

Section 5

Programming and Service Reviews

The way in which the City provides services to its residents is as critical as the types of recreation facilities and programs that are offered. This Section is intended to provide guidance to the City of St. Catharines with respect to the planning and delivery of its outdoor spaces and amenities and its indoor recreation facilities and respective programming.





5.1 Program and Service Delivery Review

The critical questions that are addressed in the Recreation Facility and Program Master Plan's Service Delivery Review include:

- a) What is the role of the City in providing and enabling recreation programs and services in maximizing participation and what is the service delivery model?
- b) What influences impact the delivery of services, for example - diversity, participation rates, demographics, trends, promising practices in other jurisdictions and the voice of residents heard during the consultations to support the development of the plan?
- c) How can related partners and stakeholders address priorities in the delivery of service to contribute in providing a broad range of choices for residents?
- d) What are the recommended service delivery priorities for the future and how can these be developed in a timely and effective manner?
- e) How can the City demonstrate to the public and stakeholders that progress is being made on the implementation of the service delivery recommendations?

Priority actions are offered as a result of quantified data, community engagement, consultation and research articulated in previous sections of this document. The focus is on the delivery of programs and services and priorities for further planning, implementation and continuous evaluation. Developed in concert with the facility assessment, the Program and Service Delivery Review creates a framework for policy development and effective administration of the City's recreation programs and services in continuing to meet the needs of the residents.

Increasing Resident's Participation in Safe and Welcoming Environments

Delivering relevant, quality driven and safe programs and services in St. Catharines requires synergistic efforts amongst the public, staff, partners, sponsors and volunteers. Energies are spent identifying the changing makeup and needs of the community, interpreting current research, developing plans, and developing program and services that are meaningful and well utilized. Implementing programs and services through marketing, registration, delivery and evaluation requires coordination and a thoughtful approach. There is no one solution in a city with such diverse needs as St. Catharines; varying approaches need to be taken to reach out and include all residents in leisure

time pursuits. It is therefore critical that all service providers keep focussed in a similar direction to ensure that there is alignment in these effective yet differing approaches.

The approach to service delivery is as important as the facilities that are provided, as the programs and service needs determine how the assets will be designed and utilized. Continued emphasis should be placed on delivering services in an integrated manner by providing programs directly and enabling community organizations to deliver quality programs and services within a blended model. This harmonized approach takes great effort and serves to avoid duplication of resources and capitalizes on limited funding.

The vision for programs and services must include the notion that participation in active and passive leisure opportunities is key to the quality of life in St. Catharines and key to the health and wellness of each individual resident. All efforts must be coordinated and focussed on including as many residents as possible to garner the social, physical, psychological and emotional benefits. Maximizing participation in quality recreational pursuits is the key to healthy individuals, thriving families and a strong community. Everyone that is engaged in providing or enabling recreation in St. Catharines must see themselves as playing a part in reaching out to more residents to be included in quality leisure pursuits; the community is stronger when it works together toward one simple but compelling vision. The focus of the Department for 2015 to 2020 will have all energies on more people participating in recreation more often through exploring strategic partnerships and by renewing efforts to include all residents in physical activity.

This section of the Master Plan focusses on the four key areas of focus from a service delivery perspective and addresses the question as to how recreation service delivery to the citizens of St. Catharines can increase participation in safe and welcoming environments. The four key areas of focus includes:

1. Program and Service Delivery Priorities
2. Inclusion and Diversity
3. Building Capacity through Partnerships, Community Development and Volunteers
4. Maximizing Participation and Increasing the Use of Facilities and Programs

The Role of Local Government

Similar to other municipal and local governments, St. Catharines has an inherent part in providing and enabling recreational opportunities for the community. The role of local government is to ensure that active and social activities and like services for residents are provided in the most cost effective and efficient manner. Typically, communities enable various methods to ensure that residents can enjoy active and healthy lifestyles. Council must ensure that these approaches are sustainable over time and can adapt to changing conditions like population growth, income disparity, diversity and varying backgrounds of residents. The role of the municipality is to anticipate and plan for these changes and develop the tools necessary to be proactive and respond in partnership with other providers. Most successful



communities demonstrate strong communications, promotion and awareness of opportunities, the development of a common vision and guiding principles, partnerships, joint development and planning initiatives, financial assistance and/or in-kind support for new initiatives and evaluation mechanisms. The most proactive municipalities continuously have their pulse on the community, build cohesion and a sense of purpose with all providers and move toward the same vision and goals.

Related service providers may have a distinct mandate from a health promotions and social services perspective, or a faith-based mandate to engage residents through recreation and social pursuits. Private providers have a profit driven mandate and may well have a discount in order to better penetrate various markets like youth and older adults. All providers have a common objective in providing market driven services although their motivation may differ. Effective communities provide forums for discussions including all providers; common communications and training tools; and one stop shopping mechanisms for similar age cohorts and segments. The collective responsively evaluates the complete system to proactively respond to trends and current and anticipated issues.

Current Service Delivery Model

The current program and service delivery model for recreation utilizes a two tiered approach. Programs and services are provided **directly** through both the City and other providers. Staff members and volunteers determine needs in concert with community and member research/consultation and follow a continuum of developing, implementing, delivering, evaluating and improving service and program delivery. Other programs and opportunities are provided through community groups, faith groups, non-profit organizations and the private sector which is considered **indirect delivery**. Through a combination of direct program delivery and indirect delivery as well as community development tools (where staff support community organization initiatives), the municipality strives to ensure a diverse and a barrier free range of recreational programs and/or opportunities for all residents, regardless of their background.

