Attachment 1

DRAFT

AURORA

Parks & Recreation Master Plan

March 2023

Monteith+Brown
planning consultants

Parks & Recreation Master Plan

March 2023

DRAFT

Prepared by:

Monteith+Brown
planning consultants

Acknowledgements

The Parks & Recreation Master Plan has been created with the assistance of hundreds of individuals whose diverse range of interests and viewpoints have helped to shape this important document. We wish to thank all members of the community that have contributed their time and input through the consultation process, as well as members of Town Council and Staff that provided critical oversight during the process. Your collective efforts are appreciated and we hope that the Master Plan Update results in meaningful change through continued enhancement of the facilities serving the parks and recreational needs of Aurora residents for years to come.

Town of Aurora Council (2022-26)

Mayor Tom Mrakas
Ward 1 Councillor – Ron Weese
Ward 2 Councillor – Rachel Gilliland
Ward 3 Councillor – Wendy Gaertner
Ward 4 Councillor – Michael Thompson
Ward 5 Councillor – John Gallo
Ward 6 Councillor – Harold Kim

Master Plan Update Steering Committee

John Firman, Manager, Business Support (Project Manager)
Al Downey, Director, Operational Services
Robin McDougall, Director, Community Services
Sara Tienkamp, Manager, Parks & Fleet
Lisa Warth, Manager, Recreation
Jason Gaertner, Manager, Financial Management
Doug Bertrand, Manager, Facilities Management
Gary Greidanus, Senior Landscape Architect
Michelle Outar, Senior Communications Advisor
Edward Terry, Senior Policy Planner
Matthew Volpintesta, Senior Policy Planner
Erin Hamilton, Coordinator, Special Events and Sponsorships
Hailey Jones, Sport & Community Development Specialist
Nicole Alison, Supervisor Business Support
Cory MacNeil, GIS Analyst

Project Consultants

Monteith Brown Planning Consultants

Land Acknowledgement

The Town of Aurora acknowledges that the Anishinaabe lands on which we live and work are the traditional and treaty territory of the Chippewas of Georgina Island, as well as many other Nations whose presence here continues to this day. As the closest First Nation community to Aurora, we recognize the special relationship the Chippewas have with the lands and waters of this territory. They are the water protectors and environmental stewards of these lands, and as a municipality we join them in these responsibilities.

We further acknowledge that Aurora is part of the treaty lands of the Mississaugas and Chippewas, recognized through Treaty #13 as well as the Williams Treaties of 1923.

A shared understanding of the rich cultural heritage that has existed for centuries, and how our collective past brought us to where we are today, will help us walk together into a better future.

DRAFT

Table of Contents

1. Introduction 1
1.1 Master Plan Purpose and Objectives 2
1.2 Master Plan Scope 2
1.3 Project Methodology 3
1.4 Parks and Recreation Benefits 3

2. Community Context 4
2.1 About Aurora 5
2.2 Aligning with Existing Corporate Frameworks 6
2.3 Demographic Characteristics of the Population 6

3. Parks and Recreation Sector Context 19
3.1 Departmental Structure 20
3.2 Recent Accomplishments 20
3.3 Aligning with Existing Departmental Studies 21
3.4 Facility Provision Levels and Municipal Benchmarking 23
3.5 Parks and Recreation Trends 24

4. Community Engagement 26
4.1 Launch Event (Pop-up Consultation) 28
4.2 Community Online Survey 29
4.3 Stakeholder Consultation 41
4.4 Youth Input 44
4.5 Internal Consultation 45
4.6 Emerging Directions from the Initial Public Input and Research Phase 46

5. Strategic Framework 48
5.1 SWOT Analysis 49
5.2 A Vision for Parks and Recreation in Aurora 50

6. Indoor Recreation Facilities 51
6.1 Summary of the Indoor Recreation Facility Supply 52
6.2 Community Centres 53
6.3 Indoor Aquatics 55
6.4 Gymnasiums 58
6.5 Fitness Centres 59
6.6 Arenas 60
6.7 Indoor Racquet Courts 64
6.8 Indoor Turf Fields 64
6.9 Multi-Purpose Rooms 65
6.10 Dedicated Youth Space 65
6.11 Dedicated Older Adult Space 66
6.12 Other Recreation Facilities 66

