

# **Parks Open Space and Leisure Master Plan Interim Review**

## **Purpose**

This report provides Council with an update on the 86 action items identified in the Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan Review (2014) (POSLMP).

## **Background**

The City of Greater Sudbury's Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan was completed in conjunction with the Parks, Open Space and Leisure background study for the City's new Official Plan in 2006. Master plans are updated every five years and rewritten every ten years to reflect emerging needs and issues.

Monteith Brown Planning Consultant (MBPC) was hired in August 2013, to conduct a review of the original plan. At the June 16, 2014, Community Services Committee meeting, Council received the POSLMP report.

The POSLMP provides recommendations on 86 potential action items.

Recommendations were not intended to be a definitive list as priorities may change due to factors such as legislation changes, emerging trends, changes in participation rates, availability of alternate providers, sociodemographic changes and facility capital requirements. The POSLMP provides guidance on community priorities and action items are utilized to prioritize projects, develop work plans and determine budget submissions.

The POSLMP also includes the following information:

- Guiding principles
- Parks and leisure trends
- Results from community engagement on leisure priorities (online survey)
- Inventory of leisure facilities and amenities along with recommended provision levels

Action item number 86 of the POSLMP calls for a review after a five year period to reconfirm the direction, priorities and accomplishments of the plan.

## Accomplishments and Action Items Update

The POSLMP contains recommendations on 86 action plans intended to provide guidance on community priorities with respect to the provision of parks and leisure services and sets a general course for meeting needs. The priority and timing of action plans are organized into the following categories:

### Priority

- High Priority - Immediate attention is recommended during the indicated timeframe.
- Medium Priority - Attention is required when high priority actions have been initiated or completed, or when suitable partners have been identified for funding.
- Low Priority - Attention is required when high and medium priority actions have been initiated/completed.

### Timing

- Short-term - 2014 to 2018
- Medium-term - 2019 to 2023
- Ongoing - 2024 and beyond

A number of accomplishments have been achieved since the presentation of the POSLMP, including:

- Accessibility enhancements at Bell Park Main Beach, including the addition of a floating water chair available to the public.
- Fully accessible family changeroom developed at the Howard Armstrong Recreation Centre.
- Completion of a Children and Youth Programming Review and the development of a Play Charter.
- Initiation of the Playground Revitalization Project in partnership with United Way Centraide North East Ontario.
- Improvements to the Terry Fox Sports Complex including LED light upgrades (in partnership with Sudbury Minor Baseball Association) and installation of artificial turf (in partnership with the Fabio Belli Foundation).
- Development of off-leash dog parks in Rayside Balfour and at the Gerry McCrory Countryside Sports Complex site (to be opened in 2020).
- New splash pads realized in Capreol, Coniston (Adelie Splash Pad), Garson, Onaping, Minnow Lake (Morel Family Foundation Park) and Sudbury's South End (DJ Hancock Memorial Park) - Splash pads to be initiated at Azlida (Whitewater Lake Park) and Twin Forks in 2020.
- New modular skate parks realized at Lions Park (Hanmer) and Berthiaume Park (Chelmsford).
- New quad chairlift installed at Adanac Ski Hill.
- Development of an Affordable Access to Recreation Strategy.

- Development of pickleball courts at O'Connor Playground and Côté Park.
- Launch of a new recreation management software system for program registration and facility booking.
- Development of a Framework for Partnership Opportunities to guide decisions related to collaborating with third parties to deliver leisure programs and facilities.

Appendix A contains a status update on each of the 86 action items contained in the POSLMP. Status of action items has been categorized as follows:

- Achieved (22 items)
- On-going / In Progress (52 items)
- To be Initiated (8 items)
- No Action Required (4 items)

## Guiding Principles

The following principles were initially developed for the City's 2004 Master Plan and were modified and/or reaffirmed as part of the Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan review in 2014. The guiding principles are grounded in the recognition that parks and leisure provide numerous physical, social, economic, and environmental benefits that are essential to creating a healthy community for all current and future citizens:

- The long-term **financial sustainability** of the City's parks and leisure delivery system will be ensured through the cost-effective and efficient management of resources, the appropriate and reasonable application of user fees, and the maximization of community resources.
- Generally speaking, the City's parks and leisure infrastructure is aging and in need of **strategic renewal** - Sustainable investment in parks and leisure infrastructure provides physical, social, cultural, environmental, and economic benefits that help to build a healthy community.
- The City will continue to implement a **community development approach** to leisure service delivery through the support of volunteers, community engagement, and capacity building.
- The City will continue to be the **primary provider** of parks and leisure infrastructure within the community.
- The City will be a **direct provider of leisure programs** that benefit core markets and the community at large.
- **Multi-purpose leisure facilities** are preferred over single purpose facilities, although these may not be appropriate for all communities.
- The City's **natural environment** is a key contributor to a healthy community and this asset will be protected and integrated into the leisure system wherever possible.

- Within the parks and leisure system, the City will continue to foster and support **sustainable mobility** opportunities for residents and visitors.
- **Partnerships and collaborations** with outside parties in the provision and delivery of parks and leisure facilities and services are desired where there is sufficient benefit to the City and community.
- All citizens deserve universal access to inclusive and responsive parks and leisure opportunities; **children, older adults, and vulnerable populations** will continue to be priority markets.
- The City will strive to provide an **affordable, accessible, and equitable distribution** of parks and leisure facilities and services, recognizing the City's large geographic area and the unique local values of Greater Sudbury's distinct ethnic, cultural, and geographic communities.
- All **decisions** with respect to parks and leisure will be based on a balance between the impact on individual well-being, community benefit, and financial sustainability.

Overall, the guiding principles of the POSLMP closely align with the 2019-2027 City of Greater Sudbury Strategic Plan and the City's Population Health Priorities. No modification of the plan's guiding principles are suggested as part of this interim review.

## Key Parks, Open Space and Leisure Trends

The POSLMP included trends based on provincial and national research relating to potential demand, usage, design and operation of parks and leisure facilities:

### Healthy Communities

- Green Technologies – LEED and energy efficient designs; green roofs; energy recovery systems.
- Local Opportunities – Demand for trails and sustainable transportation with connections; neighbourhood-level facilities.
- Sustainability – Recognition of recreation's contribution to economic, environmental and social quality of life objectives; greater focus on sustainability and cost recovery.

### Demographic Shifts

- Aging Population – Baby boomers; older adults vs. seniors; declining volunteer base.
- Diversity – Increasing ethnic diversity; greater focus on family/social activities; seeking connection with nature; emerging activities (pickleball, cricket).
- Accessibility & Affordability – Removal of physical barriers; removal of financial barriers.

## **Busy Lifestyles**

- On-Demand Activities – Demand for drop-in, self-scheduled activities; decreasing interest in organized sports and membership based clubs; meaningful activities for youth in high demand.
- Convenience – Multi-use facilities preferred; prime time hours in high demand.
- Physical Inactivity – Increasing rates of inactivity and obesity; year-round activity options being sought.

## **Facility Provision**

- Aging Infrastructure – Older facilities are often less energy efficient and have high lifecycle costs; often undersized, single-use and not barrier-free; recent grant programs focused on facility renewal.
- Multi-use & Specialized Facilities – Flexible space is a must; enhanced focus on player development is creating new requirements; specialty camps and activities on the rise.
- Partnerships – New construction and management models being considered; recreation spans many sectors (health, tourism, culture, etc.).

As part of the interim review, staff inquired through various professional associations on current issues and opportunities and emerging trends. The following is a summary of insights gained on provincial and national issues and trends.

## **Canadian Parks and Recreation Association**

The Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA) is a national organization dedicated to realizing the full potential of parks and recreation as a major contributor to community health and vibrancy. Membership includes the 13 provincial and territorial parks and recreation associations and their extensive networks of service providers in over 90% of Canadian communities.

In 2015, CPRA released “A Framework for Recreation in Canada – Pathways to Wellbeing” which is a guiding document for public recreation providers in Canada. The framework notes the following challenges and opportunities:

### **Challenges**

- Demographic changes, e.g. aging population, diversity (newcomers, Aboriginal communities), rapid urbanization, decreasing populations in rural/remote areas.
- Negative health trends: risk behaviours, chronic diseases, mental health issues.
- Economic inequities.
- Social challenges, e.g. unemployment, inequities, social media vs face-to-face
- Technology vs active/unstructured play.
- Infrastructure deficit, e.g. walking/cycling route development, facilities, green spaces.
- Threats to natural environment, e.g. extreme weather, destructive species, urban sprawl.