5.2 Program and Service Delivery Methods

Direct Program and Service Delivery

The Parks, Recreation and Culture Services Department delivers programs and services across the municipality in a variety of facilities and spaces and these programs and services are either offered as registered programs or as drop-in and casual opportunities. Staff design, develop and execute programs based on resident interests and new trends. A registered program and member based activity (e.g., fitness) is a supervised activity/course; and residents register for the programs and commit to attend the workshops or series of classes. Most often there is learning and skill development involved in a structured environment and many of the programs are standardized so the same program can be offered in multiple locations. In addition to registered programs, flexible drop-in activities are offered.

Drop-in programs offer the ability to participate in a range of recreation activities without having to register beforehand. This provides an element of flexibility for residents' busy schedules. These programs are generally offered at a lower cost and can be accessed when the services are scheduled in the recreation facilities. Drop-in opportunities are becoming more popular as busy schedules dictate the need for more casual form of recreation.

Indirect Program and Service Delivery

Beyond direct provision, St. Catharines supports the delivery of recreation programs and services through partnerships with volunteers, not-for-profit organizations and other local service providers. A recent review of volunteer stakeholder groups notes that there are 140 groups and organizations providing services and recreational pursuits. Support from the municipality is provided in a variety of ways:

Permits

Recreation facilities are distributed throughout the municipality and provide valuable local space to many community based recreation service providers. Permits are provided for a wide range of activities including sports, special events, arts, aquatics, meetings, social gatherings, fundraisers, and general activities. These leased facility spaces are available to all groups servicing residents for both recreation and other uses.

Community Development and Enabling Self-Determining Groups

St. Catharines partners with local community organizations to facilitate the development of strong relationships and build the group's capacity to sustain their recreation activities over time. Organizations that rely on volunteers often do not have the capacity to recruit and train individuals to assist with the program delivery. The municipality often assists these groups with volunteer recruitment, governance structures, and policy templates and generally provides guidance to ensure the groups have access to information on grants, fundraising and networking opportunities.

Grants Program

St. Catharines provides annual grants to non-profit groups for a variety of purposes, including the provision of recreational experiences for community members. The grant program is an excellent way to broaden the reach of recreational opportunities and support volunteer efforts in the community.

Various methods are used to provide a range of choices and deliver quality recreational pursuits in St. Catharines. It is important to understand the full range of service providers as demographics change and the older adult population increases. It will be important to



understand how groups can work better in partnership to garner the greatest efficiencies in order to provide the number and scope of recreation programs and services that will be needed. St. Catharines needs to begin to understand the penetration rate of these combined groups and what numbers can be anticipated in the future. Developing some baseline metrics around inputs, outputs, efficiencies and effectiveness will better determine the reach and effectiveness of these various approaches over time.

It cannot and should not be assumed that additional resources will be readily available to support increased participation; resources and supports must be geared to the organizations who can self-organize, have little overhead and have significant reach in including increasing participation. Further, the focus on the delivery of programs and services must be geared to residents that most need assistance in terms of subsidized programs and services. This is the only way that adequate recreational opportunities for residents can be sustained in St. Catharines over time.

Trends in the Delivery of Recreation Services

The initial stages of the Master Plan's development included a research component, community engagement, compilation of a demographic profile of the community and a detailed analysis of current recreation and leisure trends (which are summarized in Section 2.2). Trends must be considered as part of the service delivery assessment as they have an impact on what communities across Ontario are considering as they develop a broad range of program and service opportunities. Trends can describe current approaches to service delivery, quality assurance initiatives or focus on a specific age group or segment of the population. The following summary of trends (built upon the Master Plan's background research) describes what is relevant in St. Catharines, while considering the community input that has been received in the development of this plan.

- Addressing lack of free time to participate with a greater focus on drop-in and casual opportunities.
- Seeking ways to combat escalating rates of physical inactivity and obesity, potential in partnership with like-minded agencies and organizations.
- Continuing to focus on youth through program and facility delivery, participating in the 'Youth Friendly Communities' initiative through the Play Works Partnership (St. Catharines received approval from Council in 2013 to submit an application to Play Works to have St. Catharines considered as a Youth Friendly Community).
- Engaging the aging population (particularly the Baby Boom generation), understanding their needs and providing support for self-directed older adult groups.

- Furthering the work of having received an Age Friendly City designation by developing an Age Friendly Action Plan with specific focus on social cohesion and inclusion, aging in place, civic engagement and empowerment, intergenerational opportunities, active transportation at a minimum. Other cities having received the designation (e.g. Windsor, Ottawa, and Toronto) have developed multi-year action plans by including the voice of older adults in the research and development of community specific actions.
- Working within the Canadian Sport for Life (CS4L) and its Long Term Athlete Development Program (LTAD) by bringing sport groups together to discuss common challenges and work with the municipality to address sport development issues and concerns under a common framework. This approach will remain an important consideration of St. Catharines as sport preferences change and the need to keep residents engaged increases.
- As a waterfront community, continuing to emphasize learn-to-swim opportunities as a means of drowning prevention. The Lifesaving Society has developed the “Swim to Survive” program that enables non-swimmers to be able to swim to safety and survive a potential water incident. St. Catharines actively promotes the Swim to Survive program with schools and this initiative requires continued support.
- Striving to integrate principles and best practices surrounding cultural diversity, inclusion and accessibility into the design and administration of City recreation facilities and programs. This may include adoption of gender-specific programs (such as learn to play hockey for girls and women), introduction of ‘Safe Spaces’ philosophies, broadening the availability of low to no cost program options.
- Working with residents and stakeholders to strengthen neighbourhoods and create community hubs through collaborative delivery of recreation services. Staff work with community leaders to create a dialogue and assist residents in discussing and creating opportunities for social interaction and address community issues. The end goal is to create a greater sense of belonging, empowerment, pride and cohesion within local neighbourhoods.
- Building capacity through community development, partnerships, and volunteers as a means to provide quality, accessible services in spite of budget pressures, reductions in traditional forms of funding, and changes in the way resources are allocated. The trend is for innovative departments to seek out community development and partnership opportunities as well as augment services through the use of volunteers. These combined approaches provide better choices with fewer burdens to the taxpayer than trying to provide all services municipally.



