and open space system.

Specifically, this service area recommends policy direction for the Official Plan and for Council with respect to the provision of parkland, and land acquisition priorities. It also reviews development approvals related parks, open space, and pathways.

In addition, this service area is responsible for lifecycle renewal programs, as well as growth and new initiative capital projects related to the Thames Valley Parkway, Open Space Development, District Parks, Neighbourhood Parks, Sports Parks and specialty parks. Natural heritage protection and management of the City’s seven municipally-managed Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs) and its 80 smaller woodlots is another area of focus of this service area.

As identified in the City’s (draft) Official Plan, “Environmentally Significant Areas contain natural features and perform ecological functions that warrant their retention in a natural state. While Environmentally Significant Areas are protected to some extent by their inclusion in the Open Space designation, additional measures to provide for their protection and utilization are considered necessary.” “The City's management and rehabilitation priorities with respect to Environmentally Significant Areas are to protect the existing ecosystem features and functions, to increase the amount of interior forest habitat, and to strengthen corridors.”

Furthermore, it should be noted that “where necessary, public access to identified Environmentally Significant Areas within public ownership will be controlled so that such access will not be detrimental to the significant features of the property.”

Residents encourage the City to strive for high quality design of parks and pathways and to reflect the values of their neighbourhood, while recognizing the need for higher-level parks that serve broader district or City-wide needs. Several design-related recommendations are contained in this Strategic Master Plan, including the need to incorporate amenities that increase the usability of parks for older adults and residents of different ethnic backgrounds (both of which are growing groups in the City).

Demands for both organized (e.g., team sports) and unstructured (e.g., casual play) recreational activities are high in the City of London. It is likely that the aging of the population and a general
movement towards unscheduled recreation will gradually create additional demand for unstructured activities, although not necessarily at the expense of organized play. Neighbourhood parks are the most accessible park type in the City and – in combination with the City’s specialty parks and pathways – are best situated to accommodate this growth in unstructured play through their informal play areas (open space), playgrounds, internal pathways, and lesser used sports fields (compared to fields in sports parks). Attention should continue to be paid to balancing the varied needs of the community when designing parks.

A 2008 City report titled “Parkland Dedication Requirements, Practices, and Procedures” contains considerations for parks planning and acquisition which should be a high priority for implementation. Building upon this report, it is recommended that the City strive to achieve a target level of 3 hectares of neighbourhood and district parkland per 1,000 population within developing residential areas. In addition, the City should continue to acquire significant natural heritage areas. Achieving these parkland and open space objectives may require a mixture of acquisition-based strategies and collaboration with partners.

Also of note, the addition of an “Urban Park” category (e.g., plazas, civic squares, civic greens, etc.) is recommended in this Master Plan to reflect emerging residential growth patterns and a movement toward improved walkability and place-making. Alternate funding streams may be required to cover the additional costs associated with this park type.

While another function of this service area is the planning for and development of parks amenities and facilities (e.g., sports fields, playgrounds, etc.), recommendations in these areas have been categorized under Section 5.6 (Community Facilities – Outdoor).

**Recommendations – Parks Planning and Design**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parks and Open Space Supply and Classification</td>
<td>Within developing residential areas, strive to achieve a target level of 3.0 hectares of neighbourhood and district parkland per 1,000 population (for playing fields, play apparatuses, and community facilities). In addition, the City should continue to acquire significant natural heritage areas. Achieving these parkland and open space objectives may require acquisition-based strategies.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>As a guide to ensure an adequate and balanced distribution of parkland and play equipment, adopt a service standard requiring parkland and play equipment to be located within an 800-metre radius of every home in a residential neighbourhood. Ideally, the radius should not cross major barriers, such as railways, rivers, or major roadways.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Work with partners (e.g., school boards, conservation authorities, private landowners, etc.) to find creative non-acquisition based strategies to improve the functional supply of parkland, open space, and recreational opportunities available to residents, particularly in those areas of the City that fall below the recommended targets.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Recommendations – Parks Planning and Design

| Official Plan Classification and Hierarchy of Parkland | 105. | Add an “Urban Park” category to the existing parkland classification and hierarchy established in the Official Plan, along with appropriate definitions, standards, and policies. An alternative funding program may be required for the full development of “Urban Parks”. |
| Guidelines for Acquiring and Developing Municipal Parks | 106. | Implementation of the City of London’s report on “Parkland Dedication Requirements, Practices, and Procedures” should be pursued to maximize land dedications for public use. |
| 107. | Give consideration to the issues and options raised in this Parks & Recreation Strategic Master Plan (including the associated background documents) when reviewing the City’s Official Plan. |
| 108. | The City’s Bicycle Master Plan identifies conceptual routes that support cycling and linkages across the City and between neighbourhoods. To achieve this goal, appropriate lands should be dedicated to the City in accordance with the Planning Act and not as part of the parkland dedication requirements. Should any of these routes involve natural heritage areas, their establishment may be subject to the findings and recommendations of a Conservation Master Plan, an environmental assessment or other environmental study, as directed by the City’s Official Plan. |
| 109. | Allocate general revenue and/or development charge funds to ensure that land is acquired in advance of development for higher order needs such as planned community centres. |
| Parks Development and Redevelopment Priorities and Guidelines | 110. | Continue to maintain and improve “Neighbourhood” park infrastructure by allocating capital budget funds to yearly improvements. |
| 111. | Within “District” level parks, the City should, wherever possible, cluster the same type of playing fields together to increase a sense of form and function. Wherever possible, “District” level parks should also include washrooms, water fountains, electrical outlets, benches and safe, accessible pathways, etc. |
| 112. | Special recognition and attention is required for “City-wide” or “Regional” level parks that attract visitors, local residents, and tourists or that have the potential of playing this role (e.g., Storybook Gardens, Springbank Park, Ivey Park, Victoria Park, Kiwanis Park, Harris Park, and Gibbons Park). The City should strive to maintain the delicate balance of protecting the environmental integrity of these parks while committing to an ongoing program of enhancing them through the addition of amenities, upgrades, and promotion. |
| Natural Heritage System Planning | 113. | Continue to work to complete the assembly of the Ecological Land Classification (ELC) database to support the identification of significant natural heritage features and areas. |
| 114. | To assist in priority setting in parkland acquisition, the City should use the City’s Ecological Land Classification (ELC) database, in conjunction with the Official Plan criteria, to update guidelines for acquisitions of significant natural heritage features and areas. |
### Recommendations – Parks Planning and Design

