

APPENDIX B – DRAFT PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

CITY OF LONDON 2019 PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

DRAFT June 7, 2019





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to everyone who contributed their time, ideas, and expertise to the development of this Master Plan. We are deeply appreciative of the many residents, groups, and partners who shared their insight by participating in our public engagement activities. We are also sincerely thankful to City Council for their continued support and the staff from across the City of London's service areas who provided guidance and expertise throughout the development of the Plan.

Land Acknowledgement

Oral history and archeological records show that the London region has been inhabited for over 10,000 years. The Indigenous peoples who have called this regional home for millennia include the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, and Lenni-Lenape Nations.

The City of London values the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and those whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence our vibrant community. We acknowledge them and others who care for the land and its past, present, and future stewards.

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Section 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Master Plan Overview

The City of London offers high quality parks, 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, strengthening of neighbourhood connections, and more.

Planning ahead is critical. As London grows and changes, the interests of residents also change. With 2009 being the last detailed review of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (an interim update was prepared in 2017), London developed this updated plan to set a course for the future.

The 2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan provides an overall vision, direction, and guidance for making decisions about parks, recreation programs, sport services, and facilities. It is informed by public input and is aligned to strategies and best practices, trends, demographic shifts, and growth forecasts. The Master Plan has a timeframe of ten years (2019 to 2028), although it is informed by a longer-term outlook for major capital projects (to 2039).

1.2 Planning is Vital to our Success

With a population of 409,000, increasing to 489,700 by 2039, London is a growing city with a strong parks, recreation, and sport system⁽¹⁾. New demands are continually placed on this system and there is a need to evaluate municipal investment opportunities and set priorities for the future. Investing in the right services, at the right times and in the right places benefits everyone. 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.

A Master Plan helps to identify broad needs and strategies based on best practices, public input, and local demand factors. Evidence-based decisions are crucial to making the best use of public funds and this Plan seeks to identify the most pressing objectives and opportunities for achieving them. In doing so, the Plan prepares the City in its search for external funding, partnerships, and alignment with related initiatives.

Using this Master Plan

At a high-level, the Master Plan will guide the City's planning and future budgeting, including alignment with the City's 2018 Development Charges Background Study. It will also be relevant for the day-to-day operations of several City of London Service Areas, including: Parks and Recreation; Neighbourhood, Children, and Fire Services; Planning Services; and, Finance and Corporate Services.

⁽¹⁾ City of London, Finance Department, 2018. Forecasted population includes a Census undercount of 2.7%.

1.3 Parks, Recreation, and Sport Help us Achieve More

Parks, recreation, and sports 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. This helps to build a sense of belonging and form the heart of a community.

Parks, recreation, and sport 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, connecting with and developing an appreciation of nature, cultural prosperity, and more.

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.

1.4 How this Plan will Make a Difference

The audience for this Master Plan is broad. For the City, it will be an essential tool to inform planning and decision-making on areas of investment, partnerships, funding, park and facility design, programming, service delivery, and policy development. The Plan is also intended to serve as a resource for other facility and service providers, potential partners, facility funders, and others interested and/or involved in the delivery of City parks, recreation, and sport services.

The Plan outlines leading practices in parks, recreation, and sport. More importantly, it contains a series of recommendations, some of which refer to discrete projects or actions and others that provide ongoing and incremental guidance. Full implementation of the Plan will require ongoing community engagement, flexibility in approach, partnerships, and funding from a variety of sources.



1.5 The Plan is Built on Extensive Consultation and Research

The Master Plan is a strategy that guides the provision and management of parks, recreation programs, sport services, and facilities. It is informed by public input, strategies, and best practices, trends, demographic shifts and growth forecasts. It is also influenced by several overarching plans and technical studies. The key findings and implications from these inputs are summarized in Section 2.

The areas that are directly guided by this plan include:

- a. **Programs**, such as aquatic, sport, fitness, wellness, arts/crafts, dance/music, leadership, and general interest programs provided by the City and other providers.
- b. **Services**, such as operations and maintenance, public engagement, sport tourism, financial assistance programs, implementing policies, and more.
- c. **Recreation and Sport Facilities**, such as community centres, arenas, pools, sports fields, playgrounds, and more.
- d. **Parks and Civic Spaces**, such as major parks, connected green spaces, neighbourhood parks, gardens, and civic squares.

The scope of parks, recreation, and sport is quite broad and many aspects of the Plan touch on topics that are related to other initiatives, plans, and strategic documents. Aligning this Master Plan with related initiatives is critical to implementing Council's Strategic Plan, maximizing resources, and achieving common outcomes.

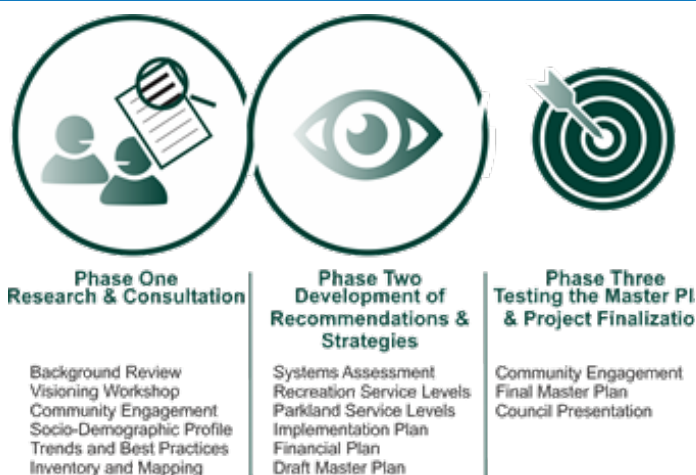
Some amenities were not included in the scope of this Master Plan as they are addressed in other strategic documents, such as:

- a. **Parkland Dedication**, which is guided by the London Plan and Parkland Conveyance and Levy By-law.
- b. **Cycling and Bike Lanes**, which are addressed in the Cycling Master Plan and London Plan.
- c. **Environmentally Significant Areas**, which are addressed through the London Plan policies and technical recommendations within Conservation Master Plans.
- d. **Arts, Culture, and Heritage**, which is guided by the City's Cultural Prosperity Plan, Music, Entertainment and Culture District Study, and related reports. The "culture portfolio" was recently transferred to the City's Parks and Recreation Service Area.

Alignment with these and other related strategic documents is a key focus of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Developing the Master Plan

1. **Research and Consultation:** Public input from this phase is documented in the "What we've Heard so Far" Report
2. **Development of Recommendations and Strategies:** This phase included the preparation of the draft Master Plan
3. **Testing the Master Plan and Finalization:** The draft Plan was shared with the public and stakeholders prior to finalization



Section 2: MASTER PLAN BUILDING BLOCKS

This section provides an overview of the City of London and its recent accomplishments as guided by past Master Plans. Summaries of key Master Plan building blocks are also provided, including demographics and growth, market trends, background studies, and community input. The City's broader strategic framework, service area strategies, and relevant Provincial/National planning initiatives are also summarized to promote alignment.

2.1 What makes London Unique

The City of London is located in the heart of Southwestern Ontario and exists as a separated city within Middlesex County. With a population of over 409,000, London is the 11th largest municipality in Canada. The city is home to Western University, Fanshawe College, and teaching hospitals, making it a regional centre for health services and education.

With a rich history and diversified economy, the city offers a vibrant lifestyle for people of all ages. London offers a multitude of leisure options for residents and visitors alike, including active living, unstructured activities, sports, nature appreciation, and opportunities for civic engagement and social connectivity such as festivals and events. The City's programs offer affordable and accessible opportunities to try new activities, build skills and physical literacy, and connect with others. In 2018, the City had nearly 72,500 registered program participants and over 2.5 million visits to its community centres.

London is known as the "Forest City" and is centred at the forks of the Thames River, a Canadian Heritage River. The city is home to hundreds of parks to meet the interests of all residents, including accessible playgrounds, sports parks, community gardens, woodlands, and the Thames Valley Parkway pathway system. A broad range of facilities are also available, such as arenas, community centres, pools, golf courses, community sites, and specialty parks and attractions (including Springbank Park and Storybook Gardens).

London is home to several semi-professional sports teams (including one of the oldest professional soccer franchises in North America – London City Soccer Club) and Labatt Memorial Park (the world's oldest baseball ground). In the past, the city has hosted several pre-eminent events, such as the Ontario and Canada Summer Games, the World Figure Skating Championships, and the Juno Awards. Every year, London attracts world-class tournaments,



including the London Blizzard Invitational (the world's largest and longest-running sledge hockey tournament) and the London Devilettes Hockey Tournament (the world's largest girls hockey tournament).

The City is committed to enhancing social equity through leading-edge programs and services that encourage broad participation and access for all residents. For example, a recent focus has been placed on providing service to under-represented populations, guided by initiatives such as the Child and Youth Agenda, Age Friendly London Action Plan, Community Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, and Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy. These initiatives have led to, or lent support to, several innovative practices and programs including (but not limited to):

- Play Your Way fund, a subsidy program offering over \$1 million annually in financial support to assist over 12,500 Londoners to participate in City programs and admissions to pools and Storybook Gardens;
- Free playground programs generate over 18,400 visits per summer at 39 sites;
- Neighbourhood Decision-Making (resident-driven projects) and the "NeighbourGood London" program (event and program assistance, including information sharing and equipment lending);
- Family Centres, a network of neighbourhood-based locations offering programs and services that support children, youth, and families; working with organizations such as the Huff N' Puff Senior Fitness Association, one of the largest such associations in Canada.

- Act-i-Pass and Healthy Eating/Healthy Physical Activity initiatives aimed at increasing healthy eating and healthy physical activity;
- Healthy Homes Program, a sport programs for homeless populations;
- The "Camps on TRACKS" training module for camp staff to better support campers with special needs (a best practice being adopted by many municipalities across Ontario);
- Community donations – many from local sports organizations – and volunteer efforts (for every \$1 of City investment, \$8 - \$10 was leveraged in cash, in-kind, and volunteer time donations to community projects on public property through initiatives such as Adopt-A-Park, and more); and,
- London was designated as Canada's first Age Friendly community - the City continues to engage a very active seniors' community by working with organizations such as the Huff N' Puff Senior Fitness Association, one of the largest such associations in Canada.

The City has also proven itself as a leader in creating accessible spaces and inclusive programs. For example, London was one of the first municipalities to create Facility Accessibility Design Standards; these technical standards have been adopted (or adapted) by more than 50 jurisdictions across Canada and the United States. The City also developed North America's first accessible golf course (Parkside 9).



Working Together

The City recognizes that community partnerships are vital to achieving a better London. The City frequently works with organizations such as the London Public Library, YMCA of Southwestern Ontario, schools, non-profit organizations, and the private sector through co-located facilities and service agreements. For example, the City established a joint venture management agreement with the Western Fair Association to develop and operate the Western Fair Sports Centre, which is a key component of the local arena supply and serves as a regional tournament centre. In addition, Western University and Fanshawe College provide a wide array of recreational resources for student and community use (the latter offers the largest college recreation program in Ontario).

The City of London is also proud of its commitment to innovative designs and environmental sustainability. Key initiatives include (but are not limited to):

- Many of London's newer municipal facilities are green municipal building projects;
- The City and two community partners established the Million Tree Challenge to inspire Londoners to plant one million trees within the "Forest City", placing London amongst much larger global cities that are participating in this initiative; the City's Tree Planting Strategy outlines a long-term plan to increase London's tree canopy from 24% to 34%;
- London has the lowest park maintenance operating cost per capita amongst its municipal benchmark comparators, reflecting a concerted effort to appropriately manage resources;
- Adopt-a-Park, Adopt-a-Pond, and Adopt-a-Street programs that empower community groups and businesses to be active stewards;
- London is the first municipality in the Province to have a city-wide invasive plant species management plan with a priority on addressing phragmites;
- A growing focus is being placed on urban food and agriculture, guided by the Urban Agriculture Strategy and the London Plan;
- The City is a leader in habitat protection, enhancement, and creation for pollinator species; and,
- The City is unique in that it has a program for the acquisition and management of woodlots.



2.2 Delivery of Parks, Recreation, and Sport Services

Parks, recreation, and sport are essential public services. The delivery system in London is comprised of providers representing the municipal, volunteer and non-profit, education, and commercial sectors.

The City of London (municipal sector) is the only provider with a mandate to oversee the needs of the entire community and is thus the primary provider of community services and facilities. Funding is predominantly derived from a mixture of growth-related charges, user fees, and taxation. The City's primary focus is on facilitating activities and experiences that enhance community wellbeing along with an emphasis on affordable opportunities for inclusive parks, recreation, and sport activities.

To facilitate this, the City provides an extensive supply of parks, open spaces, trails and pathways, recreation facilities, and community spaces, all of which are designed, managed, maintained, and programmed by a multi-disciplinary staff team with unique skills and responsibilities.

A focus is placed on accessible, quality spaces for community recreation programs, activities, and neighbourhood gatherings. The City matches the needs and wants of residents and organizations with the availability of resources in a fair and equitable manner. Community and neighbourhood development, along with services for children, youth, and older adults are also growing areas of the City's delivery system.

The City works collaboratively with others to ensure that gaps are identified and filled. Agreements and partnerships with other sectors help to enhance access to quality services for London residents.

Several municipal service areas and divisions were engaged in the development of this Master Plan, including those listed below that will be directly influenced by the plan and its directions.