5.3 Key Focus Area One: Recreation Service Delivery Priorities

Goal: To ensure that the provision of programs and services reflect current and anticipated community needs.

The delivery of recreation services is a complex operation with thousands of programs and services offered annually and with hundreds of thousands of visitors and participants. The City and its community partners will continue to place a priority on their own sport or programs to ensure that they can respond to the needs of athletes and participants in order to grow these opportunities. It must be noted that the review of programs and services found that staff are nimble and responsive in providing meaningful services and specific directives on program gaps are not needed. Staff are proactive in terms of trends and are empowered to develop new opportunities.

Community input, current demographics and/or health and quality of life issues prompt the City to place focus on certain service delivery priorities. This does not imply that resources should be reduced in other program areas; it does imply, however, that continued dialogue and working with community partners is required to address these priorities. It is suggested that specific focus is required for the duration of the plan on the delivery of recreation services for:

- Children/youth;
- Older adults;
- Promotion of physical activity and sport;
- Cultural experiences for residents of all ages and abilities;
- Learn to swim opportunities and prevention of water incidents;
- Casual and drop-in opportunities; and
- Life-long sport development for all residents.

Recommendations – Service Delivery Priority

- #39. Host bi-annual meetings with other recreation service providers within St. Catharines to determine joint priorities (diversity, access and inclusion, casual opportunities, drowning prevention, sport development etc.) and an approach to working better together.
- #40. Continue to promote all City-wide casual and drop-in (non-registered, low cost/ no cost) opportunities (trails, public skate and swim, public tennis opportunities, picnics, St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre, etc.) opportunities for residents and families. Market availability of opportunities between City program sessions to provide additional drop-in program opportunities.

- #41. Complete a survey every other year on the satisfaction levels of residents, participants and volunteers with a view to maintain a minimum 85% satisfaction level and continually seek solutions to improve service delivery.
- #42. Host full-staff workshops at least twice annually to brainstorm, share information on key departmental issues and discuss the status of the Master Plan implementation.

Recommendations - Children and Youth

- #43. Continue to implement the Parks and Recreation Ontario High 5 Quality Assurance Program in the delivery of programs and aquatics.
- #44. Work collectively with supportive community partners to ensure that youth engagement / empowerment and the resulting benefits to youth and to the community continue to be a priority.
- #45. Continue to meet the designation requirements of the "Youth Friendly Community" through the Play Works Partnership in order to promote successes in engaging youth and address any gaps in the provision and enabling of youth services.

Recommendations - Older Adult

- #46. Develop a multi-year Age Friendly City Action Plan to further the work in having received the Age Friendly City designation. Ensure that older adults are included in the development and implementation of the plan and further that social inclusion and cohesion, aging in place, active transportation, civic engagement and empowerment, intergenerational opportunities and broadening the reach of recreation, culture and parks opportunities to older adults becomes one of the key result areas of the plan.
- #47. Develop an outreach program with the Region of Niagara and social agencies to ensure that older adults from low income backgrounds can participate in recreation programs.
- #48. Host annual focus groups with older residents (non-members of the older adult clubs) to ensure that programs and services are accessible.
- #49. Investigate available software programs that promote all casual and drop-in opportunities and invite residents to participate on a weekly basis.



- #50. Address any transportation issues with St. Catharines Transit to negotiate drop-off /pick-up services in front of centres offering opportunities for older adults (and other residents that require transportation).
- #51. Gain an understanding of the participation rates of older adults in St. Catharines (of services provided municipally and by other stakeholders) with a view to providing the capacity needed to adequately respond to the number of older adults. With this understanding, the City should develop a strategy to attract a wider range of older adults at its older adult centres and community centres through innovative programming and scheduling.

Recommendations – Physical Activity

- #52. Develop a portal on the City of St. Catharines' website that promotes all available activities and resources supporting recreation and cultural opportunities for local residents. Ensure that a balance of physical and cultural programs and opportunities exist for all age and abilities.
- #53. Develop a working group with allied community partners (Health and Fitness, Public Health, Education, Social Services, etc.) to support efforts to increase the level, duration and intensity of physical activity in St. Catharines. Further, specific targets should be set that include awareness and increasing physical activity levels.
- #54. Denote all active choices in the Leisure Guide with a symbol to demonstrate that the active choice will assist in improving physical activity levels.

Recommendations - Sport Development and Sport for Life

- #55. Coordinate a forum in concert with sport groups, the Niagara Accessibility Sport Council and support organizations to discuss the Canadian Sport for Life Model in St. Catharines. Discuss the CS4L model, strengths and gaps in sport delivery to inform further planning and consideration.