**Park Design, Maintenance and Management Issues**

115. Design and manage the separations between active and passive park areas to effectively discourage active uses encroaching into passive park areas.

116. Develop Park Resource Management Plans for those park and open space areas with smaller woodlots and natural features (e.g., wetlands).

117. Establish a cooperative process and formal agreement framework by which developers may build parks and install recreational amenities (under the direction and to the satisfaction of the City) in residential areas prior to the parkland being dedicated to the City.

118. In keeping with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, the City should only light parks where “after-dusk” activities are permitted and/or encouraged.

119. A consistent system of park signage should be developed that indicates points of access and features to be found in each park with priority being assigned to “City-wide” and “District” parks.

120. Maintain a commitment to accessibility, safety, and security within its entire parks and pathway system.

121. To better reflect changes in London’s population, greater attention should be paid to incorporating amenities (such as washrooms, benches/seating areas, shaded areas, picnic areas, floral gardens, open spaces that can accommodate new activities, etc.) that increase the usability of parks for older adults and residents of different ethnic backgrounds.

122. Provisions to incorporate spaces and amenities encouraging physical activity, wellness, and informal use opportunities – in an effort to encourage use and improve activity levels – should be key considerations in the design of parks and open spaces.

123. Work with its partners to develop “value-added” improvements to the parks system. Such improvements must address City and local priorities and must conform to City safety and design standards.

124. Refine principles and criteria for the establishment, management, and subsequent public education of naturalized areas within parks.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations – Parks Planning and Design</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Stewardship 125. In order to foster partnership relationships to enhance the parks system, the City should:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• develop a community partnership agreement to guide community development and maintenance of additional parkland features beyond basic level standards;</td>
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<tr>
<td>• continue to seek community sponsorships and partnerships to support the development of trails, pathways, and park features;</td>
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<td>• work with surrounding municipalities and organizations to develop a regionally integrated pathway and trail system;</td>
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<td>• promote Citywide and corporately sponsored “greening” programs;</td>
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<td>• continue to promote community gardens in municipal and non-municipal locations;</td>
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<td>• continue to implement a tree watering stewardship program that will get more Londoners actively involved in maintaining the City’s corporate image (“The Forest City”); and,</td>
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<tr>
<td>• promote the development of new partnerships.</td>
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<tr>
<td>126. Continue to support enhancement of the natural heritage system through restoration, rehabilitation, and re-naturalization.</td>
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<tr>
<td>127. Review the current policy and by-law for woodland acquisition to potentially use the woodland acquisition fund to acquire woodlands deemed desirable by the City to ensure their protection and retention within the natural heritage system.</td>
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<td>128. Develop guidelines and set priorities for the management of City woodlots in parks.</td>
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<tr>
<td>129. Develop and implement a natural resource management strategy to address invasive species that threaten biodiversity within sensitive habitat areas, with technical input and assistance from the province and the Conservation Authority.</td>
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<tr>
<td>130. Develop and implement strategies to address excessive wildlife-induced impacts (such as excessive deer browsing).</td>
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<tr>
<td>131. Establish stewardship priorities for the natural heritage system. Stewardship ranges from direct ownership and management by the City, to private ownership and land stewardship initiatives with landowners.</td>
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<td>132. Improve awareness and understanding about the natural heritage system, both with the general public and City administration.</td>
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<tr>
<td>133. As identified in the City’s Official Plan (as amended from time to time), pathways and community trails for recreational use may be permitted in natural heritage areas, provided that such uses are designed, constructed and managed to minimize their impact on the natural heritage area. New or expanded infrastructure (sewer, roads, SWM facilities) shall only be permitted where it has been supported through an environmental assessment process under the Environmental Assessment Act and the policies of the City’s Official Plan.</td>
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</table>
### Recommendations – Parks Planning and Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environmental Stewardship (continued)</th>
<th>134. Requests for proposals issued by the City should contain provisions that require satisfactory acknowledgement and treatment of any natural heritage system features and areas so that negative impacts are avoided.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>135.</td>
<td>Within recreational areas containing both natural areas and intensively used and/or developed recreational components and facilities, a suitable separation of these uses should be established, in keeping with the City’s Official Plan policies and any recommendation contained in an environmental study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136.</td>
<td>Prohibit inappropriate uses, including off-leash dogs, within parks and natural heritage areas, and support this prohibition with active public education programs and follow-up enforcement as necessary. The City should enhance enforcement efforts aimed at controlling running of pets “off leash” within all natural heritage areas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>137.</td>
<td>Align the recommendations of this Strategic Master Plan with those of the Thames Valley Corridor Plan (once approved), particularly in relation to items such as (but not necessarily limited to):</td>
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<td>• undertaking strategic land acquisitions to improve access points to the river and pathway system and for natural heritage conservation;</td>
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<td>• optimization of under-utilized open space and park space for recreational or naturalization purposes;</td>
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<td>• establishing pathway and trail connections from the Thames River to parks, open space areas, tributaries, and surrounding neighbourhoods; and,</td>
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<td>• ensuring reasonable access to accessory recreational amenities along the river, such as seating, trash cans, washrooms, etc.</td>
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<td>138.</td>
<td>Champion City beautification efforts by:</td>
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<td>• developing strategies to plant on unplanted roadways;</td>
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<td>• encouraging the development of more floral gardens, ornamental parks, urban squares, and quiet retreats at the neighbourhood level in order to enhance the passive experience in parks;</td>
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<td>• continuing to pilot innovative park design utilizing cultural, heritage and artistic themes, working with partners to fund and implement projects (example downtown “reading garden” associated with library);</td>
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<td>• developing a “partners in parks” program to support, enhance, and expand community-based volunteer beautification; and,</td>
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<td>• promoting art in public spaces, in parks, and in private developments.</td>
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</table>

