

Report to Community and Protective Services Committee

To: Chair and Members
Community and Protective Services Committee

From: Cheryl Smith, Deputy City Manager, Neighbourhood and
Community-Wide Services

Kelly Scherr, Deputy City Manager, Environment and
Infrastructure

Subject: Parks and Recreation Master Plan Annual Report

Date: February 18, 2025

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Deputy City Managers of Neighbourhood and Community-Wide Services and Environment and Infrastructure, the [Parks and Recreation Master Plan](#) Annual Report **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Executive Summary

This report presents the City of London's fourth [Parks and Recreation Master Plan](#) Annual Report since the Plan was approved by City Council on June 25, 2019. It will serve as a summary of the Plan, including the vision and goals, provide highlights of 2024 accomplishments, and identifies key priorities and projects for 2025 that will continue to move the Plan forward.

Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

The [Parks and Recreation Master Plan](#) is aligned with the following Strategic Areas of Focus and outcomes in the City of London's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan:

- Reconciliation, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion – The City of London is a leader in becoming an equitable and inclusive community.
- Wellbeing and Safety – London has safe, vibrant, and healthy neighbourhoods and communities.
- Climate Action and Sustainable Growth – London's infrastructure and systems are built, maintained, and operated to meet the long-term needs of the community.

Analysis

1.0 Background Information

1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

- [Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update](#) (CPSC, November 11, 2024)
- [Parks and Recreation Master Plan Annual Report](#) (CPSC, March 18, 2024)
- [Parks and Recreation Master Plan Annual Report](#) (CPSC, January 31, 2023)
- [Parks and Recreation Master Plan Annual Report](#) (CPSC, March 29, 2022)
- [Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update](#) (CPSC, June 17, 2019)

2.0 Discussion and Considerations

2.1 Background and Purpose

The City of London offers high quality parks, open spaces, recreation programs, sport services, and facilities that engage residents and visitors of all ages and abilities. Parks, recreation, and sport play a significant role in community building through the facilitation of active and passive activities, opportunities for structured and spontaneous play, and strengthening of neighbourhood connections.

These services provide places for people of all ages and abilities to be active and learn new skills, connect with one another, share their interests, exchange ideas, and experience diversity. They also contribute to larger outcomes in the city, such as engaging children in active play, decreasing childhood obesity, poverty reduction, improved mental health, city building and the creation of healthy and safe neighbourhoods, economic health, sport tourism initiatives, environmental management and protection, connecting with and developing an appreciation of nature, cultural prosperity, and more.

The [Parks and Recreation Master Plan](#), approved by City Council on June 25, 2019, provides overall vision, direction, and guidance for planning and making decisions about parks, open spaces, environmental management, recreation programs, sport services, and facilities. It is informed by public input and is aligned to local, provincial, and national policies, strategies, best practices, trends, demographics, and growth forecasts.

The Plan contains a series of recommendations, some of which refer to discrete projects or actions and others that provide ongoing and incremental guidance. In total, there are 119 recommendations aligned with five (5) overarching goals. Full implementation of the Plan will require ongoing community engagement, flexibility in approach, partnerships, and funding from a variety of sources.

The Master Plan has a timeframe of ten (10) years (2019 to 2028) and includes a longer-term outlook for major capital projects to 2039.

The purpose of this report is to:

- a) Highlight 2024 Parks and Recreation Key Performance Indicators
- b) Highlight accomplishments from 2024 against the Plan's goals and recommendations; and,
- c) Identify key priorities and projects for 2025 that will continue to move the Plan forward.

2.2 Parks and Recreation Master Plan Vision and Goals

Vision

In London, all residents – regardless of age, ability, culture, gender, income, or where they live – have the opportunity to participate and share in meaningful and accessible parks, recreation, and sport experiences.

Goals

Goal #1 – Active Living:

We will support and promote opportunities for active living. This will be achieved through unstructured and structured experiences that encourage regular physical activity and healthy aging.

Goal #2 – Inclusion and Access:

We will remove barriers to participation by adopting a model of “access for all.” This will be achieved by welcoming and including all residents.

Goal #3 – Connecting People and Nature:

We will strengthen residents' connections with their neighbourhoods and nature. This will be achieved through public awareness, neighbourhood-driven activities and decision-making, and opportunities to animate and enjoy London's outdoor spaces and places.

Goal #4 – Supportive Environments:

We will invest strategically in parks, recreation, and sport infrastructure to support the Master Plan goals. This will be achieved by responding to demonstrated community needs through the thoughtful design, delivery, and management of parks, facilities, and spaces.