## **Opportunities**

- Enriched recreational experiences from cultural diversity.
- Innovation and connectivity (with youth) via new technologies.
- Recreation in integrated community infrastructure and design planning.
- Environmental stewardship role in recreation.

## **Parks and Recreation Ontario**

Parks and Recreation Ontario is a non-profit association that advances the health, social and environmental benefits of quality recreation and parks through evidence-based practices, resources and collaborative partnerships. In recent years, PRO has developed the following programs and authored discussion papers on the following topics:

- High Five Principles of Health Aging.
- Advancing Outdoor Play & Early Childhood Education.
- Design of parks and open spaces for disaster situations.
- Position papers on Provincial legislation changes (AODA, Rowan's Law, amendments to the Developmental Charges Act and the Planning Act).
- Open data and benchmarking in the recreation sector.

## **Ontario Recreation Facilities Association**

The Ontario Recreation Facilities Association Inc. (ORFA) is a not for profit organization that provides leadership in the development and delivery of innovative training and education programs, value-added services, and quality products for the benefit of the recreation facility profession. During its recent Annual General Meeting, the following emerging trends and topics were discussed:

- Emergency management of facilities within the recreation sector (preparedness, mitigation and response).
- Harm reduction strategies in recreation facilities including the use of Naloxone.
- Accessibility of park and recreation facilities.
- Funding challenges and opportunities related to recreation infrastructure.
- Climate and environment stewardship programs in recreation facilities.

## **MBNCanada Expert Panels on Parks and Sports & Recreation**

The City of Greater Sudbury is one of 16 municipalities that participates in the Municipal Benchmarking Network Canada (MBNCanada) partnership. As part of this interim review of the POSLMP, staff contacted members of the Sports & Recreation and Parks Expert Panels regarding trends and challenges that MBNCanada municipalities are experiencing in these areas. Major themes noted:

### **Affordability/Accessibility/Inclusivity**

- Increased numbers of residents qualifying for affordable access to recreation programs.

- Increased requests for additional free and low cost activities.
- Increased requests for accessible and inclusive spaces.
- Challenges to provide program locations that meet accessibility standards.

#### Aging Infrastructure / Facility Development

- Insufficient funding for maintenance and refurbishment of existing facilities.
- Dated infrastructure and challenges to meet accessibility requirements.
- Residents drawn to more modern/new facilities, finding older facilities less attractive.
- Residents requesting the inclusion of age-friendly and comfort amenities in park design (shade structures, seating, and washrooms).
- Residents requesting a variety and higher standard of play equipment (e.g. challenging play).

#### Changing Demographics and Expectations of Residents

- Less participation in traditional minor sports.
- New demands for more community events, unstructured activities and services.
- Increased focus on older adult programming.
- Increased focus on programming for new Canadians.

#### Meeting Current and Future Recreation Needs

- Municipalities reducing the quantity and enhancing the quality of leisure facilities (arenas, ball diamonds, outdoor basketball courts).
- Development of new types of facilities (off-leash dog parks, picnic sites, accessible playgrounds, cricket pitches, outdoor skate parks and pods).
- Some municipalities experiencing an excess demand for swimming lessons.
- Increased interest in pickleball, nature play, inclusive play, splash pads, and wilderness/nature parks.
- Programming focusing on physical literacy.

## **Community Engagement and Online Survey Results**

As part of the development of the POSLMP, an online survey was created and posted on the City's website in April 2014. The purpose of the survey was to identify leisure participation levels and barriers, as well as opinions on park and facility needs. A total of 491 responses were received.

As part of this report, the original survey was replicated and promoted through the City's civic engagement tool ([overtoyou.greatersudbury.ca](http://overtoyou.greatersudbury.ca)). The new survey was posted in September 2019 with a total of 517 online surveys completed.

Below is a summary of the 2019 responses received to key questions, as well as a comparison to answers received previously in 2014. Due to the self-selected and non-random nature of the survey, it cannot be considered statistically significant. The comparison does provide some insight into trends in leisure participation and facility

needs of the public. The complete results of the 2019 online survey can be found in Appendix B.