7. Outdoor Recreation Facilities 68
7.1 Summary of the Outdoor Recreation Facility Supply 69
7.2 Soccer and Multi-use Fields 71
7.3 Ball Diamonds 74
7.4 Cricket Fields 76
7.5 Tennis & Pickleball Courts 76
7.6 Basketball Courts 81
7.7 Beach Volleyball Courts 83
7.8 Skateboard and Bike Parks 84
7.9 Splash Pads 86

DRAFT

7.10 Off-Leash Dog Parks 88
7.11 Playgrounds 89
7.12 Outdoor Fitness Stations 91
7.13 Outdoor Skating Rinks 91
7.14 Lawn Bowling 93
7.15 Outdoor Running Tracks 93
7.16 Disc Golf Courses 93
7.17 Recreational Trails 94
7.18 Community Gardens 95

8. Parkland 96

8.1 Parkland Classifications and Policies 97
8.2 Parkland Supplies and Needs 100
8.3 Park Design 104

9. Service Delivery and Program Support 107

9.1 Municipal Role in Service Delivery 108
9.2 Affordability and Accessibility 109
9.3 Programming 110
9.4 Permitting and Allocation 111
9.5 Staffing and Volunteers 112
9.6 Communications and Promotion 112

10. Implementation Strategy 114

10.1 Monitoring and Updating the Plan 115
10.2 Financial Considerations 116
10.3 Community Partnerships and Sponsorships 116
10.4 Summary of Recommendations – Priority and Timing 118

Appendix A: Summary of Supporting Documents A-1

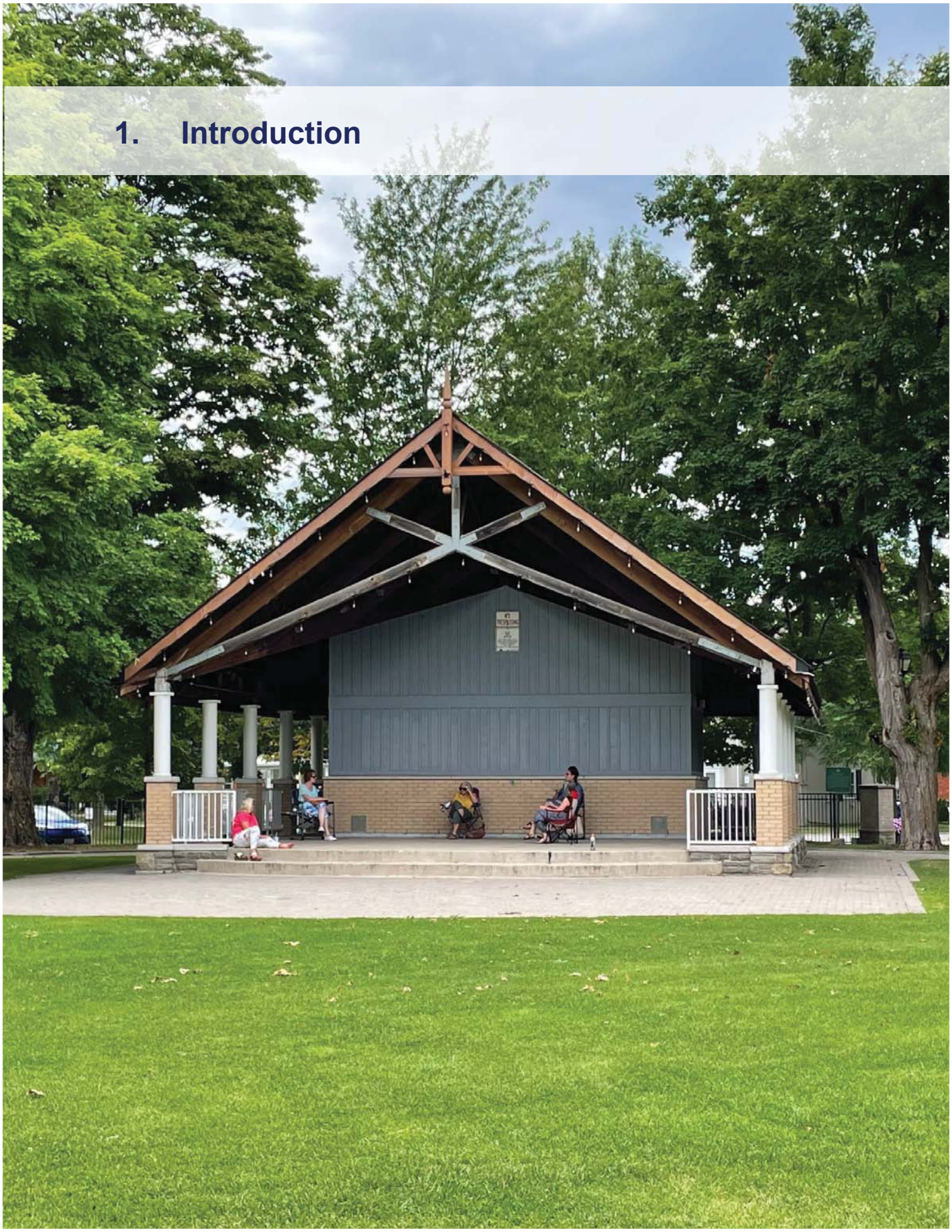
Appendix B: Parks and Recreation Trends B-1

