

For Information Only

Children and Youth Program Review

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Committee

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Resolution

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Relationship to the Strategic Plan / Health Impact Assessment

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan in the area of Quality of Life and Place as it aligns with the Population Health Priorities of Resiliency, Families, Mental Health and Play Opportunities. The report identifies a number of opportunities to enhance programs and services designed to improve the health and well-being of children and youth.

Report Summary

This report provides current status and future options for consideration for recreation programs offered by the City of Greater Sudbury Leisure Services Division.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report at this time. However, as opportunities for program changes present themselves there may be a requirement for additional resources. At that time, staff will prepare business cases for service level changes for consideration in the annual budget process.

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Background

The City of Greater Sudbury's Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan Review (2014) includes a number of action items related to children and youth programming, including:

- Evaluate the delivery of leisure services on a regular basis, including consideration to new approaches that may improve service efficiency and cost effectiveness.
- Continue to undertake program planning in coordination with community partners and in response to local needs, with an emphasis on services that promote physical activity and social inclusion.
- Maintain and/or upgrade existing youth facilities to the degree possible, with priority placed on high-use facilities. Alternative options may need to be explored for underutilized and/or deteriorating facilities, in consultation with the affected community.

At the Finance & Administration Committee meeting of January 17, 2017, Council received a report titled Annual Grants Value for Money Review. The report provided results of the value for money audit conducted on organizations receiving annual community grants from the City of Greater Sudbury (City). Two of the organizations reviewed were youth centres (Rayside Balfour Youth Action Network and the Sudbury Action Centre for Youth). The report recommended that a review be conducted of youth centres for comparison and consistency of services across the community.

A report titled Population Health Community Priorities was presented at the City Council meeting of November 22, 2017. As per the report, Council endorsed ten community priorities including Play. One of the recommended actions for the City under the Play priority was to develop strategies to encourage active living, fun and play.

Children and youth direct programs offered through the Leisure Services Division have undergone only subtle changes since the creation of the City of Greater Sudbury in 2000. Since that time there has been a significant increase in the number and variety of other service providers of child and youth programming in Greater Sudbury.

The Leisure Services Division is responsible for direct program opportunities and programming including the following:

Camp Sudaca

A municipal day camp for participants 5 to 14 years of age located on the east end of Lake Ramsey in Greater Sudbury. Campers enjoy swimming, canoeing, sailing, kayaking, nature crafts, mountain biking and other outdoor activities. Bus transportation is provided for participants. There are nine, one week sessions offered during the summer. In 2016 Camp Sudaca had approximately 650 participants.

Camp Wassakwa

A municipal day camp for participants 5 to 13 years of age located on Bass Lake in the community of Whitefish. Campers enjoy activities such as canoeing, archery, sailing, crafts, kayaking, hiking and other outdoor activities. Bus transportation is provided for participants. There are eight, one week sessions offered during the summer. In 2016, there were 225 registrations at Camp Wassakwa.

Neighborhood Summer Playground Program

Neighborhood Playgrounds offer convenient and affordable summer programs close to home for participants 5 to 12 years of age. Playground programs are offered each summer at approximately 30 locations throughout the City of Greater Sudbury. Programs are hosted at local community centres, field houses or schools. Field trips and special events add adventure to the program, bringing all playground participants together for city-wide celebrations. Participants enroll for the summer (July and August). English, French and Integrated programs are offered. In 2016 there were a total of 750 registrations in Neighbourhood Summer Playground Programs.

Creative Arts Camps

This day camp provides campers opportunities to experience visual and performing art through arts, dance and drama. The program is offered for participants 6 to 14 years of age. Six, two week sessions are offered during the summer. The camp is held at a local high school or community centre. In 2016 there were a total of 75 registrations in Creative Arts Camps.

Sports Sampler Camps

This camp teaches FUNdamental movement skills and FUNdamental sports skills along with the rules of the play and importance of playing for fun. Participants in this camp have access to a multi-sport facility and surrounding park. The program is intended for participants 6 to 14 years of age. Eight, one week sessions are offered during the summer. There were 75 registrations in Sports Sampler Camps in 2016.

Leadership Camps

The City provides opportunities for individuals to further develop leadership abilities, start building skills for part-time jobs or for those who wish to experience camps in a new way through Leader-In-Training (LIT) or Counselor-in-Training (CIT) programs. These programs are for participants 14 to 16 years of age and are held as part of Camp Sudaca, Camp Wassakwa and Neighborhood Summer Playground programs. There were 50 registrations in CIT and LIT programs in 2016.

Developmental Summer Programs

The City has recently partnered with Child and Community Resources to offer recreational summer programs for participants 8 to 18 years of age with multiple complex special needs.

Youth Drop In Centres

Youth drop-in centres offer a variety of supervised activities for participants from pre-teen to 18 years of age. Centres offer a wide range of opportunities including sports, pastimes such as billiards and video games, movie nights, chat time and guest presentations on current issues. Internet access, homework assistance, peer mentoring and educational workshops are also offered. The sites connect youth with their local community, encouraging them to volunteer and make a difference in their neighborhood. Centres pride themselves on being smoke, drug and alcohol-free venues for young people to interact in a safe and nonjudgmental environment. Centres assist youth in developing positive friendships and growing up healthy. The City operates youth drop-in centres in Capreol, Dowling, Levack/Onaping, Ryan Heights,

Valley East and Walden. Drop in centres operate from September through June. There were approximately 7,500 visits at City operated youth drop-in centres in 2016-2017.

Courses, Classes and Lessons

There are a number of other recreation programs directly offered by the Leisure Services Division for children and youth on a program registration basis. These include:

- Swimming Lessons (Preschool 1 through Swimmer 9)
- Bronze Star, Bronze Medallion, Bronze Cross, NLS Certification, NLS Instructor courses
- Junior Lifeguard Club
- Ski and snowboard lessons
- Learn to Cycle program
- Mountain biking
- Tae Kwon Do courses
- Learn to Skate and Power Skating lessons
- Gymnastics programs
- Babysitting courses

Children & Youth Recreation Programming Review

To assist with the evaluation of direct programming offered by the City as per the Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan Review and to provide a review of youth centres as per Council direction, the City sought the services of a qualified supplier to conduct a review of direct programs offered for children and youth through a competitive process.

The successful proponent required sufficient and relevant expertise, experience and knowledge of municipal recreation programming and services for children and youth.

The successful proponent was expected to:

- Conduct a review of existing children and youth programming from a risk management and quality assurance perspective.
- Provide best practices related to children and youth programming.
- Conduct a market scan of other service providers in Greater Sudbury.

As part of the review, the successful proponent was expected to consider the following:

- Accessibility and affordability of programs.
- Maximizing use of existing Leisure facilities.
- Programs to address population health issues related to children and youth in the community (youth resiliency, for example).

The successful proponent, Leading Minds Inc., produced a detailed report reflective of the scope requested (Appendix A – Children & Youth Recreation Programming Review, attached).

Key Findings

The Children & Youth Recreation Programming Review report provides various options for consideration within each of the programming categories outlined above.

Common themes throughout the document centre on:

- Equitable access to Play.
- City of Greater Sudbury as a Leisure Champion.
- Introduction of a Play charter.
- Use natural resources to encourage 4 season outdoor play.
- Evolution of programs and services towards unstructured, self directed play.

Specific attention was given to:

- Summer program portfolio suggesting alternatives to potentially stagnant programs/facilities.
- Youth centres – outlining which changes would encourage youth to participate.
- Affordable access to recreation – specific recommendations will be brought before Council under separate cover, but this initiative is very much a priority throughout this report.
- Creating resilience and confidence in children through the acceptance of higher risk play.
- Foundation of Population Health priorities within all programs.

The following is a summary of key findings and options for consideration as they relate to City of Greater Sudbury children and youth recreation programming.

Play Equity

Play Equity is defined as the fundamental principle that all children and youth have equitable access to leisure programs and it should not be determined by where they live, physical or mental challenges, socioeconomic circumstance or their ability to pay. This theme provides the foundation of this report and has become internationally recognized through organizations such as IPA (International Play Association).

Greater Sudbury Play Charter

Many Canadian communities have adopted Play Charters to assist in planning and policy decisions related to programs and facilities. The Children & Youth Recreation Programming Review report includes a recommended Play Charter for the City of Greater Sudbury:

Greater Sudbury is committed to promoting play, providing play opportunities, and educating all residents of Greater Sudbury on the importance of play to our community. Play looks like children of all abilities, alone or in groups, engaged, focused, solving problems, having fun. It can look physical, imaginary, creative, dramatic, social or energetic. Play sounds like laughter, conflict, imaginative stories. It can be boisterous or silent. Play feels like excitement and challenge. It can be scary, wondrous, doubtful, hesitant and thrilling.

We believe that:

- Play develops a core set of skills for healthy well-being.
- Play is a vital component of childhood; it is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated.

- Play is fun, uncertain, challenging and flexible.
- When children have opportunities to play they use creativity, innovation, and reflection to learn, experiment, solve problems, create new worlds, test boundaries, assess risk, and meet challenges.
- Play is a natural state for a child.

We will:

- Support play that encourages physical, emotional and social development.
- Understand and communicate that risk is a valuable component to play, and we will encourage, support and enable play that allows children to develop risk-taking skills.
- Create environments that children can control by providing flexibility in spaces and materials that promote inquiry and evoke curiosity.
- Embrace the natural environment and climate of Greater Sudbury and support children to play outdoors all year round.
- Educate and inform adults on the importance of play.
- Involve children in the decisions that affect their lives.

Recreation Program Specific Options

The report included several options for consideration as they relate to the direct programs offered by the Leisure Services Division, including:

- Overhauling the summer playground program to reflect the principles of the new play charter, offer new high-value activities, encourage self-directed learning and development, and promote creativity and free play.
- Designating summer playground staff as Play Ambassadors and provide training through such programs as PLAYLearnThink.
- Invite local providers to expand training programs for the City's staff on working with special populations.
- Continue to focus on offering affordable courses for beginners which provide fundamental skill development and consider expanding to include other sports or activities.
- Designate Camp Wassakwa as a Youth Leadership Camp and seek collaboration with community partners to design and deliver leadership programs.

Youth Drop In Centres

A review of youth centre support was included as per the previous direction of Council. The report includes the following recommendations related to youth centres:

- There were many benefits to the Rayside Balfour Youth Centre and Sudbury Action Centre for Youth operating models. Since they are driven by volunteer-based, non-profit community organizations it creates a heightened sense of ownership and commitment. An ability to access other revenue sources, are open all year round and offer extended operating hours.
- Redesign youth drop-in centre programs around civic engagement, leadership development and community development activities and engage youth directly in the process.
- Consider other City owned facilities as destinations for youth centres such as libraries, community halls located in arenas and playground facilities. As the City pursues the development of new community hubs, youth centres should be considered as a possible tenant.

- Design mobile pop up youth drop-in centres that can be setup and dismantled at various locations such as festival sites, parks and shopping mall parking lots to facilitate civic engagement.
- Review operating hours with a view of making youth drop-in centres more accessible during summer months and holidays.

Affordable Access to Recreation

The report provided a number of options for advancing the City's affordable access to recreation strategy. These options have been reviewed and incorporated under a separate report to Council. The following opportunities were noted:

- Build on the success of the skate exchange and bike exchange programs by developing a comprehensive equipment exchange program.
- Consider developing a Welcome Policy to give low income individuals and families access to leisure programs and services.

Summary

As per the Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan Review (2014), a review of the current direct children and youth programs offered by the City has been completed. The review includes support provided to youth centres and supports the City's efforts in the population health priority of Play as it identifies opportunities for active living, fun and play.

Next Steps

Consideration will be given to the various program options contained within the report. As opportunities arise, through budget processes or program demand, these options will help to form the rationale for future decisions regarding leisure programs.