Recommendations - Learn to Swim

- #56. Develop an annual communications/marketing plan on the importance of learning to swim and surviving in and around the water. Utilize the Leisure Guide to impart seasonal water safety messaging.

- #57. Continue to offer the Swim to Survive program offered to students, given its strong success relative to other municipalities, and quantify the number of students engaged in the program year over year.
- #58. Form relationships with groups representing diverse populations to impart the importance of learning to swim in Ontario and safety measures in and around water.

5.4 Key Focus Area Two: Inclusion and Diversity – Recreation for All

Goal: To ensure that all residents feel included and welcomed to participate in safe and enjoyable parks and recreational activities.

Responding to the diverse needs of residents is seen as a strategic advantage in gaining more participation in recreation programs. It is not seen so much as a social responsibility but as a way of responding to different markets and growing the customer base. The development of programs and services must include reaching out to diverse populations to provide for better customer insight. Forming relationships and partnerships with diverse groups is key to understanding needs and developing programs that are reflective of the needs of a diverse population.

Communities, agencies, and the business sector are broadening their definition of diversity to include all groups that are under-represented or marginalized as a result of their backgrounds and/or abilities. This definition includes but is not limited to persons from culturally diverse backgrounds, persons with disabilities, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Questioning (LGBTQ) community, gender equity, etc. The principle of equitable access to parks, recreation and cultural services is strengthened by identifying groups that may require taking different approaches to feeling included. Often building a relationship with representative groups and key leaders within a given social community is the first step in understanding needs and the capacity of the group to independently deliver and/or join in on municipally delivered opportunities. Joint efforts are developed based on what assistance can be offered by the municipality and what can be better accomplished by working together.

Greater efforts are being made to educate, train and enable staff, volunteers and residents to ensure that everyone is welcome and that all residents are entitled to barrier-free access. The term “Cultural Competency” is used to capture a broader notion of diversity and expand on what varying group’s require in terms of inclusive services. Efforts are also made to have a staff / volunteer mix that is representative of the community they serve; this is done in an effort to ensure that centres and services are more welcoming.



Including Residents from Low Income Backgrounds

Staff have worked over the years to engage residents from lower income backgrounds as the benefits to the individual and family are critical to positive outcomes. The approach to including these residents has been to offer a blend of fee based programs and casual drop in activities that are free or carry low fees. The Fee Assistance in Recreation (F.A.I.R.) program has assisted families from low income backgrounds to participate by having fees accommodated.

An Assessment of the Fee Assistance in Recreation Program (F.A.I.R.)

F.A.I.R. is a policy that embraces the principle that recreation opportunities should be accessible to all residents regardless of income levels. The benefits to residents participating in recreation, culture and sport opportunities are well known and increasing participation is an important element of individual, family and community wellness.

Residents who are eligible for financial assistance under the F.A.I.R. program are required to show proof of residency and an indication of their income status (in a confidential setting). The Program provides residents with a 50% reduction in the following:

- All programs and memberships
- Individual and family passes
- Four programs per annum

The policy and application is promoted in the Leisure Guide and on the City's website. Residents have become more aware of the F.A.I.R. policy to a certain extent and participation in the subsidy program has increased over the last four years. While it is positive to see that the number of residents utilizing the F.A.I.R. program has increased, the initiative has captured a very small portion of the nearly 20,000 low-income residents in St. Catharines (National Household Survey, 2010).

Table 3: St. Catharines Recreation Subsidies, 2011 – 2014

Year	Number of Residents Receiving Subsidy	Value of the Subsidies (rounded to the closest \$1.00)	Average Value Per Participant (rounded to the closest \$1.00)
2011	2	\$50	\$25
2012	43	\$2,098	\$49
2013	79	\$3,357	\$42
2014	53 (Part year)	\$2,146	\$40

Many communities are becoming more proactive in reaching out to residents from low income backgrounds to increase participation from this demographic. Multi-level approaches need to be developed to promote the benefits and garner meaningful participation. Such initiatives include:

- Providing a range of no cost and low cost opportunities and promoting these opportunities in low income neighbourhoods. Offering leadership training at no cost in low income neighbourhoods to ensure that youth are well prepared to apply for part-time positions in recreation.
- Obtaining sponsorships for programs in low income neighbourhoods to offset costs of providing recreation activities.
- Furnishing entrances to community centres in low income neighbourhoods to provide welcoming spaces and opportunities for residents to become engaged in recreational pursuits.
- Engaging Social Service Agency staff to promote the City's no cost/ low cost activities and subsidy policies. Some municipalities have gone to the point of sharing the approval process for subsidies with Social Agency workers.
- Durham Region has formed a collective of recreation, education, social service and non-profit service providers called "Advancing Access to Affordable Recreation in Durham" (A.A.A.R.D.) to proactively increase the number of residents from low income backgrounds participating in recreation. The collective developed a multi-year strategy based on best practices and gaining a better understanding of the barriers to full access by surveying low income residents. The collective is keeping statistics of participation in subsidized opportunities and have set a target to capture 15% of low income residents in recreation programs. Some of the barriers that the collective is currently addressing is transportation and the cost of equipment to participate.
- Some municipalities are working with all sport groups using publically funded facilities to waive fees so that low income residents can participate in their sport or activity of choice. Other service providers list and promote all of the no cost / low cost and subsidized opportunities to allow a wide range of choices for low income residents.
- The City of Mississauga is developing partnerships to begin contracting service providers to deliver and enable a full range of recreation programs in low income neighbourhoods.