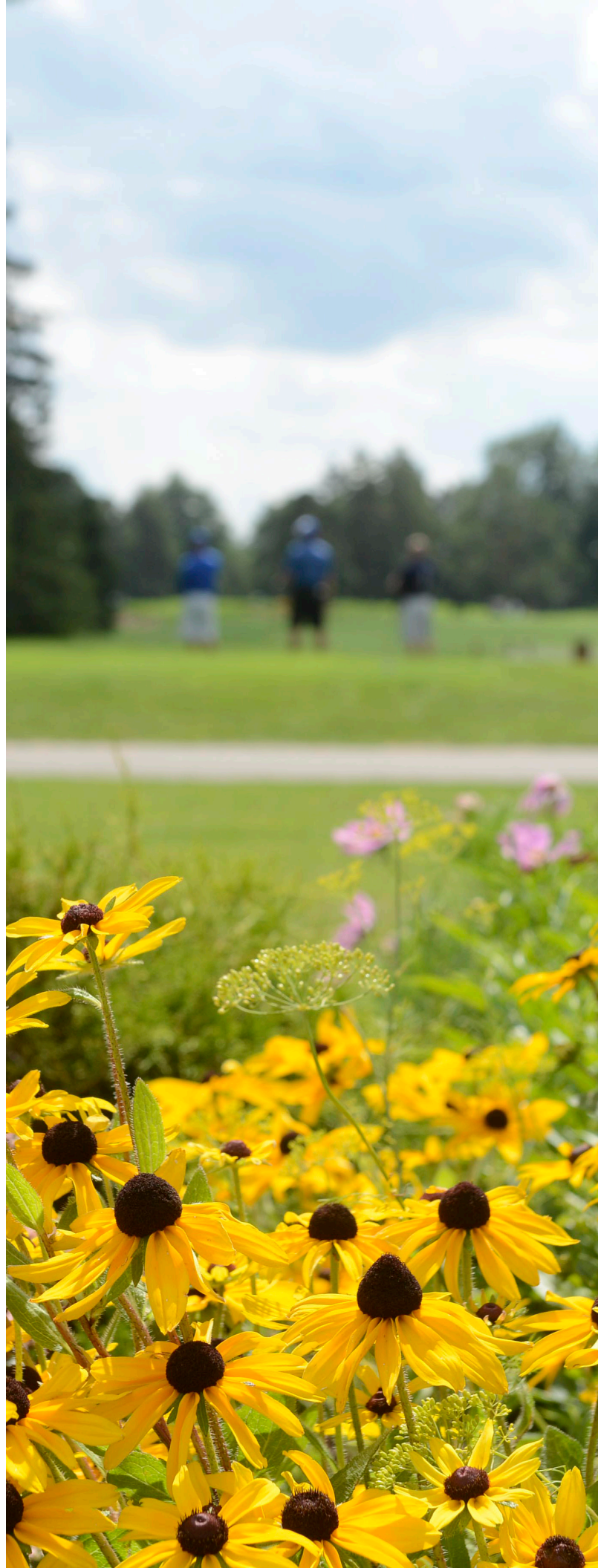


Table 1: City Departments Aligned with this Master Plan

Service Area	Division affected by Master Plan
Parks and Recreation	Aquatics, Arenas and Attractions; Culture, Special Events, and Sports Services; Business Solutions and Customer Service; Parks Planning and Operations
Neighbourhood, Children, and Fire Services	Service London; Neighbourhood Operations; Neighbourhood Strategic Initiatives and Funding
Planning Services	Long Range Planning and Research
Environmental and Engineering Services	Urban Forestry Planning
Finance and Corporate Services	Corporate Asset Management; Development Finance; Facilities Design, Construction and Maintenance; Financial Business Support; Financial Planning and Policy



2.3 Building on the 2009 Master Plan – Key Accomplishments

The 2009 Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan has served as a guiding document for parks, recreation programs, sport services, and facilities over the past ten years, until an Interim Update was prepared in 2017 with the goal of identifying short-term priorities prior to a comprehensive update in 2019. The 2009 Plan focused on the ongoing management and development of London's parks, recreation, and sport system to make sure that the needs of residents were met and to position the City to respond to growth. Many of the best practices identified in the Plan remain pertinent today.

A Strong Commitment to Implementation

The 2009 Plan identified 182 recommendations that addressed indoor and outdoor recreation and community facilities, parks planning and design, sports services, community programs, special events, Storybook Gardens, and more. To date, 97% of the recommendations put forward in the 2009 Strategic Master Plan have been completed or are underway. This illustrates the City's commitment to continuous improvement, as well as the need to chart a new course for the next ten years.

This Master Plan builds upon the successes of the 2009 Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan and 2017 Interim Update. The following are notable achievements and initiatives accomplished by the City of London (often in partnership with the community) over the past ten years.

The City of London has also made several improvements to the way it delivers services, often in partnership with other service providers. Recent accomplishments include (but are not limited to):

- Increased programming in neighbourhoods, including the introduction of more no- or low-cost programs and drop-in activities;
- Established 7 Senior Satellites;
- Supported the development and implementation of the London's Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy (2017-20) with a

focus on neighbourhood-driven activities and decision making;

- Introduced staff training programs on inclusion, diversity, and accessibility;
- Initiated changes to the way in which facilities are allocated and scheduled, with a view toward maximizing capacity;
- Collaborated with various cultural groups to enhance services to newcomer groups and produce new program opportunities, such as badminton, indoor cricket, ageless grace, fitness classes delivered in Spanish, etc.;
- Supported the development and implementation of an Age Friendly London Action Plan (2017-20) and Network and established 7 Family Centres across the City;
- Provided support for London's Child and Youth Agenda (2017-21) and Network;
- Spearheaded new communications vehicles, including social media sites, Play Your Way online newsletter, etc.;
- Updated pricing and allocation policies that have maximized facility and sport field usage;
- Prepared the London Plan (London's Official Plan), which includes a new parkland policy framework and classifications (currently under appeal), the City has also initiated work on a new Parkland Conveyance and Levy By-law;
- Initiated business improvements to golf courses and Storybook Gardens; and,
- Completed a master plan for a portion of the Thames River (One River Environmental Assessment).

In relation to infrastructure, the City has recently:

- Developed many new parks facilities, including (but not limited to) soccer and multi-use fields (including two artificial turf), ball diamonds, fieldhouses, a cricket pitch, spray pads, sport courts, skateboard parks, off-leash dog parks, and more;
- Completed one of the three main Thames Valley Parkway gaps linking Kiwanis Park and the neighbourhoods around it to the rest of the city;
- Invested in repairs to facilities at the end of their lifecycles, including (but not limited to): community centres (Byron Optimist, Boyle Memorial, Carling Heights Optimist,

- (cont'd) Medway, and South London); pools (Canada Games Aquatic Centre and outdoor pools such as Westminster, Southcrest, and Byron); arenas (Argyle, Oakridge, Stronach, Medway, and Nichols); and, dozens of playgrounds;
- Developed several new community centres, including:
 - Springbank Gardens Community Centre (2010);
 - Stoney Creek Community Centre, YMCA and Library (2011);
 - Bostwick Community Centre, YMCA and Library (2018); and,
 - East Community Centre (2019).
- Supported the development of the BMO Centre (indoor sports facility) by London Optimist Sports Centre (opened in 2011 and expanded in 2017);
- Completed major upgrades to approximately twelve (12) parks and collaborated with local organizations to improve sports fields, including adding lights, and new fencing;
- Assumed over ninety (90) new parks (the majority of which are open space and woodland parks) and added more than 260 hectares of new land to the inventory;
- Adopted new accessibility standards for facilities and programs including building 7 accessible community gardens;
- Constructed over forty (40) kilometres of recreational pathways to the network – one of the best systems in Canada; and,
- The private sector has developed several new commercial recreation venues and activities (indoor sports, adult leagues, entertainment complexes, etc.), although one prominent baseball facility has recently closed to accommodate residential development.

Building on these accomplishments, an updated strategy is needed to reflect current conditions and ensure alignment with contemporary priorities and strategies.



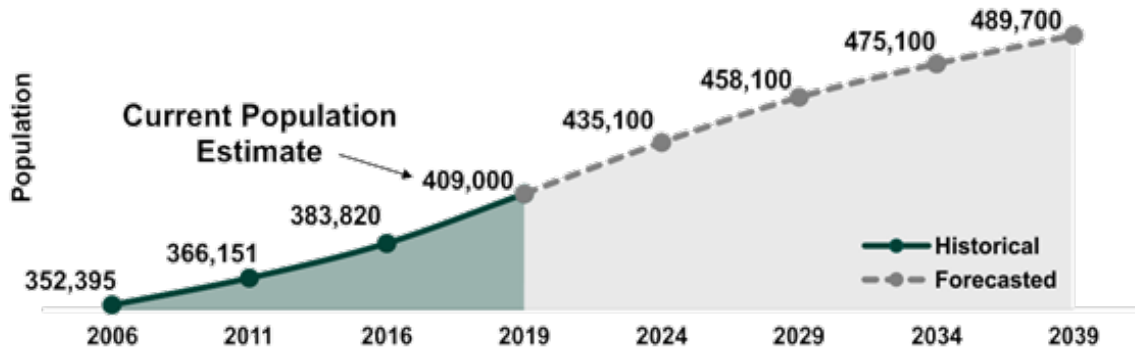
2.4 London's Socio-Demographic Profile and Growth Outlook

Understanding who lives in the city and how the population is expected to change in the future is vital to parks, recreation, and sport planning. This section draws from Census data, City of London population projections, and secondary research sources.

Population and Geographic Distribution

The estimated 2019 population for the City of London is 409,000. By 2039, London is projected to add another 80,700 residents, reaching a population of 489,700. This represents an increase of 20%, continuing the city's past pattern of strong growth and suggesting that the parks, recreation, and sport needs of residents will also increase over time.

Figure 1: Historical and Forecasted Population Growth



Source: Statistics Canada 2006 – 2016 Census; City of London, 2018 Development Charges Review.

Note: Forecasted population includes a Census undercount of 2.7%.



The Master Plan recognizes that the City's land use policies will increasingly emphasize growth within the Primary Transit Area, as directed by the London Plan (the City's new Official Plan, which is partially under appeal at this time). To enable the City to meet its intensification targets, infill growth will become more prominent and structured along a series of nodes and corridors within the Primary

Transit Area. Due to the strength of residential growth in greenfield areas, the proportion of the city's population living within the Primary Transit Area will decrease from 53% in 2019 to 48% in 2039. Nevertheless, the population within the Primary Transit Area is projected to grow by 8%, with limited opportunities for new parks and open spaces.

Table 2: Population Distribution by Primary Transit Area

Area	2019	2024	2029	2034	2039	Growth	
Primary Transit Area	216,200	221,400	226,600	229,800	232,900	16,700	8%
Other Areas	192,800	213,700	231,500	245,300	256,800	64,000	33%
Total	409,000	435,100	458,100	475,100	489,700	80,700	20%

Source: City of London, Finance Department. Forecasted population includes a Census undercount of 2.7%. Rounded to the nearest 100.



Figure 2: Distribution of Population Change, City of London 2019-2039

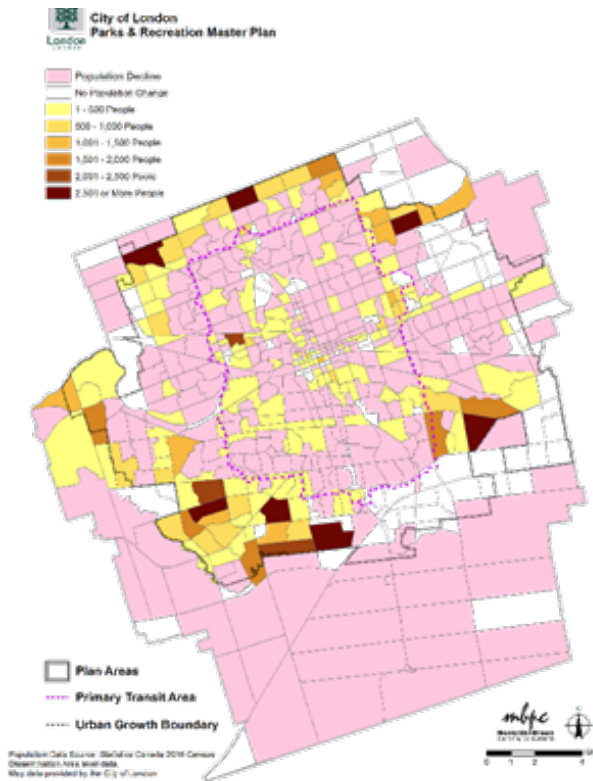


Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of population growth during the 2019-2039 planning period. Growth is expected to occur throughout London, with continued greenfield/suburban growth being more common in the short-term due to previous planning approvals. Over time, residential development will transition towards higher-density growth within the Primary Transit Area. Generally speaking, facility and service gaps will be most prominent in areas with increasing population density (e.g., downtown and primary transit area) and developing areas of London (e.g., outer edges). In these areas, existing amenities and programs may face increased pressure and use until such time as new parks, facilities, or partnerships can be developed.

Figure 3: Master Plan Areas



Building on the approach used in previous master plans, the city has been divided into five geographic “Plan Areas” to enable research and comparisons at the district-level. These plan areas are consistent with those used by the City in its recent Neighbourhood-Decision Making initiative that essentially divide the city into quadrants with a central core. The plan areas take into consideration population distribution and resident-identified neighbourhoods.

Figure 3 and Table 3 illustrate the Plan Area boundaries.