Appendix C: Status of Recommendations from 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan C-1

Appendix D: Community Survey Data Tables D-1

DRAFT

1. Introduction



1.1 Master Plan Purpose and Objectives

The Parks & Recreation Master Plan guides decision-making with respect to municipal parks and recreation facilities and services in the Town of Aurora over the next five years (2023 to 2027). The Plan is an update to the Master Plan last completed in 2016 and has been aligned with other guiding municipal documents and studies, such as the Official Plan, Aquatics Feasibility Study, Outdoor Sports Field Development Strategy, and more.

Local parks and recreation services benefit the community by providing residents with a diverse range of opportunities for physical activity and social engagement. These programs and services play a significant role in the community's health and supporting the Town's high quality of life.

To provide a basis for future planning, the Plan captures updated input from the public and stakeholders pertaining to local needs and priorities. It also recognizes several current and forecasted changes in the community's demographic characteristics and population growth. The influence of these changes, combined with emerging trends in the parks and recreation sector are evaluated in the context of evolving demand and resident preferences.

Master Plan Objectives:

- Assess the **inventory and distribution** of parks, recreation facilities, programs and services provided by the Town and community partners;
- Establish a foundation of **background research** based on local demographics, trends, best practices, innovative strategies, as well as an understanding of potential impacts due to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Gather **input** from the public, stakeholders, staff and Council to identify issues, potential solutions and to test preliminary directions;
- Conduct **needs assessments** for parks and recreation facilities in relation to upgrades, new development, existing gaps, and future requirements to support current and future generations;
- Assess the Town's existing **service delivery model as well as parks and park policy** to ensure that the appropriate resources are available to meet the needs of current and future residents, as well as to implement the Master Plan; and
- Develop an achievable, realistic and fiscally-responsible **implementation strategy**, as well as alternative paths to meet short-, medium- and long-term goals through the efficient use and allocation of resources.

1.2 Master Plan Scope

The range of parks and recreation amenities and services is expansive, including both indoor and outdoor features, as well as physical, administrative, financial, and human resources. This Parks and Recreation Master Plan includes assessments of:

- Indoor recreation facilities, such as community centres, pools, gyms and arenas;
- Outdoor recreation facilities, such as sports fields, courts, splash pads and off-leash dog parks;
- Parkland supplies and guidelines;
- Services, policies and supports necessary to provide the aforementioned facilities and services.