References

Annual Grants Value for Money Review, Finance and Administration Committee
(January 17, 2017)

<http://agendasonline.greatersudbury.ca/index.cfm?pg=agenda&action=navigator&id=1167&itemid=12444&lang=en>

Population Health – Community Priorities, City Council (November 22, 2017)

<http://agendasonline.greatersudbury.ca/index.cfm?pg=feed&action=file&agenda=report&itemid=30&id=1137>

Parks, Open Space & Leisure Master Plan Review (June, 2014)

<https://www.greatersudbury.ca/play/parks-and-playgrounds1/parks-open-space-and-leisure-master-plan-review-2014/>



CHILDREN & YOUTH RECREATION PROGRAMMING REVIEW

June 2018

Prepared by Leading Minds Inc

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary

The City of Greater Sudbury's Leisure Services Division is conducting a review of programs offered for children and youth which have remained mostly unchanged since the creation of the City of Greater Sudbury in 2000.

Information regarding industry norms, best practices and leisure trends came from several sources including leisure services program managers, local community leisure organizations as well as masterplans and reports from other communities. A series of principles have guided this review and the subsequent opportunities and options for consideration.

The concept of Play forms the premise for this report and refers to the fundamental principle that all children and youth should have access to leisure programs despite where they live, physical or mental, challenges, socioeconomic circumstances or their ability to pay. This report builds on the recommendations of the City of Greater Sudbury's Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan. This review takes into consideration current and emerging trends that could potentially impact leisure services in Greater Sudbury. It considers trends in demographics, participation, leisure, facility and service delivery.

The opportunities and options for consideration are grounded in five strategic directions, as follows:

- 1) All children and youth have access to play and leisure opportunities.
- 2) That the City of Greater Sudbury champions the evolution of the local leisure industry as a collaborative partner, community developer and capacity builder.
- 3) That a new Play Charter will be the lens by which all local leisure providers are invited to think about Play programs, facilities and partnerships.
- 4) Natural resources are seen as an outdoor leisure facility.
- 5) That leisure programs and services evolve towards the provision of unstructured, self-directed play experiences.

It identifies potential opportunities in the areas of play equity, Greater Sudbury's uniqueness, the role of the municipality, staff and volunteerism, youth engagement, leadership development, communications & registrations, affordability and assessing programs and services. It also provides options for consideration in the areas of accessibility, day camps, neighbourhood summer playground programs, program specific camps, youth drop-in centres, courses, classes and lessons.

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The City of Greater Sudbury's Leisure Services Division has engaged Leading Minds Inc to conduct a review of programs offered for children and youth and assess the City's capacity to support the public's desires for leisure services. The consultant was asked to do the following:

- conduct a review of existing programming from a risk management and quality assurance perspective;
- provide best practices related to children and youth programming; and,
- conduct a market scan of other service providers in Greater Sudbury including public, non-profit and commercial sectors.

As part of the review, consideration was given to the following:

- accessibility and affordability of programs;
- opportunities to enhance user experiences and satisfaction;
- maximizing use of existing leisure facilities; and
- programs to address population health issues

Generally speaking, children and youth direct programs offered through the Leisure Services Division have remained mostly unchanged since the creation of the City of Greater Sudbury in 2000. Since that time there has been a significant increase in the number and variety of other service providers of child and youth programming in Greater Sudbury. The review seeks to validate the continuation of existing programs, recommend changes, identify new opportunities, as well as provide a framework for leisure program planning into the future. It also seeks to provide clarity on the City's role in the leisure sector going forward and to brand that role within the minds of the public. The outcomes of this review are intended to be budget neutral. An analysis of leisure facilities is considered outside the scope of this review; however, many programs are dependent on the availability, design and capacity of the leisure infrastructure. The review seeks to understand where there is need and where there is value in the current system. Children and youth between the ages 0 to 19 represent approximately 22% of Sudbury's population (2011). (City of Greater Sudbury, 2014) For purposes of this review youth are identified as follows: "Youth starts at around 12 or 13 years of age, and ends either at the end of, or soon after, the teen years (19, 20 or 21 years old)." (Zizys, 2005)

The author of this report views it as a starting point for engaging the community in a consultation. It offers a menu of options for consideration whose viability and popularity should be measured within the context of a broader community dialogue, especially with local youth.

INTRODUCTION

CONSULTATION PROCESS

The consultant interviewed several leisure services program managers as well as local community leisure organizations. These were informal discussions guided by the following questions: Could you offer any guiding principles? What are the key issues, challenges, opportunities? What are the opportunities? Could you recommend any reports or municipalities for best practices? Who else should we contact? The interviews with key informants provided valuable insights that reflected a front-line perspective on such issues as youth engagement, program outcomes relevant to youth and other practical considerations. Relevant municipal reports and plans were also reviewed. Finally, reports and masterplans from other communities were cited. All these inquiries sought to identify industry norms and best practices, as well as leisure programming trends. A list of individuals interviewed as well as key documents is provided in the Appendices.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles have guided this review and the subsequent opportunities and options for consideration. All children and youth leisure programs and services should:

- Promote children's right to play
- Provide equitable and affordable access to leisure
- Align with upstream population health principles
- Be consistent with the values of the social determinants of health
- Be sustainable and resilient
- Seek to accept and reasonably manage risk and promote public safety
- Increase access for low-income families and marginalized populations
- Promote physical, social and emotional well-being
- Seek to positively impact the epidemic of childhood obesity
- Provide a sense of belonging within a diverse environment
- Prioritize gaps not provided by other community groups and businesses
- Compliment rather than compete with other leisure service providers
- Seek strategic partnerships with community groups and businesses as appropriate
- Recognize that youth involvement is vital to the success of youth leisure programs
- Anticipate the shifting demographics of an aging population
- View our natural resources as an outdoor leisure facility
- Responsibly leverage local natural resources to provide leisure opportunities
- Design and plan leisure services and programs to change, not necessarily to last
- Continually refresh leisure facilities as leisure trends and demographics change

INTRODUCTION

WHY PLAY EQUITY?

In 2015, the Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council and the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association published a Framework for Recreation in Canada. It proposed an updated definition of ‘recreation’ as *“the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing”*. (Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council, 2015) The framework aims to revitalize the community-centric approach to developing services that enhance the well-being of all who participate. Unfortunately, not all citizens have equitable access to leisure opportunities because of such factors as low income, physical challenges, distance from leisure facilities and lack of resiliency. For example, within the educational system there can be disparities with regards to the quality of school yards depending on where a child lives. *“Experts say that playgrounds are a key area of the school experience that affects student engagement and social development and they question if their quality should be determined by the wealth of a neighbourhood”*. (Farooqui, 2017)

The United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child states that the child has a right to leisure, play, and participation in cultural and artistic activities. The International Play Association (IPA) Declaration of the Child’s Right to Play states the following:

- PLAY, along with the basic needs of nutrition, health, shelter and education, is vital to develop the potential of all children.
- PLAY is instinctive, voluntary, and spontaneous.
- PLAY helps children develop physically, mentally, emotionally and socially.
- PLAY is a means of learning to live, not a mere passing of time.

IPA is concerned by a number of alarming trends and their negative impact on children’s development, including:

- Society’s indifference to the importance of play
- Over-emphasis on unhealthy competition and “winning at all costs” in children’s sports. (International Play Association, 2018)

Play equity refers to the fundamental principle that access to children and youth leisure programs is not determined by where they live, physical or mental challenges, socioeconomic circumstances or their ability to pay. This statement forms the premise for this report.

CURRENT STATE

Current State

PROFILE OF GREATER SUDBURY

The City of Greater Sudbury (CGS) is centrally located in Northeastern Ontario at the convergence of three major highways. It is situated on the Canadian Shield in the Great Lakes Basin and is composed of a rich mix of urban, suburban, rural and wilderness environments. Greater Sudbury is 3,627 square kilometres in area, making it the geographically largest municipality in Ontario and second largest in Canada. Greater Sudbury has an abundance of natural resources and is recognized as the ‘*city of lakes*’, containing 330 lakes. In 2011 the city's population was 160,274. It is a multicultural and truly bilingual community with over 27% of people reporting French as their mother tongue and almost 39% of people identify themselves as being bilingual. And many more francophone immigrants are settling in Sudbury. (Reseau du Nord, n.d.) More than 6% of people living in the City are First Nations. Greater Sudbury is a regional hub for many Ontario residents who live in nearby communities. (City of Greater Sudbury, 2018). The City's geographic location makes it a four-season community providing a variety of leisure opportunities in the spring, summer, fall and winter. In 2000, the City of Greater Sudbury was formed through the amalgamation of eight municipal governments.

LEISURE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan states that, “*the City will generally offer direct leisure programming when there are identified benefits to core markets and the community at large. The City may also be the preferred provider due to reasons of accessibility, affordability, safety, and/or mandate alignment. It is vital for the City to continue to evaluate the delivery of leisure services on a regular basis and to consider new approaches that may improve the efficiency and cost effectiveness of existing services. Support to volunteers, community engagement, and capacity building will also continue to be key roles for the City in ensuring a well-rounded and sustainable leisure delivery system. A complex network of municipal departments, agencies, institutions, private business, community organizations, volunteers, and residents play vital roles in the delivery of leisure services. Much like the adage “it takes a village to raise a child”, it takes a shared effort to provide accessible and affordable leisure services to the complete range of Greater Sudbury residents.*” (City of Greater Sudbury, 2014) The City of Greater Sudbury's Leisure Service Division has many strengths, including: skilled and experienced staff; high quality programs; strong community connections; effective leadership; and a diverse leisure infrastructure. It is also facing several challenges, including: an aging leisure infrastructure; limited operational funds; demand for subsidies and low users fees; high public expectations for affordable and accessible services; and a declining volunteer sector.

CURRENT STATE

A wide range of leisure opportunities currently exist in Greater Sudbury provided by a network of community organizations, volunteers, and the private sector. The City of Greater Sudbury's Leisure Services Division provides opportunities for citizens to access physical recreation and leisure activities through direct provision and support to volunteers. The Division provides both management and coordination to the community's leisure and recreation system, as well as fostering and developing community partnerships and engagement. Leisure Services manages the operation of community arenas, community centres and halls, recreational facilities, playing fields, parks and aquatics, all of which are community resources that support both direct and indirect program delivery. The Division is organized into three sections: Arenas; Parks Services; and Recreation. The Recreation Section is responsible for direct program opportunities including programming including the following: day camp programs, summer playground programs, program specific camps such as creative arts, sports & leadership, programs for specific populations such as the developmental summer program, activities at youth drop-in centres and a variety of course classes and lessons such as swimming, skiing, cycling and gymnastics. Generally speaking, children and youth direct programs offered through the Leisure Services Division have remained mainly unchanged since the creation of the CGS in 2000. Since that time there has been a significant increase in the number and variety of other service providers of child and youth programming in Greater Sudbury.

Many leisure services are also provided by other public sector institutions as well as the non-profit and private sectors. Given the anticipated continued demand for leisure services and limited financial resources, the municipality may, in some cases, prefer a community group provide the service. However, in situations where there is no group interested in providing a service, the municipality may need to provide the program or activity. Greater Sudbury is fortunate to have such a breadth and depth of organizations that provide leisure services to children and youth.

CGS REPORTS AND MASTERPLANS

In 2015 City Council approved the 2015-2018 Corporate Strategic Plan- Greater Together. One of its main priorities is Quality of Life and Place in which it identifies four objectives, as follows: create programs and services designed to improve the health and well-being of our youth, families and seniors; maintain great public spaces and facilities to provide opportunities for everyone to enjoy; promote a quality of life that attracts and retains youth and professionals, and encourages seniors to relocate to our community, taking into consideration all of Greater Sudbury; focus on clean, green living and the environment, by investing in our future and celebrating how far we've come. (City of Greater Sudbury, 2015)

CURRENT STATE

The City of Greater Sudbury's Leisure Services Division is guided by several key policy documents, as follows:

- Accessibility Plan (2012)
- Constellation City Report (2007)
- Greater Sudbury Corporate Strategic Plan (2018)
- Greater Sudbury Official Plan (2017)
- Greater Sudbury's Children First Charter (2002)
- Greater Together- 2015-2018 Corporate Strategic Plan
- Healthy Communities Strategy (2010)
- Population Health – Moving Upstream (2017)
- The Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan (2014)
- The Playground Revitalization Project (2018)
- The Youth Centres Program Review (2014)

The Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan articulates the City's vision as, "Exceeding the leisure needs of Greater Sudbury through programs, partnerships and equitable access to facilities, programs and open space. This report builds on that vision."