Table 3: General Boundaries of Plan Areas

Plan Area	Northern Boundary	Eastern Boundary	Southern Boundary	Western Boundary
Northwest	Northern City Limits	Richmond Street, Thames River	Oxford Street West, Thames River	Western City Limits
Northeast	Northern City Limits	Eastern City Limits	CP Railway, Oxford Street East	Richmond Street, Thames River, Adelaide Street North
Central	Oxford Street West, Thames River, CP Railway	Highbury Avenue North	Commissioners Road West	Thames River, Wharncliffe Road S
Southeast	Oxford Street East, Commissioners Road East	Eastern City Limits	Southern City Limits	Wellington Road
Southwest	Thames River, Commissioners Road West	Wellington Road	Southern City Limits	Western City Limits

Table 4: Population Distribution by Plan Area

Plan Area	2019	2024	2029	2034	2039	Growth	
Northwest	86,900	94,100	98,000	99,400	100,500	13,500	16%
Northeast	77,700	82,300	87,800	92,300	94,500	16,800	22%
Central	72,400	75,400	77,800	80,200	81,900	9,500	13%
Southeast	70,900	74,900	78,600	80,600	81,900	10,900	15%
Southwest	101,100	108,400	115,800	122,600	130,900	29,900	30%
Total	409,000	435,100	458,100	475,100	489,700	80,700	20%

Source: City of London, Finance Department. Forecasted population includes a Census undercount of 2.7%. Rounded to the nearest 100.

Each plan area has a population that currently ranges between approximately 70,000 and 100,000 residents. Over the planning period, each plan area is projected to experience some degree of population growth. The majority of growth is expected to occur in Southwest London (30%) and

Northeast London (22%) given the large supply of undeveloped residential greenfield space. In terms of population size, Southwest London will continue to be the largest area by 2039 (130,900 residents) followed by the Northwest London (100,500 residents).

Preparing for London's Changing Urban Form

The City needs to plan for appropriate parks, recreation programs, sport services, and facilities within all areas of London. A continued shift towards medium- and high-density residential development will place stress on many of London's existing parks, recreation programs, sport services, and facilities. This will require a greater emphasis on partnerships and innovation in the design and delivery of parks, recreation, and sport facilities, such as applying progressive design standards and seeking new ways to provide services. As higher densities can result in a loss of personal space and growing feelings of isolation, opportunities for publicly-accessible spaces, neighbourhood hubs, and engaging activities should be sought.

Population by Age

London's population is aging as the leading edge of the baby boom generation is now just over 70 years old. The 2016 Census reported an average age of 40.5 years for London residents and there are now more residents age 60 and over than residents age 19 and younger.

London's age cohort forecasts suggest continued changes in age composition over the next twenty-plus years. Between 2021 and 2041, London's senior population (age 70+) is forecast to experience the most growth (increasing by 67%), followed by adults (age 35 to 54 years, which generally represent the baby boom echo). Modest growth is forecast for the child and youth populations, which have traditionally been the primary users of parks, recreation, and sport services. Moving forward, demand can be anticipated for amenities and programs serving all ages, including a range of active pursuits (e.g., playgrounds, swimming, sports, pickleball, etc.), and social and passive activities (e.g., community gardens, trails and pathways, comfort amenities, etc.).



Table 5: Age Cohort Forecast, 2021 to 2041

Age Groups	2021	2041	Change	
Pre-School and Children (0 – 9 yrs)	44,300	45,000	619	1%
Youth (10 – 19 yrs)	48,000	54,600	6,600	14%
Young Adults (20 – 34 yrs)	91,400	97,300	5,800	6%
Adults (35 – 54 yrs)	103,700	132,700	29,000	28%
Older Adults (55 – 69 yrs)	77,900	76,300	-1,600	-2%
Seniors (70+ yrs)	53,500	89,500	36,000	67%
Total	418,800	495,200	76,400	18%

Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. 2018. City of London Population, Housing and Employment Growth Forecast, 2016 – 2044.

An analysis of the distribution of London's age cohorts by Plan area (2016 Census) indicates that:

- The highest proportions of **pre-school and school-age children (ages 0 – 9 years)** are located in London's outer neighbourhoods, including the city's newest residential communities;
- The largest concentrations of **youth (ages 10 – 19 years)** can be found in established neighbourhoods within Northwest, Southwest, and Southeast London;
- Proportionally, many **young adults (ages 20 – 34 years)** reside in Central London, as well as in portions of Northwest and Northeast London, which is likely influenced by post-secondary and rental housing opportunities;
- The distribution of **adults (ages 35 – 54 years) and older adults (ages 55 – 69 years)** is relatively balanced across all Plan Areas; and,
- High concentrations of **seniors (ages 70+)** can be found in pockets within each Plan Area, partially influenced by the location of seniors' group housing developments.





Other Socio-Demographic Considerations

Socio-demographic factors such as income and diversity are also known to influence interest and participation in parks, recreation, and sport opportunities. Described below, these trends suggest an increasing need for accessible, affordable, and age friendly spaces and services.

Nearly one-fifth (19%) of London residents reside in low-income households, higher than the Provincial average (14%). Populations that are most vulnerable include: children and youth; older adults; lone parent families; newcomers; ethno-cultural and ethno-racial groups; persons with disabilities; Indigenous peoples; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Two-Spirit, plus (LGBTQ2S+); and, women. To encourage broad participation, the City and its partners have made substantial efforts to offer low- and no-cost programming within neighbourhoods and to provide financial assistance through programs such as the Play Your Way fund. These efforts demonstrate a commitment to promoting

access for all.

Over one-fifth (22%) of London's population are immigrants, lower than the Provincial average (29%). One-quarter (26%) of this population arrived in Canada between 2006 and 2016. One-tenth (10%) of London's residents speak a non-official language at home – the most common being Arabic, Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin), Spanish, and Polish. London's Newcomer Strategy highlights the importance of attracting immigrants and newcomers to sustain overall growth within the city.

As immigration rates continue to rise, there will be greater demand for activities, and services that appeal to the diversity in the population. Some notable examples include cricket, badminton, and picnicking, although the range of specific requests will be much broader and may include interventions such as providing materials in multiple languages and curtains to restrict viewing during women-only swim times.

2.5 Leading Parks, Recreation, and Sport Trends

Trends in parks, recreation, and sport are constantly evolving due to socio-demographic shifts, activity preferences, evolving lifestyles, land use patterns, and new outlooks regarding personal wellbeing. As trends are not static, the City and other providers must continue to engage the community, monitor needs, and respond to changing interests over time.

At right are several “mega-trends” that are broad, system-wide directions or movements affecting society and spanning various sectors. Many of these will have widespread effects on the future of parks, recreation, and sports. Some, such as urbanization and population aging, are already starting to impact what and how facilities and services are being delivered. Others, such as climate change and physical inactivity, require a longer-term perspective but are equally important.

The Value Proposition

- Recognizing the Benefits
- Environmental Awareness
- Changing Economic & Fiscal Landscape

Demographic & Socio-Economic

- Urbanization
- Changing Demographics
- Immigration and Diversity
- Affordability

Participation & Interests

- Sedentary Lifestyles and Physical Inactivity
- Unstructured, Low-cost Activities
- Connecting with Nature
- Demand for Active Transportation
- The Changing Face of Sport
- Elite Training, Competition and Sport-Friendly Facilities

Park and Facility Design

- Multi-use Parks and Facilities
- Renewing and Repurposing Aging Infrastructure
- Variation in Park Usage and Design
- Focus on Design and Function

Service Delivery

- Partnerships and Community Hubs
- Supporting Volunteerism
- Customer-driven Models
- New Technologies



Informed by these mega-trends, summarized below are several key findings that have influenced the development of this Master Plan. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, rather it contains specific subjects that were identified time and again through the research and consultation phase.

a) More attention is being paid to personal wellness, but physical activity levels remain low.

Low physical activity levels have been a concern in Canada for some time, which has created a renewed focus on physical literacy, healthy behaviours, and personal wellness, particularly among children. Enhancing convenience, affordability, and ease of participation for people of all ages and abilities can help reduce barriers. A variety of strategies are required to offer choice and convenience in participating in physical activity.



The City of London uses several practices and programs to address access and inclusion for all. For example, the City has expanded unstructured activities, which are lower cost, easier to fit into busy schedules, and improve physical and/or mental health. The ACT-i-Pass card also provides grade 5 students in London with free access to recreation programs during the school year. Furthermore, exposure to nature and access to outdoor play space for active play help to strengthen individuals and communities. These and similar initiatives have been identified through the Neighbourhood Decision-Making program and are a growing component of municipal investment.

b) Interest in parks, recreation, and sport interests has diversified and expectations are growing.

Generations ago, children and youth sports (mainly hockey and baseball) dominated the recreation landscape and municipal facility and service delivery followed suit. Today, new activities and markets are prevalent, challenging municipalities to keep pace. The examples are widespread - from pickleball to cricket, community gardens to disc golf, neighbourhood hubs to year-round athletic



facilities, innovative play and more. The trend toward increased specialization in sport is also stretching the limits of municipal service delivery. In response, the market share held by other sectors is growing.

The City of London frequently introduces new activities and spaces within its parks, recreation, and sport system to address changing community trends. This is often done in partnership with others as the City cannot respond to the full range of needs on its own. Where possible, the City also encourages multi-use amenities, flexible spaces, and defined levels of service to maximize access and resources.

c) The population is aging and becoming more diverse.

Demographic shifts are occurring throughout North America, most notably increases in the number of older adults and newcomers, coupled with steady to declining birth rates. As covered earlier, these trends are impacting the demand for, and delivery of parks, recreation, and sport services. Generally speaking, vulnerable populations have fewer opportunities for leisure participation due to the barriers they face, such as cost, transportation, time, health, etc.



The City of London has been a leader in the development of barrier-free spaces and accessible program opportunities, which has strengthened the ability to serve residents of all ages and backgrounds. Other examples include ongoing engagement through initiatives such as Age Friendly London, Child and Youth Agenda, various advisory committees, and community outreach forums. As the population grows and evolves, a continued focus should be placed on inclusive opportunities that reflect an increasingly multicultural, diverse, and urbanized community.

d) There is growing demand for healthy, complete communities that promote social interaction.

On the whole, people are spending more time in their neighbourhoods, increasing the importance of equitable access to quality leisure opportunities. Leading this trend is increased interest in active living, social connectedness, and placemaking, all of which are influenced by an aging and increasingly diverse population.



The City of London is readying itself for urban intensification through policies and projects that support a wider range of public spaces and amenities, such as trails/pathways, seating, shade, washrooms, urban parks in dense areas (including privately owned public spaces), event spaces, neighbourhood hubs, and more. Social issues such as drug abuse and homelessness are also increasingly impacting the use of parks and community facilities, leading the City to seek new strategies in service delivery and design.

e) Aging and outdated infrastructure create financial and other challenges.

Most Canadian municipalities are faced with rising infrastructure deficits. The growing stock of aging facilities contributes to this as many were built in the late 1960s or 1970s through Centennial-era or lottery-funded grant programs. Many of these facilities contain outmoded designs and features that are not barrier-free or able to meet contemporary needs.



By comparison, the City of London has addressed infrastructure renewal through proactive planning and strategic investments in existing, replacement, and new facilities. The City continues to evaluate opportunities to optimize existing parks and facilities and orient them to community needs. Decisions regarding facility renewal and repurposing can be complex and met with substantial community interest.

f) Partnerships bring resources together to achieve more.

Municipalities play a key role in providing parks, recreation and sport facilities, programs, and services. However, many of these opportunities would not be possible without the dedication of partners such as conservation authorities, community organizations, sports groups, agencies, private entities, and more. Partnerships with external organizations to fund, develop, and/or operate services and facilities are becoming more common as the range of community needs expands.



The City of London values its many partners, which help to extend the reach and impact of programs and services. The City frequently evaluates new opportunities to collaborate with others in response to demonstrated community needs.



2.6 City of London's Strategic Plan and Related Strategies

Parks, recreation, and sport contribute to the success of many city-wide and community-specific priorities. This Master Plan reflects the planning context and aligns with the directions of relevant City of London strategies, particularly those that share a common vision to enhance the wellbeing of individuals, communities, and the natural and built environments.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a key strategic driver of strategies noted in the Strategic Plan for the City of London. The Strategic Plan identifies City Council's vision, mission, values, and strategic areas of focus. It sets the course of City Council and Administration as they work to deliver on the goals for the next four years. Through the multi-year budget process, Council's Strategic Plan is put into action, with details about accountability, pacing, and resourcing. To learn more about Council's Strategic Plan, please visit www.london.ca

Among others, the Master Plan has been influenced by the following Council-endorsed strategies. These documents are broad in scope and include information regarding the city's growth, program and service delivery, infrastructure development, policies, and other strategic directions.

- The London Plan (Official Plan)
- London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy
- Age Friendly London Action Plan
- London's Child and Youth Agenda
- London ON Bikes Cycling Master Plan
- London's Cultural Prosperity Plan
- Thames Valley Corridor Plan
- One River Environmental Assessment and related reports
- London for All: A Roadmap to end Poverty
- Community Diversity & Inclusion Strategy
- A variety of topic-specific policies, business plans, and implementation strategies



2.7 Alignment with Provincial and National Initiatives

In the past few years, the Provincial and Federal Governments – often in association with the non-profit sector – have undertaken significant work focused on parks, recreation, and sport and the importance of participation in physical and leisure activities. These initiatives include a blend of policies, guidelines, and best practices based on accepted norms and research. In doing so, they allow municipalities and stakeholders to speak a common language and work together to achieve common goals.

