

## Report to Community & Protective Services Committee

**To:** Chair and Members  
Community & Protective Services Committee

**From:** Kelly Scherr, P. Eng., MBA, FEC  
Deputy City Manager, Environment and Infrastructure  
Cheryl Smith, Deputy City Manager, Neighbourhood and  
Community-Wide Services

**Subject:** Parks and Recreation Master Plan – 2026 Update –  
Preliminary Findings

**Date:** April 13, 2026

## Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Deputy City Manager, Environment and Infrastructure and the Deputy City Manager, Neighbourhood and Community-Wide Services, the following actions **BE TAKEN**:

- a) the report with respect to the preliminary findings of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan – 2026 Update **BE RECEIVED** for information; and
- b) staff **BE DIRECTED** to undertake further community engagement on the preliminary findings.

## Executive Summary

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan, approved by City Council on June 25, 2019, assists with the planning, design, funding, building and maintenance of London's parks and recreation system and established provision targets based on population forecasts for various sport, recreation, and park amenities.

The rapid growth of London's population in recent years and updated growth forecast scenarios have greatly increased in numbers compared to what was originally planned in 2019. A scoped update of the Master Plan with a focus on park-related matters was endorsed by Council in November 2024. Monteith Brown Planning Consultants was selected to work with staff on this update.

The 2026 Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update includes a review of:

- Planning context and Background;
- Public engagement – “What We Heard”; and,
- Needs and Strategies.

Together, these three reports will form the foundation of the Master Plan update. The update also aligns provisional targets with City Council's approved population growth projections informing the 2028 Development Charge Background Study's growth-related parks and recreation capital infrastructure needs.

This report provides Council with a summary of the preliminary findings prior to further public engagement. Additional engagement will be conducted in the coming weeks, prior to finalizing the 2026 Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update. The final plan will be presented to Council for adoption in Q3 2026.

## 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

- Community and Protective Services Committee – June 17, 2019 – Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update
- Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee – December 6, 2022 – City of London Corporate Growth Projections 2021-2051
- Community and Protective Services Committee – March 29, 2022 – Parks and Recreation Master Plan Annual Report
- Community and Protective Services Committee – January 31, 2023 – Parks and Recreation Master Plan Annual Report
- Community and Protective Services Committee – March 18, 2024 – Parks and Recreation Master Plan Annual Report
- Community and Protective Services Committee – November 11, 2024 – Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update
- Community and Protective Services Committee – February 18, 2025 – Parks and Recreation Master Plan Annual Report
- Community and Protective Services Committee – April 7, 2025 – Request for Proposal 2025-389 – Consulting Services for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update
- Community and Protective Services Committee – February 17, 2026 – Parks and Recreation Master Plan Annual Report

#### 1.2 Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update – Council Direction

On November 26, 2024, Council resolved the following:

*That, on the recommendation of the Deputy City Manager, Environment and Infrastructure and the Deputy City Manager, Neighbourhood and Community-Wide Services, the following actions be taken with respect to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan update:*

*a) the following report **BE RECEIVED** for information and the project milestones and timelines identified in Section 2.4 **BE ENDORSED**;*

*b) the following matters **BE ENDORSED** for review with the update:*

- I. projected city-wide population growth and the geographic distribution of future users of park and recreation services;*
- II. a forecast of parkland needs;*
- III. park types, definitions and servicing areas;*
- IV. equity and inclusion strategies and opportunities;*
- V. strategies and standards to provide mitigation and adaptation to Climate Change;*

- VI. *municipal park infrastructure provision best practices (demographics, trends, types of amenities, etc.);*
- VII. *quality and quantity standards for parkland and park amenities;*
- VIII. *quality and quantity standards for pathways, park system linkages and open space lands;*
- IX. *the confirmation of provision targets and service standards for pickleball, cricket, community gardens, dog parks, community gathering spaces, public washrooms, and the provision of potable water;*
- X. *infrastructure requirements for parks located near intensified growth areas;*
- XI. *opportunities for service provision partnerships, including school boards and businesses;*
- XII. *identification of policies, strategies and action plans to guide Master Plan implementation; and,*
- XIII. *a 15-year forecast of park infrastructure needs to inform updates to the capital budget and growth needs for the 2027 Development Charges Background Study.*

*It being noted that operational service delivery standards and detailed lifecycle renewal needs are outside of the scope of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.*

The project scope of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan – 2026 Update principally focuses on parkland needs and associated amenities. Recreation and sporting needs have been assessed based on updated population and demographic projections, as well as participation trends. In response to Council’s direction, the items identified in the November 26, 2024 resolution have been reviewed and have informed the analysis and directions of the 2026 Update.

