

Report to Community and Protective Services Committee

To: Chair and Members
Community and Protective Services Committee

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

Kelly Scherr, Deputy City Manager, Environment and
Infrastructure

Subject: Parks and Recreation Master Plan Annual Report

Date: March 29, 2022

Recommendation

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

Executive Summary

This report presents the City of London's first annual [Parks and Recreation Master Plan](#) report since the Plan was approved by City Council on June 25, 2019. It will serve as a reminder of the Plan, including the vision and goals, and provide highlights of accomplishments to date and identify key upcoming projects for 2022 that continue to move the Plan forward.

Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

The 2019 [Parks and Recreation Master Plan](#) is aligned with the following strategic areas of focus in the City of London Strategic Plan (2019 – 2023):

- Strengthening our Community, under the outcome Londoners have access to the services and supports that promote well-being, health, and safety in their neighbourhoods and across the city;
- Building a Sustainable City, under the outcome London's infrastructure is built, maintained, and operated to meet the long-term needs of the community; and,
- Leading in Public Service, under the outcome Londoners experience exceptional and valued customer service.

Analysis

1.0 Background Information

1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

- [Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update](#) (June 17, 2019)
- [Irregular Result Request for Proposal 18-09 "Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan Update"](#) (Feb. 21, 2018)
- [Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan Interim Update](#) (Jan. 24, 2017)
- [Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan – Accomplishments and Update Strategy](#) (Apr. 26, 2016)
- Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan Update (Nov. 23, 2009)

2.0 Discussion and Considerations

2.1 Background and Purpose

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, and strengthening of neighbourhood connections.

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

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

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

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

The purpose of this report is to:

- a) Begin an annual public reporting process, knowing that regular monitoring, reporting, and updating of the Master Plan will be critical to ensuring it remains responsive to the community and fiscally achievable; and,
- b) Highlight accomplishments from 2019 – 2021 and key 2022 projects that continue to move the Plan forward.

2.2 Parks and Recreation Master Plan Vision and Goals

Vision

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

Goals

Goal #1 – Active Living:

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

Goal #2 – Inclusion and Access:

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

Goal #3 – Connecting People and Nature:

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

Goal #4 – Supportive Environments:

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

Goal #5 – Recreation Capacity:

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

2.3 COVID-19 Impact

Parks, recreation programs, sport services, and facilities have been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic over the last 2 years. Facility closures, program restrictions and capacity limits, increased demands on parkland/trail/pathway systems, and delays in planned capital works are all examples of this impact.

The following data points assist in quantifying some of the impact of COVID-19 on service delivery:

Programs:

- 2019 – 74,411 program participants, 10,500 programs, 7,640 camp spaces
- 2020 - 23,077 program participants, 4,592 programs, 2,710 camp spaces
- 2021 – 18,864 program participants, 2,842 programs, 2,777 camp spaces

Sport Services:

- 2019 – 36,905 hours allocated to groups for outdoor sport fields
- 2020 – 4,083 hours allocated to groups for outdoor sport fields
- 2021 - 18,044 hours allocated to groups for outdoor sport fields

Trail/Pathways:

- Increase in user trips on the TVP from pre-pandemic level of 1M trips/year to over 1.2M trips/year

2.4 Highlights of Accomplishments (2019-2021) and Key 2022 Projects

The below chart is intended to capture high-level accomplishments and highlight some key 2022 deliverables. It should be noted that this list does not capture all day-to-day activities of the services provided that also further the Master Plan.

Goal	Accomplishments	2022 Projects
Active Living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New summer Playground program locations added (4 new sites in 2019) • New programs provided at East Lions Community Centre (opened in December 2021) • Several virtual and outdoor program options were delivered throughout the pandemic • Developed London’s first provincial/national Competition Cricket Pitch as well as 2 new baseball diamonds in Northridge Fields 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to return to pre-pandemic levels of program provision and participation
Inclusion and Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offered modified free drop-in programs in response to the pandemic • First Indigenous Family Centre opened – Nshwaasnangong Child Care & Family Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adding new locations for programming at 3 high schools • The conversion of current fieldhouse