TRENDS & BEST PRACTICES

Trends & Best Practices

This review takes into consideration current and emerging trends that could potentially impact leisure services in Greater Sudbury. In addition to local socio-demographic changes, a review of trends in participation and service delivery is also helpful. This review identifies a few trends and best practices in leisure services relevant to Greater Sudbury.

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Population Growth

According to City of Greater Sudbury Outlook for Growth to 2046 Report, “*Greater Sudbury is expected to grow over the next 30 years by between 6,900 to 15,000 people*”. The report also states that “*the most predominant demographic consideration continues to be the age-structure of the population. The aging population trend has resulted in an increasingly high proportion of older-aged adults in Greater Sudbury.*” (HEMSON Consulting Ltd, 2018) This is consistent with a prevalent demographic trend across Canada. As of 2011, this age cohort represents 28% of the country’s population (in contrast to only 9% in 1991) and is expected to increase as the boomer population (currently ages 52 to 70) continues to age and experience longer life expectancies. This shift should influence the type of leisure services that Greater Sudbury will need in the future as children and youth may see decreased usage rates.

Low Income Populations

Poverty and economic inequality is another major barrier to participation in recreation, leisure, and culture activities. For instance, the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association reported that family after-tax income inequality rose by 41% between 1995 and 2011. This indicates that opportunities to experience recreational experiences are decreasing due to financial constraints such as the cost of transportation, equipment, lessons for organized sports and activities, and facility rental. (Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, 2016) According to the 2010 *Everyone Plays-Access to Recreation for Low-Income Families* in Ontario, five themes emerged that contributed to the success of these initiatives:

- 1) Community partnerships and inter-sectoral collaboration help ensure a holistic approach that maximizes resources and increases access to recreational, social and educational programming.
- 2) Funding partnerships are key as many initiatives are dependent on additional funding to ensure financial viability and long-term sustainability.
- 3) Fee subsidy programs that minimize or eliminate user fees, transportation costs and equipment costs enable low-income families to access recreational programs that they would otherwise not be able to afford.

TRENDS & BEST PRACTICES

4) A written access policy that is approved by a municipal council formalizes the commitment of the organization and helps ensure the viability and long-term sustainability of the policy.

5) Child and youth development programs foster leadership and self-esteem, which enhances physical and emotional health and increases social skills, resulting in healthier, more resilient adults who are able to effectively contribute to society. (Low-Income, 2010)

The Charter for Recreation and Parks in Ontario states that *“everyone in Ontario has a right to quality, accessible and inclusive recreation and parks services in their communities – services that are essential for the health of Ontarians, the quality of life in our communities and the sustainability of our environment.”* Affordability can be a significant barrier to participation, particularly in higher cost sports, as studies have correlated higher household income to higher participation rates due to a greater ability to pay. For hockey, costs can be intensive, particularly for rep level play (i.e., “representative” travel teams) where household expenditures on registration fees, equipment, and travel are much higher than at the house league level. Recently in Nova Scotia, the minor hockey league is trying to fight off a decline in membership by waiving the cost of registration for new players next season. (CTV News, 2018) This concern is especially prevalent in rural communities. (Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, 2016) Participation levels are found to be lower among youth living in low income households. Some municipalities are responding to these needs by providing affordable drop-in programs as well as assistance programs which provides financial assistance subsidies to low income families. (City of Vaughan, 2013)

PARTICIPATION TRENDS

Declining Physical Activity

Over the last 20 years, Canadians have become less active. This trend mirrors a reduced participation in sports. A recent Canadian survey shows a 17 per cent decline in sport participation among Canadians, due in part to the aging population, but also due to lack of free time and lack of interest. Canadians are becoming more sedentary because of lifestyles that include more desk jobs, transportation by car, and more screen time during leisure hours. (Toronto Parks, Forests and Recreation, 2012)

The Canadian Health Measures Survey (2014 and 2015) found that only 8% of children and youth ages 5 to 17 met the current guidelines for physical activity of at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity a day. (Monteith and Brown Planning Consultants, 2017) The decline of physical activity rates continues to be a concern across the country. In a survey undertaken by ParticipACTION, teens identified that socializing (97%), entertainment (96%), and the internet (93%) were the most important aspects of

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their daily lives, more so than physical activity (84%). Similarly, recent research conducted by the Human Environments Analysis Laboratory in 2013 found that among 851 participants aged 9 to 13, nearly half (47.5%) reported spending more than 4 hours of screen time per day. This is twice the amount recommended by the Canadian Pediatric Society (2013) and is an indication that children and teens are spending too much of their free time engaged in passive forms of pastime. While the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines recommend that teens achieve a minimum of 60 minutes of physical activity each day, a report by Active Healthy Kids Canada on physical activity levels among the Country's younger population reports that only 7% of children (between the ages of 5 and 11) and 4% of youth (between the ages of 15 and 17) are meeting this target, resulting in a physical activity grade of "D-" for 2015. (Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, 2016)

Childhood Obesity

Between 1981 and 2009, measures of fitness declined for Canadians of all ages and both genders, while measures of body fat increased. The prevalence of overweight and obese Canadians has also increased. A recent report on obesity completed by the Public Health Agency of Canada found that nearly 6% of children ages (2-5) and 9% of children (ages 6-17) in Canada are obese. The risk of obesity increases with age where nearly one in four Canadian adults are considered to be obese, while over 60% of all Canadians are obese or overweight. (City of Vaughan, 2013) Cases of obesity are also more commonly found among residents with lower socio-economic status (14%), compared to residents with higher incomes (11%), reinforcing the need to provide opportunities for parks and recreation activities to lower-income households. (City of Vaughan, 2013)

Accessibility

The City of Greater Sudbury has an Accessibility Advisory Panel, an Accessibility Plan for 2012-2017, as well as a Policy of Universal Access. (City of Greater Sudbury, 2003) Priority is given to complying with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). It is estimated that nearly one-quarter of Ontarians are living with a physical disability. Municipalities across Ontario are removing barriers for people with physical and mental disabilities in compliance with the AODA. A best practice in accessibility includes an established set of policies which facilitate and promote inclusive and accessible programs, and facilities, in the delivery of recreation and leisure services. (Voight, 2008) A best practice in accessibility promotes the delivery of integrated recreation programs and activities for persons with and without disabilities if applicable, feasible, or desirable. (Voight, 2008) It is important to consider opportunities that support more isolated young people in rural areas and to adopt a strategic and inclusive approach to planning leisure activities. (Pacific Leadership Design, 2010) Care needs to be taken in recreational planning to ensure that programs and services remain affordable and accessible to low income residents and young families. (Pacific Leadership Design, 2010)

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LEISURE TRENDS

Play Research

A large body of research substantiates the health, social and economic benefits of broad participation in play programs by participants, such as:

- Enhanced physical and psycho-social health of individuals and families
- Increased attendance and achievement at school
- Decreased behavioural and emotional problems
- Increased self-reliance and ability to manage
- Decreased use of medical services or emergency services
- Reduced future costs
- More efficient use of existing resources (Lashley & Associates)

The National Recreation and Park Association reports that there are many positive outcomes of participating in leisure programs, as follows:

- contribute to reducing juvenile delinquency
- contribute to increasing positive and reducing negative behaviors
- expose youth to less violence
- improve children's educational performance and thus impact the quality of the future work force and the national economy
- help decrease health care costs related to childhood obesity
- increase the economic contributions of young people to society when they become adults
- help youth develop self-confidence, optimism, and initiative (National Recreation and Park Association, 2010)

The International Play Association (IPA) Declaration of the Child's Right to Play states the following: PLAY, along with the basic needs of nutrition, health, shelter and education, is vital to develop the potential of all children. PLAY is instinctive, voluntary, and spontaneous. PLAY helps children develop physically, mentally, emotionally and socially. PLAY is a means of learning to live, not a mere passing of time. (International Play Association, 2018) Quality programs that are affordable and accessible are essential for fostering a healthy, active community. Activities that are convenient, accessible, affordable, and relevant will be the most successful.

CGS is a registered organization with HIGH FIVE®- Canada's quality standard for children's programs. Before HIGH FIVE, no standard existed and there was a clear need for an innovative approach to help organizations enhance program quality and provide positive experiences for children, which would remain with them for a lifetime. HIGH FIVE holds true to the five Principles of healthy child development that the research indicates are essential for quality programs:

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- A Caring Adult,
- The opportunity to make Friends,
- The opportunity to Play,
- The opportunity to Master Skills and
- The opportunity to Participate. (Parks and Recreation Ontario, 2018)

Self-Directed Recreation

The traditional conception of youth recreation that was based in sports and other forms of highly structured physical engagement represented only a part of what is considered youth recreation. Recreation is now redefined to include cultural activities such as music and fine arts- events that are generally less structured. (Pacific Leadership Design, 2010) Parks are increasingly viewed as an opportunity for non-programmed recreation and cultural activities and can accommodate facilities targeted for all ages. (Monteith & Brown Planning Consultants, 2010)

Because of busy lifestyles and careers, as well as competing time constraints, many people cannot make time for physical activity. Trends in leisure services include a growing emphasis on non-programmed and unstructured activities and away from organized sports. Also, the proportion of children and youth that participate in organized physical activity or sport decreases significantly with age. The cost of enrollment remains the largest barrier to sport participation. (Monteith and Brown Planning Consultants, 2017) Although lack of free time can be a barrier to participation, there are things that Leisure Services can do to promote activity. For instance, unstructured play times allow for individuals and families to participate in activities at their leisure. Also, leisure programs that do not require registration allow opportunities for users to participate at their convenience with no commitment. Flexible and affordable recreation options provide opportunities to further engage residents in physical activity. (Monteith and Brown Planning Consultants, 2017) Spontaneous and non-programmed activities are becoming more popular because they adapt to people's busy lifestyles. Drop-in programs and facilities such as the Skate Path on Ramsey Lake attract people of all ages. Providing flexible opportunities to participate is also an increasing trend among youth. Recreation activities typically compete with other time commitments such as homework, part-time jobs, and socializing with friends, leaving limited availability for structured recreation activities. As a result, self-structured and drop-in programs provide recreation opportunities that fit their schedule. (City of Vaughan, 2013)

Charter of Rights

In 2009, Parks and Recreation Ontario published a charter that identifies the recreation and parks rights of Ontarians, the rationale for leisure services, goals for communities and the role of recreation and park leaders. The Charter states that: *"Everyone in Ontario has a right to quality, accessible and inclusive recreation and parks services in their communities—services that are essential for the health of Ontarians, the quality of life in our communities,*

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and the sustainability of our environment.” Every citizen in Ontario has the right and freedom to:

- Participation – in safe, affordable and quality recreation programs that are in harmony with the diversity of the community.
- Active Living – be physically active through participation in both organized and informal sport and recreation activities.
- Access to Nature and the Outdoors – experience nature and access open spaces within their communities.
- Enriching Experiences – experience the arts, cultural, heritage, sport and recreation activities in their communities.
- A Welcoming and Inclusive Community - be included in activities that build strong communities, engaged citizens and a healthy family life.
- Engagement – be engaged in the planning of recreation and parks in their communities and to participate in volunteer activities.
- Recreation and parks can help us to overcome the significant challenges facing our communities today, including physical inactivity and the rising cost of health care, a rise in youth violence and the protection of our environment. (Parks and Recreation Ontario, 2009)

Emerging & New Activities

The CGS has made investments in new facilities in recent years including the James Jerome Sport Complex’s artificial turf field, several splash pads, trails, parks, and pickle ball courts. Community organizations such as the YMCA continually add new programs to their menu of public offerings. And new parks such as Kivi Park and Rotary Park are being developed because of local volunteer and fund-raising efforts. The private sector has also added new facilities and programs such as the Gym Zone, the Urban Air Adventure Park and the ARC Climbing Centre. Many new leisure activities are emerging beyond the traditional programs, such as fat-tire winter cycling, pocket pads and other activities. The popularity of such activities is driven by many factors, including a shift in demographics and leisure preferences. The municipality should be cognizant of them and proactively plan to accommodate them where demand is expected in the next ten years. The repurposing of underutilized facilities and the provision of flexible facility spaces are two effective ways to meet changing needs. (Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, 2016) The popularity of emerging passive outdoor activities such as hiking, tai chi, community gardening, and casual cycling also generates demand for passive parks and open spaces. Extreme/non-traditional sports such as skateboarding and BMX biking are also expected to experience continued support and strong participation rates among youth and children. (City of Vaughan, 2013)

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Active Transportation

Active transportation is defined by the Public Health Agency of Canada as any form of human-powered transportation (i.e., walking, cycling, etc.) for utilitarian and leisure purposes. It is effective in combating physical inactivity and obesity and can increase social vitality by encouraging more livable communities where people are more likely to have personal contact with each other. Research has shown that residents in rural areas are less likely to use active transportation methods given the spatial distribution of destinations and the lack of supporting infrastructure (e.g., sidewalks), resulting in a greater reliance of automobiles. (Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, 2016) Providing an interconnected system of parks and open spaces is an important component of human health and ecological function. As many parks are destinations, ensuring that they are accessible can go a long way in encouraging people to visit them. Linking parks with trails, sidewalks, bicycle paths and roads provides choices for people to travel to these areas while creating infrastructure for commuter, utilitarian and recreational uses. (City of Vaughan, 2013) The CGS Official Plan contains a section dedicated to Active Transportation.