<b>Participation</b>			
In the past 12 months, which of the following activities have you or anyone in your household participated in? (Multiple responses permitted. Top 10 responses shown)			
<b>2014</b>		<b>2019</b>	
Walking or Hiking for Leisure	90%	Walking or Hiking for Leisure	89%
Swimming (outdoor)	60%	Swimming (outdoor)	66%
Cycling or Mountain Biking	53%	Use of Playground Equipment	53%
Ice Sports / Skating (outdoor)	51%	Water Sports	46%
Swimming (indoor)	49%	Ice Sports / Skating (outdoor)	45%
Use of Playground Equipment	47%	Cycling or Mountain Biking	41%
Water Sports	47%	Swimming (indoor)	39%
Running or Jogging	43%	Use of Spray Pads in Parks	37%
Aerobics, Fitness or Weight Training	43%	Ice Sports / Skating (indoor)	30%
Ice Sports / Skating (indoor)	38%	Running or Jogging	30%
Other (most popular answer)		Other (most popular answer)	
Snowshoeing		Pickleball	

<b>Desired Travel Time for Most Common Activities</b>			
What is a reasonable length of time for you to travel for the leisure activities that your household does the most.			
<b>2014</b>		<b>2019</b>	
Less than 10 minutes	30%	Less than 10 minutes	16%
10-19 minutes	57%	10-19 minutes	45%
20-29 minutes	23%	20-29 minutes	19%
30-44 minutes	14%	30-44 minutes	13%
45 minutes or more	7%	45 minutes or more	5%

<b>Barriers to Participation</b>			
Why are you and members of your household not able to participate in parks and leisure activities as often as you would like? (Multiple responses permitted.)			
<b>2014</b>		<b>2019</b>	
Lack of desired facilities/programs	33%	Lack of personal time/too busy	45%
Lack of personal time/too busy	26%	Lack of desired facilities/programs	39%
Not offered at convenient time	20%	Lack of information	32%
Lack of information	16%	Not offered at convenient time	29%
Lack of transportation/location too far away	15%	Lack of transportation/location too far away	21%
Lack of money or equipment	15%	Lack of money or equipment	17%



<b>Facility Priorities</b>			
To what degree do you oppose or support spending additional public funds on the following facilities – either to improve existing facilities or build new ones?			
<b>2014</b>		<b>2019</b>	
Nature Trails (unpaved)	86%	Nature Trails (unpaved)	87%
Beaches	81%	Playgrounds	81%
Playgrounds	79%	Beaches	80%
Outdoor Rinks	75%	Multi-use Trails (paved)	79%
Multi-use Trails (paved)	75%	Youth Centres	74%
Arenas	67%	Splash Pads	72%
Swimming Pools (for therapy/leisure)	67%	Seniors Centre	72%
Youth Centres	66%	Swimming Pools (therapy/leisure)	71%
Splash Pads	66%	Outdoor Rinks	71%
Seniors Centres	64%	Fitness Centres	64%
Ski Hills	64%	Swimming Pools (lanes)	56%
Other (most popular answer)		Other (most popular answer)	
Bike lanes / paths		Pickleball	

<b>Statements regarding Leisure Services</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2019</b>
Respondents were asked to identify their level of agreement with the following statements.		
Investing in parks and leisure services should be a high priority for City Council.	86%	82%
Leisure activities in Greater Sudbury are generally affordable to your household.	59%	57%
The amount of time it takes your household to travel to leisure activities is reasonable.	52%	67%
The City should place a higher priority on the attraction of sports tournaments and competitions to Greater Sudbury.	51%	38%
There are sufficient parks and open spaces in your area to meet the needs of your household.	48%	62%

In addition to feedback received through the online survey, the City also received submissions from the following organizations (which are attached as Appendix C):

- Coalition for a Livable Sudbury
- Minnow Lake Restoration Group
- Vermillion River Stewardship

## Inventory of Leisure Facilities and Recommended Provision Levels

The POSLMP provided an inventory of leisure facilities and established target provision levels for various facility types. The following table illustrates the provision levels of major municipal indoor and outdoor leisure facilities at the time of the POSLMP and at present.