The Equity Lens – The City of Toronto developed an "Equity Lens" which is a simple tool that assists staff to be more inclusive as they review the effectiveness of existing policies/programs and develop new ones. The lens poses three questions for staff to address as programs and services are developed and/or reviewed.



1. How did you identify the barriers faced by diverse groups and assess the impact of the policy/program on them? What diverse groups are impacted by the identified barriers?
2. How did you reduce or remove the barriers? What changes have you made to the policy/program so that the diverse groups will benefit from the policy/program?
3. How do you measure the results of the policy/program to see if it works to benefit diverse groups?

Persons with Disabilities: Physical access to recreational facilities is imperative and a legislative requirement in Ontario as a baseline criteria in treating all residents equitably. The development and delivery of recreation programs and services for persons with disabilities should be viewed as a collective responsibility within the community. Often, municipalities take a leadership role in bringing all support agencies together to begin a more holistic discussion on the strengths, challenges and gaps of program and service provision. These discussions often are the impetus in developing priorities and strengthening the ability of the collective to share resources, increase penetration and to develop innovative and meaningful programs. The City of Hamilton recently developed a recreation plan for persons with disabilities by engaging all support organizations and agencies and by reaching out to residents with disabilities and has seen stronger relationships and meaningful recreation services as a result.

Safe Spaces: The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Questioning (LGBTQ) community often experience exclusionary behaviours. The introduction of "Safe Spaces" is one way of welcoming this community to public places. Safe Spaces was developed by Safe Spaces Canada whereby signage on the front door of a community space indicates that staff have been trained in reducing homophobic gestures and slurs and in creating welcoming environments.

Positive Spaces: The Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants developed the Positive Spaces Initiative through Citizen and Immigration Canada to denote public spaces that are safe for and welcoming to the LGBTQ community. Signage including the Pride flag in the graphic denotes that the space is positive for the LGBTQ population.

Recommendations – Inclusion and Diversity – Recreation for All

#59. Develop a Diversity / Inclusion Policy and Practice model for the delivery/enabling of recreation programs and services that addresses but is not limited to the following elements:

- i. Define diversity, access and inclusion in the broadest sense including but not limited to, visible cultures, cultural diversity, persons with disabilities, gender equity, sexual orientation, persons from low income backgrounds, and other predominant yet marginalized groups.
- ii. Develop and implement an “Equity Lens” that ensures inclusive language and approaches in the development and delivery of services. The lens / checklist will be used to identify and remove barriers as programs and services are planned, executed and evaluated.
- iii. Form a reference group of representatives from diverse populations to ensure programs and services are reflective of the changing needs of the community.
- iv. Ensure that all correspondence and written materials are reflective of Plain Language principles and that training in Plain Language communications training is provided to relevant staff.
- v. Ensure that all community recreation centres can be considered Safe and/or Positive Spaces with the required training and identification to enable staff and volunteers to prevent homophobic slurs and gestures in creating safe recreational centres.
- vi. Review service delivery plans in each program area (aquatics, youth, older adults, fitness, culture, parks, etc.) to ensure that programs and services are welcoming and accessible to diverse and underrepresented populations within the community.

Recommendations – Residents from Low Income Backgrounds

- #60. Continue to provide a blend of no cost low cost programs and opportunities for residents to ensure that the recreation system is open and accessible to all. Further consider where there are fee based programs that might be cost prohibitive, extend efforts to:
- i. Promote the F.A.I.R. policy and local recreation and sport opportunities to Niagara Regional Housing and Ontario Works staff;
 - ii. Continue to address other barriers to program participation, such as transportation and equipment;
 - iii. Consider a policy revision that requires recreation and sport groups that use subsidized City spaces to offer community outreach and subsidized/no cost registration for residents of low income backgrounds;
 - iv. Expand on the number of opportunities for at risk children and youth through corporate sponsorship opportunities;



- v. Provide more casual/drop-in and no cost/low cost recreational experiences and youth leadership opportunities in at risk neighbourhoods; and
- vi. Consider expanding the annual grants program to assist groups in providing recreational opportunities in lower income neighbourhoods.

Recommendations – Persons with Disabilities

- #61. Develop and foster a working group with agencies and groups that provide services to persons with disabilities to enable a seamless system and barrier free access to recreation pursuits. Continue to provide one point of contact for residents with disabilities to receive the needed supports and advice in order to access and benefit from participation in recreation.
- #62. Continue to develop partnerships in reaching more residents with disabilities; quantify participation numbers on an annual basis and monitor the effectiveness of inclusion policies, practices and program offerings.

5.5 Key Focus Area Three: Building Community Capacity

Goal: To work more effectively with recreation service delivery stakeholders in order to increase the number and quality of recreational opportunities available to the public.

Residents have demonstrated a willingness to actively support the delivery of recreation programs and services through organizing leagues and events and as well as volunteering. Partnerships have demonstrated an ability to increase opportunities for residents with little burden to the taxpayer. With growing interest in recreational pursuits, alternative delivery strategies are needed to augment directly offered programs and services. The City will need to continue to build and strengthen the current recreation service delivery system through partnerships, community development and volunteers.

Parks, Recreation and Culture departments in Ontario continue to work in a climate that demands broadening their reach to all residents by finding internal efficiencies. This requires the ability to be innovative and to enable staff to do more with equal or fewer resources. Municipalities have risen to this challenge and are beginning to work better together with institutions and organizations that have complementary mandates. The trend is for more innovative departments to proactively seek out community partnership opportunities as well as augment services through the use of other providers and volunteers. This combined approach provides better choices with less burden to the taxpayer than trying to provide all programs and services directly through the department.