**Note:** Additional recommendations directly related to this service area can be found in Sections 4.6 and 5.6.
5.6 Community Facilities (Outdoor)

Community Facilities (Outdoor) is the counterpart to the indoor facilities section and addresses park amenity development projects, including playgrounds, sports fields, multi-use pathways, skateboard parks, and off-leash dog parks and falls under the corporate service areas of Parks & Horticulture and Operational Management. The City’s Planning and Development Department is primarily responsible for the development of the amenities in parks, with the operational management being the responsibility of the Parks and Recreation division. Recommendations relative to the planning and design of the City’s parks and open space network, including policy directions, can be found in the Parks Planning and Design service area (Section 5.5).

The City currently maintains over 340 parks and open spaces (totalling nearly 2,300 hectares), including 127 play structures, 192 sports fields, 106 hard surface courts (tennis, basketball, multi-use), 7 skate parks, 3 off-leash areas, and nearly 200 kilometres of multi-use pathways at an annual operating cost of $6.4 million dollars in 2008.

As described at the outset of Section 5, the assessment of park needs – both in terms of land base and specific outdoor facilities/amenities – is based on a mixture of inputs, including best practices and industry standards, public input, demographics, and trends in participation. Several recommendations in this section are derived from the establishment of provision targets that are specific to London. Furthermore, considerable direction for this section and related topics can be found in documents such as the City’s Official Plan, Bicycle Master Plan, and Parkland Dedication Report; this section is not intended to replace any of these studies.

### Summary of Inventory, Provision Targets and Needs – Outdoor Community Facilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility Type</th>
<th>Current Inventory</th>
<th>Recommended Provision Target</th>
<th>Summary of Facility Needs (2009-2018)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soccer Fields</td>
<td>96 municipal fields (a total of 101.5 unlit equivalents*)</td>
<td>1 soccer field for every 90 registered participants (youth and adult)</td>
<td>Focus on quality rather than quantity. A declining youth population will reduce field requirements; however, the need for high quality fields (including artificial turf) will increase.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>65 school fields that are permitted / scheduled by the City</td>
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<td>Total of 166.5 unlit field equivalents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ball Diamonds</td>
<td>83 municipal diamonds (a total of 87.5 unlit equivalents*)</td>
<td>1 diamond for every 80 registered participants (youth and adult)</td>
<td>No additional diamonds are required over the next ten years</td>
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<td>23 school diamonds that are permitted / scheduled by the City</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total of 110.5 unlit diamonds equivalents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facility Type</td>
<td>Current Inventory</td>
<td>Recommended Provision Target</td>
<td>Summary of Facility Needs (2009-2018)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Football Fields</td>
<td>2 dedicated municipal practice fields and 7 fields shared with soccer and baseball</td>
<td>A recommended provision target is not set</td>
<td>City will continue to offer 2 dedicated practice fields. One of the artificial turf fields to be built at City-wide Sports Park will primarily be used by football to meet the need for high quality fields.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>19 high school fields allocated through the school boards</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TD Waterhouse Stadium (UWO) is also used for football</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19 high school fields allocated through the school boards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis Courts</td>
<td>66 municipal courts (excluding school and private courts)</td>
<td>1 tennis court per 6,000 population; consider distribution</td>
<td>New courts are required in three areas (Southwest, Northwest, and Southeast). Under-utilized courts may be repurposed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball Courts</td>
<td>19 full courts and 18 half courts for a total of 56 half-court equivalents (excluding school and private courts)</td>
<td>1 basketball hoop per 750 youth (ages 10-19); consider distribution</td>
<td>New courts are required in two areas (Northeast and Southwest), as well as new growth areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skate Parks</td>
<td>7 municipal skate parks, including 1 City-wide facility, 1 District facility, and 5 Neighbourhood facilities</td>
<td>As per City of London Outdoor Skate Park Implementation Strategy</td>
<td>Four new District skate parks, expansions to two existing skate parks, and establishment of Neighbourhood skate parks on an as-needed basis. An indoor skate facility could be considered as part of a repurposing of an existing community facility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play Structures</td>
<td>127 play structures at 111 municipal parks; 7 playgrounds are fully accessible to persons with disabilities (excluding school and private playgrounds)</td>
<td>1 play structure generally within an 800-metre radius of every residential area (without crossing a major arterial road or physical barrier)</td>
<td>New play play structures are required in two areas (Southwest and Southeast), as well as new growth areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-Leash Dog Areas</td>
<td>3 off-leash dog areas/parks</td>
<td>Demand should continue to be monitored; consider distribution</td>
<td>Two to three new off-leash areas are required to improve distribution (Northwest and South/Southwest)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Parks & Recreation Strategic Master Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility Type</th>
<th>Current Inventory</th>
<th>Recommended Provision Target</th>
<th>Summary of Facility Needs (2009-2018)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specialized Facilities</td>
<td>1 Disc golf course at St. Julian Park</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>No current need for further disc golf courses currently identified. 1 BMX bike park to be developed. Consideration should be given to the provision of an indoor skate park as part of a repurposing of a neighbourhood facility. Consideration should be given to the provision of an all-weather, extended season, outdoor multi-sport field for soccer, football, rugby and lacrosse.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* each lit field/diamond is counted as 1.5 unlit fields/diamonds due to the extended playing time