FACILITY TRENDS

Rural Access to Facilities

Accessibility of leisure facilities can affect whether people lead an active lifestyle, and these accessibility challenges are more prevalent in rural communities. This may be due to a variety of factors, including a dispersed rural population and a lack of resources and market size to support major leisure complexes.

Aging Leisure Infrastructure

The municipal leisure industry across Canada is coping with aging infrastructure. In 2006, Parks and Recreation Ontario estimated that 30-50% of recreation facilities were nearing the end of their useful lifecycle. (Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, 2016) This presents a major challenge for municipalities which face pressures to provide newer and better facilities while maintaining standards at existing facilities, many of which were built with provincial assistance in the 1960s and 1970s. Many of these now require significant repairs and renovations and are costlier to maintain due to operational inefficiencies. (Monteith and Brown Planning Consultants, 2017)

Multi-purpose facilities

Many municipalities are centralizing multiple recreational facilities on individual sites. And there is a growing public expectation that facilities be designed as multi-purpose. Such facilities can provide convenient, centralized centres as well as generate operational efficiencies. However, one drawback of multi-purpose facilities is that they tend to be centralized located and can be difficult to access by rural residents. (Monteith and Brown Planning Consultants, 2017) Communities are also moving away from single-purpose,

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stand-alone facilities in favour of multi-use facilities that integrate numerous activities and offer economies of scale with respect to construction, maintenance, staffing, and scheduling. Multi-use facilities are often designed with flexible spaces (e.g., activity rooms, gymnasiums, etc.) that have the potential to expand and easily respond to changing trends and demands of future users. (City of Vaughan, 2013) Future leisure programs and services within the CGS will be directly affected by the design of recreational facilities.

SERVICE DELIVERY TRENDS

Community Development

The Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan identifies the following principle, “*The City will continue to implement a community development approach to leisure service delivery through the support of volunteers, community engagement and capacity building.*” (City of Greater Sudbury, 2014) Community development builds the capacity of the broader community by supporting volunteers and seeking community partners in the delivery of recreation, leisure, and culture services. The CGS should undertake community development and capacity building with non-profit organizations and user groups to increase indirect programming; and enhance volunteer engagement in leisure programming. It is through a collaborative approach that issues can be addressed by engaging local stakeholders. This largely consists of service clubs, athletic associations and volunteers, along with all the resources they possess.

As a coordinator of facility-based community development, municipalities can support organizations and serve as a provider of space by offering the community access to facilities and parks. This coordination role involves understanding the leisure needs of the community and mobilizing staff, volunteers and other service providers to collectively respond to these needs. This approach will encourage organizations and volunteers to mature to a point where they can function with minimal support from the municipality. Examples of facilitating community development may include:

- Continuing to support organizing committees in the provision of special events;
- Helping groups to generate awareness of their services through marketing/promotion efforts;
- Assisting local groups to maintain their services through access to grant programs;
- Assisting groups with volunteer recruitment, training and succession planning;
- Upgrading municipal parks and facilities through capital investment; and
- Facilitating partnership arrangements to provide programs and access to parks and facilities.

Partnerships

There is a growing trend in Canadian municipalities towards integrated service delivery—that is, delivering community-based programming through partnerships, especially with

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community based, not-for-profit organizations and volunteer groups. (Toronto Parks, Forests and Recreation, 2012) Community partners are critical contributors to the local leisure service system. Across Ontario, many municipalities are seeking ways to collaborate with outside organizations in the funding of facility projects and/or management of facility components. Private and community partners can also be engaged to provide leisure programming to the City. For example, partnership opportunities exist with private sector businesses through sponsorships, project funding, donations, and volunteerism. The most successful partnerships are derived from common objectives (e.g., environmental conservation, community improvement, physical activity, trail development, etc.), utilizing the skills and strengths of each group in delivering access while sharing responsibilities and minimizing risks (e.g., costs and liabilities). (Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, 2016) While there are many benefits to sharing risks and liabilities through partnerships, there are also some potential risks that the Municipality should be aware of. For example, the residents of Greater Sudbury will expect the Municipality to ultimately be responsible for the services provided, even if they are delivered under a partnership agreement with another organization. The success of Leisure Services division is directly related to their ability to work in partnership with the community to provide residents and visitors with high quality programs and events.

As the demand for leisure programming increases, the ability of the Municipality to keep pace through direct programming will be increasingly challenged. While the Division could continue to be a direct provider for many leisure opportunities, in some areas it will be more appropriate to be a partner or facilitator for leisure programs, activities and events; therefore, the role of other public, non-profit and commercial service providers will become increasingly important. Partnerships allow communities to efficiently and effectively utilize resources while taking advantage of the expertise found within the community, whether through private corporations, volunteers, other municipalities, or government partners. Community partners such as service clubs, private organizations, school boards, and related agencies are critical contributors to the local leisure services system and should be actively engaged to maximize benefits for residents. The advantages of a collaborative approach to service delivery are many and include the efficient allocation of community resources, comparative advantage in program and services provided by specialized community groups, and the sharing of data among different stakeholders to help identify emerging challenges and opportunities. Resource-sharing helps to ensure the long-term viability of facilities and programs. (Monteith and Brown Planning Consultants, 2017)

Volunteerism and Youth Involvement

Volunteers are essential to the operation and delivery of many parks and recreation services, and they are particularly vital in smaller communities where resources tend to be more limited. Although older adults currently represent the most active volunteer

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group, it is anticipated that this group will soon move on from the volunteer workforce because of a decline in service club and church memberships, resulting in greater pressures on the delivery of services and impact programming capacity. Some key issues facing volunteers are a lack of recognition and burn-out. Engaging youth as volunteers and “community leaders in training” is also important. This approach can be effective as it maximizes the strengths of volunteers and local organizations, while minimizing financial obligations. (Monteith and Brown Planning Consultants, 2017) Community development requires a continued reliance on the volunteer sector for program delivery. Should volunteer involvement decline, residents will look to the City to assume many of these responsibilities. Due to the importance of volunteers, it is essential that priority be placed upon the recruitment, selection, training, supervision and recognition of volunteers. (Monteith and Brown Planning Consultants, 2017) To reach out and attract the interest of tech-savvy youth, effective utilization of social media will be an important factor of a volunteer recruitment strategy. Understanding which social media platform works best for different youth segments, establishment of a social media policy at the municipal level, and ensuring a coherent message is being delivered across multiple platforms will go a long way in creating interest in volunteering among the Municipality’s youth population. (Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, 2016) *“It is evident that if we want to bring about changes in leisure habits moving toward other habits that are more sustainable and healthy, it is imperative to start from processes advocating youth participation that favour the involvement of this group in decision making to improve their quality of life”.* (María de Fátima Poza-Vilches, 2016)

Increased Regulations in Day Care

Many leisure programs and services involve students and adolescents who are responsible for supervising the participating children. In recent years, there has been an increase in the various regulatory frameworks that oversee daycare such as the 2014 Child Care and Early Years Act. And various Ontario Ministries have implemented new guidelines such as How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years (Ontario Ministry of Education). Programs such as playground programs and day camps have greater restrictions and requirements that make it more challenging for municipal leisure programs that employ students and adolescents.

Gaps in the Leisure Service Sector

There is a general sense locally that youth between the ages of 13-19 do not have sufficient leisure programs that are designed and targeted to their specific demographic. And many organizations have expressed a desire to engage youth in leadership development programs that could be aligned with leisure services.

In terms of infrastructure, there is a need to connect the local trail system so that a more comprehensive and integrated non-motorized infrastructure would increase the opportunity for self-directed leisure activities such as cycling and walking. Local groups

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such as the Sudbury Cyclists Union and Rainbow Routes have advocated and led the development of more connected trail systems.

The Leisure Services Division does not currently offer a comprehensive menu of arts and culture programs per se; however, it does support more local arts organizations as well as local festivals and events such as the Sudbury Art Gallery, the Carrefour Francophone, the Sudbury Theatre Centre, Cinéfest, the Up Here festival and the Northern lights Festival Boreal. While this may be viewed as a gap in terms of programs offered by the City, it does demonstrate that the City can support local leisure agencies without having to provide all the desired direct programming.

Some would also see an opportunity to increase the amount of leisure programming provided with the natural environment such as lakefronts and parks. For example, while the City offers lifeguard programs for some beaches, there are very few other aquatic programs such as swimming lessons, offered at these locations.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Strategic Directions

The *Opportunities* and *Options for Consideration* are grounded in five strategic directions.

1. That all children and youth have equitable access to play and leisure opportunities.
2. That the City of Greater Sudbury champions the evolution of the local leisure industry as a collaborative partner, community developer and capacity builder.
3. That a new Play Charter will be the lens by which all local leisure providers are invited to think about Play programs, facilities and partnerships.
4. That our unique and abundant natural resources are seen as 4-season outdoor leisure facilities.
5. That leisure programs and services evolve towards the provision of unstructured, self-directed play experiences.

POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Potential Opportunities

This section draws from interviews conducted with Greater Sudbury Leisure Services Division staff as well as community leaders in the leisure sector. It factors in trends and best practices and findings from leisure service plans of other municipalities. Finally, it respects the guiding principles identified earlier in the report.

PLAY EQUITY

Play equity refers to the fundamental principle that all children and youth should have equitable access to leisure programs is not determined by where they live, physical or mental, challenges, socioeconomic circumstances or their ability to pay.

Population Health

In January 1997, the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Advisory Committee on Population Health (ACPH) defined population health as follows: *“Population health refers to the health of a population as measured by health status indicators and as influenced by social, economic and physical environments, personal health practices, individual capacity and coping skills, human biology, early childhood development, and health services. As an approach, population health focuses on the interrelated conditions and factors that influence the health of populations over the life course, identifies systematic variations in their patterns of occurrence, and applies the resulting knowledge to develop and implement policies and actions to improve the health and well-being of those populations.”* (Government of Canada, 2018)

In 2017-18 the City of Greater Sudbury engaged the community in an extensive consultation process that led to the development of a Population Health report entitled- Moving Forward with an Upstream Approach- A Call to Action on Community Priorities. (City of Greater Sudbury, 2017) These priorities included the following:

- Indigenous Youth
- Resiliency
- Families
- Mental Health
- Compassionate City
- Play Opportunities
- Housing
- Holistic Health
- Age Friendly Strategy
- Healthy Streets

POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Population Report provides the foundation for many of the options and opportunities contained in this report. For example, several actions identified in the Population Health report are relevant to Children and Youth Leisure Services such as: providing equal and accessible play opportunities; connecting youth and children to the community; providing skill-based learning opportunities; broadening partnerships to enhance play opportunities for all ages; providing affordable access to recreation and transit; supporting community participation, volunteerism and engagement; expanding 4-season play opportunities at parks and recreational sites; apply standards, principles and recommendations from Parks & Recreation's High Five for all programs; promote health and active living opportunities through the Open Space Master Plan; and create neighborhoods that are safe, connected, accessible, green and playful.