Excluded from the scope of this plan are recommendations directly influencing the provision of trails and active transportation infrastructure, cultural and library facilities.

1.3 Project Methodology

This Master Plan project began in summer 2022. Monteith Brown Planning Consultants was retained to direct the development of this study with assistance and oversight from a Project Team consisting of Town staff. Input was also sought from the public, stakeholders and Town officials at key points.

Guided by a Terms of Reference prepared by the Town, development of the Master Plan was divided into two phases to achieve a realistic, implementable, and community-responsive master plan.

Figure 1 – Master Plan Process

Phase 1 of the Master Plan began with a review of relevant background research, growth and demographics, participation trends, and facility benchmarking. Input was then sought from residents, stakeholders, Town Council and municipal staff through a variety of engagement tactics. The research and consultation input were then used to formulate a vision and guiding principles for the Master Plan.

Phase 2 builds upon the initial phase by preparing needs assessment for facilities, parkland, and related services. Recommendations were developed around key priorities. The Draft Master Plan was released for public review and comment prior to finalization.

1.4 Parks and Recreation Benefits

Parks and recreation are integral to our community's success and wellbeing. They contribute in a significant way to our social, economic, and environmental priorities by providing spaces for services and programs that benefit residents and support community-building. Universal access to leisure opportunities that address diverse needs and offer affordable, high-quality opportunities is vital to individual and community health and prosperity.

Specifically, leisure opportunities:

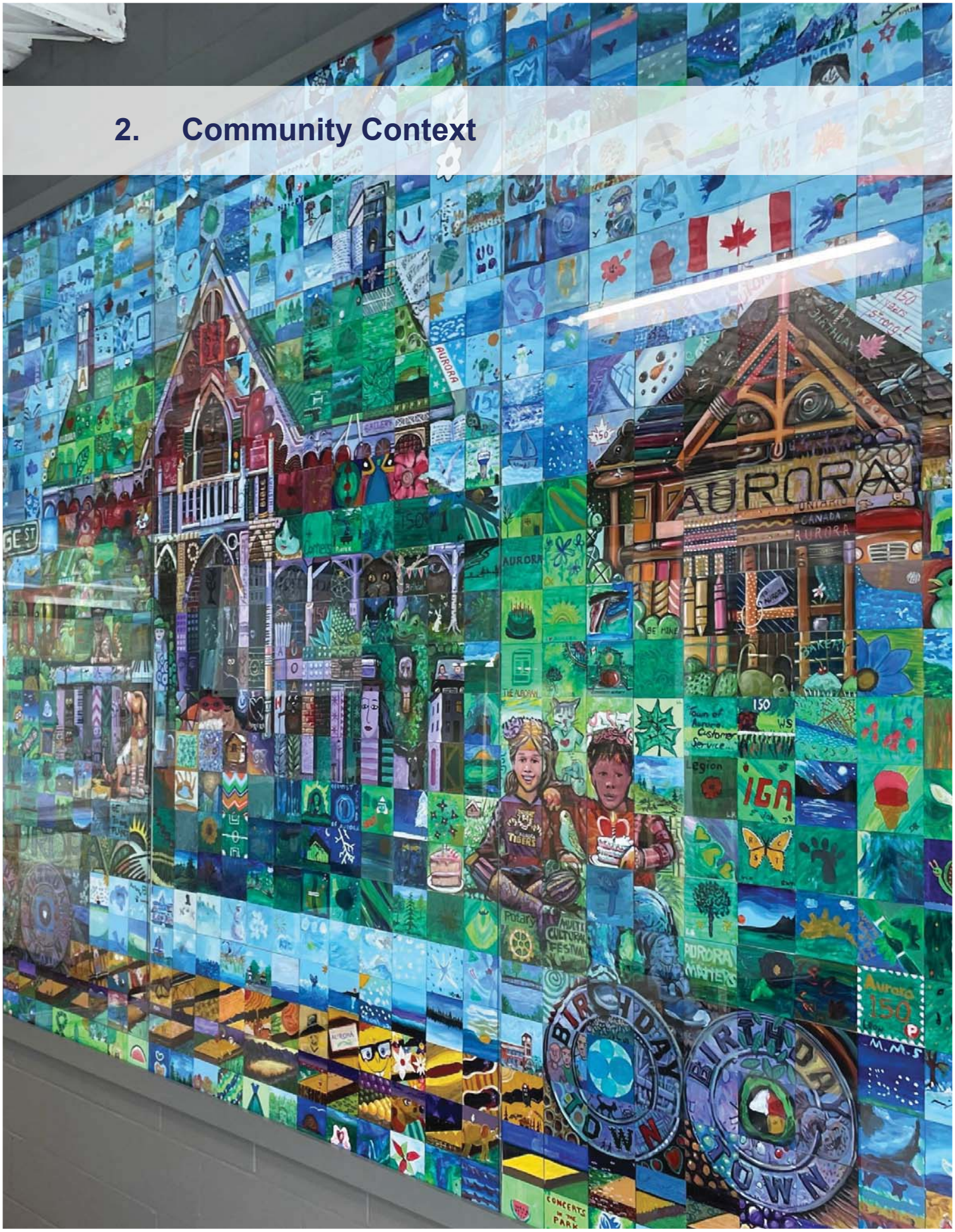
- Enhance mental and physical wellbeing;
- Enhance social wellbeing and promote engagement and inclusion;
- Help build strong families and communities;
- Support equity and inclusion amongst all residents, including marginalized populations;
- Help people connect with nature;
- Help people develop critical and creative thinking skills;
- Improve our resilience to climate change and environmental events; and
- Provide wide-ranging economic benefits.[1]