Goal #5 – Recreation Capacity:

We will deliver exceptional parks, recreation, and sports services. This will be achieved using effective and responsive practices, partnerships, innovation, leadership, and accountability at all levels.

2.3 Key Performance Indicators

Recreation, Parks and Sport Services collect and monitor Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) to help analyze utilization and satisfaction of facilities, recreational trends, and capacity opportunities and challenges of our assets and programs. Increases were observed in all recreation, parks, and sport categories in 2024, from total summer camp participation to number of rounds of golf. Below shows our KPI trends over a 5 year-period, noting that 2020 and 2021 services were greatly impacted by COVID-19.

Recreation Programs:

- 2020 – 23,077 total participants, 4,592 programs, 2,710 summer camp spaces
- 2021 – 18,864 total participants, 2,842 programs, 2,777 summer camp spaces
- 2022 – 71,028 total participants, 6,370 programs, 5,619 summer camp spaces
- 2023 – 97,639 total participants, 8,955 programs, 6,149 summer camp spaces
- 2024 – 98,389 total participants, 10,188 programs, 7,566 summer camp spaces

Aquatics:

- 2020 – 46,813 total participants, 1,690 programs, 5,756 drop-in sessions
- 2021 – 107,435 total participants, 1,387 programs, 8,238 drop-in sessions
- 2022 – 146,398 total participants, 3,088 programs, 7,560 drop-in sessions
- 2023 – 197,398 total participants, 3,209 programs, 9,992 drop-in sessions
- 2024 – 206,567 total participants, 3,617 programs, 10,802 drop-in sessions

Sport Services:

- 2020 – 4,083 hours allocated to groups for outdoor sports fields
- 2021 – 18,044 hours allocated to groups for outdoor sports fields
- 2022 – 37,426 hours allocated to groups for outdoor sports fields
- 2023 – 39,018 hours allocated to groups for outdoor sports fields
- 2024 – 43,355 hours allocated to groups for outdoor sports fields

Golf Services:

- 2020 – 112,000 rounds of golf played on City of London courses
- 2021 – 110,550 rounds of golf played on City of London courses
- 2022 – 111,075 rounds of golf played on City of London courses
- 2023 – 120,295 rounds of golf played on City of London courses
- 2024 – 125,122 rounds of golf played on City of London courses

2024 Citizen Satisfaction Survey:

- Recreation, sports, and leisure programs (88% satisfaction)
- Recreation facilities (88% satisfaction)
- City owned golf courses (85% satisfaction)
- Parks and other green spaces (88% satisfaction)

Summer Camps:

- A survey conducted with parents of 2024 Summer Camp participants resulted in 496 responses, of which 370 indicated they were very satisfied with the experience, and 101 indicated they were satisfied, representing 95% being satisfied or very satisfied.

Program Participant Surveys:

- In surveys conducted across multiple recreation programs, results indicated a satisfied or very satisfied response of 92% across child, youth, and adult programs.

Facility Satisfaction:

- A recent survey conducted across multiple facilities (arenas, community centres, and aquatics facilities) gathered the following results of either satisfied or very satisfied customer experience:
 - Overall experience - 93%
 - Safety of facilities and programs – 96%

- Overall satisfaction with staff – 94%
- Overall communications and admissions – 95%

2.5 Highlights of 2024 Accomplishments

The chart below is intended to capture high-level accomplishments from 2024. It should be noted that this list does not capture all day-to-day activities of the services provided that also furthers the Master Plan.

Goal	2024 Accomplishments
Active Living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 64,000+ public skating participants and over 6,000 Learn to Skate participants. • Partnership with Huff N' Puff seniors sport and fitness continues to grow offering over 60 programs per week. • 3 million+ visits to all recreation and sport facilities. • 700+ hours of free opportunities added by increasing the variety, frequency, location, and promotion of programs. • 2 million+ users of city operated trails and pathways. • 15,000+ visits during Statutory and Public Holiday free programming events and activities. • Over 152,000 guests to Storybook Gardens. • Introduced sidewalk painting features at Storybook Gardens, promoting accessible, engaging active play opportunities for children and families. • Partnership with The London Arts Council and The Province of Ontario to create the Growing Together Through the Arts Workshops for Senior Programming. • Over 430 weekly adult fitness programs were offered, with over 6,000 participants registered. • Expanded Foxfield Park to accommodate additional pickleball courts, a premier lit soccer field, washroom facilities and a new spray pad.
Inclusion and Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported 8,866 individuals accessing recreation opportunities through the Play Your Way financial assistance program. • Offered free access to over 10,500 guests from June through August to Storybook Gardens on 'Festival Fridays', made possible by various sponsorships. • 107 approved applications through the Waiving or Reducing of Fees (WORF) Policy, representing over 1,500 hours of space. • In partnership with local Indigenous communities and organizations, facilitated over 100 hours for 750 participants of recreational opportunities. • In partnership with the South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre, provided over 250 hours for 1,500 participants of recreational opportunities for newcomer youth and families. • Completed renovations to the admission hall at Storybook Gardens, creating a more welcoming, accessible space for families and enhancing customer service. • Summer Camps expanded inclusive programming for individuals with special needs. • Completed the Lorne Avenue Park Mosaic Tile and Insect Hotel projects in partnership with a local community organization.