It is helpful to utilize a common partnership framework to determine when and how partnerships should be developed and sustained. The use of the following Partnership Framework will enable all staff to seek out partnerships in their respective discipline to broaden the reach of their service efficiently and effectively.

Partnership Goal – To efficiently increase the number of residents participating in quality parks, recreation and culture experiences in St. Catharines by working in partnership with complementary organizations, agencies and institutions.

Types of Partnerships in a Municipal Parks, Recreation and Culture Setting

In all partnership arrangements, specifications and requirements must ensure that the partner will respect and align with the Department’s vision, mandate, values, strategic priorities and service standards.

Table 4: Partnership Types

Partnership Types	Description	Formalized Relationship
Not-for-Profit Community Groups	Community groups exist to provide services, leagues, education etc. through the use of volunteers for the most part and are not-for-profit. They may require assistance in forming as a group but most likely require space and consideration for a not-for-profit rate for rental fees.	Typically community groups abide by an allocation policy or a Community Development Policy and thrive more effectively through sharing of information, cross-marketing of opportunities and regular communications to enhance the delivery system.
Complementary Institutions and Agencies	Working more effectively with school boards, hospitals and other agencies such as the Y and the Boys and Girls Clubs can benefit the community through the development of joint programs and initiatives and sharing of resources. This will broaden the reach of like programs and services and reduce duplication.	Requires a service level agreement or a reciprocal agreement that spells out the rights, obligations and deliverables of each agency.
Private Service Providers	Private service providers have a for-profit mandate and may provide specialized programs and services not necessarily in the municipal mandate. Often profit	A contract will articulate the rights, obligations and deliverables of each party. Specific consideration must be given to ensuring that



Partnership Types	Description	Formalized Relationship
	sharing can provide an alternate form of revenue to the municipality.	quality assurance, risk management and service levels are equal to that of the municipality.

Guiding Principles

Each partnership must be considered with the following guiding principles in mind:

- a) The outcome of the partnership is aligned with, and supported by, the municipal values, mandate and priorities;
- b) There is an articulated need for the proposed service in the community;
- c) The financial and liability risks to the municipality is shared or reduced;
- d) The proponent is best equipped and qualified to deliver the service through identified efficiencies, and the ability to reach an identified segment of the population;
- e) The quality of the program or service provided through the partnership meets municipal quality assurance and risk management requirements and complies with legislation;
- f) Unsolicited for-profit partnership proposals are dealt with transparently and through a competitive process as identified in the City's procurement process;
- g) Accountabilities and responsibilities can be clearly defined and complied with; and
- h) Annual reporting requirements capture participation numbers and alignment with departmental objectives.

Making the Most Out of Existing and Future Partnerships

Partnerships can increase the capacity of the municipality to deliver quality programs and services and therefore should be considered an integral part of the delivery system. Continued discussions should centre on how each organization can promote each organization's work and their respective contribution to the quality of life in St. Catharines. Annual reporting can demonstrate linkages to similar priorities, innovative partnership arrangements, outcomes and participation numbers as well as volunteer hours. The Department is encouraged to proactively seek out partnerships in the key priority areas for programs and services.

Recommendations – Program Partnership

- #63. Proactively seek out partnerships based on the needs of the residents in the delivery of recreation services such as reaching diverse populations, greater access for low income residents, specialized equipment for persons with disabilities, expanded program provision, increasing the time and intensity of physical activity, providing casual, low fee / no fee programs and opportunities.
- #64. Establish opportunities for regular, ongoing dialogue with the St. Catharines Public Library with respect to long-term strategic planning and delivery objectives as it pertains to the role that the City and Library play in program and facility provision, including the continued co-location of recreational and library facilities, and coordinating program delivery.
- #65. Host an annual think tank with existing and potential partners to recognize excellence, determine current issues and trends, and to discuss opportunities for partnerships and strengthened approaches to integrated service delivery.
- #66. Determine where sponsorships can enhance the delivery of service and seek out sponsorships in an equitable and transparent fashion.

Recommendations – Community Development

- #67. Expand the role of staff in the level of support that is provided to community and stakeholder groups from a maintenance role to a more proactive role. Begin to develop new groups and assist groups in their development based on gaps in city-wide and local needs such as diverse groups and building capacity within neighbourhoods.
- #68. Increase the supports provided to community groups (including, but not limited to, service clubs, sports organizations, older adult associations, arts and cultural groups, etc.) to better assist in their ongoing operations (communications, helping groups better reach out to diverse populations, training, posting of opportunities, etc.).

Recommendations – Volunteer

- #69. Expand on the support to community groups through the creation of a Volunteer Development Strategy, which will include but not be limited to the recruitment, selection, training, retention and recognition of volunteers.
- #70. Develop training programs and an E-Tool kit based on identified priorities regarding recruitment, training, retention etc. for use by stakeholder groups.



- #71. Procure Volunteer software that serves to develop a database of community volunteers and match them with the volunteer opportunities that are available. The software should also track the number of active community volunteers and the number of volunteer hours annually.
- #72. Raise the profile of volunteers and their value within the broader community, in order to recruit and retain volunteers, and to increase volunteer satisfaction through meaningful experiences and appropriate recognition.

5.6 Key Focus Area Four: Maximizing Participation and the Use of Facilities

Goal: To maximize the use of publicly-owned recreation facilities in order to derive the greatest social and physical benefits for the community.