This update is also required to align future servicing needs with City Council’s approved population growth projections and inform the 2028 Development Charges Background Study. The 2026 Update meets the adopted 5-year Parks and Recreation Master Plan update cycle.

## **2.0 Discussion and Considerations**

### **2.1 Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update**

The consultants retained for this project, Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, are specialized in strategic planning in terms of recreation, municipal parks, communications and municipal finance. They also have knowledge of municipal best practices and have received input and local context from staff experience.

Since May 2025, the consultant team has been working with staff to prepare an update to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, informed by three background reports:

- Planning Context and Background;
- Public Engagement – What We Heard; and
- Needs and Strategies.

Together, these reports will form the foundation of the Master Plan Update.

### **2.2 Planning Context and Background Report**

This report investigated the Planning Context and Background applicable to Parks and Recreation in London. Research topics include:

- Progress since the 2019 Master Plan
- Policy context and alignment
- Funding review
- Community profile and growth outlook
- London’s parks and recreation system
- Trends review
- Benefits, vision and goals

It should be noted that the current vision and goals of the 2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan remain unchanged as part of this update.

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.

The five goals are:

1. Active living
2. Inclusion and access
3. Connecting people and nature
4. Supportive environments
5. Recreation capacity

### **2.3 Public Engagement – What We Heard Report**

From mid-August to the end of October 2025, the City promoted the Parks and Recreation Master Plan update through its ‘Let’s Talk Park’ campaign to engage with the community and discuss the future of London’s parks and open spaces.

Over 2,200 people participated in the online survey available on the Get Involved website. Londoners also provided comments through additional engagement opportunities organized by the project team, such as open houses, pop-ups in the community, and through direct outreach and meetings.

The main objectives of these engagement opportunities were to assess community satisfaction with parks and associated amenities, identify service gaps and unmet needs, and uncover ideas to improve and enhance these spaces.

Feedback themes that were heard during the public engagement in 2025 generally involved:

- Community gathering and event spaces
- Emerging recreational activities such as pickleball, cricket, community gardens, and dog off-leash areas
- Equity, inclusion, and accessibility including accessible spaces, park washrooms and drinking fountains
- Creative strategies for supplying parks and recreation in a growing City
- Opportunities for supporting climate resilience and environmental sustainability

The comments received during this consultation period were reviewed and summarized into key highlights, including:

- Parks are considered important to the quality of life of Londoners
- Perception of park safety and inclusion are mixed
- Neighbourhood parks are the most used park category
- Washrooms, drinking fountains and comfort amenities have the largest gap between satisfaction (low) and importance (high)
- Barriers exist with accessing washrooms
- Desire for year-round park use
- Need for parks designed for all ages and abilities
- Support for the environmental benefits of natural areas and Environmentally Significant Areas
- Interest in partnerships that can enhance public access to park from school boards and conservation authorities

This consultation builds upon the extensive community engagement that was completed in 2019, which informed the 2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Many of these findings remain relevant and continue to be implemented.

A summary of what we've heard so far has been posted to the project's Get Involved website, [getinvolved.london.ca/talk-parks](https://getinvolved.london.ca/talk-parks), as part of our next phase of public engagement.

## **2.4 Needs and Strategies report**

This technical report builds upon the research and community input contained in the first two reports, while providing analysis of items related to park planning. The planning horizon used extends until 2042, in line with the 2028 Development Charges study. It is estimated that an additional 104,000 people will live in London between 2028 and 2042. Provision targets for the various parks and recreation amenities have been created or modified to support this growth and resulting needs in terms of parks and recreation. Topics studied include:

- Park and open space classification structure review
- Parkland needs assessment and estimated parkland forecast
- Park design standards review (equity and inclusion, climate change, natural heritage, parkland and pathway quality and quantity standards)
- Park amenities assessment (such as community gardens, dog off-leash areas, cricket, pickleball, community gathering and event spaces, park washrooms, fieldhouses, potable water in parks, as well as other existing outdoor and indoor recreation amenities)
- Financial strategy and implementation

The Needs and Strategy report also looks at geographic distribution of parks and amenities across the city. It provides a list of recommendations that includes a blend of retained or updated directions from the 2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan and new recommendations for the 2026 Update that emerged based on research, analysis, and public input.