Facility Type	2014	2019	Provision Target
Ice Pads	16	16	One ice pad for every 405 youth registrants
Indoor Pools	5	5	One indoor aquatic facility for everyone 25,000 residents (includes CGS, YMCA and University facilities)
Fitness Centres	6	6	POSLMP does not recommend a target provision level.
Community Centres & Halls	27	27	POSLMP does not recommend a target provision level.
Playground Structures	179	190	Distribution-based provision target of one play structure within an 800-metre radius of every urban residential neighbourhood, without crossing a major arterial road or physical barrier.
Play Fields (unlit equivalent)	93	93	One soccer field (unlit equivalent) for every 65 active participants.
Ball Diamonds (unlit equivalent)	73	73	One baseball diamond (unlit equivalent) for every 80 active participants.
Tennis Courts	59	53	One court per 5,000 persons with 1.0 km service radius considerations.
Pickleball Courts	0	10	POSLMP does not recommend a target provision level.
Basketball Courts	30.5	31	One full court equivalent per 750 youth (ages 10 to 19 years) with 1.0 km service radius considerations.
Outdoor Rinks	56	56	Distribution-based provision target of one outdoor rink within a 1.0 km radius of all urban residential areas.
Skate and BMX Parks	10	10	One park per 3,000 youth (ages 10-19 years) with 2-kilometre service radius considerations.
Splash Pads	8	14	Distribution-based provision target of one splash pad within a 1.5 km radius of all urban residential areas.
Off Leash Dog Parks	1	2	POSLMP does not recommend a target provision level.
Ski Hills	3	2	POSLMP does not recommend a target provision level.

Provision targets and service levels of parks and leisure facilities were also recently reviewed through the City's Core Services Review. No service level adjustments or changes to provision levels were made. Rather, policy describing minimum utilization rates and other similar criteria will be developed to support further deliberations to rationalize facilities and parkland.

## **Summary**

There have been a number of significant achievements with respect to leisure programming and facilities since 2014, and the City has achieved or significantly advanced the majority of action items identified in the POSLMP.

Based on the interim review completed, the POSLMP continues to be a relevant guiding document with respect to parks and recreation needs in Greater Sudbury over the next 5 years. The POSLMP is aligned with Council's Strategic Plan 2019-2027 and supports the City's Population Health Priorities.

The industry scan confirms that the POSLMP still considers emerging trends and challenges. Community feedback received through the 2019 online survey largely validates that the priorities and recommended actions of the POSLMP are still relevant.

## **Next Steps**

The POSLMP and contained action items will continue to be reviewed and used as the basis for annual work plan development, capital budget submissions and business cases.

The City of Greater Sudbury will undertake a complete review and update of the POSLMP in the year 2024.

## **References**

City of Greater Sudbury Parks, Open Space & Leisure Master Plan Review (2014)  
<https://www.greatersudbury.ca/play/parks-and-playgrounds1/parks-open-space-and-leisure-master-plan-review-2014/>

Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan Review, Presentation to Council (July 08, 2014)  
<https://agendasonline.greatersudbury.ca/index.cfm?pg=feed&action=file&attachment=12212.pdf>

Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan Review Final Report, Community Services Committee (June 16, 2014)

<https://agendasonline.greatersudbury.ca/index.cfm?pg=feed&action=file&agenda=report&itemid=1&id=731>

The Framework For Recreation In Canada, Canadian Parks and Recreation Association

<https://www.cpra.ca/about-the-framework>

Parks and Recreation Ontario

<https://www.prontario.org/>

Ontario Recreation Facilities Association

<http://orfa.com/ORFA-Home>

Municipal Benchmarking Network Canada

<http://mbncanada.ca/>

Core Service Review Final Report, (City Council, February 18, 2020)

<https://agendasonline.greatersudbury.ca/index.cfm?pg=feed&action=file&agenda=report&itemid=7&id=1464>

City of Greater Sudbury Strategic Plan (2019-2027)

<https://www.grandsudbury.ca/hotel-de-ville/maire-et-conseil/conseil-municipal/pdf-documents/2019-2027-strategic-plan/>

City of Greater Sudbury Population Health Priorities (2017)

<https://www.greatersudbury.ca/live/about-greater-sudbury/population-health/>