Goal	2024 Accomplishments
Connecting People and Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued to address invasive species management efforts along north branch of Thames Valley Corridor. • Continued to support and expand London’s provincially recognized recreational pathway and trail system, bringing the total length of all pathways to 265km. • Expanded outdoor recreation programming with innovative programs such as Outdoor Explorers, snowshoeing, trail running, and hiking programs. • Progressed the planning and detailed design of several important recreational pathway projects, including the Stoney Creek Connection, Richmond Street North Pedestrian Crossing, and extension of the Thames Valley Parkway main branch. • Extended the Hyde Park Rotary Trail north to Sunningdale Road. • Coordinated improvements to the Springbank Park Arboretum in partnership with the Murray Hunter Foundation. • Began implementing recommendations from London’s Paddling Plan, including improved access at eight locations. • Summer Camp launched a new pilot camp program “Junior Forest Rangers”. • Free trail walking programs across the City of London at various sites. • Completed construction of a new pedestrian bridge along Dingman Pathway in Lambeth Centennial Park.
Supportive Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installed tennis courts at Thames Park and White Oaks Park. • Added acrylic surfacing to the recently upgraded tennis court at Glanworth Park. • Installed two new neighbourhood parks at Upperpoint Park and Regiment Park. • Through the Green and Inclusive Community Building (GICB) Program, began energy retrofit project at Kinsmen Arena and Earl Nichols Arena. • Six (6) Neighbourhood Decision Making projects were installed at city parks. • Began implementing the Neighbourhood Parks Improvement Fund with completed projects at White Oaks Park, Murray Park and Regiment Park. • Completed infrastructure work at both Thames Valley and Fanshawe golf courses. • Completed work on the lighting of sports fields at North London Athletic Fields. • Hosted Ontario Summer Games which saw over 3,500 athletes come to London and compete across the city at various recreation facilities. • Installed Live Streaming services in our arenas. • Installed new basketball courts at Murray Park, Regiment Park, Jesse Davidson Park, and Upperpoint Park.
Recreation Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued partnerships with the Thames Valley District School Board and the London District Catholic School Board providing recreational programming at over 30 schools across London. • 88 businesses and local community groups contributed to \$620,888 in sponsorship value in 2024. These contributions supported infrastructure enhancements, created free access to programs, and generated advertising revenue. • Facilitated community access to Western University and Fanshawe College’s recreation and sport amenities. • Extended summer operating hours at Storybook Gardens, with a longer operating season and more daily hours.

Goal	2024 Accomplishments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Installed a new multi-use court at Carling Heights Optimist Community Centre, launched from 'Carling Decides Program.'

2.6 Key 2025 Priorities

The chart below is intended to capture high-level priorities for 2025. It should be noted that this list does not capture all day-to-day activities of the services provided that also further the Master Plan.

Goal	2025 Priorities
Active Living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create additional unstructured and structured experiences that encourage regular physical activity. Continue to maximize use of existing space in current Parks and Recreation system for all areas. Expand the variety, frequency, location, and promotion of recreation and sport programs. Continue to review program participation data to make informed decisions about program development.
Inclusion and Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to remove barriers to participation to be welcoming and inclusive of all residents. Increase the number of free drop-in programs in all of recreation and sport. Connect with newcomers to provide expanded access to recreational programming. Work collaboratively with populations that face constraints to participation. Undertake a review of the effectiveness of the Play Your Way and Waiving or Reducing of Fees financial assistance programs, including opportunities to simplify the processes. Upgrade play equipment and improve playground accessibility in five (5) different parks. Expand opportunities for sensory-friendly times at Storybook Gardens. Expand Canadian Centre for Activity and Aging (CCAA) programs to allow for additional training for fitness instructors. Complete infrastructure work to make Thames Valley Clubhouse fully accessible with new washrooms and ramp entrance. Include diversity, equity and inclusion into the planning process when exploring new recreation program opportunities. Redevelop the community garden in Proudfoot Park West.
Connecting People and Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen connections with neighbourhoods and nature through public awareness, neighbourhood driven activities and decision making, and opportunities to animate and enjoy London's outdoor spaces and places. Explore partnerships with conservation areas on recreational programming opportunities. Continue to expand outdoor recreation program offerings. Complete the Storybook Gardens Master Plan to meet the changing needs and expectations of visitors. Build a new community garden in Proudfoot Park.
Supportive Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete Neighbourhood Decision Making installations in six (6) different parks. Continue with the redevelopment of Silverwood Arena and Park. Continue the redevelopment of Thames Park.

