

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS COMMUNITY and PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING ON JUNE 17, 2019
FROM:	SCOTT STAFFORD, MANAGING DIRECTOR, PARKS AND RECREATION AND LYNNE LIVINGSTONE, MANAGING DIRECTOR, NEIGHBOURHOOD, CHILDREN AND FIRE SERVICES
SUBJECT:	PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Directors of Parks and Recreation and Neighbourhood, Children and Fire Services, the following actions be taken with respect to the attached (Appendix B) Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan, dated June 7, 2019:

- a) the above-noted Plan **BE ADOPTED**; and,
- b) the Civic Administration **BE DIRECTED** to proceed with implementation of the Plan, it being noted that any/all implementation will be subject to funding through the multi-year budget process.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
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- Irregular Result Request for Proposal 18-09 “Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan Update” (Feb. 21, 2018)
- Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan Interim Update (Jan. 24, 2017)
- Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan – Accomplishments and Update Strategy (Apr. 26, 2016)
- Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan Update (Nov. 23, 2009)

STRATEGIC PLAN LINKAGES 2019-2023
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Strengthening our Community: The parks and recreation system plays a significant role in strengthening neighbourhoods by creating opportunities for residents to lead healthy, socially active lives.

Building a Sustainable City: Creating and preserving strong and healthy environments and creating beautiful places for all Londoners is emphasized in the Master Plan.

Growing Our Economy: Investment in the parks and recreation system and city building activities attract growth and investment and regenerate spaces and places.

Creating a Safe London for Women and Girls: Providing opportunities for women and girls to participate safely in parks, recreation, and sport.

Leading in Public Service: Experiences are enhanced through investment in park, recreation and sport facilities and by pursuing innovative programs and service delivery.

BACKGROUND

The 2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan provides an overall vision, direction, and guidance for planning and making decisions about parks, 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 Master Plan has a timeframe of ten years (2019 to 2028) and includes a longer-term outlook for major capital projects to 2039.

The Plan identifies broad needs and strategies and contains a series of recommendations that will assist the City and the community to achieve the vision and goals. The recommendations build upon the strong core of services currently provided by the City. [Appendix A](#) contains a full list of the goals, strategic directions, and recommendations.

Full implementation of the Plan will require ongoing community engagement, flexibility in approach, partnerships, and funding from a variety of sources. It will guide the work of several service areas including: Parks and Recreation, Neighbourhood, Children and Fire Services, Planning Services, and Finance and Corporate Services - Facilities Design and Construction. The Plan was last updated in 2009, with an interim update in 2017.

The purpose of this report is to:

- a) Outline the steps taken to develop the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and provide the results of community input on the Goals, Strategic Directions, and Recommendations (March to April 2019); and,
- b) Present the Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan to Committee and Council for consideration (see [Appendix B](#)).

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

Staff from Parks and Recreation, Neighbourhood, Children and Fire Services, Planning Services, and Finance and Corporate Services guided the work of the consultant team led by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants with Tucker-Reid and Associates, and Swerhun Consulting.

The development of the Plan was completed in three (3) phases:

1. Research and Consultation (Mar. to Sept. 2018);
2. Development of Recommendations and Strategies (Sept. 2018 to Feb. 2019); and,
3. Testing the Master Plan and Finalization (Mar. 2019 to current).

Phase 1: Research and Consultation

A significant amount of background research informed the development of the update. This research included a review of existing City of London strategies, projects, inventories and use data as well as municipal scans of best practices, emerging trends, demographics, and standards. A review of programming and service needs to maximize participation, and to make sure they are accessible and inclusive of all residents, was a focus of the overall update.

Engagement with residents (including under-represented populations), stakeholders, agencies, organizations, partners, advisory committees, City staff, and City officials was critical to understanding current issues and future opportunities for enhancing the parks, recreation, and sport system in London. The comprehensive engagement strategy provided many opportunities for resident and stakeholder input, as well as supporting increased understanding and awareness of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan update.

Over 2,500 individuals provided input through a series of structured and unstructured opportunities (online survey, interviews, stakeholder sessions, focus groups) over the engagement phase in spring and summer 2018. Valuable insights on the current state of London's parks, recreation, and sport system were captured in a background report "*What We've Heard so Far*", available on the City of London website. A summary of this engagement phase can be found on pages 23 to 25 within the attached Draft Plan ([Appendix B](#)).

Phase 2: Development of Recommendations and Strategies

The framework of the Plan is based upon the *Framework for Recreation in Canada* (2015) and is supported by the Master Plan's internal and external engagement program, as well as leading research in the sector. The framework is aligned with, informed by and supports the achievements of many City of London plans and strategies that identify parks, recreation, and sport services as important contributors in creating strong neighbourhoods, reducing poverty, engaging diverse populations, supporting children and youth, designing age friendly communities, and much more. A list of all the goals, strategic directions, and recommendations can be found in [Appendix A](#).

Phase 3: Testing the Master Plan and Finalization

From mid-March to the end of April 2019, the draft goals, strategic directions, and recommendations were posted online at getinvolved.london.ca for public comment. Two Open Houses were also held for those wishing to provide input in person to City staff and consultants. These opportunities were advertised widely throughout the community, through e-newsletters, at community centres, and through the various stakeholder groups and individuals engaged in 2018. Presentations/interviews were offered to the Advisory Committees and Council.