Key sector-specific Provincial- and National-level initiatives that have influenced the Master Plan include:

- A Common Vision for Increasing Physical Activity and Reducing Sedentary Living in Canada: Let's Get Moving (2018)
- Parks for All (2017)
- Ontario Trails Strategy (2017)
- Game ON – The Ontario Government's Sport Plan (2015)
- A Framework for Recreation in Canada: Pathways to Wellbeing (2015)
- Canadian Sport for Life – various documents; e.g., Active for Life, Long-term Athlete Development, etc. (2014-2018)
- Canadian Sports Policy (2012)
- Active Canada 20/20 (2012)
- Ontario Healthy Kids Strategy (2012)
- Charter for Recreation and Parks in Ontario

(2009) (4)

- CycleON – Ontario's Cycling Strategy (2013)
- CycleON Action Plan 2.0 (2018)

One report – **the Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015: Pathways to Wellbeing** – has particular relevance to this Master Plan as it is the overarching guideline designed to support coordinated policies and practices in recreation and related sectors throughout Canada. The Framework for Recreation in Canada (FRC) was endorsed by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities in September 2016. Specifically, the FRC:

- Presents a renewed definition of recreation and explores the challenges and benefits of recreation today;
- Provides the rationale for investing in an evolved recreation strategy and describes the need for collaboration with other initiatives in a variety of sectors; and,
- Describes a new vision for recreation in Canada and suggests common ways of thinking about the renewal of recreation based on clear goals and underlying values and principles. The vision is *“a Canada in which everyone is engaged in meaningful, accessible recreation experiences that foster: individual wellbeing; community wellbeing; and, the wellbeing of our natural and built environments.”*

The goals of this City of London Parks and Recreation Master Plan (see Section 3.2) are aligned with the goals of the Framework for Recreation in Canada.

Figure 6: Goals of the Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015



(4) The City of London committed to this vision by endorsing the Charter in 2010.

2.8 What We've Heard – Community Consultation

Engagement with residents, stakeholders, agencies, 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. Directed by a comprehensive community engagement strategy, the process generated awareness and understanding while ensuring that all stakeholders had an opportunity to be heard, including under-represented populations.

Londoners are passionate and engaged when it comes to parks, recreation, and sport. The community's response to the Master Plan process was outstanding, with over 2,500 residents providing input. The engagement program incorporated a series of structured and unstructured opportunities to identify issues and ideas, both in-person and remotely. The first consultation phase occurred during Spring and Summer 2018 and helped to identify preliminary needs and ideas.

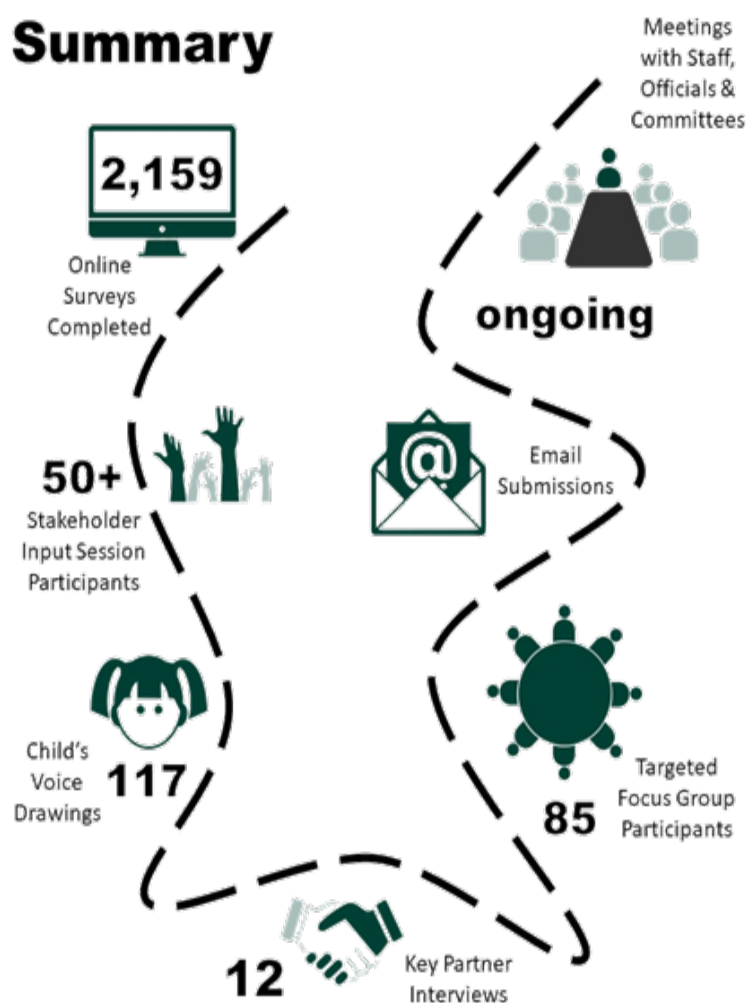
Primary engagement tactics included:

- Community Survey (2,159 completed online and paper) advertised widely across the city;
- Online Engagement through the City's "Get Involved" and City websites, as well as written submissions to the project email;
- Stakeholder Workshops (3 sessions with over 50 representatives) with local user groups, service clubs, neighbourhood associations, and organizations to learn more about their concerns and needs;
- Targeted Focus Groups (6 sessions with 85 representatives) to allow for deeper engagement with partners that provide services to those identified as priority, such as Indigenous populations, newcomer groups, youth, older adults, persons with disabilities, and low-income residents;
- Agency and Partner Interviews (12 sessions) with selected organizations that provide services to London residents and/or have notable relationships with the City;
- Child's Voice Drawing Submissions (117) that identified how children like to play;
- Advisory Committee Presentations (10 committees) to gather input; and,
- Internal Engagement to solicit input from City staff and officials.

In-depth Public Engagement

A background report to this Master Plan – the "What We've Heard so Far" report – identifies what is important to residents and stakeholders. A second consultation phase took place in Spring 2019 for feedback on the draft goals, strategic directions, and recommendations.

Consultation Summary



The Master Plan's communication and engagement initiatives provided valuable insights into the current state of London's parks, recreation, and sport system. The following findings represent opinions shared by many residents and stakeholders. They have been taken into consideration within this Master Plan, along with other building blocks such as demographics, market conditions and trends, regional considerations, financial capabilities.

The City offers a wide variety of high quality and responsive parks, facilities, and services.

1. Londoners expressed high levels of satisfaction with parks, recreation, and sport services, programs, and facilities. According to the community survey: indoor recreation facilities, active parks, passive parks, trails, and pathways all received satisfaction levels of 86% or higher.
2. The City and community partners provide access to high quality and affordable programs, parks, and facilities. Most partners and community organizations have excellent relationships with the City and want to do more.
3. Residents indicated that there are many opportunities to participate in sports and active pursuits. This is vital for physical activity and physical literacy for people of all ages, abilities, and income levels.
4. Residents indicated that there are numerous opportunities to access and connect with the natural environment (which promotes mental, physical, social, and cultural health for individuals and communities).
5. Organizations indicated that the City is progressive, responsive to community requests, and open to trying new things. One example is the City's efforts to develop strong neighbourhoods and enhance a sense of community.

Access, equity and inclusion are key considerations for service delivery.

6. Additional low- and no-cost activities and facility rentals were requested. Affordability challenges are the greatest for under-represented and marginalized groups, such as the homeless, low-income populations, newcomers to Canada, Indigenous populations, and persons with disabilities.
7. The City's Play Your Way financial assistance program is well used and needed. However, some groups found that it was difficult to navigate the system and felt that some people are falling through the cracks.
8. Participants felt that it is vital that the City continue to offer accessible and inclusive spaces, amenities, and services. A wide variety of requests were received in this regard, both general and specific, including the establishment of a public inventory of accessible spaces and services.

9. Program locations that meet accessibility design standards, provide accessible equipment, and are accessible by public transit and active transportation were identified as key considerations.

We can achieve more by working together.

10. Greater communication and awareness were requested by many. A multi-faceted strategy is required as different groups rely on different forms of communication.
11. Many community organizations expressed interest in working with the City to fill gaps in programs and services. Regular and consistent communication with a wide range of service providers is critical.

London's population and urban form are changing and parks, facilities, and services must keep pace.

12. London's population is aging and becoming more diverse. This is leading to new demands, including more community events, unstructured activities, and sports (pickleball, cricket, etc.).
13. With growing diversity (ethnicity, income, abilities, etc.) comes the need for strategies to promote inclusion, safety, and welcoming environments. Examples include training, messaging, communication.
14. There is a need to acknowledge the traditional territories of Indigenous populations and build strong relationships to accommodate their unique needs within the parks, recreation, and sport system.
15. Continued education was requested around park use/rules, City initiatives, benefits of physical activity, etc. Public involvement helps to elevate sense of community and pride.

Parks and open spaces provide tremendous benefits and should be a focus of future investment.

16. Comfort amenities in parks – such as shade, seating, and washrooms – were a common request. These amenities help to support greater use by people of all ages and respond to the trend in unstructured park use. A significant number of the Neighbourhood Decision Making Program idea submissions focused on these park support amenities.
17. The variety of park types and designs is changing. For example, suggestions were received to reimagine Neighbourhood Parks with age friendly and accessible amenities and a variety and higher standard of play equipment (including challenging play).
18. There are growing concerns over safety within the city's parks and trails system. Common requests included the separation of pedestrians and cyclists along the Thames Valley Parkway, addressing the issue of needles, litter, and vandalism within parks, and responding to concerns over urban wildlife management.
19. Many participants suggested that a greater emphasis be placed on healthy food and urban agriculture, such as the expansion of community gardens and promotion of naturally growing foods.
20. More can be done to promote the environmental and social benefits of preserving, managing, and enjoying natural areas. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is not the place to include overarching policy relating to the Environmentally Significant Areas. Clarity in terminology and alignment with existing policy will be important.

Population growth and evolving interests are impacting demand for recreation and community services and facilities.

21. Strong support was expressed for multi-use parks and facilities, specifically for a

21. future community centre development in North-west London. Additional large gymnasiums that can accommodate a variety of sports (including pickleball) were requested.
22. Infrastructure renewal is a growing concern in London. Specifically, there is uncertainty over the future of older arenas (e.g., Silverwood Arena, Farquharson Arena, etc.), though demand was expressed for accommodating other community-building and sport opportunities within repurposed facilities.
23. Several groups articulated a desire for new or improved sports fields, such as additional ball diamonds (with consideration to geographic distribution), cricket fields, multi-use turf fields, and fieldhouse amenities at sports parks.
24. Many requests were received for more spray pads throughout the city. Some concern was expressed over the phasing out of wading pools.
25. While there is growing interest in new park amenities, many – such as BMX/skateboard parks, off-leash parks, outdoor sport courts, lighting, etc. – can be met with community opposition due to site selection challenges.

Interest in sport is growing and additional support was requested.

26. Several organizations expressed interest in new and improved facilities to meet year-round sport training and competition needs. One example was an expansion to the Canada Games Aquatic Centre.
27. There were suggestions for the City to support athlete development to a greater degree than it has in the past. Examples include working with community partners to provide indoor and outdoor track and field venues, as well as a curling facility.
28. To better support sport tourism, it was suggested that the City work with organizations to design new parks and facilities that are “competition-ready”.



Section 3: STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

This section identifies the strategic framework that will guide the Master Plan's implementation. In creating this framework, the principles, and overarching strategies established in the 2009 Master Plan and 2017 Interim Update have been revisited through the lens of updated consultation and research.

3.1 The Case for Investing in Parks, Recreation, and Sport

There is ample evidence that points to the tremendous benefits associated with parks and open space and participation in recreation and sport. In short, parks, recreation, and sport opportunities enrich quality of life and strengthen personal and community wellbeing. Everyone in London benefits from parks, recreation, and sport.

The Cost of Physical Inactivity

Similar to Provincial and National averages, 42% of adults (18 years and over) and 35% of youth (12 to 17 years old) in the London Census Metropolitan Area do not achieve the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines.

The 2018 ParticipACTION Report Card of Physical Activity for Children and Youth in Canada gives the following grades:

- overall physical activity (D+)
- active play and leisure activities (D)
- organized sport participation (B)

As of 2009, physical inactivity cost Canadian taxpayers \$6.8 billion a year, representing nearly 4% of total health care costs.

The Strategic Plan for the City of London identifies five strategic areas of focus. The benefits of parks, recreation, and sport – as identified through a review of relevant research sources – are identified below according to these focus areas.





Strengthening our Community

Parks, recreation, and sport:

- improves physical and mental health by keeping people active, healthy and engaged
- addresses sedentary behaviours and contributes to disease prevention and obesity reduction
- builds confidence, learning, and cognitive skills by engaging children in active play
- removes barriers to access recreation, sport, leisure and leadership for hard to reach populations and delivers accessible opportunities for persons with disabilities
- provides families and neighbourhoods with safe and welcoming places to interact together
- supports athletes in their quest to be the best they can be
- offers social respite from everyday pressures
- contributes to skill development, lifelong learning, and the training of future leaders
- creates a sense of belonging and enhances understanding and respect for different cultures

Building a Sustainable City

Parks, recreation, and sport:

- plays a key role in maintaining healthy, strong, and vibrant communities
- enhances social connections and vibrancy within neighbourhoods
- presents the community with affordable and inclusive spaces for gathering and celebrating
- generates community pride by inspiring residents to invest their time and energy in their city
- offers active transportation choices that are safe, convenient, and enjoyable for pedestrians

and cyclists

- deepens our appreciation of and connection with the natural environment
- contributes to ecological health and climate change mitigation through the thoughtful management of open space and natural features

Growing our Economy

Parks, recreation, and sport:

- increases property values through the availability of nearby amenities
- supports tourism and generates economic benefits
- creates a competitive advantage for the city in terms of attraction and retention

Creating a Safe London for Women and Girls

Parks, recreation, and sport:

- Provides opportunities for women and girls to participate safely in parks, recreation, and sport
- Contributes to outcomes of providing safe spaces and places for women and girls

Leading in Public Service

Parks, recreation, and sport:

- contributes to larger outcomes in the city, such as economic vitality, public health, poverty reduction, and environmental resiliency
- creates new and/or enhanced opportunities for residents and neighbourhood groups to participate and engage in identifying program and service needs and to build capacity

3.2 A Vision for Parks, Recreation, and Sport in London

Guiding principles, each with a series of directions, were prepared for the 2009 Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan. Since that time, several key reports and policies have been developed that offer additional direction to the planning, design, and delivery of parks, recreation, and sport services. This includes (but is not limited to) Council's Strategic Plan, London Plan, and "A Framework for Recreation in Canada". As a result, this framework has been revisited.