Many municipalities in Ontario are experiencing a decline in registered programs and an increase the number of residents attracted to casual and drop in opportunities. This trend is beginning to erode revenue targets associated with directly operated programs. This could be due to many reasons, including the levelling or slight decline in children and youth populations, diversity and differing needs, the time that is needed to dedicate to a set of lessons and/ or cost. The response by recreation service providers has been to look to a combination of approaches that fit with the needs of their communities and includes:

- Strengthening neighbourhoods through the creation of community hubs to better understand needs and deliver at the local level. A community hub is defined as a central meeting place where everyone is welcome to participate, socialize and learn about active and cultural opportunities in the community.
- Seeking out sponsorships to introduce innovative programs and services and alternate forms of revenue to offset costs;
- Intentional programming to address social issues (inactivity, drowning prevention, after-school programming) to attract residents into the program stream; and
- Forming strategic partnerships in offering programs and services to lessen the cost burden on all agencies.

Some trends in fully utilizing recreation facilities in response to social and leisure needs include:

Increase Casual and Drop-In Opportunities – Pay As You Go

Busy schedules, commuting and getting children to activities are often reasons cited for not taking part in registered programs offered by recreation departments. Drop-in and casual opportunities are gaining in popularity.

Memberships

Municipalities and other service providers are increasing their offerings of resident membership opportunities that allow residents' unlimited access to facilities and casual drop-in opportunities according to the membership options that they have chosen. A consistent schedule of drop-in and casual opportunities is posted and promoted to the community including indoor skating, shinny, public swim, drop-in basketball etc. A discount is generally offered for continued use of facilities through the membership option.

Strengthening Neighbourhoods

The strong neighbourhood movement is gaining in popularity in southern Ontario. The goal is to recognize that neighbourhoods do not all have the same needs and engaging residents in discussions about their recreation needs prompts the formation of neighbourhood groups to self-organize and self-determine. Recreation Staff often have strong relationships at the local level and they should be seen as facilitators to gather relevant community leaders, groups and residents together to initiate these conversations. The use of community centres will most likely see a change as a result of this work to include other community agencies and organizations, although core recreation services must still be seen as the key deliverable in addressing local social issues.

Increasing Program Registrations

Municipalities are looking to non-traditional means of increasing participation in recreation programs and are witnessing an increase as a result. One approach is to contract out the provision of specialized programs and offerings where there is a need for specialized skills and equipment. The municipality avoids many of the direct costs through a service agreement. Revenues are shared with contracted service providers and none of the hiring, training, program supply and supervisory costs are accrued to the municipality. The programs are listed in the community recreation guide and registrations are processed through the municipal computerized registration system. Samples of contracted and specialized programs include children's computer, science and theatre classes, film making, golf, photography, yoga and Sportball. Programs may or may not take place in municipal facilities.

Promotion and the Use of Social Media

Continuous efforts to promote recreational opportunities and its benefits is an ongoing necessity in keeping residents informed. The use of the Leisure Guide, the St. Catharines website, the use of social media and are excellent communications mechanisms. An annual strategy to



communicate and promote recreation opportunities using additional mechanisms, such as cross promoting with other providers, would assist in increasing the number and frequency of communication impressions.

Maximizing Technology in the Delivery of Services

The use of technology has enhanced service provision over the last decade. Requirements to manage social media, maintain websites and blogs as well as seek new solutions has required new levels of expertise and some very creative thinking. Innovative departments are committed and are willing to devote the funding and resources into ensuring that they understand the needs of their staff, users and non-users and develop technology based solutions centred on these needs. Some current examples of the use of technology to enhance the parks, recreation and cultural experience include:

Code Scanning

Bar codes are being inserted on promotional communications to enable residents to use their phones to scan them in order to enable immediate access to more information.

Promotion of Casual Opportunities by Self-Determining Groups

The use of technology to promote and engage residents in casual opportunities is also witnessing results in increased participation. Residents “join” a website and customize what activities they would like to receive information on. Each week residents receive a listing of the respective opportunities and are invited to “join in”. The respondent replies as to which opportunities he/she will be attending and a list of attendees is provided to the program/opportunity organizer. This approach is especially successful to those who are busy and cannot attend regimented multi- week opportunities. “Meet-Up” in Durham Region and “Socialable Sisters” in Southern Georgian Bay are both excellent examples of this approach.

People Counters

Laser people counters have been installed in parks, trails and recreation and cultural facilities to count the number of users in a day, month year etc. This information provides data on peak time usage and can address efficiencies such as energy use, staffing and maintenance scheduling.

Active Networks and Exware Solutions

Active Networks is an example of a cloud-based solution that is used to promote, register, secure payment and management data for activities and events. Exware Solutions is one example of an IT solution utilized to manage membership based opportunities.

Population Segmentation

Oakville, Ajax, Markham and many other municipalities are using a software program by Environics that segments the population into 64 predominant types of residents and predicts their leisure (amongst other) preferences and behaviours. This program assists municipal staff and agencies in aptly predicting program and service types and levels of service. It also creates greater awareness of the types of residents living within their communities in terms of communications and engagement efforts.

Webinars for Professional Development and Staff Training

Organizations with a large staff complement both in full and part-time staff are developing training and professional development webinars. This approach reduces the cost of facilitators, as webinars can be accessed collectively or individually. This approach to training, although it cannot fully replace the use of trainers, creates efficiencies in training staff in common professional development and training subject areas.

Virtual Meetings

Travel time and the cost for staff to get to staff meetings is being reduced by the promotion of virtual meetings either by Skyping, or the use of FaceTime or Conference Calls. Major corporations are trying to reduce the number and frequency of meetings to create greater efficiencies.