Relative to sports fields, recommended provision targets are one soccer field per 90 registered participants and one ball diamond for every 80 registered participants; the provision of other sports field needs (e.g., football) should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Soccer remains the most popular team sport in the City, and with this comes high expectations around access to and quality of fields. Although a declining youth population will reduce overall field requirements in the future, additional soccer fields may be required over time, particularly full size, lit, and irrigated pitches to accommodate demand from adults and competitive youth teams. Registration and demand should continue to be closely tracked as well as the availability and quality of non-municipal fields.

London has a surplus of ball diamonds; however, the large majority of these are lower quality practice diamonds located on school board lands. In addition to giving consideration to re-purposing under-utilized diamonds to in-demand uses, the City and user groups should cooperate in identifying existing diamonds that could be expanded or improved to increase their playability (where demand warrants).

Football enjoys the use of 2 dedicated practice fields, 7 municipal shared use fields, 19 high school fields, and the University's TD Waterhouse Stadium to meet the combined needs of high school, minor, competitive and semi-professional programs in the community. Registration and demand will continue to be tracked to assess and respond to the programmatic needs of the football community for shared or dedicated municipal fields.
The provision target for tennis courts is one per 6,000 population (in new/developing areas). Recent local research suggests that some of the City’s tennis courts may be vastly under-utilized; additional analysis of this data is required, with a potential outcome being the conversion of selected courts to alternate uses. Nevertheless, additional courts are required in a small number of gap areas in order to improve geographic distribution and accessibility.

Municipal outdoor basketball courts are recommended to be provided at a rate of one hoop per 750 youth (ages 10-19). Some gaps exist in the distribution of basketball courts; multi-use court designs (i.e., for basketball, ball hockey, and natural ice rinks) should be considered at appropriate sites.

In 2008, the City adopted an Outdoor Skate Park Implementation Strategy, which outlines the development of several new and expanded skate parks, including district, community and neighbourhood level parks. This Strategy provides sufficient direction for the delivery of new skate park infrastructure and should be implemented.

The provision of one playground generally within an 800m radius of every residential area (without crossing a major arterial road or physical barrier) is the recommended target. The City provides excellent geographic accessibility to play structures, with only two gaps of note (in Southwest and Southeast London).

The City should continue to provide off-leash dog areas as needs arise and in conjunction with local organizations. The establishment of two to three more off-leash areas is recommended over the next ten years in order to provide for a more balanced distribution across the City. The City’s Off-leash Area Site Evaluation Report should be considered when selecting future leash-free sites, as well as input from affected residents.

The public consultation program for both the current and past Strategic Master Plans found that walking and cycling on the Thames Valley Pathway System is a favoured activity for all ages, but that connecting links on the pathway system are required. A number of pathway and trail development projects are required in order to complete the gaps in the Thames Valley Parkway (along all tributaries of the Thames River) and connections to bike arterials and feeder routes. Implementation of London’s Bicycle Master Plan should also continue to be a high priority for the City.

Also of note, elementary and secondary school grounds play an important role in the provision of outdoor recreational facilities for structured and informal public use (e.g., basketball hoops, playgrounds, sports fields, etc.), particularly at the neighbourhood level. Opportunities to maximize community use of all public recreational lands – including schools – should continue to be pursued.
Recommendations – Community Facilities (Outdoor)

Pathways & Trails

139. A number of pathway development projects are required in order to complete the gaps in the Thames Valley Parkway and connections to the secondary recreational bike system and on-road network. Pathway development projects should be implemented based on the following priorities (in order of priority):

1. filling the gaps between existing pathways;
2. connecting neighbourhoods; and,
3. extending the pathway system to new areas.

Where conceptual routes cross components of the natural heritage system, the appropriate environmental studies shall be undertaken in accordance with the policies of the Official Plan.

140. Clearly sign and define pathway and trail entry or access points.

141. Pathways, wherever possible, should connect to London Transit Commission (LTC) bus stops or have well defined walking routes from LTC bus stops to the pathways. Routes providing access to all City parks, open space areas and natural areas should be provided to the LTC. This information should be available on the LTC web-site, on bus schedules (as appropriate) and noted on the route maps.

142. Where appropriate and in keeping with Official Plan policies, infrastructure within publicly accessible components of the natural heritage system should be designed such that persons with disabilities can be reasonably accommodated.

143. In high traffic areas, continue efforts to separate types of use (pedestrians do not mix well with cyclists and rollerblade enthusiasts).

144. Continue efforts to connect the “missing links” in the pathway and trail system. In some circumstances, this may require negotiating agreements with privately owned lands.

145. In designing new pathway and trail routes, the City’s Ecological Land Classification (ELC) database should be used to plan activities, uses, and alignments so they avoid sensitive habitats.

146. Implementation of the City of London’s Bicycle Master Plan should continue to be pursued as a high priority relative to recreational use.