Goal	2025 Priorities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commence construction of teaching kitchen and elevator at Carling Heights Optimist Community Centre with funding provided through Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP). • \$5 million in planned life cycle renewal on current infrastructure. • Continue implementing the Neighbourhood Parks Improvement Fund in at least ten (10) different parks. • Construct the Thames Valley Corridor through the Old Victoria Hospital Lands with the Federal Inclusive Communities Infrastructure Program. • Continue expanding the park system with new parks in City growth areas (ex. Kent Park, Somerston Park, etc.).
Recreation Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work with our partners at Western, Fanshawe, Thames Valley District School Board and London Catholic District School Board on community access. • Review Allocation Policies to create efficiencies in providing space and scheduling sport opportunities. • Form a regional Aquatic Providers Committee creating partnership and collaboration opportunities with surrounding municipalities. • Increase data analytics tools to develop actionable strategies that enhance program quality and accessibility. • Initiate public engagement and detailed design for the new Dingman Sports Park.

3.0 Financial Impact/Considerations

There are no financial impacts or considerations directly associated with this report.

The current Multi-Year Budget (MYB) contains approved capital spending of more than \$125 million for Parks, Recreation and Neighbourhood Services. Of this amount, approximately 60% is attributed to growth-related projects, approximately 30% to lifecycle projects, and approximately 10% to service improvements.

The [Parks and Recreation Master Plan](#) will continue to be used as a resource in developing the City’s annual budget updates, multi-year budget documents, growth planning, secondary plans, and related studies.

The goal is to work within the City’s multi-year budget by implementing capital recommendations in a period consistent with population growth and expected funding sources. A strategic direction of the Plan is to pursue a variety of funding options to implement the Master Plan including partnerships and other external funding sources when available.

4.0 Next Steps

This is the fourth annual Parks and Recreation Master Plan Report, reporting out on accomplishments and upcoming priorities. City Council can expect an annual report in all future years throughout the life of the Plan, which is ten (10) years, and twenty (20) years for major capital projects, respectively.

City Council approved the [Parks and Recreation Master Plan](#) in 2019, and therefore, 2025 represents its sixth year.

As per recommendation 119 of the Plan, the City of London will complete more formal updates every five (5) years, where some recommendations may be revised due to changes in participation trends, demographics, growth patterns, and/or municipal best practices.

A November 11, 2024, report listed the following project objectives:

- Complete a background review of the current Master Plan with updated demographic data, trends and population analysis;
- Review the current inventory of parks and recreation facilities and recommended provision targets and service standards to help establish a summary of infrastructure needs for a 15-year period;
- Assess the list of recommendations from the 2019 Master Plan and identify key accomplishments, as well as revised or new recommendations, considering current trends (e.g. population growth, community engagement feedback, etc.), current park and recreation facility inventory, and current City policies and strategies such as Council's Strategic Plan and the Mobility Master Plan along with current Provincial and Federal initiatives; and,
- Engage with the public to inform the actions and standards established through the Master Plan update.

The most important aspect of this process is to update growth projections to align with City Council's 2023 approved population growth projections, as the previously utilized growth projections are out of date and no longer suitable to use to calculate future amenity provision. This will prepare these services for submission to the 2028 Development Charge Background Study which is a large funding source of growth-related capital infrastructure.

Conclusion

The [Parks and Recreation Master Plan](#) identifies broad needs and strategies based on best practices, public input, and local demand factors. It identifies the most pressing objectives and the opportunities for achieving them and prepares the City of London in its search for external funding opportunities, partnerships, and alignment with related initiatives.

This Plan aims to improve the quality of life for all Londoners through the provision of parks, recreation programs, sport services, and facilities that are welcoming and accessible for all. The Plan addresses barriers to access and aligns parks, recreation programs, sport services, and facilities with the evolving interests and requirements of Londoners.

Civic Administration will continue to build annual actions around the Master Plan deliverables and update City Council and the public on a regular basis.

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