Parks Interpretation and Points of Interest Enhancement Applications

Parks Canada has introduced a GPS based application that allows parks users to learn more about points of interest in national parks through the use of their mobile phone. Two other applications that Parks Canada had introduced include a "How to Camp" application for new campers and a "Heritage Gourmet" application that lists Canadian heritage cooking recipes.

Forestry Tree Maintenance

Many communities are tagging trees with chips that link the maintenance of the municipally-owned tree canopy to a data base. The data base can determine ordered tree trimming by streets and geographical areas as well as the age and type of tree stock. This technology assists with the more efficient way to maintain the tree canopy and provide other efficiency measures. This application could be extended to other maintenance applications such as playground inspections, and maintenance of parks amenities.



Linking Physical Activity to Brainpower

FitBit and Lumosity (a program to boost mental reaction time and memory amongst other mental skills) have partnered to link their programs. An individual that has a FitBit and a subscription to Lumosity can agree to submit the results of their daily steps taken and their Lumosity exercises to a North American research project. The research is set to determine if physical activity is linked to the ability of the brain functions. This may have applicability within communities with efforts to increase physical activity levels and prevent mental decline in an aging population. There may be an innovative opportunity to determine the impacts on certain age cohorts within a geographical area.

These uses of technology are provided as examples and food for thought for the use of Council, staff and stakeholders. There may be applications or spin-off of applications that can create efficiencies and enhance the parks, recreation and culture experience in St. Catharines. As well there may be an ability to work with other like agencies and organizations to create meaningful applications and share in the resources that it takes to develop and launch them.

Recommendations – Increasing Participation and Maximizing Facility Use

- #73. Coordinate a meeting with other recreation service providers (including, but not limited to, educational institutions, service clubs, the Y.M.C.A., Boys and Girls Club, etc.) to initiate the discussion on community and respective service priorities and how the collective can work better together toward common goals.
- #74. Investigate the feasibility of developing a “bundled” services membership to allow greater casual use of facilities and increase participation.
- #75. Investigate increasing the use of technology to increase participation in recreation services by connecting residents and groups with like interests.
- #76. In tandem with Corporate Communications and the Recreation Business Development Division, develop an annual promotions and communications plan that seeks to promote the benefits of participating in recreation, parks and cultural services and increase participation including the use of cross promotional opportunities.

5.7 Performance Measures

Positioning Recreation in St. Catharines – Telling the Inspiring Story

Measuring performance can bring substantial benefits to any organization in the form of greater efficiency, effectiveness and accountability. This is an ongoing process of determining how well or how poorly a program, service or initiative is being delivered and or perceived. It involves the continuous collection of data and progress made towards achieving pre-established targets, goals or outcomes. Performance indicators, or measures, are developed as standards for assessing the extent to which goals or outcomes are achieved, alongside already established expectations of desired levels of performance.

The use of benchmarks with other communities comes with its challenges; there are many differing factors that can influence results such as demographics, subsidy levels, service provision mandates etc. The real measure is to compare performance year after year within St. Catharines to evaluate how effectively the City and its partners have addressed its goals to provide efficient and effective program and services.

A performance measurement framework is recommended as an effective tool for monitoring, capturing, and reporting information on the key goals identified in this plan. The intent is that the performance management framework will be used to evaluate, motivate, budget, celebrate, communicate, recognize, learn and improve service delivery. The following framework suggests measures to articulate baseline operational requirements. This should be put in place while developing methods of demonstrating the return on investment in parks, recreation and culture to individuals and the community as a whole. For example; how does a healthy tree canopy reduce the carbon footprint? How does increased physical activity reduce the investment in healthcare costs? What is the return on youth engagement in terms of completing education, reducing harmful behaviours and drug use? What is the economic impact of sport tourism in St. Catharines? The answers to these questions and others can demonstrate to the public that the investment in parks, recreation and culture are good and sound investments.

Recommendations

- #77. Develop and implement performance measurement metrics as a part of the annual evaluation process to determine Departmental efficiencies and opportunities. Compare year to year results and report out annually to Council, the public and stakeholders. Suggested performance measures are provided in Table 5.
- #78. Develop an enhanced performance measures framework that demonstrates and quantifies where possible the return on the investment in parks, recreation and culture to individuals, respective age cohorts and the community as a whole.



Table 5: Suggested Performance Measures

Performance Measure Category	Measures	Description
Inputs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gross Operating Budget 2. Net Operating Budget 3. Staffing in Full-Time Equivalent 4. Investment per capita in each of facilities, parks, culture and programs/camps 	This data provides an overview of the municipal investment in parks, recreation and culture.
Outputs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of hours of community spaces and programs available for use 2. Capacity and fill-rates of facilities and programs 3. Age groups and abilities served 4. Number of users of the facilities 	This information compares the return on the investment year to year. This data responds to the question: How have these outputs increased/improved through staff and stakeholder efforts?
Efficiencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Operational cost per hour /per facility, operation and program type. 2. Percent of cost recovery as a result of enhancements 3. Facility use as a result of outreach and promotion 4. Efficiencies (reduced costs) 	This data will demonstrate what has been done to become more efficient. How have expenditures been reduced through efficiencies and revenues been enhanced by increasing the use of facilities and participation in programs.
Effectiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. User and visitor satisfaction levels 	User and visitor satisfaction levels can indicate what staff are doing well and what can be done to improve the user's experience.