147. Identify and consider opportunities to enhance the City’s “walkability” through urban design and active transportation initiatives.

Soccer Fields

148. Continue to work with the school boards to maintain access to and appropriate maintenance of school fields on an as-needed basis.

149. Carefully monitor public access to the Ontario Realty Corporation lands (London Psychiatric Hospital) at Highbury Avenue and Oxford Street to ensure continued availability of these or alternate fields (should they be removed from service).
### Recommendations – Community Facilities (Outdoor)

**Soccer Fields**  
(continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>150.</td>
<td>Monitor City-wide soccer registration for all ages and apply a soccer field provision target of 1 field per 90 registered participants (with each lit and irrigated field being equivalent to 1.5 unlit fields) to determine future needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151.</td>
<td>As participation in soccer grows, provide additional fields in keeping with the recommended provision target, with an emphasis being placed on: (a) full size, lit, and irrigated fields to accommodate demand from adults and competitive youth teams; and (b) a balanced distribution across the City, while recognizing the desire to create multi-field park sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>152.</td>
<td>In keeping with sport-specific needs, consider the conversion of under-utilized baseball diamonds to full size soccer fields if park characteristics permit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153.</td>
<td>The maintenance and periodic renewal of fieldhouse buildings that provide washroom and storage facilities for organized sports groups should continue to be a priority for the City and its community partners.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Baseball/Softball Diamonds**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>154.</td>
<td>While the overall number of diamonds is currently more than sufficient, the City should monitor the availability of the Southwest Optimist Ball Diamonds (Dreamers) and the impact on youth and adult diamond supply. If this supply diminishes, the City should assess the need to provide diamonds for adult baseball elsewhere in the City.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155.</td>
<td>The City – in partnership with user groups – should continue to work to identify diamonds that could be expanded or improved to increase the utility of already existing baseball diamonds within the City. The City should also identify under-utilized diamonds that can be dismantled or repurposed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Football Fields**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>156.</td>
<td>Maximize opportunities to accommodate football within the City’s and School Boards’ inventory of playing fields, in keeping with the needs of all field users.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Outdoor Tennis Courts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>157.</td>
<td>Validate the results of the tennis court observation project and implement a program to convert under-utilized courts to multi-purpose courts (e.g., basketball, ball hockey, ice skating, etc.) or alternate uses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>158.</td>
<td>Develop new tennis courts in the Southwest (e.g., Lambeth), Northwest, and Southeast with the intention of approaching a supply ratio of 1 court per 6,000 population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159.</td>
<td>Where possible, new courts should be developed in groups of three or more. Multiple court development is preferred as it lends itself to greater use, potential club development, better instruction opportunities, and also provides opportunities for future redevelopment to basketball courts, skate parks, etc. should trends and needs change.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Recommendations – Community Facilities (Outdoor)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility Type</th>
<th>Recommendation Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Basketball Courts</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>Develop basketball courts in keeping with a provision target of one hoop for every 750 youth; this will require additional investment in the Northeast and Southwest, as well as growth areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>161</td>
<td>When designing new parks, consideration should be given to multi-use court designs that can accommodate basketball, ball hockey, and natural ice rinks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Skate Parks</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>Continue to follow the 2008 Outdoor Skate Park Implementation Strategy, including the recommendations to develop four new District skate parks, expand the Wolseley (CHOCC) and White Oaks skate parks, establish neighbourhood skate parks on an as-needed basis, and consult with the public prior to any skate park enhancements or construction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play Structures</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>Ensure that the City is providing one play structure generally within an 800m radius of every residential area (without crossing a major arterial road or physical barrier). Areas found to be deficient are: (1) Southwest London (north of Southdale Road and west of Wonderland Road); and (2) Southeast London (north of Commissioners Road and west of Pond Mills Road).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-leash Dog Parks</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>Continue to provide leash free areas as needs arise and in conjunction with local organizations. The establishment of two to three more off-leash areas would provide for a more balanced distribution across the City, particularly if located in the Northwest and South/Southwest Plan Areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>165</td>
<td>In selecting sites for future off-leash dog parks and areas, consider the criteria and recommendations of the Off-leash Area Site Evaluation Report and undertake consultation with nearby residents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized Facilities</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>Develop a BMX Bike Park Strategy to define needs, establish locational criteria, and identify capital needs similar to those strategies developed for Off-Leash Dog Parks and Outdoor Skate Parks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Additional recommendations directly related to this service area can be found in Section 5.5.
5.7 Sports Services

Sports Services:

- provides access to community recreational facilities for sporting organizations, groups and individuals through fair and equitable sport field allocations;
- provides coaching development programs, runs defined adult sport leagues, and administers learn-to-skate programs;
- provides for maintenance of London’s premier soccer, football and baseball fields; and,
- supports tourism initiatives by providing facilities in support of sport tournaments.

With an aging population, one of the emerging needs identified through the consultation process is growing demand for adult sport leagues (i.e., opportunities to play sports at a recreational level without being involved as volunteers to organize the leagues, register participants, permit spaces, order and distribute uniforms, hire referees and maintain league standings). The City has responded by taking on the administrative responsibilities to incubate this emerging need. While the results show an increase in adult participation and the outcomes that can be expected from increased participation, the demand on staff time for these purposes may not be the best use of human resources. It is anticipated that demand for adult sports will increase over time and the City should investigate other models of delivery for adult sport leagues.