OPPORTUNITY: that the Leisure Services Division lead or facilitate the implementation, where appropriate, of the priorities of the Population Health report

Municipal Play Charter

We need to redefine the way we understand play. It should be more self-directed and led by children and youth. We need to move away from the antiquated idea that adults need to develop structured, risk-free opportunities for play and let kids create, design and develop their own play experiences. After all, recreation is really an experience of re-creating through playing and learning. The City could enshrine its commitment to the rights of children and youth to equitable access to leisure opportunities by developing and approving a Play Charter similar to Calgary, Alberta. (City of Calgary, 2018) Such a charter would affect planning and policy decisions across all departments.

OPPORTUNITY: that the CGS adopts a Children and Youth Play Charter and invite local stakeholders to endorse the Charter

POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

GREATER SUDBURY PLAY CHARTER

Greater Sudbury is committed to promoting play, providing PLAY OPPORTUNITIES, AND EDUCATING ALL SUDBURIANS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY TO OUR COMMUNITY. PLAY LOOKS LIKE- CHILDREN OF ALL ABILITIES, ALONE OR IN GROUPS, ENGAGED, FOCUSED, SOLVING PROBLEMS, HAVING FUN. IT CAN LOOK PHYSICAL, IMAGINARY, CREATIVE, DRAMATIC, SOCIAL OR ENERGETIC. PLAY SOUNDS LIKE- LAUGHTER, CONFLICT, IMAGINATIVE STORIES. IT CAN BE BOISTEROUS OR SILENT. PLAY FEELS LIKE- EXCITEMENT AND CHALLENGE. IT CAN BE SCARY, WONDROUS, DOUBTFUL, HESITANT AND THRILLING.

WE BELIEVE THAT

- *PLAY DEVELOPS A CORE SET OF SKILLS FOR HEALTHY WELL-BEING.*
- *PLAY IS A VITAL COMPONENT OF CHILDHOOD; IT IS FREELY CHOSEN, PERSONALLY DIRECTED AND INTRINSICALLY MOTIVATED.*
- *PLAY IS FUN, UNCERTAIN, CHALLENGING AND FLEXIBLE.*
- *WHEN CHILDREN HAVE OPPORTUNITIES TO PLAY THEY USE CREATIVITY, INNOVATION, AND REFLECTION TO LEARN, EXPERIMENT, SOLVE PROBLEMS, CREATE NEW WORLDS, TEST BOUNDARIES, ASSESS RISK, AND MEET CHALLENGES.*
- *PLAY IS A NATURAL STATE FOR A CHILD.*

WE WILL

- *SUPPORT PLAY THAT ENCOURAGES PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT.*
- *UNDERSTAND AND COMMUNICATE THAT RISK IS A VALUABLE COMPONENT TO PLAY, AND WE WILL ENCOURAGE, SUPPORT AND ENABLE PLAY THAT ALLOWS CHILDREN TO DEVELOP RISK-TAKING SKILLS.*
- *CREATE ENVIRONMENTS THAT CHILDREN CAN CONTROL BY PROVIDING FLEXIBILITY IN SPACES AND MATERIALS THAT PROMOTE INQUIRY AND EVOKE CURIOSITY.*
- *EMBRACE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE OF SUDBURY AND SUPPORT CHILDREN TO PLAY OUTDOORS ALL YEAR-ROUND.*
- *EDUCATE AND INFORM ADULTS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY.*
- *INVOLVE CHILDREN IN THE DECISIONS THAT AFFECT THEIR LIVES.*

Youth Friendly Community

There is a general feeling locally that youth aged 13-19 have fewer leisure programs available to them. A community that makes sure that youth (ages 13 - 19) have access to as many opportunities as possible and continuous access to a diversity of 'play' are designated as a Youth Friendly Community. (Playworks Partnership, 2018) Youthful Cities, based in Toronto, measures just how youth-friendly in many cities across Canada. "To many, infrastructure means roads and bridges. To youth, it's a more holistic view of the attributes of cities that help them live, work, play and thrive. We have surveyed more than 30,000 youth globally to help define a youthful infrastructure based on what's important to them." (Youthful Cities, 2018) In 2013, the City was awarded the Silver Youth Community Builder Award by Play Works; Greater Sudbury is one of 42 communities from across Ontario to be recognized as a "Youth Friendly Community". (City of Greater Sudbury, 2014)

POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

OPPORTUNITY: Honour the City's commitment and designation as a Youth Friendly Community

Accessible Programs

The ability and capacity of children and youth to access leisure programs can be affected by many factors including: location, physical challenges and time constraints.

Municipalities are required to have a plan in place to meet the accessibility standards of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005). The City of Greater Sudbury does have a Multi Year Accessibility Plan (2012) which states that: The City of Greater Sudbury is a community of communities that respects the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities and endeavours to facilitate inclusive access to municipal programs, services and facilities. The City of Greater Sudbury recognizes that while much work has been done to enhance access to municipal programs, services and facilities, there is more work ahead. The plan, which identifies key themes and opportunities for improving accessibility, provides focus and assist in guiding the organization as we work together to ensure that all citizens can participate in the community's great northern lifestyle. This plan, like the City's Strategic Plan, is *"a promise from the past and a vision of our future"*. (City of Greater Sudbury, 2012)

OPPORTUNITY: That the City continues to implement the priorities identified in its Accessibility Plan, to ensure the individual's right of access to municipal facilities, programs and services in accordance with provincial legislation and municipal policies and by-laws

For many families, accessing leisure programs is challenging because of competing priorities and busy work schedules. Leisure programs should seek to accommodate these challenges by offering times that are aligned with work schedules and/or offered at times when parents are available to bring their children such as evenings and weekends.

OPPORTUNITY: that the municipality explore ways to offer more programming and access to facilities on weekends and possibly via earlier and later weekday hours for some programs and leisure opportunities

Play Risk Management

In Great Britain, the Play Wales organization works to raise awareness of children and young people's need and right to play and to promote good practice at every level of decision making and, in every place, where children might play. They are part of The Play Safety Forum, a group of national organisations involved in play safety. They produced guide called Managing Risk in Play Provision. The guide shows how play providers can develop an approach to risk management that considers the benefits to children and young people of challenging play experiences, as well as the risks. It builds on the Play Safety Forum's position statement Managing risk in play provision (2002)." Robin

POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Sutcliffe, Chair of the Play Safety Forum said: *“Children need and choose exciting places to play, which inevitably means managing situations that are inherently risky. This publication recognizes this and gives guidance to providers about how this can be reconciled with a natural desire for children’s safety.”* (Play Wales, 2018)

OPPORTUNITY: develop a Play Risk policy that provides a balanced approach to children’s safety and the benefits that come from providing challenging play experiences

GREATER SUDBURY’S UNIQUENESS

The City of Greater Sudbury has several features and characteristics that make it somewhat unique within the context of leisure services, such as: it is the largest geographic municipality in Ontario; it is an amalgamated municipality; it has a significant francophone population as well as indigenous communities; it has a vast array of natural resources including 330 lakes; an abundance of parks, trails and green spaces; opportunities for 4-season leisure activities; and it is considered the northern centre for health, tourism and post-secondary education. The Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan identifies the following principle, *“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 where possible.”* (City of Greater Sudbury, 2014)

OPPORTUNITY: that the Leisure Services Division look for opportunities to provide leisure programs within the natural environment and that Laurentian University’s McEwen School of Architecture be approached to engage students in the design of outdoor leisure spaces that leverage the opportunities of our seasonal and natural resources

ROLE OF THE MUNICIPALITY

It is important for both the municipality and the community that it serves to have a common understanding of their respective roles and relationships as it pertains to leisure services. Having finite resources, the municipalities do not have the resources nor the capacity to provide an infinite array of direct leisure services to all its citizens. And there are many other organizations in the public, non-profit and private sectors that plan, develop and deliver leisure services as well. Historically, CGS has built and operated leisure facilities as well as developed and delivered leisure programs and events. It is critical going forward that the municipality identify its core purpose to ensure that adequate leisure services are available throughout the community.

Oftentimes public expectations exceed the City’s ability. For example, some parents may expect playgrounds and recreation centres to provide the same level of service as a

POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

daycare facility or that adolescent staff will have the experience and credentials to provide a level of supervision that they receive at school. Also, the relationship of the municipality and community can take many forms- provider, partner, facilitator, regulator or funder. While the Leisure Services Division is generally viewed as a collaborative and committed department, oftentimes community groups deal with other departments at City Hall. Some departments may not always be holding the same knowledge or attitude towards leisure services that community groups appreciate. Also, some groups feel that they must deal with several siloed departments instead of accessing City Hall through one point of contact.

OPPORTUNITY: Develop a streamlined mechanism for community leisure groups to easily navigate and engage all municipal departments

There is a general trend within the municipal leisure services sector to move toward a more community development role in which the municipality serves as a facilitator, broker and capacity builder of leisure services. To truly act as a facilitator of services, municipalities must solidify and strengthen its community development approach. This model relies on the support of volunteers and the community at large to continue to be the main providers of programming, while the municipality fills gaps. This approach recognizes that the City will not be the sole provider and facilitator of recreation programming and spaces. (Monteith and Brown Planning Consultants, 2017)

OPPORTUNITY: That CGS increase its community development approach to leisure programming and coordination

There is general agreement that the Leisure Services Division should be the strongest and most vocal ambassador for the leisure industry. Their sphere of influence throughout the community and within City Hall positions the Leisure Services Division to lead and inspire the development of the local leisure industry. That does not mean that it should endeavour to develop and deliver all leisure programs; and, in fact, may be quite the opposite. While ensuring that the local leisure infrastructure is designed and managed in a manner that promotes and supports an exhaustive number of recreational opportunities, and ensures its long-term viability, the City's relationship with other leisure providers can take many forms including partner, collaborator, supporter, promoter, broker and facilitator.

OPPORTUNITY: leverage the profile and reputation of Leisure Services to engage the community and promote all leisure services and programs

POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Partnerships

The Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan identifies the following principle, *“Partnerships and collaboration 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.”* (City of Greater Sudbury, 2014) Community partnerships are a critical aspect of community development. Partnerships can build community ownership and leverage the strengths and resources of multiple agencies. For example, co-locating facilities and programs with those offered by community partners is a useful way of optimizing space within leisure facilities. School board partnerships are critical to the planning and delivery of leisure services within an existing network of youth-oriented facilities. And school yards present excellent opportunities for leisure infrastructure such as playgrounds, parks and community gardens. The CGS Leisure Services Division has built strong partnerships across the community.

OPPORTUNITY: Enhance the City’s partnership with community agencies to improve sector coordination and develop a strategic partnership framework for monitoring partnership effectiveness

OPPORTUNITY: work with local school boards to identify opportunities for the expansion of leisure service program delivery and achieve a joint use agreement for all leisure facilities

OPPORTUNITY: Partner with post-secondary institutions to involve students in the delivery of leisure service programs

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Human resources are the driving force behind leisure services. A combination of staff and volunteers provide the bulk of the human energy within the municipality as well as local public institutions, non-profit organizations and local businesses. Staff and volunteers need to possess the proper skills and credentials to effectively participate. Within the leisure services sector, many of the staff positions are seasonal. For example, during the summer months, students are often employed to work at beaches, day camps and playgrounds. Retaining those students for employments in subsequent summer seasons can be a challenge. Also, local organizations are concerned that they cannot compete with the wages being offered by the City to seasonal employees.