The Town is commended for recognizing these benefits through the development of this updated Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

[1] Adapted from "A Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015: Pathways to Wellbeing" and "Ontario Culture Strategy (2016)"

DRAFT

2. Community Context



The Town of Aurora is centrally located in the Regional Municipality of York. As a community of this vastly growing region, its adjacent location to Greenbelt territory and neighbouring communities has shifted demand for development towards infill and intensification through nodes that enhance existing corridors. The influence of the community's changing urban fabric creates a high necessity for adequate parks and recreation servicing. A comprehensive understanding of the Town's context is essential for optimizing greenspaces, trails, and recreation with services that engage a diverse population. This section provides an extensive overview of the corporate frameworks, population growth, and demographic profile that represents the community.

2.1 About Aurora

Centrally located within the Regional Municipality of York, the community shares its borders with the Town of Newmarket, Protected countryside, and the Oak Ridges Moraine Greenbelt area. Town facilities service a degree of regional demand arising through its neighbouring communities that include the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, the City of Richmond Hill, and the Township of King. The community possesses 67 parks and 62 kilometers of trails that connect residents to greenspace, natural heritage and recreation facilities. Collectively, the characteristics that outline the community's geographical context are what offers residents the small-town lifestyle with urban amenities that the Town is renowned for.

Figure 2 – Town of Aurora Map

The Town's recreation facilities and parks offer a wide variety of recreation to residents including baseball diamonds, indoor and outdoor basketball courts, BMX/skateboarding parks, fitness circuits, indoor and outdoor ice rinks, playgrounds, splash pads, soccer fields, pickleball and tennis courts, and volleyball courts at multiple locations. Major recreational facilities throughout the community include:

- Aurora Community Centre
- Aurora Family Leisure Complex
- Lind Realty Team Sports Dome
- Aurora Seniors' Centre
- Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex

In addition, completion of the Aurora Town Square project is set for Fall 2023. This project includes a seasonal skating loop, water feature, and additional indoor community and recreation spaces next to the Aurora Public Library in the Town's core on Yonge Street. The community's existing facilities and geographical context provides a unique opportunity for which the optimization of parks and recreation services can enhance the quality of life found within this Regional Municipality of York community. The Town's location is also beneficial to the region's sport tourism industry through the provision of hotel and restaurant establishments.