In addition to adult recreation, the City is witnessing increased pressure to accommodate year-round same sport activities. Soccer is a good example, with demand being expressed for all-weather turf fields (to extend the outdoor season) and indoor facilities for off-season use and training. While both of these initiatives are beyond the City’s current financial capacity, recommendations have been made to explore partnership opportunities and potential City involvement in partnering or facilitating such services.

**Recommendations – Sports Services**

167. Determine the best service delivery approach to supporting the emerging need for adult sport leagues.

168. Continue to maintain Labatt Park as a high level ball field.

169. A periodic review of the allocation policies is recommended to ensure balanced use by sports such as soccer, football, lacrosse, etc. By employing such a mechanism, the City should also require all renters to provide basic information on participant levels, thereby allowing the City to better track and manage demand and address the traditional seasonality of each sport.

170. The City may assess and participate in non-municipal proposals for indoor soccer facility provision if the conditions are satisfactory and in accordance with the City’s partnership framework model, as modified from time to time.

171. To increase play opportunities for multiple sports, explore locations and potential partnerships and funding models suitable to the provision of multi-seasonal artificial turf facilities.

*Note: Additional recommendations directly related to this service area can be found in Section 5.6.*
5.8 Special Events

Special Events services facilitates opportunities for Londoners to come together to participate in a safe, respectful, and engaging manner. The City provides – and facilitates through others – unique opportunities for Londoners and visitors to enjoy the experiences that special events can bring to individuals, families, and groups. The City has invested in infrastructure to support special events and assists holders of special events, community events, and film producers with: permits and approvals for various event spaces; marketing; and support for the operation of events at locations across the community, while ensuring appropriate uses of public spaces and public interests. The City enjoys over 100 special events and walks per year hosted at a number of well known sites, such as Victoria Park, Harris Park, the Civic Garden Complex, and the revitalized Springbank Gardens. Continued support of special events creates opportunities for residents and visitors to participate in a variety of cultural, sporting, and community events.

**Recommendations – Special Events**

172. Continue to coordinate special events in London and continue to improve event amenities and services provided at special events sites to accommodate ever-changing event requirements, including admission based events.

173. Continue to maintain Harris Park, Springbank Gardens and Victoria Park as premier cultural landscapes.

5.9 Golf

The City of London has a 60 year history of providing high quality, accessible, affordable, and amazing golf experiences for Londoners and visitors. Three locations (Thames Valley, Fanshawe Park, and River Road Golf Courses) offer a total of 90 holes of golf in a variety of course styles and levels, including a 9 hole barrier-free, accessible course. These courses are sustained financially by London’s golf community.

Participation in golf encourages healthy outdoor activity and social opportunities for all ages, abilities, and genders and supports the mission of “Moving Londoners” toward healthier lifestyles through amazing experiences”.

The expansion of municipal golf courses is not recommended (a provision target has not been set); rather, opportunities to enhance the experience of players and encourage year-round use of clubhouse and/or courses should be pursued on a case-by-case basis, in keeping with golf objectives (i.e., affordable and accessible golf opportunities).
Recommendations - Golf

174. Continue to offer affordable golf opportunities with further attention to potentially expanding services that would encourage year-round use of clubhouse and/or courses, including:

- Improving clubhouse facilities for use as community space;
- Development of teaching facilities (e.g., driving range, virtual golf) for player development; and
- Addressing the potential for year-round use of golf facilities (e.g., cross-country skiing, virtual golf at Thames Valley, etc.).

5.10 Storybook Gardens

Storybook Gardens is a unique, admission-based local learning and recreation facility, unlike any other park or recreation facility in London. The Storybook Gardens vision is to inspire the imagination of visitors through interactive play and learning in an enchanted storybook environment.

Serving over 120,000 visitors per year, Storybook Gardens plays a vital role in enhancing opportunities for children and families to learn through play and programming and to engage in healthy physically and socially active lives. Storybook Gardens embraces its emerging role as support for the Child and Youth Agenda where literacy is a way of life and childhood obesity is addressed through healthy eating and physical activity. Storybook Gardens is a beautiful naturalized environment, with gardens, animals, water, and a wide variety of stimulating program areas encouraging children to explore the world in a very “hands-on” way.

A growing body of research supports the positive benefits for children resulting from early literacy, free play, and exposure to natural and naturalized settings. Storybook Gardens creates opportunities for families to play and learn together, creating memories that will last a lifetime.

Recommendations – Storybook Gardens

175. Continue to support Storybook Gardens as a family-oriented local attraction in keeping with business plans that have been developed.

176. Continue to develop and expand opportunities for Storybook Gardens to assist in advancing the literacy and healthy eating, healthy physical activity priorities of London’s Child and Youth Agenda.
Section 6: IMPLEMENTATION AND FINANCIAL PLAN

This section presents the implementation strategy documenting priorities and high level cost implications for the recommendations.

6.1 Overview

The Implementation and Financial Plan identifies the parks and recreation facilities and land (capital) needs of the City of London for the next ten years based on the recommendations of the Parks & Recreation Strategic Master Plan.

Specifically, the recommendations of this Plan have been compared to the City’s 2009-2018 Capital Budget and 2009 draft Development Charges Study to identify potential budget shortfalls or overruns and areas for adjustment. The City’s capital budget generally changes from year to year, depending on both needs and the amount of funding available. A debt cap (across all municipal departments) has also been instituted to assist in achieving short and long-term priority of financial sustainability.

Annual operating costs for programs, services, and facilities (existing or recommended under this Plan) are not included in this analysis. It is expected that an analysis of operating budget implications and partnership options would be undertaken prior to approving any capital project and that sufficient annual operating funds would be allocated to any approved project.