OPPORTUNITY: develop a leisure volunteer strategy to facilitate volunteerism across the community

POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

OPPORTUNITY: Develop a training program specific to creating ‘play’ ambassadors

OPPORTUNITY: review the current hiring process for summer students as well as the current wage levels for seasonal student workers compared to the private and non-profit sectors

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Youth engagement is necessary to ensure that programs and spaces are responsive to the needs of local youth and to provide opportunities for youth to gain confidence and skills in decision-making and public participation. *“Upon reviewing academic literature, ... engaging the youth in all processes of leisure program planning—not only created a meaningful experience for both the youth and the programmer, but also helped youth develop skills like leadership, teamwork and organization.”* (University of Alberta, 2018) YouthfulCities recommends that communities take the following steps to measure just how youth-friendly they are: first, measure the city’s youthful infrastructure through the YouthfulCities Index; second, gather youth opinions about the city’s youthful attitude and performance through the Urban Youth Survey; third, set the city’s youthful priorities with youth; fourth, unleash the inventiveness of youth through the YouthfulCities pop-up innovation lab. (Youthful Cities, 2018) In 2007, the Constellation City Report identified the need to engage citizens through the creation of Community Action Networks (CANs). (City of Greater Sudbury, 2007) Since that time, over a dozen CANs have been established across Greater Sudbury. This represents an effective network for youth engagement as well.

OPPORTUNITY: invite youth representatives to review and provide feedback on this report and invite the public to provide feedback on the report on the *Over to You* webpage

OPPORTUNITY: establish a Youth Leisure Advisory committee to provide the municipality with ongoing advice on the development of leisure programs and services

OPPORTUNITY: Organize a Youth Summit every four years to engage youth in a discussion about local leisure activities, needs and trends

OPPORTUNITY: encourage local CANs to establish Youth Community Action Networks (YouCAN) for their respective areas

POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Leadership development for youth is a thread that runs through several of the themes- civic engagement, volunteerism and staff development. It is also central to the concept of learning and play as well as the role of program facilitators. The International Play Association advocates for the development of play leadership as a supporting aspect of a Play Charter. (International Play Association, 2018) Some organizations, such as the YMCA, already employ leadership development in their programs. *“At YMCA John Island Camp, we view leadership development as a corner stone of our program. Becoming a future camp staff member often begins within our leadership training programs. We believe good camp leaders possess a high degree of skill and confidence in the outdoors and sensitivity to the needs of young people. Our leadership progression is designed to help young people develop greater self-confidence, and ability to work in group settings, a wide variety of outdoor skills, and an appreciation for the needs of younger campers.”* (YMCA, 2018)

OPPORTUNITY: Identify a youth leadership development model to encourage personal development, civic engagement and volunteerism within leisure programs and services

OPPORTUNITY: re-purpose Camp Wassakwa as a leadership development camp for youth. Partner with the YMCA or other local organizations to deliver the leadership development content

COMMUNICATIONS & REGISTRATIONS

Many leisure services and programs are dependent on a high level of public awareness to attract participants. Municipalities require an effective communication system to connect with the public and promote its many leisure programs as those offered by other public institutions and non-profit organizations. The City of Greater Sudbury used to deliver its Leisure services guide to all households; however, that service was discontinued years ago. Many people feel that there is a lack of effective promotion currently for leisure services. Moreover, an effective social media strategy is virtually non-existent.

The Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan recommends the following, *“Review the Communication and Marketing Strategy to ensure that it is effective in creating awareness and engaging all members of the community. The Strategy should reflect the continued development of new technologies, including social media, and explore new means to reach younger demographics.”* (City of Greater Sudbury, 2014) It also recommends upgrading the City’s recreation management software to improve customer service, customer intelligence, trend tracking, and performance indicators. Furthermore, there is a need to promote all leisure programs across the community and make it easy for participants to find the programs they are looking for, view a schedule and register for the programs.

POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Many of the smaller local leisure organizations do not have the capacity to effectively offer such a comprehensive online service. For example, online software helps municipalities connect with the public via email and online booking as well handling all registrations, marketing and scheduling.

OPPORTUNITY: Adopt an online portal to promote, communicate, schedule, register and purchase leisure services across the City of Greater Sudbury

OPPORTUNITY: Develop a dynamic communications plan and a robust social media strategy to promote leisure services

OPPORTUNITY: develop an email database of families and individuals who have participated at specific programs to proactively promote upcoming programs

OPPORTUNITY: Partner with local Francophone groups to proactively ensure that marketing and communications is bilingual and reaching francophone audiences

AFFORDABILITY

Leisure Services Division is currently reviewing the issue of affordability and a staff report to City Council is being prepared under separate cover.

The Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan identifies the following principle, “*The City will strive to provide an affordable, accessible and equitable distribution of parks and leisure facilities, recognizing the City’s large geographic area and the unique local values of Greater Sudbury’s distinct ethnic, cultural and geographic communities.*” (City of Greater Sudbury, 2014) Delivering effective programs and services to the public within an environment of fiscal constraints can be a challenge. Greater Sudbury is a competitive market for the public’s finite leisure dollars. While Greater Sudbury’s leisure user fees are generally lower than in many other municipalities, not everyone can afford to access specific leisure programs because of personal income constraints. While the City does offer many affordable courses and programs for beginners, other organizations may offer more elite level programs which can have higher costs associated. Also, though there are various subsidies available, those sources have diminished over the years. Many groups recruit sponsors to try and offset costs and keep fees to a minimum. Some groups are concerned that the City provides subsidized transportation, such as bussing to camp Sudaca which creates an uneven playing field. With its vast geography, it can be difficult, especially for people living in rural areas to reasonably access leisure programs located in the core of the City. The City currently runs the Feel Free to have a Ball and Feel Free to

POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Feel Fit programs that provide children and youth with opportunities to access leisure facilities and public transit.

In Toronto, City Council established the Welcome Policy to provide a fee subsidy to help low-income individuals and families access Recreation programs. To be eligible for the Welcome Policy, applicants must be City of Toronto residents and have a before tax family income of less than Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut Off (LICO). Social assistance recipients automatically qualify for Welcome Policy and can be approved by their caseworker. (Toronto Parks, Forests and Recreation, 2012)

OPPORTUNITY: Formalize the Affordable Access to Recreation policy to bolster universal access to physical activity and recreation opportunities

OPPORTUNITY: build on the success of the Feel Free programs develop a leisure pass that gives youth access to many leisure programs at no cost or a reduced fee as well as provide access to public transit at a reduced rate

OPPORTUNITY: build on the success of the skate exchange and bike exchange programs by developing a comprehensive equipment exchange program

OPPORTUNITY: consider developing a Welcome Policy to give low income individuals and families access to leisure programs and services

ASSESSING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

With every passing year, municipal operations become more complex. A focus should be placed on creating and/or updating policies and procedures to guide matters related to risk and liability management, health and safety, legislative compliance, fiscal responsibility, inter-departmental coordination, operating performance, and customer service. And facilitate a coordinated delivery system through the creation and clarification of policies and practices that emphasize accessibility, equity, consistency, and proactive management. Key questions for ongoing monitoring include: what are the participation rates? What is the minimum participation benchmark for underutilized programs? What are the future leisure trends? Does the City have the resources and capacity to deliver the program? The outcome of such an assessment could be one of the following: continue, expand, discontinue or change/improve programs offered directly by Leisure Services.

OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION: actively involve local stakeholders in leisure service planning and track emerging leisure trends

POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION: Maintain an up-to-date inventory of recreation, leisure, and culture opportunities within the community

OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION: Only develop new programs that are non-competitive with other providers, introductory in nature, able to achieve realistic program objectives, and are feasible within available resources

Cost Benefits

Program participation and utilization rates, as well as annual costs provide a helpful perspective from a cost benefits analysis and should be factored into planning decisions. Below are examples of recent data regarding leisure program performance.

2017 Leisure Program Statistics				
Program	Utilization	Participation	5-year Variance	Deficit/(Surplus)
Camp Sudaca	57%	628	23% decline	\$ (27,320)
Camp Wassakwa	24%	217	52% decline	\$ 5,472
Summer Playgrounds	n/a	763	18% decline	\$157,465
Program Specific Camps	17%	86	71% decline	\$ 58,267

PROGRAM SPECIFIC OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Program Specific Options for Consideration

DAY CAMPS- SUDACA AND WASSAKWA

Camp Sudaca is a municipal day camp for 5 to 14-year olds located on the east end of Lake Ramsey. Campers enjoy swimming canoeing, sailing, kayaking, nature crafts, mountain biking and other outdoor activities. Bus pick up is provided for participants. There are 9 one-week sessions offered during the summer. In 2017 Camp Sudaca had approximately 628 participants. Camp Wassakwa is also a municipal day camp for 5 to 13-year olds located in the community of Whitefish. Campers enjoy activities such as canoeing, archery, sailing, crafts, kayaking, hiking and other outdoor activities. Transportation is offered in the form of bus service. There are 8 one-week sessions offered during the summer. In 2017, there were 217 registrations at Camp Wassakwa. In the past five years overall enrolment has declined 33% from 1,269 down to 845. Utilization in 2017 for Camp Sudaca was 57% and Camp Wassakwa was 24%.

Other local organizations such as the YMCA, Science North and Carrefour Francophone offer day camp experiences. Competition for day campers can be competitive and there have been some recent closures, such as Camp Falcona, as a result. It could be argued that the municipality should not be in competition with local, non-profit organizations who are providing a similar service. A key question is- does Greater Sudbury need two separate municipal day camps? Given Camp Sudaca is central and provides bussing from across the municipality, it seems reasonable that it should continue as a municipal day camp. Camp Wassakwa is an older camp ground and is in the extreme west end of the municipality. However, it does present opportunities for re-purposing.

In recent years, a few new parks have been developed. Rotary Park, located in New Sudbury, was led by the local Rotary and Rotary Sunrisers Clubs in partnership with the City. Kivi Park is being developed because of a significant donation from a private donor and other local sponsors. And other parks, such as the new Second Avenue park, have been developed by the Morel Foundation. Kivi Park provides many amenities such as walking trails, cross country skiing, canoeing, fat tire cycling trails, skate paths and a playground structure, among other features. Various lessons are offered as well as equipment rentals. And they partner with local groups such as Greater Sudbury police services to offer programs such as biking program for youth at risk. Kivi Park was recently identified as the Ontario Training Facility for paranordic athletes.

Day camp trends across North America are seeing a shift from offering just traditional day camp experiences. Specialty camps, the integration of technology, new leisure activities, etc. (USA Camp Association, 2017) For example, many day camps are offering day camp experiences that are designed for specific interests and audiences. The next big trend in

PROGRAM SPECIFIC OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

summer camp culture will include activities that teach kids how to cope with stress, express themselves in healthy ways, and how to wind down.

Day camps outside of Greater Sudbury have taken on a specific focus such as leadership development to distinguish themselves from other camps. Hidden Bay Leadership Camp in Carling, Ontario has developed a model for a leadership camp where all children can attend camp regardless of circumstance. (Hidden Bay Leadership Camp, 2018)

OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION: Designate Camp Wassakwa as a Youth Leadership Camp. Partner with a post-secondary program such as Laurentian University's Outdoor Leadership Program to design and deliver the leadership program using students

OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION: Introduce new programs and facilities at the day camps such a zip lines, high rope courses, rappelling platform and skateboard parks as well as year-round, 4-season activities such as snowboarding, fat-tire cycling, etc

OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION: Partner with other day camps to provide community outreach opportunities. For example, Science North may be interested in exploring a natural science program in an outdoor day camp setting

OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION: Create specialized camps for kids with specific passions or needs such as music- themed or mindful camp that includes mindfulness training, yoga and gardening to help kids learn how to relax

NEIGHBOURHOOD SUMMER PLAYGROUND PROGRAM

Neighbourhood Playgrounds offer convenient and affordable summer programs close to home for participants' ages 5 to 12. Playground programs are offered at approximately 30 locations throughout the City of Greater Sudbury each summer. Programs are hosted at local community centres, field houses or schools. Field trips and special events add adventure to the program, bringing all playground participants together for citywide celebrations. Participants sign up for the summer (July and August). English, French and Integrated programs are offered. In 2017 there was a total of 763 registrations in Summer Playground programs. In the past five years overall enrolment has declined 18% from 931 down to 763.