For a comprehensive planning process to be achieved, this approach must reflect the demand and interest of the diverse abilities, ages, cultural backgrounds and incomes of the population. Additionally, alignment and consistency with existing frameworks and prioritizing the qualities that define the Town of Aurora's identity are essential.

2.2 Aligning with Existing Corporate Frameworks

The Town of Aurora is guided by the policies and studies of several legislatures that are designed to optimize quality of life through parks and recreation. Up to this point, previous studies have provided successful direction through goals, objectives and recommendations. With strong anticipation of the Town continuing to intensify and undergo the impacts of continual growth, this master plan will pursue a comprehensive planning approach that can be relied upon for the proceeding 10 years.

Key documents are summarized in **Appendix A**, including:

- Town of Aurora – Strategic Plan (2011 to 2031)
- York Region Official Plan (2022)
- Town of Aurora – Draft Official Plan (2022)
- Town of Aurora – Service Delivery Review (2021)
- Town of Aurora – Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2022-2026)
- Town of Aurora – Asset Management Plan (2021)
- Town of Aurora – Development Charges Background Study and By-law (2021)
- Town of Aurora – Corporate Environmental Action Plan (2018)

2.3 Demographic Characteristics of the Population

The Town of Aurora supports a diverse community profile that is growing, though at a slower rate than some other municipalities in York Region as the town approaches build-out. Changes are also being seen in terms of resident age, cultural background, employment and income. This section examines the town's demographic profile along with potential implications on parks and recreation planning.

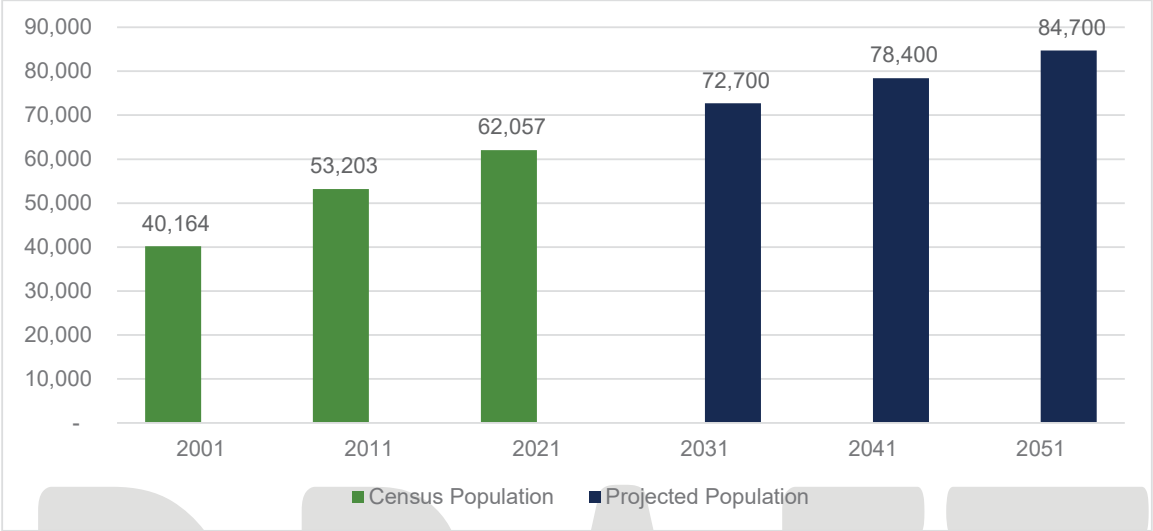
Population and Growth

Aurora has demonstrated steady population growth for several decades, with an accelerated growth rate (10.7%) between 2016 and 2021 when the town reached a population of 62,057. Population estimates from the Regional Municipality of York indicate that the town has reached a population of 64,100 (as of April 2022), a population figure that will be used as the baseline for this plan.