The strategic framework for this Master Plan contains an overall **vision**, which is supported by **goals** and **strategic directions**. This framework is an important tool that fundamentally expresses how the City will approach decision-making and investment over the next ten years and beyond. Collectively, it articulates the vision and direction to which the City and community aspire, strengthens the City's ongoing commitment, and directs future investment. Everything the City does should further the vision and one or more of the goals.

This framework is supported by the Master Plan's internal and external engagement program (including input from the public and stakeholders), as well as leading research in the sector and local policy directions. The framework is aligned with, informed by and supports the achievement 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.

The Master Plan also contains detailed **recommendations** that will assist the City and the community to achieve the vision. The recommendations build upon the strong core of services currently provided by the City and others. Strategic directions and recommendations can be found in Sections 4 to 8, with additional recommendations relative to implementation and budgeting in Section 9.

Figure 7: Strategic Framework for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan



Vision (adapted from the London Plan and Framework for Recreation in Canada)

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.

Table 6: Parks and Recreation Master Plan 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, provision, and management of parks, facilities, and 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.

Note: The goals of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan are aligned with the Framework for Recreation in Canada (2015).

Section 4: ACTIVE LIVING

This section contains analysis and recommendations relating to programs and activities.

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.

The City of London strives to provide parks, recreation, and sport programs that introduce residents to new activities, encourage physical activity, and strengthen physical literacy. By facilitating access to high quality programs and spaces, the City of London can make sure that residents have access to the services they need to make healthy choices that will enhance individual and community wellbeing. The review of City programs and services revealed a high level of satisfaction with the quality and variety of these opportunities.

Sharpening our Focus

The following primary areas require continued focus for the duration of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan:

- a. Increasing the frequency, duration, and intensity of physical activity for the general population; and,
- b. Increasing participation and offering a broad range of programs and services to all residents.

Making the case for an aligned and collective approach to maximizing the intensity, duration, and frequency of physical activity through introductory programming will serve residents well. Making physical activity the easy choice should be the continued focus of the City and all related stakeholders.



Physical Activity

There is an increasing body of knowledge that supports the **personal and societal benefits** of participation in active endeavours including all forms of physical activity. It is well known that combining regular physical activity with proper dietary habits helps to form healthy lifestyles that contribute to a host of physical, social, and physiological benefits. Recreation and sport participation and physical activity are increasingly seen as health promotion tools in the fight against some of the most significant illnesses of the 21st century like heart disease, obesity, and diabetes.

Consistent with Canadian Sport for Life Model (CS4L), recreation providers play an integral role in developing **physical literacy** in children and youth, as well as promoting lifelong physical activity for all residents. Because many different institutions, agencies, and groups are involved in delivering sports and physical activity programs, CS4L recommends that recreational, educational, and sport clubs coordinate their efforts to prepare residents to have the skills to be more active in a safe manner. Physical literacy is integrated into programs and activities for all ages. Under the CS4L framework, recreation providers work together with organizations to introduce and promote physical literacy for all ages and abilities.

The goal of municipal recreation providers is to introduce various leisure pursuits to promote exposure to physical activity and sports, creative pursuits, and general interest programs. This in turn exposes residents to various opportunities generally at an introductory level and encourages people to try new activities and reap the benefits of participation. A review of the City of London's Recreation Guide found that there is a broad range of **opportunities for all age groups and abilities**.

Staff regularly review registration statistics, reassess programs with low registration, and add new programs and opportunities to respond to trends and community needs. For example, the development of the Act-i-Pass program with other community recreation providers offers free activities for students in Grade 5 to promote engagement in recreation. The creativity in developing new programs is what program staff pride themselves in. The range of programs offered in London is intentional. An emphasis is placed on programs and clinics on the environment, science, and technology

to respond to a growing need to ensure that young people are exposed to broader opportunities, can think more globally, and consider careers in these areas.

The Master Plan's **public engagement** process yielded suggestions for additional drop-in programs, a greater variety of activities for older adults and seniors, adult sport leagues, and opportunities to connect with nature and optimize park use year-round. There were also suggestions for intergenerational opportunities and opportunities to increase physical literacy through the built environment. Recreation practitioners need to be nimble to respond to emerging needs and address critical social issues. City of London staff remain vigilant in determining new interests and monitoring participation rates in the range of opportunities by age group.

It is important to annually assess the number of people participating in recreational pursuits by age group, often referred to as the **penetration or participation rate**. This is typically measured by determining the percentage of the population (or age subset) that is registered in direct programs and engaged in casual pursuits. Staff have measured the location of program participants (to determine how far participants travel to engage in recreation pursuits) as well as participation in some sports and seniors' activities. These data are intended to provide a high-level benchmark as some residents register in more than one program in each year. While there is no industry benchmark as each community is different, measuring participation rates year-to-year provides useful indicators locally and may identify gaps. The goal is to attain as much participation as possible given facility space and fiscal sustainability goals. All efforts must be taken to increase this participation rate to ensure that the health outcomes within the general population are positive ones.

Other methods may also be used to determine the effectiveness of the parks, recreation, and sport programs and services. Understanding quality assurance measures, legislative compliance, and participant satisfaction levels will offer a broader view. Once the rates are understood, staff can develop realistic and achievable targets in increasing participation. The City is encouraged to work with other providers to understand participation figures and the degree to which the participation rate extends beyond City-delivered programs.

Casual and unstructured opportunities to be active are proving to be most popular. Walking, hiking, cycling throughout the city, dropping into a community centre to play in the gym, and using park spaces to master new skills on one's own time are popular in terms of participation. The City of London has recognized this trend and offers the loan of large-scale games for residents to use for family picnics and gatherings. Many municipalities are also increasing daytime and unstructured use of gymnasiums by allowing residents to use them through independent or self-organized play outside of program times. Other promising examples that help to keep residents outside and active longer include sand/dirt hills that allow children and the general public to climb, build, and explore, as well as supports that can be used for slacklines (balancing sports).

Active Living

Active living is critical to individual and community wellbeing – it reduces the risk of chronic disease, enhances physical and mental health, and brings residents together. It is about working together to create places where active transportation, physical activities, and play are integral parts of everyday life.

Accessibility and affordability are essential to providing opportunities to be active in neighbourhoods and on the way to work, school, or play. To achieve maximum benefit, active living should be integrated into daily routines, such as walking to the store or bus stop or taking the stairs. Supporting safe, connected, and healthy neighbourhoods requires collaboration with internal and external stakeholders.

The City is mindful that policy decisions, community design, service delivery, and education initiatives impact public health and peoples' abilities to make active lifestyle choices. Convenient, safe, and connected walking and cycling routes are at the core of promoting active living. Aside from specific infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians, the way neighborhoods and communities are built affects walkability and levels of activity. The notion of making "the healthy choice the easy choice" is supported by several City of London plans and strategies, such as the Age Friendly Action Plan, London ON Bikes Cycling Master Plan, London's Child and Youth Agenda, London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy, and more.

Note: See Section 6 "Connecting People and Nature" for more on recreational trails and pathways, which are key components of London's active transportation system.

Note: For definitions of Park types refer to the London Plan - Parks and Recreation, for Natural Heritage definitions refer to The London Plan – Environmental Policies. Further definitions are available in By-Law No. PR-2, A By-law relating to use, protection and regulation of Public Parks and Recreation Areas in the City of London.

Active Aging

The City of London will experience an increase in the number of older adults (55 years and older) over the course of the next two decades. It is anticipated that the number of older adults will increase by 34,400 residents between 2021 and 2041. While the City's population will also rise during this time period, older adults will account for about 45% of the growth.

The current service delivery approach for older adult services includes a "hub and spoke" model of facilities, anchored by two seniors' community centres and supported by seniors' satellites across the city. The model includes programming and casual opportunities offered directly by the City, as well programs and services offered by older adult clubs. Demand will likely increase as the population expands and the City will need to be prepared. In 2017, older adults registered in 13,500 program opportunities of the 16,500 opportunities offered (with an 82% fill rate). Public spaces provided to older adult clubs may also need to be reviewed as demand changes.

Recommendations

Physical Activity, Active Living, and Active Aging

1. Continue to embrace a **strength-based service delivery and program role** that maximizes access by leveraging contributions from the full range of providers. Programs provided by the City of London will continue to emphasize physical activity and physical literacy for residents of all ages and abilities through registered and drop-in opportunities.
2. Expand the variety, frequency, location, and promotion of **drop-in programs** through the use of community centres, neighbourhood locations, and parks. Develop a strategy to identify, administer, and evaluate drop-in programming that responds to changing demographics and diversity.
3. Offer more **family recreation opportunities** to meet the needs of newcomers and minority groups (including more intergenerational opportunities and options for children ages 0-2 years) and to help foster lifelong participation.
4. Work with the Child and Youth Network priority area leads to explore options for integrating **physical literacy and new physical activity elements** into the built environment, such as incorporating literacy decals, murals, etc. into community centres.
5. Explore how to best meet the increasing demands and unique needs of **older adults**. Meet with partners such as the Huff N' Puff Seniors Fitness Association and other organizations to explore needs/plans moving forward, including the exploration of a **therapeutic line of programming** with community partners.
6. Continue to review **program participation data** to make informed decisions about program development by age group and location through the establishment of participation targets.
7. **Work together with other service providers and stakeholders** to understand and address overall participation rates and gaps in parks, recreation, and sport pursuits in London.



Section 5: INCLUSION AND ACCESS

This section contains analysis and recommendations to **access and equity**.

Goal 2: INCLUSION & 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.

The City plays an active and important role in providing community access to parks, recreation, and sport opportunities and is committed to initiatives and community-based projects that are consistent with its vision, mission, and values.



Providing Access for All

Increased access to parks, recreation, and sport services improves individual, social, and economic wellbeing. The City is committed to providing:

- A full range of opportunities that reduce barriers and support all Londoners to feel engaged and involved in our community.
- Access to programs and activities for persons of all ages and abilities.

Services and spaces that are accessible to diverse communities, and people of all ages and abilities will create healthier individuals and a stronger community. The City strives to offer programs, parks, and facilities that can be used by all, but challenges still exist. Common barriers include costs, transportation, design and built environment, communication and awareness, and need for child care.

“It’s all about Participation!” These are the first words articulated in London’s Recreation Guide. This paragraph is followed by information on the Financial Assistance Policy to ensure that finances are not a barrier to participation in

recreation programs and services. This is a clear demonstration that the City places importance on including all residents in a broad range of inclusive parks, recreation, and sport services.

It is vital that all residents can make easy choices to join in casual or formal activities and reap the benefits of participation. The simple – but big – idea is to reduce barriers that residents may face in accessing parks, recreation, and sport opportunities. In the past, this emphasis on barrier reduction has largely focussed on residents from low income backgrounds and persons with disabilities. Efforts to implement barrier-free park and facility designs, translate materials and signage into predominant languages, provide program assistance to residents with disabilities, deliver specialized programming, and offer recreation subsidy programs for low income residents are proving to be successful.

Residents expect exceptional customer service within universally barrier-free facilities. Accessible spaces and affordable services enable people to maintain or improve their health and wellbeing through all of their life stages. This is an increasingly important consideration given health trends that indicate an aging population, decreased mobility, and increased physical and mental illnesses.



Municipalities and other providers are now expanding their efforts to include other under-represented populations to ensure full inclusion. There is a clear distinction between “equality” (providing all residents the same opportunities regardless of their backgrounds) and “equity” (taking differing approaches to include under-represented residents).

More amenities that support people of all ages will be needed, including accessible, age friendly park and facility designs, as well as inclusive programming led by qualified instructors. The City must continue to adapt its spaces to serve people of all ages and backgrounds, setting priorities based on community input, demographics, utilization, and design factors.

Key Tools and Practices for Inclusion

The size and range of under-represented groups in London is growing, along with their needs. Ensuring **equitable access to parks, recreation, and sport services** is a vital role for all municipalities. For the City of London, this means continuing to:

- Develop baseline policies that state the commitment of the City and staff to include all residents regardless of backgrounds;
- Ensure that the makeup of staff and volunteers reflect the community that they serve;
- Provide staff and volunteers with adequate training to understand the needs of under-represented populations and the barriers that they face;
- Provide staff and volunteers with adequate training to address emerging behavioural, emotional, and cognitive needs of children and residents of all ages;
- Guide staff in considering diverse populations in the development, delivery, and evaluation of all programs and services;
- Engage diverse populations as services are reviewed and new ones developed;
- Develop partnerships, sponsorships, and donation programs to maximize resources;
- Attract youth from diverse backgrounds to engage in leadership training to become employment-ready for parks, recreation, and sport opportunities;
- Execute visual audits of parks, facilities, and programs to ensure that participation is reflective of the community makeup;
- Develop internal staff inclusion and equity committees to ensure that there is the capacity and readiness to include under-represented populations;
- Provide programs to teach an introduction to traditional Canadian sports and opportunities; and,
- Work with diverse populations to offer their own traditional sports and activities to all residents.



Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous awareness, recognition, understanding, and reconciliation are addressed through a number of sectoral documents, such as Parks for All (2017 Parks Canada Agency on behalf of the Canadian Parks Council and the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association) and the calls to action identified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. All communities have a role to play in recognizing the importance of Indigenous voices in parks, recreation, and sport. For example, many municipalities are showcasing Indigenous history through public art and plaques in community centres and parks, along with exploring programs and events reflective of First Nations sports and culture.

Indigenous Peoples: Truth and Reconciliation

The following Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) relate to “Sports and Reconciliation” and are applicable to all levels of government:

87. We call upon all levels of government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, sports halls of fame, and other relevant organizations, to provide public education that tells the national story of Aboriginal athletes in history.

88. We call upon all levels of government to take action to ensure long-term Aboriginal athlete development and growth, and continued support for the North American Indigenous Games, including funding to host the games and for provincial and territorial team preparation and travel.

Through this Master Plan and other initiatives (e.g., London’s Community Diversity and Inclusion Strategy), the City of London has shown leadership in reaching out to Indigenous peoples to better understand their needs and take concrete steps towards healing and reconciliation. These initiatives are in their initial stages and must demonstrate commitment over the long-term.



Persons with Disabilities

The 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability reported that approximately 3.8 million Canadians were living with a disability, equating to 13% of the population(1). Locally, the City estimates that approximately one in five residents have some form of disability(2), which would amount to over 80,000 residents.

The City of London is committed to providing quality goods, services, and facilities that are accessible to all and in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. The City is committed to working with the community to meet the needs of persons with disabilities by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility in customer service, information and communication, employment, the design of public spaces, and transportation. The City is also committed to meeting the requirements of applicable legislation, including the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Human Rights Code.

Specific to parks, recreation, and sport, the City offers a range of services to ensure that persons with disabilities can engage in leisure activities, with guidance from the Accessibility Advisory Committee. For example, staff work directly with residents with disabilities to integrate them into programs/ camps and provide the needed supports. Greater prominence and information on inclusive services was suggested by stakeholders, such as listing this information within the initial pages of the Recreation Guide and advertising the accessible features at all parks and facilities. In addition, specific opportunities for persons with disabilities are offered (e.g., Wheelchair Tennis) and other opportunities are provided in partnership with organizations supporting residents with disabilities. Ensuring that trails and pathways are accessible to all is one of the goals expressed by residents through the Master Plan's engagement program.

Note: Unless otherwise noted, matters relating to barrier-free accessibility and AODA built environment requirements are addressed in Section 7 "Supportive Environments".

(1) 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability. 2016. Mobility disabilities among Canadians aged 15 years and older, 2012. Retrieved from www.statcan.gc.ca
 (2) City of London. 2012. Disability facts, figures, and issues. Retrieved from www.london.ca



Residents with Low Income

The City of London recognizes that addressing affordability will likely increase participation in programs and services. Access to most outdoor spaces, parks, trails, and pathways is free, as are many programs and events. The City's Financial Assistance Policy ("Play Your Way" fund) offers financial support to low income Londoners who wish to access recreation programs and activities offered by the City of London. A maximum of \$300 per person is available for a 12-month period to eligible recipients (as of 2019). The City also offers a range of free and low-cost programs and services to ensure that there is universal access to parks, recreation, and sport opportunities. The City works with others such as the London Public Library system which provides information and assistance to allow residents to apply for recreation subsidies. With an annual contribution of over \$1 million, the effectiveness of the Play Your Way fund should be reviewed to understand the participation rate of the number of residents with low income and work towards a participation target. The delivery of services at the neighbourhood level is also a successful model for serving low income residents and those with transportation barriers.

Newcomers

Approximately one-fifth (22%) of residents in London are immigrants and it is anticipated that the number of newcomers will increase. London's Community Diversity and Inclusion Strategy demonstrates the City's commitment to ensure that residents feel engaged and welcomed in the community.

Making newcomers feel welcome is paramount, as is delivering appropriate program types. Some residents from other countries not only participate in different sport and activities, but also use public space differently, often with a greater focus on socializing. The City strives to welcome all residents within its parks and facilities through comfortable public spaces and high quality customer service. Building relationships with diverse communities and cultural groups also pays dividends in promoting understanding, enhancing access, and improving participation.

LGBTQ2S+ and Gender

Recreation departments play a role in welcoming members of the LGBTQ2S+ community. Trained staff and safe spaces encourage members of this community to engage in leisure pursuits. Safe and positive spaces to gather and recreate can assist this community with respect to freedom of expression. Many municipalities include the LGBTQ2S+ community in developing programs and services of interest to ensure that programs and partnerships are meaningful.

Female participation in parks, recreation, and sport pursuits declines as girls reach adolescence. Uninterrupted engagement is important in ensuring that females can embrace active lifestyles through the life course, and becomes a way of life. Further, due to cultural values some females prefer "women-only" experiences. This barrier to participation has been addressed by the City of London and other providers through a variety of ways, such as leadership opportunities, sport leagues, and more. A review of participation may assist in ensuring that the number of females in recreation and sport pursuits is reflective of the percentage of the general population.

Homeless Prevention and Belonging

The City of London has shown leadership in setting out to prevent homelessness and providing supports for the homeless population. The City also facilitates sports leagues such as baseball and floor hockey for the homeless community. Parks, recreation, and sport also plays a supporting role to stakeholder groups who provide services to this community. Participation in recreation and sport provides homeless residents with encouragement, increased physical activity levels, and confidence through skill development. Promising practices in other municipalities include similar active pursuits, parks ambassador programs, and community garden plots for the homeless. London should continue to work with other service providers to augment supports through leisure activities that offer encouragement and positive outcomes. Thoughtful park and facility design - with consideration of CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles - also enhances comfort, safety, and security.

Recommendations

Inclusion and Access

8. As the City grows, continue to expand **low- and no-cost program initiatives**. Continued research and engagement at the neighbourhood-level is necessary to identify areas that will benefit the most from these initiatives.
9. Reach out to **Indigenous people and organizations** to:
 - a) Undertake regular and meaningful engagement on matters of importance related to parks, recreation programs, sport services, and facilities;
 - b) Explore new partnerships for including Indigenous programming in the Recreation Guide;
 - c) Explore how to best ensure Indigenous peoples feel welcomed in programs and community centres;
 - d) Target casual staff recruitment efforts through Indigenous organizations to increase the diversity in London's leadership staff; and,
 - e) Identify how parks, recreation, and sport can support the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action.
10. Work with **under-represented populations** to: identify participation rates in parks, recreation, and sport; remove barriers to participation; and, establish appropriate participation targets.
11. Expand our reach to **newcomer populations** by:
 - a) Focusing on staff recruitment efforts and leadership development to increase the diversity of the staff team;
 - b) Increasing the variety of recreational opportunities that are appropriate for various ethnocultural groups; and
 - c) Translating promotional materials into predominant languages.
12. Expand programs and services for the **special needs population**, with a focus on increasing physical activity options for school-aged children with special needs.
13. Expand **staff training** around accessibility, including sensitivity training sessions.
14. Expand **gender diversity/LGBTQ2S+** inclusion by utilizing consistent signage at all centres and using the Ontario Human Rights Code and experts in the region to inform the staff training programs.
15. Evaluate the balance of **female participation** by age cohort in all direct, casual, community, and stakeholder-driven sport opportunities in London.

Note: Unless otherwise noted, matters relating to barrier-free accessibility and AODA built environment requirements are addressed in Section 7 "Supportive Environments".

Section 6: CONNECTING PEOPLE AND NATURE

This section contains analysis and recommendations relating to **connecting people with their neighbourhoods and with nature**.

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:

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

6.1 Connecting People and Neighbourhoods

The London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy (LSNS)

Through strong resident engagement, the City of London has taken a proactive role in strengthening communications and access to services where people live. LSNS has shown leadership in better understanding the needs and make-up of

neighbourhoods and building capacity to deliver meaningful programs and services. This approach assists in better understanding and addressing the unique nature of residents' needs within each neighbourhood. LSNS provides for greater engagement and inclusion of all residents, local decision-making, increased neighbourhood activities and participation, and enhanced communications.

Some promising deliverables from LSNS include:

- The Neighbourhood Decision-Making program provides funding for infrastructure, local supports, and events. Residents propose ideas and vote for the various proposals. Approximately \$250,000 per year was provided in 2017 and 2018 to neighbourhoods through this program.
- The City provides access to free assets such as tents, tables, chairs, and games to support neighbourhood events to residents and neighbourhood groups. A Neighbourhood Small Events Fund (up to \$500) is available to residents and neighbourhood groups to support community events to engage and strengthen the community.
- Toolkits and "How to" resources are provided to neighbourhoods to assist with planning of local events and activities.
- Communications are enhanced through various online tools (like NeighbourGood London) and promotional materials.

With the anticipated increase in the population, staff will need to continue to encourage the delivery of recreational opportunities and neighbourhood activities to include more residents and through a

Online Communities

Effective communication and engagement with the community are paramount in not only promoting local opportunities, but educating the public on the benefits of participating in parks, recreation, and sport pursuits. The City of London utilizes an **extensive communications program** to promote its various special events, registration dates, trails, gardens, specialized facilities, and more. The City is committed to making it convenient for residents to learn about municipal services and make it even easier to access them. One way of supporting increased communications and engagement while reaching a broad audience is through the development and support of **online communities**. Building an online community for parks, recreation, and sport can serve to educate, inform, promote, engage, and seek opinions. Moving beyond the current “Play Your Way” online newsletter where residents are required to provide contact information to receive updates about upcoming events, program registrations, volunteer opportunities. The opportunity could be geared to one’s particular interests, with participants receiving relevant material on activities, volunteer opportunities, educational items, etc. The system could also offer the ability to respond to City-initiated polling questions to gather a quick response to specific items of interest or allow for cross-posting of events.

Engaging the community in self-governing parks, recreation, and sport activities also requires extending support to **volunteers and service providers**. For example, neighbourhood hubs such as senior satellites and community centres rely on local organizations and volunteers to promote their programs and opportunities. Staff regularly engage residents, businesses, like-minded organizations, and community groups to maximize investments that enhance local capacity and support accessible, responsive programming – particularly in neighbourhoods with higher numbers of vulnerable children, youth, and families. Meaningful programs and services cannot be provided without open dialogue with the people that the City serves.

The City of London is known for its approach to addressing social issues in the community through an **integrated approach with other stakeholders** with specific expertise. This approach has set an example for communities in that local issues are studied with a rounded view and a view toward providing coordinated and thoughtful solutions. Some examples of integrated decision-making processes include the London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy, London’s Child and Youth Network, Age Friendly London Network, Homeless Prevention and Housing Plan. These are excellent illustrations of creating a vision as a collective to improve community outcomes, while allowing all stakeholders to play their individual part in achieving them. This is leading practise and should continue as community issues require attention.



Recommendations

Connecting People and Neighbourhoods

16. Continue to **support community development and local decision-making initiatives**, the London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy, Child and Youth Agenda, partnerships, and other means of achieving equity in park, facility, and service delivery.
17. Continue to embed **public engagement as a required element** when making key decisions relating to parks, recreation, and sport services. Consider a variety of tactics (including community-led and community-designed engagement opportunities) that make it easy for people to participate, such as at non-traditional locations and times.
18. Continue to support **Neighbourhood Hubs** by:
 - a) Ensuring community centres are safe places where people can gather and connect, and promote this fact;
 - b) Providing welcoming and inviting spaces;
 - c) Using community centres as access points for information about other City of London services; and,
 - d) Using appropriate facilities as warming/cooling centres when needed.
19. Continue to maximize program delivery in **existing places and spaces** by:
 - a) Identifying location gaps for different program areas and develop strategies to fill these gaps; and,
 - b) Sourcing out new program locations through formalizing usage of school facilities (all school boards), coordinating with Family Centres, planning ahead for when new school space becomes available, and identifying under-utilized public library spaces.
20. As part of a broader community engagement strategy that utilizes a blend of broad and targeted tactics, investigate the feasibility of developing an **online community portal and application** centred on parks, recreation, and sport in London.
21. Increase resident **awareness and marketing** of parks, recreation, and sport opportunities and information through:
 - a) Leveraging new and emerging technologies that enhance the customer service experience (e.g., program registration and rentals);
 - b) Including more information about features available at each location, including those accessible to persons with disabilities;
 - c) Educating the public about service level standards, such as parks maintenance and naturalization initiatives;
 - d) Establishing strategies for communicating with specific audiences, including under-represented groups;
 - e) Expanding current initiatives such as the Play Your Way newsletter, NeighborhoodGood London, surveys, information centres, etc.;
 - f) Developing generic neighbourhood-based information by working with Family Centres, libraries, and schools; and,
 - g) Increasing cross-promotion on social media, utilizing relationships with neighbourhood groups, etc.
22. Continue to explore opportunities to publish key promotional material and provide language supports for participants in **multiple and predominant languages** with the goal of expanding the City's reach and increasing participation amongst newcomer groups.

6.2 Connecting People and Nature

London's parks and open space system – with many assets connected to the Thames River – has consistently been rated by the public as one of the city's best features. Parks and open spaces enhance the vibrancy of our communities and keep individuals connected and engaged. Their impact on personal wellness is significant, including the many mental health and healing benefits associated with connections to nature.