The design of playgrounds has evolved over time. Traditional playgrounds consisted of simple features such as slides, swings and other basic elements. Modern playgrounds are uniquely designed for creative play that allows children to use their imagination to create

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enjoyable play environments. And new amenities, such as splash pads, are finding their way onto playgrounds. Playgrounds represent a significant portion of the local leisure infrastructure; however, playground enrolment has experienced a decline in recent years. And issues such as physical accessibility, present challenges for older playgrounds. In 2017 the City embarked on a Playground Revitalization Project that will result in the revitalization of up to 58 playgrounds over the next several years. *“Playgrounds contribute to the health and well-being of residents. Playgrounds provide opportunities for active and passive recreation and act as community gathering places. The proposed recommendations for playground revitalization enhance play spaces with priority considerations for neighbourhoods based on socioeconomic factors.”* (City of Greater Sudbury, 2018)

There are several emerging trends in playgrounds around the world. In New Zealand, there are developing Destination Playgrounds which combine adventure, variety, ‘out of the box’ design and a social atmosphere: and you have a destination playground. Often themed and usually embracing all ages and abilities, destination playgrounds draw local community and tourists alike. (Playground Centre, 2018) Other trends are theme-based such as music playgrounds. *“Music is a universal language that any can play. Our Rhapsody outdoor music line is tuned to Major C so any prodigy or novice can start jamming to help release stress with a drum, xylophone or chimes.”* (RecWeest, 2018) Create environments that children can control by providing flexibility in materials and spaces that promote inquiry and evoke curiosity. (City of Calgary, 2018) In Calgary, they offer Mobile Adventure Playground which is not a registered program, but a playground that offers a different way to play. Onsite play ambassadors are there to inspire play and keep the playground safe, but not directly supervise the children. Parents are encouraged to stay and watch their children play and see how their imaginations soar in this new adventure space. (City of Calgary, 2018)

PLAYLearnThink is a local organization that offers training for recreation leaders and anyone who directly or indirectly impacts children's play. They are committed to helping children learn, to nurture their sense of wonder for the world and guide them on their path to life-long learning, self-resilience and social, emotional and physical well-being. PLAYLearnThink also offers playful professional development and training sessions such as Children as Scientists, Learning Through Play and Creating a PLAYspace. (Harrison, 2018)

There is a tremendous opportunity to fundamentally transform the summer playground program from its current status by integrating the principles of a new Play Charter. For example, *“When children have opportunities to play they use creativity, innovation, and reflection to learn, experiment, solve problems, create new worlds, test boundaries, assess risk, and meet challenges.”* (City of Calgary, 2018). New and diverse high-quality programs

PROGRAM SPECIFIC OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

could add value to the playground experience for children and youth such that playgrounds are not viewed just as places for parents to drop off their children for the day, but destinations for play that encourage physical, emotional and social development and grounded in the principles of population health such as resiliency learning and holistic health.

OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION: overhaul the summer playground program to reflect the principles of the new play charter, offer new high-value activities, encourage self-directed learning and development, and promote creativity and free play

OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION: re-designate summer playground staff as Play Ambassadors and provide training through such programs as PLAYLearnThink

OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION: Invite the McEwen School of Architecture to engage their students in a project to re-design playground spaces incorporating specific themes utilizing as well as the principles of Play Wales (Play Wales, 2018)

PROGRAM SPECIFIC CAMPS

The municipality offers several camps that are topics specific including: creative arts, sports sampler and leadership camps. The camps are offered at several different locations including day camps, schools, community centres and playgrounds. Utilization for Creative Arts Camps and Sports Samplers has declined from 50% in 2013 down to 17% in 2017.

Creative Arts Camps

This day camp explores provides campers opportunities to experience visual and performing art through arts, dance and drama. The program is offered for participants' ages 6 to 14. Six two-week sessions are offered during the summer. The camp is held at a local high school or community centre. In 2016, 75 participants were registered in creative arts camps.

OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION: Partner with local arts organizations, such as the Sudbury Art Gallery, Place des Arts and the Sudbury Theatre Centre, to design and deliver programs at municipally-owned facilities

Sports Sampler Camps

This camp teaches FUNdamental movement skills and FUNdamental sports skills, the rules of the play and importance of playing for fun. Participants in this camp have access to a multi-sport facility and surrounding park. The program is intended for participants 6 to 14 years of age. Eight one-week sessions are offered during the summer. There were only 75 participants in sports sampler camps in 2016.

PROGRAM SPECIFIC OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION: Integrate Sport Sampler programs into the summer playground program

Leadership Camps

The City provides opportunities for individuals to further develop leadership abilities, start building skills for part-time jobs or for those who wish to experience camps in a new way through Leader-In-Training or Counsellor-in-Training programs. These programs are for 14 to 16-year olds and held as part of Camp Sudaca, Camp Wassakwa and Neighbourhood Summer Playground programs. A total of 50 individuals registered for CIT and LIT programs in 2016.

OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION: Partner with a post-secondary program such as Laurentian University's Outdoor Leadership Program to design and deliver the leadership program using students

Developmental Summer Programs

The City has collaborated with Child and Community Resources (CCR) to offer recreational summer program for children ages 8 to 18 with multiple complex special needs. CCR is a charitable organization that provides services and community supports to parents, children and professionals to enhance and support the inclusion, integration, and wellbeing of children across the north region of Ontario. (Child & Community Resources, 2018) The integration of special populations within children and youth programming can be a challenge. Adolescent staff don't usually have the necessary experience or skills to manage these populations. Parents of these youth have expectations that their child will be supervised by qualified staff.

OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION: Invite the CCR and other local providers to expand training programs for the City's leisure staff on working with special populations

YOUTH DROP-IN CENTRES

Youth drop-in centres operate primarily on a drop in basis and offer a variety of supervised activities for participants from pre-teen to age 18 including sports; pastimes such as billiards and video games, movie nights, chat time and guest presentations on current issues. Internet access, homework assistance, peer mentoring and educational workshops are also offered. The sites connect youth with their local community, encouraging them to volunteer and make a difference in their neighbourhood. Centres pride themselves on being smoke, drug and alcohol-free venues for young people to interact in a safe and nonjudgmental environment. Centres assist youth in developing positive friendships and developing resiliency. The City operates youth drop in centres in Capreol, Dowling, Levack/Onaping, Ryan Heights, Valley East and Walden. Drop in centres

PROGRAM SPECIFIC OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

run from September through June. These six centres are funded by the City, with a Provincial grant specifically available for the Ryan Heights program. There were approximately 7,500 visits at City operated youth drop-in centres in 2016-2017. Youth centres do face some challenges as well. There is some question as to their long-term viability. For some people, there is a stigma attached to participating at youth centres. The location of some of the existing centres makes it difficult for many young people to access them. There may be a need to expand the hours of operation during holidays and weekends. Some parents view youth centres as ‘daycare’ facilities and expect a high level of supervision. Finally, youth centres can be costly to operate given the number of participants that use them.

A couple of bright spots in the local youth centre infrastructure are the Rayside-Balfour Youth Centre and the Sudbury Youth Action Centre. These centres are associated with non-profit groups that raise funds, operate the centres and manage volunteers. They do receive subsidies from the City. The two organizations operating these youth centres receive annual funding for programming and staffing from the City of Greater Sudbury through an annual community grant allocation: Rayside-Balfour Youth Action Network (\$60,000) and Sudbury Action Centre for Youth SACY (\$89,120). A report entitled “Annual Grants Value for Money Review” showed that both Youth Centre grants scored above 70 on the value for Money framework. (City of Greater Sudbury, 2017) Both Centres run through the summer whereas the six that are operated by the City only offer programming from September to June. The operating hours and number of days vary by location. Both Youth Centres scored well in the majority of the tool, however lacked points in the volunteer category as full time paid staff are in place. The Rayside-Balfour Youth Centre operates out of Cote Park, which is a Municipally-owned facility at no cost. Both centres also receive additional grants through other sources such as the United Way. There appears to be many benefits to this model, such as: they are driven by volunteer-based, non-profit community organizations which create a heightened sense of ownership and commitment; their ability to access other revenue sources; they are open all year round; and they offer extended operating hours.

The Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan Review (2014) calls for youth centres to be located near schools, in parks or community centres, and on transit and active transportation routes. The Master Plan’s online survey and open houses found considerable interest in expanded program opportunities for teens, including keeping youth centres open during the summer. It recommends that, as opportunities arise, existing leisure facilities should be retrofitted to ensure that spaces are welcoming for youth. Any new youth space should be co-located with community centres rather than creating new stand-alone facilities. In considering how to revitalize and energize youth centres, there needs to be a combination of both drop-in as well as integration with

PROGRAM SPECIFIC OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

existing facilities that are under-utilized such as community halls, day camp facilities, and playground field houses. This combination may allow youth more choices to engage and participate without the perceived “stigma” of attending a youth centre drop in site. Community partnerships are critical to the viability of youth centres. Agreements with school boards: includes various relationships developed between municipalities and school boards to maximize the benefits and use of public infrastructure for the community, and to minimize the operational costs of maintaining the public infrastructure. (Parks and Recreation Ontario, 2009)

There are several youth centres around the world that take a more innovative approach to their raison d’être. For example, the Heartwood Community Centre for Youth Development in Halifax *“uses an integrated approach in our community youth development practices. We provide direct leadership training for youth by supporting and working with youth in their communities. We also offer capacity building, professional development, and research for anyone else who is interested in meaningfully engaging youth. Our direct work with young people keeps us relevant and connected to issues and approaches critical to youth, while our capacity-building and consulting work increases the ability of organizations and government to reach a diversity of young people across the province.”* Their slogan is *“Imagine if all youth were viewed as community leaders... and all youth knew of this to be true!”*. (Heartwood Centre for Community Youth Development, 2018). Another example is the Drop Inn independent Youth Organisation in the UK. Their mission is to *“encourage good social skills, help improve self-esteem and promote mutual respect. Social sessions are in a safe space designed and run by young people, there is no entry fee or registration to ensure full inclusion. We welcome young people to use our award-winning youth venue to express their creativity, build confidence and develop new skills. We believe in community cohesion and take any opportunity to link our young members with other areas of the community.”* (The Drop Inn, 2018) Another innovative centre is the Youth Spaces for Creation in Spain, which *“encourages the creative, innovative, entrepreneurial and artistic thinking of young people. These centres are always open to the proposals from their own users; therefore, their agenda are built up daily and updated with the new needs of the youth.”* (Portalul european pentru tineret)

The City is currently developing a Community Hub strategy. This strategy presents opportunities for aligning and consolidating leisure facilities for children and youth programs and services such as those offered at youth centres. And contemporary community centre designs now place a greater emphasis on multi-use spaces that can be used for a wider variety of activities, often in conjunction with other facility components that create a destination with broader appeal. (Monteith and Brown Planning Consultants, 2017).

PROGRAM SPECIFIC OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

There is an opportunity to rethink what drop-in youth centres should be moving forward. Instead of being facility-centric, they could be staging areas for connecting youth to the broader community. Many Ontario communities have started 'pop up' youth centres that are mobile in nature and connected to other local events such as OHL hockey games. Thinking outside of the four walls, youth could participate in civic engagement activities; visit other areas of the city such as the Grace Hartman Amphitheater or the Greater Sudbury Police Services; help out at local festivals and events; or volunteer in spring clean ups. The youth drop-in centres could become very much focussed on youth leadership development within the context of community development and civic engagement and their direct involvement in program development would drive the youth centre activities.

OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION: redesign youth drop-in centre programs around civic engagement, leadership development and community development activities and engage youth directly in the process

OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION: Collaborate with local groups such as the YMCA, Science North and the Carrefour Francophone to encourage community outreach program delivery at existing youth centres

OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION: Consider other city-owned facilities as destinations for youth centres such as libraries, community halls located in arenas and playground facilities. As the City pursues the development of new community hubs, youth centres should be considered as a possible tenant

OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION: Design mobile 'pop up' youth drop-in centres that can be setup and dismantled at various locations such as festival sites, parks and shopping mall parking lots to facilitate civic engagement

OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION: review operating hours with a view of making Youth Drop-in Centres more accessible during summer months and holidays.