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased training for camp coordinators and inclusion staff on lifts/transfers, augmentative communication, and cultural sensitivity • Universal changerooms installed at East Lions Community Centre • All COVID-19 signage and information on guidelines and health measures translated into 5 languages 	<p>washrooms from gender specific to gender neutral with universal washrooms where applicable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued focus and engagement with equity-deserving groups to increase participation and diversify program offerings
Connecting People and Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided training for 275 program staff on increasing physical activity through outdoor play and the mental health benefits of recreation in nature • Launched "30 Things to Do Outside This Winter" social media campaign • Expanded outdoor programming to 5 new community and senior's centres • Installed new hiking trails at multiple parks and ESA's • Creation of a new Tree Planting Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement new outdoor programming series across the city • London certified as a "Bird Friendly City" by Environment Canada and Nature Canada • Pathway upgrades/repairs across the city
Supportive Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opened the East Lions Community Centre in December 2021 along with the redeveloped East Lions Park featuring new amenities including unique wetland features • Secured funding from other levels of government for Labatt Park and Carling Heights Optimist Community Centre rehabilitation projects, and Foxfield Park expansion • Equitable distribution of Summer Playground program across the city • Purchased 4 new electric zambonis for arenas • Expanded Seniors Satellites to Byron Community Centre and Stronach Recreation Centre • Upgraded or added park amenities including courts, benches, and lighting systems in parks across the city • Completion of the North Branch Connector including 2 unique bridge structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide update on the construction of the new Southeast Community Centre project (Council report in 2022) • Continue to work with internal partners to acquire lands for future facilities (including for the future Northwest Community Centre) • Re-ignite engagement and planning for future of Silverwoods Arena (Council report in 2022) • Efficiency upgrades to infrastructure at 15 recreation facilities • Development of criteria for future potential wading pool decommissioning (Council report in 2022)

<p>Recreation Capacity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnered with key stakeholders, such as the YMCA, CMHA, TVDSB, LDCSB, local churches and Resource Centres to provide targeted free recreation programs in neighbourhoods • \$211,000 in sponsorship was received for the East Lions Community Centre • \$175,000 in sponsorship was received for the fully accessible Hully Gully Playground in Southwest Optimist Park • Collaborated with TVDSB on how to best maximize use of high school space, including running child/youth and adult/older adult programs simultaneously at the same location to reduce barriers to participation • Redevelopment of former school grounds into award winning Lorne Avenue Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer a new Targeted Leadership program in east London • Offer a new children's gardening program through Friends of Civic Gardens • Host Sport Forum in the fall of 2022
----------------------------	---	---

3.0 Financial Impact/Considerations

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

The current Multi-Year Budget contains approved capital spending of more than \$130 million for Parks, Recreation and Neighbourhood Services between 2020-2023. Of this amount, approximately 60% is attributed to growth-related projects, approximately 30% to lifecycle projects, and approximately 10% to service improvements.

The [Parks and Recreation Master Plan](#) will continue to be used as a resource in developing the City’s annual budget updates, and multi-year budget documents, growth planning, secondary plans, and related studies. The goal is to work within the City’s multi-year budget by implementing capital recommendations in a timeframe consistent with population growth and expected funding sources. A strategic direction of the Plan is to pursue a variety of funding options to implement the Master Plan including partnerships and other external funding sources when available.

4.0 Next Steps

This is the first annual Parks and Recreation Master Plan Report, reporting out on progress and upcoming projects. City Council can expect an annual report in all future years throughout the life of the Plan, which is ten (10) years, and twenty (20) years for major capital projects respectively. It should also be noted that the Plan recommends more formal updates every five (5) years, where some recommendations may be revised due to changes in participation trends, demographics, growth patterns, and/or municipal best practices.

Conclusion

The [2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan](#) identifies broad needs and strategies based on best practices, public input, and local demand factors. It identifies the most pressing objectives and the opportunities for achieving them and prepares the City of London in its search for external funding opportunities, partnerships, and alignment with related initiatives.

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

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

Prepared by: **Jon-Paul McGonigle, Director, Recreation and Sport**

Scott Stafford, Manager, Parks and Forestry

Recommended by: **Cheryl Smith, Deputy City Manager, Neighbourhood and
Community-Wide Services**

**Kelly Scherr, Deputy City Manager, Environment and
Infrastructure**