Aligning with Provincial Policy

Connecting people and nature supports policy 1.5.1 of the Provincial Policy Statement (2014) that promotes:

- *“planning and providing for a full range of publicly accessible, built and natural settings for recreation, including facilities, parklands, public spaces, open spaces areas, trails and linkages, and, where practical, water-based resources”; and,*
- *“providing opportunities for public access to shorelines”.*

The National and Provincial direction to connect people and nature aligns with International standards for managing natural areas in urban centres. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is the world's authoritative resource for protected areas. In the IUCN's Urban Protected Areas Profiles and Best Practice Guidelines (7) the number one best practice recommendation is to **“provide access for all”**.

Note: Additional recommendations on parks planning and design are contained in Section 7.4.

Recreational Trails and Pathways

In recent years, there has been more research into the benefits of nature for children and major efforts to provide opportunities in urban areas for all residents to interact with nature. These benefits are well documented and are recognized by Londoners, as they rank “hiking on nature trails” as their second most popular recreational activity, after walking on pathways. It is, therefore, a high priority to continue to provide residents with these valuable experiences. As more Londoners value and appreciate

nature, they are more likely to support and advocate for the protection and management of natural areas.

London residents consistently identify walking, hiking, and cycling as favoured activities for all ages. These activities are often satisfied in local neighbourhoods through sidewalks and walking loops in parks. The multi-use Thames Valley Pathway (TVP) and London's network of community trails and cycling routes also support these activities and help to connect neighbourhoods across the city. The City places a high priority on enhancing the recreational trail and pathway system.

Continued improvement and expansion of the recreational pathway and active transportation networks are key goals for the City. For example, the Age Friendly London Action Plan (2017-2020) recommends a guide for age friendly outdoor recreational trails and pathways in London. All trail and pathway development projects require site-specific analysis, including application of applicable policies and guidelines.

Making Recreational Trails and Pathways Accessible for All

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act requires that all new recreational trails and pathways be accessible, unless there is a strict technical reason why they cannot be – such as very steep slopes or significant negative impacts on natural features. For the last fifteen years, London has been a leader in Ontario and across Canada in making its parks and facilities more accessible and the City continues to strive to make its parks open to all Londoners.

Many of London's parks and open spaces are part of a larger Natural Heritage System that includes Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs). Currently, there are twelve large ESAs that the City contracts the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority to manage separately from the parks and open space system. While ESAs provide Londoners with great opportunities for recreational hiking, these areas have their own planning and management goals, guidelines, and processes that fall outside of the mandate of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The planning and management of ESAs resides with the City Planning service area.

(7) International Union for Conservation of Nature. Urban Protected Areas Profiles and Best Practice Guidelines. 2014. <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/PAG-022.pdf>

Thames River

This Natural Heritage System also overlaps with the parks system in many places, the largest being the Thames Valley corridor. Two branches of the Thames River run through the city and form the backdrop to many of its largest parks – Springbank, Gibbons, Harris, Greenway, North London Athletic Fields, St. Julien, and Thames Parks. Through the development of the Thames Valley Corridor Plan, Londoners established a guiding vision for the corridor that is now part of the new London Plan:

The Thames Corridor is London's most important natural, cultural recreational, and aesthetic resource. The City and community partners will preserve and enhance the natural environment, Thames River health, vistas, beauty and cultural heritage while accommodating compatible infrastructure, accessibility and recreation.

- Vision Statement from Thames Valley Corridor Plan, 2011

The vision for the corridor through London is in keeping with the goals of the Canadian Heritage River designation – bestowed on the Thames River “for its outstanding natural and cultural contributions, quality recreational opportunities, and demonstration of a healthy river environment”. The important role of the river as a cultural and environmental feature for Indigenous populations is also recognized.

The Corridor Plan has several key objectives that implement this vision, which have been incorporated into the City's ongoing management of the corridor. Specific sites along the river have been identified for improvement and the recent One River Environmental Assessment has studied how this may be accomplished in the area from the Forks, westward to Boler Road.

Access to the Thames River is important to Londoners and visitors, as is protecting and promoting its Heritage River status. Fishery health and ecosystem biodiversity in local waters are improving and interest in fishing and paddling are trending upward. Residents and stakeholders have requested enhanced access for water-based recreational pursuits and cultural ceremonies. Maintaining and increasing shoreline access promotes good health, water-based recreation, environmental awareness, and connections to nature for multiple user groups.

Consistent with the London Plan and Thames Valley Corridor Plan, the City will continue to seek opportunities to invest in and enhance access to London's riverfront.

Environmental Health and Stewardship

Aside from the key recreational and social benefits to residents, London's parks and open spaces also help the City achieve its goals and requirements relating to environmental health. It is increasingly evident that parks and open spaces fulfill a role in helping the City meet many of its environmental goals. Over the last twenty years, the City has purposefully naturalized approximately 15% of the river corridor parklands with meadows, shrubs, and trees. For years, this work has included specific projects that support pollinators like butterflies and bees. This work across the City has also resulted in the parks and open space system having over 40% tree canopy coverage – well above the average in the city of 24%.

The Master Plan recognizes the contributions of natural areas, the urban forest, and the Thames River to individual and community health and wellness. This includes consideration of the City's role in environmental stewardship (e.g., programming, climate change mitigation, green technologies, etc.) and expanding support for community-driven initiatives that encourage environmentally-friendly behaviours. Many relevant directions and policies relating to these topics are contained in guiding documents such as the London Plan, Urban Forestry Strategy, and the City's new Invasive Plant Species Management Strategy. The City will continue to support the protection and enhancement of the natural environment through appropriate means, including stewardship initiatives and community partnerships.

The City has both an obligation and an opportunity to be a leader in environmental sustainability. There are many things London can do to become a greener city. While this Master Plan is not intended to provide detailed direction on environmental management, many ideas were raised through the consultation program, such as the use of interpretive signage and community education, pollinator habitat and community gardens, solar and wind energy, shade, and naturalization guidelines, green technologies, low impact development approaches, materials purchasing, urban wildlife, and invasive species management.

Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is critical to children's development; they need outdoor and unstructured play to master new skills, be active, learn, and find wonder in their natural environment. However, children are given fewer opportunities to engage in outdoor and "challenging" play compared to previous generations. Children spend less time outdoors due to a fear of accidents and more time spent indoors engaged in sedentary behaviours (such as increased screen time). As a result, Nature Deficit Disorder is a term coined to encourage parents to keep their children and families outside longer and more often to gain the benefits of being active. Guidelines to assist communities and individuals address this issue are beginning to emerge, offering practical ways to improve the physical, mental, and social health of children and residents of all ages.

The Value of Outdoor Play

"Access to active play in nature and outdoors – with its risks – is essential for healthy child development. We recommend increasing children's opportunities for self-directed play outdoors in all settings—at home, at school, in child care, in the community, and in nature."

- ParticipACTION 2015 position statement on active outdoor play

Several municipalities are engaged in researching and experimenting with the merits of challenging play and testing new approaches. Many communities are also placing larger toys (e.g., kitchens, trucks, workshops, tricycles, castles, etc.) in playgrounds, which has proven to keep children in playgrounds longer and immersed in imaginative play. To address concerns over risk mitigation, the Canadian Public Health Association is developing a policy toolkit to guide the development of challenging play opportunities and adventure play areas. The development of an Outdoor Activity Strategy is recommended to encourage Londoners of all ages to stay outdoors longer, enjoy natural settings, and enhance connections with nature. This strategy should consider programs and pilot projects that animate and energize London's excellent parks system, unlocking their potential as "outdoor community centres". For example, London's Urban Agriculture Strategy includes several initiatives that promote the benefits of staying outdoors longer and leading more active lifestyles.



Recommendations

Connecting People with Nature / Thames River

23. Place a greater emphasis on helping people **connect with nature through recreation** by:
- a) Incorporating appreciation and exposure to nature through new program design;
 - b) Improving the connection between community and seniors' centres and their outdoor spaces; and,
 - c) Enhancing shoreline access and gathering spaces by providing more amenities for trails/pathways and water-based recreational pursuits (e.g., fishing, paddling, etc.) adjacent to the Thames River, in keeping with best environmental practices.
24. To support education and nature appreciation, provide **interpretive signage** that highlights the significance of London's Natural Heritage System.

Recreational Trails and Pathways

25. Continue to provide Londoners with **trails** that offer opportunities to be immersed in, experience, respect, and value nature.
26. Where ecologically appropriate, ensure that new trails are **AODA compliant**, so that all Londoners can experience nature.
27. Continue efforts to address **gaps in the recreational trail and pathway system** and extending the system into new growth areas. All trail and pathway development projects require site-specific analysis, including application of applicable policies and guidelines.
28. Identify and consider opportunities to enhance the **safety and convenience** of the recreational pathway system through urban design, active transportation, and park renewal initiatives. Examples include (but are not limited to) installation of bike racks and amenities, signage clearly identifying access points, community education and awareness, separation of users in high traffic areas, and a winter maintenance program in select locations where significant features and functions are not put at risk.
29. Work with applicable approval agencies to develop a coordinated policy approach for **recreational trail and pathway development** within Woodland Parks and floodplains.
30. Align implementation of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan with the City's **Cycling Master Plan** and promote and link with **Provincial Cycling Routes** (CycleON). Update technical standards to reflect Provincial planning guidelines, as revised from time to time.

Environmental Health and Stewardship

31. Identify resources to support the enhanced **management of municipal woodlands** (including Woodland Parks) and work collaboratively with internal and external stakeholders to achieve the desired service level standards.
32. Encourage **stakeholder and resident roles** in providing **stewardship** of parks, gardens, and other community resources. This may include encouraging the establishment of park foundations, conservancies, and other stewardship partnerships that enhance park sustainability.

Recommendations

33. Seek opportunities to improve **awareness and understanding** about the importance of the City's Natural Heritage System and urban forest and their broader role within **Carolinian Canada**. Additional research should be conducted into best practices that build upon existing community partnerships and community education opportunities (e.g., programming and events, social media, educational signs, etc.).
34. Continue to promote **naturalization of appropriate municipal lands and beautification and greening efforts** led or sponsored by the City (e.g., planting programs, "adopt-a-" initiatives, community events, public art, and more) to meet multiple goals for habitats, pollinators, and tree coverage.
35. Continue to seek and implement strategies for the effective management of **urban wildlife and invasive species**.

Outdoor Play

36. Develop an **Outdoor Activity Strategy** to encourage residents of all ages to stay outdoors longer, enjoy outdoor settings, and enhance connections with nature. This strategy may also include policy direction on accommodating physical activity and community-based **commercial activities** in parks (e.g., group fitness classes, farmers' markets, etc.).
37. Investigate new **challenging play opportunities** to keep children and families outdoors and active for longer periods of time.

Section 7: SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

This section contains analysis and recommendations relating to **capital planning/investment and recreation spaces/amenities**.

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, provision, 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 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.



7.1 Capital Planning and Investment Planning for a Maturing City

Planning for a Maturing City

Local and Provincial policies support healthy, active communities and the balanced distribution of parks and open spaces within urban areas. One of London's key goals is to build a mixed-use compact city that makes the best use of existing infrastructure and maintains natural and agricultural lands. Over time, this will be achieved by growing “**inwards and upwards**”, concentrating future population growth in existing built-up areas. The London Plan (currently under appeal) establishes strategies to target a minimum of 45% of new residential development within the built area boundary and 75% of all intensification within the Primary Transit Area (8).

Growth in the city's existing neighbourhoods introduces new dynamics related to population density, land availability, critical mass, and diversity. Over time, intensification – characterized by mid- to high-rise residential buildings – will become more common in the downtown core and along major nodes and corridors within the Primary Transit Area. From experiences in larger urban centres, it can be anticipated that these areas will attract a wide range of residents, from single adults (many of whom will form families with young children) to retirees.

Advanced planning and creativity are needed to support growth and the city's evolving urban form. Intensification means that it can be costly and challenging to find space for land-intensive uses such as community centres, sports parks, and more. Higher densities can also result in a loss of personal space and growing feelings of isolation, placing greater demands on public amenities. Enhanced access to green space, publicly-accessible spaces, complete streets, active transportation choices, neighbourhood hubs, and diverse activities will become more critical.

Although the City has recently approved several high-density residential buildings – many in downtown London – this shift towards intensification will be gradual. Between 2019 and

2039, the City forecasts that nearly four-fifths of London's population growth will occur outside the Primary Transit Area. As a result, there are many neighbourhoods outside the built-area boundary that are growing and maturing, requiring the expansion and renewal of services, programs, and infrastructure. Planning for parks, recreation, and sport must consider the diverse needs and preferences of residents living across all of London.

As a large, maturing city, London is home to a **diverse population**. While the parks, recreation, and sport system has a role to play in achieving broader social objectives, it is also affected by emerging social trends, such as the aging population, multi-cultural diversity, obesity and physical inactivity, poverty, homelessness, and drug use, to name a few. The City offers inclusive services that can be accessed by all and, in the case of hard-to-reach populations, has fostered partnerships with other service providers to promote the benefits of parks, recreation, and sport.

The City has a **social responsibility** to support diverse groups. London's Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy (2009) sees a future where our neighbourhoods are “empowered, sustainable, safe, and active”, where “we will care for and celebrate each other while encouraging diversity and inclusiveness”, and where “our neighbourhoods will be environmentally and socially responsible...”. A continued commitment to social engagement is required to achieve this.