COURSES, CLASSES AND LESSONS

There are several other recreation programs directly offered by the Leisure Services Division for children and youth on a program registration basis. These include:

- Swimming Lessons (Preschool 1 through Swimmer 9)
- Bronze Star, Bronze Medallion, Bronze Cross, NLS Certification, NLS Instructor courses
- Junior Lifeguard Club
- Ski and snowboarding lessons
- Learn to Cycle program

PROGRAM SPECIFIC OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Mountain biking
- Tae Kwon Do courses
- Learn to Skate and Power Skating lessons
- Gymnastics programs
- Babysitting courses

Participation rates vary from course to course. It can be a challenge to find certified instructors. And other organizations in the community already offer some of these courses and classes. The City maintains a strong focus on introductory programs for beginners and learning the fundamentals such as the “*Learn to*” programs. Elite level programs tend to be offered by other non-profit and private sector organizations. The City’s fundamental level programs provide a foundation for participants to access higher level programs in the future.

OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION: Continue to focus on offering affordable courses for beginners which provide fundamental skill development and consider expanding to include other sports or activities

OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION: Reconsider the delivery of programs that offered by other non-profit or for-profit organizations such as Tai Kwan Do, Yoga and Babysitting courses

The City provides fitness facilities, especially among smaller communities where there are typically fewer private fitness offerings. Some municipalities aim to bridge the gap and supply turnkey fitness facilities, while others refrain from offering this level of service to avoid competition with private business. It is typical for most communities to provide activities (e.g. fitness classes, yoga, etc.) within some type of multi-purpose space in community centres. The desire for programming focused on physical health and wellbeing has resulted in growing participation in physical fitness activities across Ontario. This demand is resulting in strong levels of use of private and public-sector fitness services, including active living programming centred on general health and wellness, cardiovascular training and stretching activities (e.g. aerobics, yoga, pilates, etc.). Fitness programs that require specialized equipment are traditionally provided by the private sector given their ability to offer a premium level of service and higher quality facilities. For example, a new fitness facility, the Lively Athletic Centre recently opened. (Lively Athletic Centre, 2018)

OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION: Review the need for fitness programs at municipally-owned fitness facilities. Consider partnering with local

PROGRAM SPECIFIC OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

organizations or businesses who may be interested in offering programs at these sites

Municipal pools are one of the most expensive recreational facilities to operate and can challenge the ability of smaller communities to fund their operation due to smaller tax bases. For this reason, indoor pools are seldom provided in small rural communities and aging outdoor pools are increasingly being closed to avoid capital renewal costs. Splash pads are becoming increasingly common park features but need to be properly justified due to their cost. They tend to be free, drop-in facilities that appeal mostly to families with young children. They are also more cost effective to build and operate than outdoor pools as they do not require lifeguards, and generally have longer operating seasons. Recently, there are local businesses that are contributing to new facilities such as Lopes Ltd, *“Lopes’ contribution to the project will total approximately 80 per cent of the cost, with the City of Greater Sudbury contributing \$50,000 from the Healthy Community Initiatives funds.”* (Sudbury Star, 2018) Recent trends also include wave pools, fun pools and water trampolines. In Greater Sudbury, the design of some aquatic facilities limits the diversity of programs offered.

OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION: expand waterfront front programs to include swimming lessons, kayaking and canoeing, etc. at various beaches throughout Greater Sudbury

Greater Sudbury runs two municipally-owned ski hills- Adanac and Lively where ski and snow boarding lessons are offered. Adanac provides several amenities such as washrooms, equipment rentals, a BMX park, and a canteen; and is located adjacent to Rotary Park. Off season activities include obstacle mud runs, miner’s mayhem and women’s leadership courses. The facilities can be rented for various activities such as weddings or school field trips. Cite Blue Mountain amenities

OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION: provide access to seasonal leisure equipment such snow shoes and fat-tire bikes in the wintertime

OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION: Partner with Rotary and Rotary Sunshine Clubs to expand 4-season leisure opportunities such as mountain biking, cross country skiing and snowshoeing at Rotary Park

OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION: Plan for the re-purposing of the Northern Ontario Film Studios (formerly Barrydowne Arena) to become an indoor leisure venue to support outdoor leisure activities at Rotary Park

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Appendices

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

We would like to thank all of those who contributed to this review. This report is a product of the shared vision and dedication of the City of Greater Sudbury Leisure Services Division as well as the many people who provided valuable insights and feedback.

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 Cathy Stadder-Wise - Science North
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 Nancy Gareh- Sudbury Art Gallery
 Sherry Fournier- Child Community Resources
 Melissa Sheridan- Kivi Park
 Tom Coon, Kendra McIssac, Nicole D'Avirro-Beattie - YMCA
 Stéphane Gauthier- Carrefour francophone
 Brian Smith- Rotary Park
 Anne Salter- Sudbury Manitoulin Children's Foundation

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SUMMARY OF OPPORTUNITIES

Topic	Opportunity
Population Health	That the Leisure Services Division lead or facilitate the implementation, where appropriate, of the priorities of the Population Health report
Play Charter	That the CGS adopt a Children and Youth Play Charter and invite local stakeholders to endorse the Charter
Youth Friendly Community	Honour the City's commitment and designation as a Youth Friendly Community
Accessible Programs	That the City continue to implement the priorities identified in its Accessibility Plan, to ensure the individual's right of access to municipal facilities, programs and services in accordance with provincial legislation and municipal policies and by-laws
	That the municipality explore ways to offer more programming and access to facilities on weekends and possibly via earlier and later weekday hours for some programs and leisure opportunities
Play Risk Management	Develop a Play Risk policy that provides a balanced approach to children's safety and the benefits that come from providing challenging play experiences
Greater Sudbury's Uniqueness	That the Leisure Services Division look for opportunities to provide leisure programs within the natural environment and that Laurentian University's McEwen School of Architecture be approached to engage students in the design of outdoor leisure spaces that leverage the opportunities of our seasonal and natural resources
Role of Municipality	Develop a streamlined mechanism for community leisure groups to easily navigate and engage all municipal departments
	Increase CGS's community development approach to leisure programming and coordination
	Leverage the profile and reputation of Leisure Services to engage the community and promote all leisure services and programs
Partnerships	Enhance the City's partnership with community agencies to improve sector coordination and develop a strategic partnership framework for monitoring partnership effectiveness
	Work with local school boards to identify opportunities for the expansion of leisure service program delivery and achieve a joint use agreement for all leisure facilities
	Partner with post-secondary institutions to involve students in the

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	delivery of leisure service programs
Staff and Volunteers	Develop a leisure volunteer strategy to facilitate volunteerism across the community
	Develop a training program specific to creating 'play' ambassadors
	Review the current hiring process for summer students as well as the current wage levels for seasonal student workers compared to the private and non-profit sectors
Youth Engagement	Invite youth representatives to review and provide feedback on this report and invite the public to provide feedback on the report on the Over to You webpage
	Establish a Youth Leisure Advisory committee to provide the municipality with ongoing advice on the development of leisure programs and services
	Organize a Youth Summit every four years to engage youth in a discussion about local leisure activities, needs and trends
	Encourage local CANs to establish Youth Community Action Networks (YouCAN) for their respective areas
Leadership Development	Identify a youth leadership development model to encourage personal development, civic engagement and volunteerism within leisure programs and services
	Re-purpose Camp Wassakwa as a leadership development camp for youth. Partner with the YMCA or other local organizations to deliver the leadership development content
Communications and Registrations	Adopt an online portal to promote, communicate, schedule, register and purchase leisure services across the City of Greater Sudbury
	Develop a dynamic communications plan and a robust social media strategy to promote leisure services
	Develop an email database of families and individuals who have participated at specific programs to proactively promote upcoming programs
	Partner with local Francophone groups to proactively ensure that marketing and communications is bilingual and reaching francophone audiences
Affordability	Formalize the Affordable Access to Recreation policy to bolster universal access to physical activity and recreation opportunities
	Build on the success of the Feel Free programs develop a leisure pass that gives youth access to many leisure programs at no cost or a reduced fee as well as provide access to public transit at a reduced rate
	Build on the success of the skate exchange and bike exchange

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Assessing Programs and Services	programs by developing a comprehensive equipment exchange program
	Consider developing a Welcome Policy to give low income individuals and families access to leisure programs and services
	Actively involve local stakeholders in leisure service planning and track emerging leisure trends
	Maintain an up-to-date inventory of recreation, leisure, and culture opportunities within the community
	Only develop new programs that are non-competitive with other providers, introductory in nature, able to achieve realistic program objectives, and are feasible within available resources

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SUMMARY OF OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Program or Service	Program Specific Options for Consideration
Day Camps	Designate Camp Wassakwa as a Youth Leadership Camp. Partner with a post-secondary program such as Laurentian University's Outdoor Leadership Program to design and deliver the leadership program using students
	Introduce new programs and facilities at the day camps such as zip lines, high rope courses, rappelling platform and skateboard parks as well as year-round, 4-season activities such as snowboarding, fat tire cycling, etc.
	Partner with other day camps to provide community outreach opportunities. For example, Science North may be interested in exploring a natural science program in an outdoor day camp setting
	Create specialized camps for kids with specific passions or needs such as music- themed or mindful camps that includes mindfulness training, yoga and gardening to help kids learn how to relax
Summer Playground Program	Overhaul the summer playground program to reflect the principles of the new play charter, offer new high-value activities, encourage self-directed learning and development, and promote creativity and free play
	Re-designate summer playground staff as Play Ambassadors and provide training through such programs as PLAYLearnThink
	Invite the McEwen School of Architecture to engage their students in a project to re-design playground spaces incorporating specific themes utilizing as well as the principles of Play Wales
Creative Arts Camps	Partner with local arts organizations, such as the Sudbury Art Gallery, Place des Arts and the Sudbury Theatre Centre, to design and deliver programs at municipally-owned facilities
Sports Sampler	Integrate Sport Sampler programs into the summer playground program
Leadership Camps	Partner with a post-secondary program such as Laurentian University's Outdoor Leadership Program to design and deliver the leadership program using students
Developmental Summer Programs	Invite the CCR and other local providers to expand training programs for the City's leisure staff on working with special

	populations
Youth Drop In Centres	Redesign youth drop-in centre programs around civic engagement, leadership development and community development activities and engage youth directly in the process
	Collaborate with local groups such as the YMCA, Science North and the Carrefour Francophone to encourage community outreach program delivery at existing youth centres
	Consider other city-owned facilities as destinations for youth centres such as libraries, community halls located in arenas and playground facilities. As the City pursues the development of new community hubs, youth centres should be considered as a possible tenant
	Design mobile 'pop up' youth drop-in centres that can be setup and dismantled at various locations such as festival sites, parks and shopping mall parking lots to facilitate civic engagement
	Review operating hours with a view of making Youth Drop-in Centres more accessible during summer months and holidays.
Courses, Classes and Lessons	Continue to focus on offering affordable courses for beginners which provide fundamental skill development and consider expanding to include other sports or activities
	Reconsider the delivery of programs that offered by other non-profit or for-profit organizations such as Tai Kwan Do, Yoga and Babysitting courses
Fitness Programs	Review the need for fitness programs at municipally-owned fitness facilities. Consider partnering with local organizations or businesses who may be interested in offering programs at these sites
Pool and Waterfront Programs	Expand waterfront front programs to include swimming lessons, kayaking and canoeing, etc. at various beaches throughout Greater Sudbury
Ski Hills	Provide access to seasonal leisure equipment such as snow shoes and fat-tire bikes in the wintertime
	Partner with Rotary and Rotary Sunshine Clubs to expand 4-season leisure opportunities such as mountain biking, cross country skiing and snowshoeing at Rotary Park
	Plan for the re-purposing of the Northern Ontario Film Studios (formerly Barrydowne Arena) to become an indoor leisure venue to support outdoor leisure activities at Rotary Park

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