## **2.5 Park and Recreation Master Plan – 2026 Update Report**

The detailed findings of the three background reports will be consolidated and synthesized into the Parks and Recreation Master Plan – 2026 Update report. The 2026 Update report will present an overview of the process, supporting analysis, and proposed recommendations organized around four (4) emerging themes:

- A. Modernizing Parkland Policies & Standards
- B. Designing Inclusive, Sustainable & Adaptable Parks
- C. Focusing on our Parks & Recreation Amenity Priorities
- D. Leveraging Partnerships & Funding Solutions

The recommendations will reflect a combination of updated direction from the 2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan and new directions identified through the 2026 Update process. The report will highlight areas where the City has made strong progress in implementing the 2019 recommendations and where continued efforts are warranted, while also identifying new and emerging priorities to guide future planning and investment.

Highlights from the background reports, along with preliminary findings for each of the four emerging themes, have been compiled in the attached presentation (Appendix A). Ongoing public engagement will further inform the refinement of these directions and the development of the final recommendations.

Staff are working to consolidate the background analysis and engagement feedback into a comprehensive final report, which is anticipated to be presented to Council for consideration in Q3 2026.

## **2.6 Further Community Engagement on Preliminary Findings**

Staff are now reengaging Londoners about the plan with a second round of public engagement. This phase focuses on sharing preliminary findings and inviting residents

to review them and share their comments with us. This engagement is intended to refine and strengthen the emerging directions, including identifying any gaps or considerations that may have been missed.

Residents will have the opportunity to participate once again during a four-week engagement period this spring. The public engagement includes:

- an online webinar;
- a public open house; and
- collecting comments through the project’s Get Involved webpage.

Residents can register for the webinar, learn details about the open house, or share feedback online at [getinvolved.london.ca/talk-parks](https://getinvolved.london.ca/talk-parks)

This engagement opportunity is being promoted through the City’s webpages, social media posts, email newsletters, a media release, and direct outreach including to First Nations. The project team has also been reengaging Community Advisory Committees about the plan.

Feedback from this second round of engagement will help inform the final 2026 Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update Report.

### 3.0 Financial Impact/Considerations

Works identified in this Master Plan Update will inform the 2028 Development Charges Background Study for the Parks and Recreation Services.

Financial and implementation plans identified in the 2026 Update will be input into the next multi-year budget cycle including, 10-year capital plan adjustments, and future operational budgets where necessary.

### 4.0 Next Steps

The proposed project timeline and milestones for the remainder of the project are identified below in Table 1. It is anticipated that some project components and milestones will have overlapping timelines.

**Table 1: Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update – Timeline and Milestones**

Item	Timeline	Milestone
Public consultation on PRMP Preliminary Findings	March – April 2026	Community open houses, social media postings and Get Involved website
Finalize Master Plan update	Early summer 2026	Revised Master Plan update document
Submission of final Master Plan update for Council approval	Late summer 2026	Adopted Parks and Recreation Master Plan update

A second phase of engagement for the Let’s Talk Parks campaign is being conducted this spring, and includes an in-person open house, a virtual webinar, direct outreach and collecting community feedback through the webpage [getinvolved.london.ca/talk-parks](https://getinvolved.london.ca/talk-parks).

This input will be included into the final Parks and Recreation Master Plan, to be presented to Council for adoption in the summer of 2026.

## Conclusion

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan – 2026 Update is required to respond to population growth and ensure the City’s parkland and recreation system continues to meet community needs. The preliminary findings reflect updated analysis, community

input, and alignment with Council's growth projections, and will inform a mix of continued and new directions for parks planning and investment.

Further public engagement is underway to refine these directions. Staff will incorporate this feedback into a final Parks and Recreation Master Plan – 2026 Update, to be presented to Council for consideration in Q3 2026.

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**Appendix A:** **Presentation: Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update - Preliminary Findings**