6.2 Review of City’s 2009-2018 Capital Budget

(note: Section is currently under review by City’s Finance Department)

The City’s 2009-2018 Capital Budget contains considerable detail regarding capital projects (and amounts) to be undertaken in 2009, as well as expected future year projects (which are subject to change based on needs/priorities, funding availability, etc.).

Over the next ten years (2009-2018), the City’s 2009 Capital Budget identifies the following annual average expenditures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Annual Costs (2009-2018, including prior commitments)</th>
<th>Recreation facilities (e.g., community centres, arenas, indoor and outdoor aquatics, golf courses, etc.)</th>
<th>Parks facilities (e.g., park development and upgrades, open space network and ESAs, sports fields, pathways and trails, etc.)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growth-related</td>
<td>$9.51 million</td>
<td>$2.88 million</td>
<td>$12.39 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Initiatives</td>
<td>$1.17 million</td>
<td>$1.02 million</td>
<td>$2.19 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifecycle</td>
<td>$3.68 million</td>
<td>$4.95 million</td>
<td>$8.63 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$14.36 million</td>
<td>$8.85 million</td>
<td>$23.21 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals may not add due to rounding.
Of these amounts, approximately 78% is “rate-supported” (e.g., capital levy, debentures, reserves, funded from operations, etc.) and 22% is “non-rate supported” (e.g., grants, development charges, etc.). The City should account for inflation and other cost factors in its annual and long-term budgeting. The majority of the capital recommendations in this Strategic Master Plan are fully or partially growth-related.

6.3 General Priority of Capital Projects

This section identifies the priority of major capital projects recommended by the Strategic Master Plan (with “timing” generally being synonymous with “priority”, meaning that projects identified in earlier years should generally be higher priorities for the City). Budget pressures, changes in participation rates or demographics, population growth rates, grant programs, and other factors may impact upon the implementation of this Plan.

The goal of this Financial Plan is to work within the City’s existing 10-year capital budget; this means implementing all capital recommendations in a timeframe consistent with population growth, and within expected sources of funding. Should additional funding become available, either sooner or in greater amounts, the priority list in this section should be used to guide decisions about the use of this funding, with an intent to advance projects already identified or meet new and emerging needs for growth.

One specific example is the economic stimulus funding from the Federal and Provincial governments that is expected to be made available in the short-term (this program would result in an even three-way split of capital dollars between the Federal, Provincial, and municipal levels of government; the municipal funding allocation can come from a variety of sources, including the tax base, partner contributions, etc.). In terms of recreation and parks projects, the City has earmarked much of this stimulus funding to lifecycle projects (e.g., repairs, renewal, and enhancement to existing assets, most of which would normally be funded from the tax base), which are supported by this Strategic Master Plan.

For the purposes of this analysis, the service bundles for parks and recreation that were presented earlier in Section 5 are divided into the following three streams (as shown on the following page):

1. Community Development, which encompasses Community Investments and Planning, Community Programs/Spectrum, Sports services, and Special Events;

2. Recreation Facility Development, which encompasses Community Facilities (Indoor), Aquatics, Golf, and Storybook Gardens; and,

3. Parks Development, which encompasses Parks Planning and Design, and Community Facilities (Outdoor).
There is a high degree of overlap and coordination between these streams, and the City’s parks and recreation services cannot be successful unless sufficient resources are allocated to all three.

The capital requirements of each of these streams can vary. For example, Recreation Facility Development requires funding for large projects such as community centres and indoor pools, while the capital funding needs of Community Development are smaller by comparison and harder to forecast as this area deals with initiatives such as community capacity building that rely heavily on staff and volunteer resources. Community Development – to which both parks and facilities development contribute – requires both capital and operational resources and is a highly important priority for funding.

The following tables identify the general priority order for major capital investments in Recreation Facility Development and Parks Development; a separate table for Community Development has not been prepared as additional direction will be forthcoming through the Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy (currently under development). For the purposes of this Plan, Community Development has been integrated into the Facility Development and Parks Development streams.

Major capital projects that are expected to be achieved within the funding levels anticipated by the City’s current ten-year capital forecast are identified and should be generally pursued prior to undertaking those projects that are “below the line” (i.e., that are currently unfunded and that may require non-traditional funding approaches). The one exception is in cases where the “unfunded” projects would not affect the implementation and timing of projects that are “above the line” (i.e., those that are anticipated to be funded within existing budget envelopes).
## Major Capital Facility Projects in Order of Priority / Timing