Continued population growth is forecasted, with the town reaching 72,700 residents by 2031 and 84,700 residents by 2051. Residential development in the past has largely focused on greenfield development (e.g., Aurora 2C in the town's northeast area); however, these areas are approaching build-out and an increased focus is being placed on infill and intensification opportunities. The Town's new Official Plan identifies the Aurora Promenade and Major Transit Station Area (MTSA), the Yonge Street Regional Corridor, and the Local Corridors of Bayview Avenue, Leslie Street and Wellington Street as strategic growth areas; these areas will accommodate denser forms of growth.

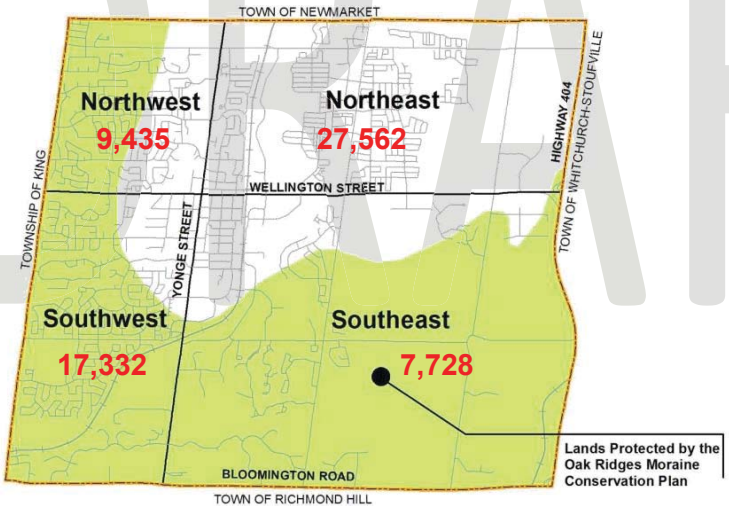
DRAFT

Figure 3 – Town of Aurora Population (existing and projected), 2001 to 2051



Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada (2011-2021); Town of Aurora 2022 Draft Official Plan (2031-2051).