Fifty (50) people attended the two Open Houses held on April 3, 2019, and over 1,000 unique visitors viewed the content at getinvolved.london.ca. A total of 169 comments were submitted. A summary of this input is attached in [Appendix C](#) and is organized by section of the Plan. Advisory Committee input can be found in [Appendix D](#).

Consideration of these comments resulted in some edits to the strategic directions and in some cases further clarifying information was included either within the recommendations themselves or within the text of the various sections.

PRESENTATION OF THE PLAN

The Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan attached in [Appendix B](#) is the result of the year-long process described above. It provides details on background research (trends, best practices, demographics, growth projections) and community input, links to existing City of London strategies and initiatives, provincial and national initiatives, and past accomplishments.

The Plan contains an overall vision, supported by goals and strategic directions that expresses how the City will approach decision-making and investment over the next ten years and beyond.

As noted earlier Appendix A provides a complete summary of the goals, strategic directions, and recommendations while the entire Plan can be found in [Appendix B](#).

The vision and goal statements outlined in the Plan are aligned with the Framework for Recreation in Canada (2015).

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.*

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.

Strategic Directions:

- a) Foster active living through structured and unstructured activities that improve physical, mental, and social wellbeing.
- b) Make parks and facilities walkable and accessible by residents through active transportation and connections to public transit.
- c) Support programming that encourages introductory skill development, interaction, and community building.

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

Strategic Directions:

- a) Work collaboratively with populations that face constraints to participation – such as (but not limited to) Indigenous peoples, newcomers to Canada, residents with low income backgrounds, LGBTQ2S+ community, females, and persons with disabilities – to reduce and remove barriers.
- b) Support diversity and inclusion by evaluating proposals, policies, and actions through an equity and gender lens.
- c) Provide, promote, and enhance subsidy programs that improve affordability for all.
- d) Increase the range of low- and no-cost programs within the city.
- e) Promote the use of parks and public spaces.

- f) Promote the use of trails and pathways in a way that protects significant features and functions.
- g) Implement age friendly design standards and planning strategies that improve accessibility for all.

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.

Strategic Directions:

- a) Enhance awareness of community initiatives and promote the personal and community benefits of parks, recreation, and sport.
- b) Support volunteerism and community engagement in the planning and delivery of services.
- c) Continue to emphasize initiatives focused on strengthening neighbourhoods, animation of public spaces, and unstructured activities.
- d) Collaborate with providers to exchange information and promote services and programs.
- e) Use recreation to help people connect with nature and be stewards of the natural environment.
- f) Apply effective designs and management strategies that support healthy and sustainable environments, and sustain significant ecological features and functions.
- g) Support efforts to expand active transportation networks, including trails and pathways within, and connecting to, parks and natural park areas.

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.

Strategic Directions:

- a) Ensure that public spaces are safe, welcoming, accessible, and maintained in a state of good repair through the implementation of contemporary design standards and AODA requirements.
- b) Renew, expand, and develop spaces, facilities, and amenities in appropriate locations to address existing gaps.
- c) Strive to develop spaces, facilities, and amenities that are flexible, serve multiple users, function as neighbourhood hubs, and can be linked to broader strategies and initiatives.
- d) Respond to changing participation patterns, demographics, and emerging activities by adapting public spaces and programs to fit evolving needs and expectations.
- e) Employ effective and progressive maintenance and asset management practices.
- f) Support inward and upward growth through proactive planning and innovative models that support future growth and an increasingly urbanized city.
- g) Recognize the importance of placemaking through the provision of exceptional civic spaces and robust infrastructure.
- h) Utilize a variety of acquisition and non-acquisition-based options to enhance the supply of parks and open spaces.

GOAL 5 – RECREATION CAPACITY

We will deliver exceptional parks, recreation, and sport services. This will be achieved through the use of effective and responsive practices, partnerships, innovation, leadership, and accountability at all levels.

Strategic Directions:

- a) Demonstrate leadership and service excellence in the management and provision of quality parks, facilities, programs, and services.
- b) Adopt evidenced-based continuous improvement models in the delivery of service.
- c) Respond to a changing community through continued professional development and training.
- d) Seek out partnership and community relationship opportunities that maximize benefits to Londoners.
- e) Work with community partners to create a sustainable sport development model.
- f) Promote alignment between the Master Plan and other community strategies and initiatives.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan will be used as a resource in developing the City’s 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 timeframe 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.

CONCLUSION

This updated Master Plan looks at the long-term future of parks, recreation programs, sports services, and facilities in the context of Council’s long-term plan for city-building, needs and desires of London’s residents/user groups/stakeholders, comparison to best practices of other municipalities, identification of gaps, and overlaps in existing services and internal operations, all balanced against the city’s financial realities.

This Plan will serve as a guiding document providing goals and directions for standards and service delivery over the next 10 years and an identification of facility needs for the next 20 years.

This Plan represents a unique opportunity for the City and its partners to direct their focus to priority areas that will make a powerful impact in the lives of London’s diverse residents and their neighbourhoods by building a better London for all.

Acknowledgements

A Steering Committee guided the development of the Master Plan. Members were: Scott Stafford (Chair), Lynne Livingstone, Anna Lisa Barbon, and John Fleming.

Staff from Parks and Recreation, Neighbourhood, Children, and Fire Services, Finance and Corporate Services, City Planning, and Environment and Engineering contributed to the development of the Plan through the Technical and Engagement Committees, and by providing input during the engagement phases of Plan development.

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