*(note: excludes lifecycle projects)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RECREATION FACILITY DEVELOPMENT &amp; COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major Capital Projects (in order of priority)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BUILDING COMMUNITIES:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOUTHWEST MULTI-USE COMMUNITY CENTRE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Currently funded for $39 million between 2012-2015 (construction to begin in 2015). <strong>Opportunities to advance funding for this high-priority area should be explored.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Steps include: feasibility study and construction (components may include aquatics centre, twin pad arena, gymnasium, program space).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOUTHEAST / EAST AQUATIC, ARENA, AND COMMUNITY COMPONENTS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Currently funded between 2016-2018 for $39 million (construction to begin in 2018).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Steps include: site identification / land acquisition, feasibility study, and construction (components may include aquatics centre, arena, gymnasium, program space). May be achieved through multiple sites (existing or new).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BUILDING NEIGHBOURHOODS:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GLEN CAIRN ARENA EXPANSION OR RE-PURPOSING</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Currently funded in 2015 for $2 million in lifecycle renewal. Funding amount may not be sufficient to meet programmatic needs of the community and requires further study. Further study required regarding local needs and alternate uses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SILVERWOOD ARENA EXPANSION OR RE-PURPOSING</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Currently funded in 2016 for $2 million in lifecycle renewal. Funding amount may not be sufficient to meet programmatic needs of the community and requires further study. Further study required regarding local needs and alternate uses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>REDEVELOPMENT OF FARQUHARSON ARENA</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Currently funded for $2 million in Life Cycle Renewal in 2016. Funding amount may not be sufficient to meet programmatic needs of the community and requires further study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Dependent upon construction of the Southwest Multi-use Centre and further study regarding alternate uses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STRENGTHENING NEIGHBOURHOODS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- City currently undertaking Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy which will act as a lever for the neighbourhood facility projects. Currently unfunded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RESOLVE COMMUNITY SPACE ISSUES IN THE NORTHWEST</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Seek funding alternatives and undertake project after the Southwest Community Centre is built (could be in advance of other major projects listed above).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Recommended components include gymnasium and program space (estimate need for $950,000).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXPANDING COMMUNITY SPACE IN NEIGHBOURHOOD FACILITIES</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Currently unfunded for additional expansion including facilities such as Byron ($450,000), Boyle ($450,000), Springbank Gardens Community Centres ($350,000), etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Anticipate infrastructure funding will create capacity to advance these ahead of other major projects listed above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OUTDOOR POOLS (or additional investment in new Indoor Pools)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Shortfall of Life Cycle Renewal by approximately $1 million per pool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Alternatives to renewal include: (1) decommissioning and replacement with spray pads in conjunction with other neighbourhood repurposing; and/or (2) redirecting funding toward development of indoor pool(s) serving a collection of neighbourhoods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INDOOR ATHLETICS (SOCCER) FACILITY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Currently unfunded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Municipal capital contribution, if any, is to be determined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OTHER MAJOR CAPITAL</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Unsolicited proposals – unknown and unfunded (e.g., Indoor Skate Park)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Major Capital Parks Projects in Order of Priority / Timing (note: excludes lifecycle projects)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARKS DEVELOPMENT &amp; COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major Capital Projects (in order of priority)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pathway and Trail System Expansion & Upgrades (Major Open Space & Thames Valley Parkway)**
- Current annual budget in two programs in Life Cycle Renewal and Growth Areas; approximate yearly expenditure: Thames Valley Parkway $1.2 million, Open Space $800,000.
- Opportunities to increase funding for this high-priority area should be explored.

- Most items are funded annually as part of district and neighbourhood park development budget and are not split out into these specific categories. Life Cycle Renewal of Parks is funded for $850,000 and Growth-related Park projects are funded for $800,000
  - Playground gaps exist in the South east and Southwest; will also be required for new growth areas.
  - Spray pads are funded ($400,000 each) through the Recreation budget in 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2017 (consider staggering them every 2 years); several gaps in distribution exist; will also be required for new growth areas.
  - Skate Park gaps exist in the Northeast, Southwest, and East.
  - Basketball Court gaps exist in the Northeast; will also be required for new growth areas.
  - The primary focus of the Sports Park funding is to improve and upgrade existing sports fields (e.g., multi-sport artificial turf) and to replace fields in the event that non-municipal artificial turf is lost to development. Growth areas identified and budgeted as required.
  - Outdoor Tennis Court gaps exist in the Southwest, Northeast, and Southeast.
  - For ESAs, priorities include the development of conservation master plans and site plans to ensure long-term ecological integrity and access for appropriate recreation opportunities. Annual LCR and Growth budgets average $500,000.

**Basketball Courts (Address Gaps & New Growth)**

**Sports Parks (Address New Growth & Quality)**

**Outdoor Tennis Courts (Address Gaps)**

**Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs) (opportunity-based)**
- “Urban Parks” category currently unfunded. Main focus is downtown.
- Storybook Gardens – Theme development and expansion with life-cycle renewal elements.
- Off-Leash Dog Parks gaps exist in the Northwest and South/Southwest.
- Unsolicited proposals – unknown and unfunded (e.g., BMX Park). Seek funding alternatives; project(s) could be undertaken in tandem with other major projects listed above.
6.4 Financial Implementation

In implementing the recommendations, it is expected that Council will consider approaches that are financially sustainable, such as partnering with qualified agents, building cost-effective multi-use facilities rather than those designed for a single use, seeking senior government grants and fundraising, etc. At present, parks and recreation capital projects are funded mostly through municipal taxes, and development charges (intended to provide service to new growth); other outside sources, such as fundraising, grants, and partnerships, may also be available for some projects. Most public parkland is provided through parkland dedication under the Planning Act, although acquisition of some lands – including natural areas – may be municipally-funded. These implementation tools will continue to be used and will be supplemented by other approaches, where possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations – Financial Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>177. Using this Strategic Master Plan as a resource, the City should continue to develop the 10 year capital plan which has regard for typical annual spending and debt caps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>178. Use funding capacity (if available) created by alternative funding sources to advance projects from the unfunded parks and recreation project lists. Key priorities that are currently unfunded include expanding community space at Boyle, Byron, Medway, and Springbank Community Centres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>179. Continue to seek partners to reduce the burden on the tax base, to advance projects within the 10 year plan, and to bring unfunded parks and recreation projects forward.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.5 Plan Implementation

On an annual basis, the City should reconcile the recommendations with its fiscal capacity and focus on the highest priority items. It is critical that the City regularly monitor and update the Strategic Master Plan and its recommendations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations – Plan Implementation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>180. Implement a system for the regular monitoring of the Master Plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>181. Implement a system for the regular review and updating of the Master Plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182. Determine if an update or a full review of the Master Plan is required in 2013/14.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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