For example, **social issues** can discourage some residents and user groups from using and enjoying London's parks and green spaces. The City has responded by teaming up with social service agencies to develop a “coordinated informed response” aimed at reducing the health risks to individuals who are street-involved and addressing public concerns. Other examples include needle bin programs and designing parks that consider crime prevention principles. The City builds and maintains parks for all residents; however, some locations require stronger interventions to improve safety and access for all. Sustained efforts will be required to maximize current assets, explore new ways of doing things, and foster partnerships.

(8) City of London. 2016. The London Plan (Minister's Modifications)

Guidelines for Planning and Priority-Setting

An investment in parks and facilities is a contribution toward the health and wellbeing of the community. Renewed and new infrastructure provide the places and spaces that the City and its partners require to deliver accessible, responsive programming, build capacity, and create spaces for people to gather. The equitable provision of parks, facilities, and services enables all residents to achieve positive outcomes for themselves and their communities.

Through a strengths-based delivery system, the City is committed to providing parks, recreation programs, and sport opportunities that meet the needs of all Londoners. It is necessary to establish priorities because the City cannot feasibly meet all community expectations placed on its parks, recreation, and sport system.

The City's current level of service prioritizes facilities that support broad community access through traditional and universally-accessible amenities, including more urban amenities as the population within existing neighbourhood increases. Projects that extend beyond this level of service – including specialized and/or single-use facilities and spaces that are less accessible to the general public (e.g., soccer stadiums, indoor track and field venues, curling clubs, etc.) – would generally require outside funding, such as grants, donations, fundraising, user fees, or other forms of partnerships and external investment. This may apply to amenities that promote exclusive access or enhancements required to accommodate specialized activities or events.

Community-Initiated Facility Requests (see also Section 8.3 Partnerships)

As recommended in the 2009 Strategic Master Plan, the City should not be obligated to finance, construct, operate, or maintain any facility that does not:

- Directly serve a significant proportion of the city's residents;
- Constitute a core service; or,
- Form part of an identified sport-tourism program or other Corporate initiative.

The City should maintain an “open door policy” for communication with organizations to allow them to communicate and gain information about facility availability. This direction continues to be supported.

The intended users influences the design, location, and management of facilities and services. The City supports a network of facility types that allows for local needs to be met through neighbourhood program sites (such as parks, neighbourhood community centres, or other partnered spaces such as Family Centres) and district or city-wide services to be delivered at destination facilities (such as larger multi-use centres and District Parks). A range of facility types and delivery strategies are necessary for creating strong, vibrant, and healthy communities.



Table 7: Facility Classification Typology

Classification	Description
Neighbourhood Facilities	<p>Neighbourhood facilities offer opportunities with broad appeal that respond to the specific needs of the surrounding area. Convenience is a major strength of neighbourhood level amenities, which will be within walking distance of many users. The scale of most neighbourhood facilities is modest so as to integrate within the surrounding area. Examples include neighbourhood community centres, outdoor basketball courts, community gardens, etc.</p> <p>Some amenities and spaces may exist at the sub-neighbourhood level (with a catchment area of less than 1-kilometre) to serve the needs of an immediate area, such as playgrounds, seating areas, etc.</p>
District Facilities	<p>District facilities typically serve a collection of neighbourhoods and offer a wide range of opportunities for activities, programs, rentals, and events. They are destinations and often require substantial off-road parking and support amenities. Examples include multi-use community centres, arenas, sports fields, and court complexes, etc.</p>
City-wide Facilities	<p>City-wide facilities offer specialized opportunities intended to serve the entire city and possibly beyond, including major events. Where possible, these facilities also provide services that would typically be delivered in a community facility. Examples include the Canada Games Aquatic Centre (50-metre pool), Western Fair Sports Centre (quad pad arena), etc.</p>

Note: The parks system is guided by a separate classification system comprised of eight park types, as referenced in the London Plan - Parks and Environmental Policies sections. Further definitions are available in By-Law No. PR-2. A By-Law relating to use, protection and regulation of Public Parks and Recreation Areas in the City of London.



Developing, operating, and maintaining parks, recreation and sport infrastructure is a major responsibility. Prior to providing new facilities, the City should explore opportunities to optimize existing parks and facilities and be creative in doing so, including consideration of renewal, upgrades and non-traditional options. **Upgrades** to existing parks, trails, and facilities found strong support in the community consultation program (62% of survey respondents felt that the City does not provide enough support for maintaining and updating older parks, recreation, and sport facilities) – most residents prioritize renewal and upgrades over new amenities.

Principles for Infrastructure Investment

Decisions to invest in existing, new, and repurposed parks, recreation, and sport facilities should be supported by the following, at a minimum. Gaps and needs may be different across the city and provision should be based on community-specific requirements.

- a. **Demonstrated demand**, as determined by
 - i. Capacity of existing system to accommodate current and projected demand (e.g., facility utilization, participation trends, etc.);
 - ii. Geographic distribution and the ability to serve high needs areas (e.g., consideration of underserved and vulnerable communities), recognizing that different facilities may have different catchment areas; and,
 - iii. Population thresholds, particularly for growth-related requirements.
- b. **Public and stakeholder support.**
- c. **Partners** and consideration of alternate providers, where applicable.
- d. Leading **asset management practices** and considerations of condition, functionality, and user experience (in the case of existing infrastructure)
- e. **Financial feasibility** and the ability to leverage internal and/or external funding.

To aid in the assessment of demonstrated demand, targets (linked to distribution, population, specific age groups, or participants) have been developed to identify indoor and outdoor recreation and sport facility needs within this Master Plan. The targets from the previous Strategic Master Plan were reviewed and updated based on local demand factors and community input. These should be interpreted as general guidelines for determining facility needs. For more information, refer to Tables 9 (indoor facilities) and 10 (outdoor facilities).



Infrastructure Planning and Design Considerations

The planning and design of parks, recreation and sport facilities should consider the following:

- a. Securing a suitable **location**, ideally well in advance of construction (i.e., at least five years prior to construction of major community facilities).
- b. Maximizing **accessibility, visibility, and safety**, such as planning facilities on transit routes and pathways, as well as designs that meet or exceed universal guidelines.
- c. Meeting a wide range of **community needs** through designs that are **flexible, multi-functional, and multi-seasonal** to the greatest degree possible.
- d. **Operating models** that enhance community access and affordability.
- e. Designs and technologies that are **resilient, reduce environmental impacts, improve operational efficiency, and enhance connections with outdoor spaces**.
- f. Addressing the City's **emergency management requirements**, where applicable.
- g. Opportunities to allow for sport hosting capabilities, including designs that are **competition-friendly**, where appropriate.

As noted above, new facilities and activity spaces should be designed with **multiple uses** in mind. A continued shift away from smaller, single use facilities that are operated under exclusive use

arrangements will assist the City in focussing its resources on spaces that promote public access and inclusive programming, as well as providing more efficient use of staff and other resources. Requests for dedicated spaces and single-use facilities may be considered, but will be lower priorities.

In terms of design, quality infrastructure and facility modernization allow municipalities to reduce the impact of **extreme weather events and climate change**. Flexible designs and contemporary construction techniques help parks and facilities to better adapt to shifting needs and meet a wider variety of uses over their lifecycles. Retrofits are sometimes required to meet modern performance targets in the areas of climate change, environmental sustainability, energy conservation, and facility and program accessibility. For example, energy efficiency (e.g., natural or high-efficiency lighting, automated building systems, etc.) and eco-friendly designs (e.g., building to LEED standards, etc.) are common objectives of most City of London building projects and this can be expected to continue. Preventative maintenance programs can also assist in ensuring that parks and facilities are able to respond to changing climatic conditions.

The City should continue to **stay informed** about emerging parks, recreation, and sport interests through regular communication, business intelligence tools, and monitoring of trends and community interest (including the collection of program, activity, and sport registration data). In cases where the City has decided to participate and/or invest (using the criteria identified above), they will seek **innovative solutions and/or partnerships** (using a standardized partnership framework – see Appendix B) that enhance access to residents.



Recommendations

Planning for a Mature City

38. Consider **new service and facility delivery models** that reflect the realities of higher-density residential communities, while ensuring convenient public access to needed spaces (e.g., public recreation amenities in highrise buildings).
39. In neighbourhoods planned for **residential intensification**, evaluate existing parks, green spaces, and other municipal properties for their potential to accommodate multi-functional spaces and expanded social and recreational opportunities to serve diverse populations.
40. Evaluate **surplus school and other acquisition opportunities** based on the principles and targets advanced in this Master Plan, with a focus on geographic gap areas.

Guidelines for Planning and Priority-Setting

41. Facilitate a **balanced distribution and network** of parks, recreation programs, sport services, and facilities recognizing that different locations may serve different needs. This includes planning for **new program locations** (municipal and partnered) in gap and growth areas.
42. Utilize the planning and priority-setting guidelines identified in this Master Plan (Section 7.1) for evaluating requests and opportunities to provide **new or enhanced infrastructure** and when planning and designing infrastructure.
43. Where possible, **acquire land well in advance** of development for higher order projects such as planned community centres. Consider options for co-locating community centres with District Park-level sports fields and amenities.
44. Continue to make facilities and parks more accessible for persons with disabilities, in keeping with **AODA requirements**. Review the City's **accessibility design standards** to ensure that all relevant parks, recreation and sport facilities are included.
45. Conduct **accessibility audits** on a regular basis to ensure that the City's accessibility standards are being met at all parks, recreation and sport facilities. Give consideration to assistive technologies and adaptive equipment that facilitate access for persons with disabilities.
46. Develop a **standardized framework to evaluate requests** for facilities presently not part of the City's core parks, recreation, and sport service mandate. At a minimum, the framework should consider the City's role (or lack thereof) in providing the service in relation to demonstrated demand, alternate providers, cost factors, and economic sustainability.
47. Ensure that major retrofits and new construction projects adequately consider opportunities to address **climate change, environmental sustainability, and energy conservation**. At a minimum, this should include consideration of green technologies (e.g., green roofs, electric vehicle charging stations, battery-powered maintenance tools, refrigeration plants, etc.) and low-impact development practices (e.g., stormwater management, permeable surfaces, etc.) by building these items into City budgets.

7.2 Indoor Recreation Spaces

The City of London is committed to providing affordable, accessible, and quality community recreation facilities (e.g., community centres, arenas, etc.) for programming, rentals, community-based services and functions. Several of these facilities – initially built in the 1960s and 70s – have recently been revitalized to extend their service life.

Over time, more amenities that support people of all ages and abilities will be needed to respond to London's changing and growing population. Examples of in-demand features include accessible, age friendly facility designs, warm water pools, larger lobbies, social spaces, community kitchens, gymnasiums, flexible spaces, walking loops, and more. Modern facilities are increasingly being designed as gathering spaces that respond to the ways in which people interact and how they access services, often in a drop-in manner.

Through the careful analysis of supply and demand factors (including community input, demographic and participation trends, alternate providers, etc.), as well as consideration of projects currently underway, **facility needs for the next twenty years** have been identified. These needs have been evaluated through an equity lens illustrated by the facility hierarchy identified in Section 7.1, offering service at the neighbourhood, district, and city-wide levels and beyond. Where gaps exist in the municipal inventory, the City may seek partnerships with other providers to improve access.

This Master Plan Identifies Needs at a High Level

A summary table illustrating existing inventories, recommended targets, and proposed strategies is contained at the end of this section. Mapping of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities is contained in Appendix A.

While the Master Plan identifies a long-range vision and guiding actions for the City's consideration, **further technical analysis** (e.g., feasibility studies that examine location, design, programming, partners, etc.) is required when planning major infrastructure. This will occur throughout the Master Plan's implementation phase with community engagement.

Community Centres

Community centres are inviting, inclusive, and accessible gathering places that allow people to engage in a variety of recreation programs, drop-in and social activities, and sport services. The City operates 24 community centres of varying sizes and models, including two large multi-use centres, five mid-size multi-use centres, sixteen neighbourhood centres, and one specialized facility.



Table 8: Community Centre Classification System, City of London

Classification/Description	Municipal Facilities (2 locations)
Large Multi-Use Community Centre Must contain at least: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 gymnasium; • 1 multi-purpose room; • 1 indoor pool; • Dedicated seniors and/or youth space; and, • 1 other recreation facility (e.g., arena, library, fitness, etc.). 	2 Locations Bostwick Community Centre, YMCA and Library* Stoney Creek Community Centre, YMCA and Library*
Mid-size Multi-Use Community Centre Must contain at least: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 gymnasium; • 2 multi-purpose rooms; and, • 1 other recreation facility (e.g., pool, arena, library, etc.). 	5 Locations Carling Heights Optimist Community Centre East Community Centre (2019) Lambeth Community Centre South London Community Centre Stronach Community Recreation Centre
Neighbourhood Community Centres Includes stand-alone or multi-pad arenas, community rooms, small gym, etc.	16 Locations Argyle Arena Boyle Memorial Community Centre Byron Optimist Community Centre Carling Recreation Centre Civic Gardens Complex Earl Nichols Recreation Centre Farquharson Arena Hamilton Road Seniors' Centre & Community Centre Kinsmen Recreation Centre Kiwanis Seniors' Community Centre Medway Community Centre North London Optimist Community Centre Oakridge Arena Silverwood Arena (currently operating as a dry pad) South London Community Pool Springbank Gardens Community Centre
Specialized Facility Includes unique, City-wide facilities.	1 Location Canada Games Aquatic Centre

Classification Source: 2009 Strategic Master Plan.

*Operated in partnership with a third party.

Note: Supply excludes Glen Cairn Arena, which has been removed from the inventory following the completion of the Bostwick Community Centre, YMCA and Library. Silverwood Arena is operating as a dry pad and is expected to remain in the inventory as a repurposed facility.