Figure 4 – Census Population by Quadrant, 2021

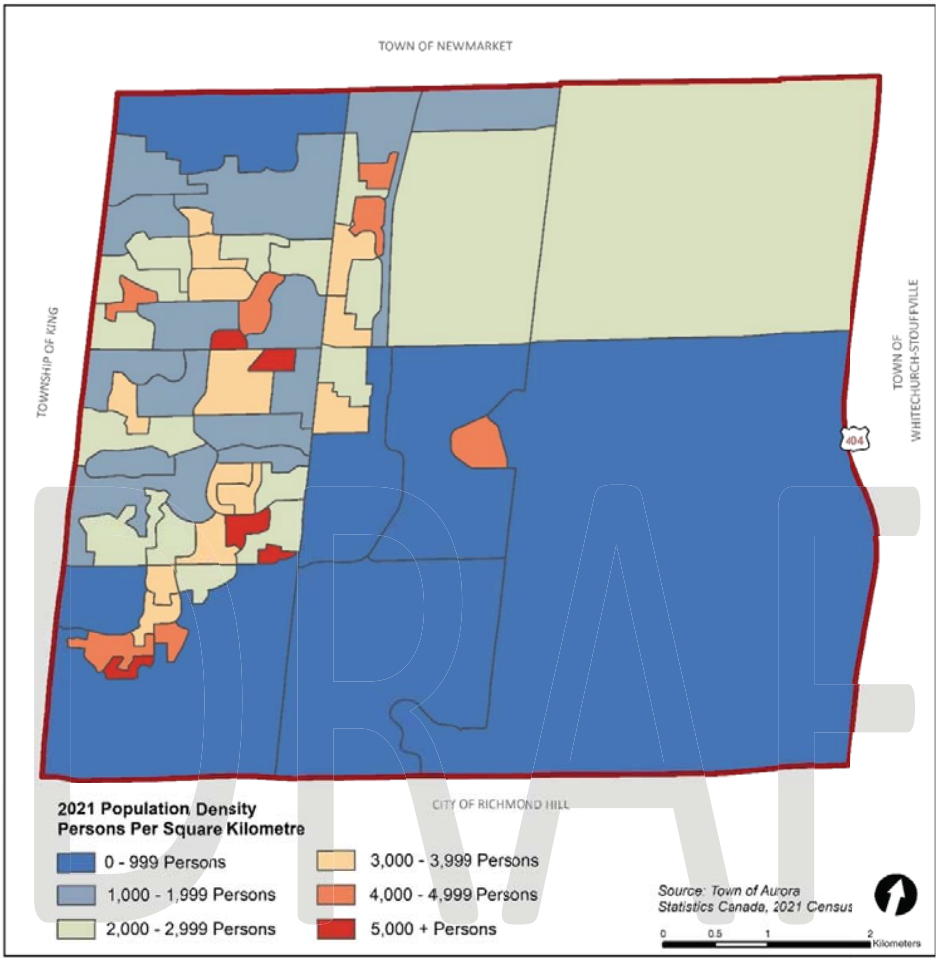


Source: 2021 Census

The following map shows population densities for 2021, illustrating the higher densities in the town's central and northern areas. The Oak Ridges Moraine Countryside Area is a protected provincial landform containing significant ecological and hydrological features that preclude urban development in lands within the southern and western portions of the town.

DRAFT

Figure 5 – Population Density across the Town of Aurora, 2021



DRAFT

A note about changing Provincial planning legislation

In November 2022, the More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022 (Bill 23) partially received Royal Assent, impacting several provisions of the Planning Act and other pieces of legislation. The changes are significant and will impact how municipalities manage growth through implementation of the official plan and how they provide essential infrastructure and community services. Notable to this Master Plan, Bill 23 introduced changes that will reduce development charges revenue, community benefits charges, and parkland dedication requirements. The Town of Aurora issued its formal opposition to Bill 23 in November 2022.

In addition, the Ontario government is working toward integrating the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) and A Place to Grow into a new province-wide planning policy instrument to reflect the policy framework implemented through Bill 23. Under the Planning Act, local planning decisions shall be consistent with policy statements such as the PPS and shall conform with provincial plans like A Place to Grow.

The updated provincial policy framework is expected to include growth management and planning tools that enable the province to achieve its housing target. Some elements of the proposed framework that may impact how and where municipalities grow include:

- Streamlining and simplifying policy direction that enables municipalities to expand their settlement area boundaries;
- Increasing housing supply through intensification in strategic areas (urban and suburban) and increasing flexibility to enable more residential development in rural areas; and
- Encouraging municipalities to undertake long-range integrated infrastructure planning.

The changes to the Planning Act, Provincial Policy Statement, and Places to Grow Act are among the most significant in decades. The full impact of these modifications will continue to be assessed for the months to come and will be considered through the Town's ongoing Official Plan review. Reduced levels of service are possible if funding is reduced to growth-related services as is anticipated. This Parks and Recreation Master Plan reflects the legislative framework that is in place at the time of approval.

Age Profile

Compared the rest of Ontario, Aurora has a higher percentage of children and youth (24% v. 21%), but the town's population is also aging. In 2021, the population's median age was 42.0 years, up from 39.5 years in 2011. The following table identifies comparisons between the town's 2011, 2016 and 2021 age profiles.

Census data shows the most rapidly increasing age groups over the last ten years are older adults (ages 55 to 69) and seniors (ages 70+), which grew by 37% and 39% respectively since 2011. The number of young adults (ages 20 to 34) has also increased, suggesting that the town could see some growth in the number of children in the years to come as this population is within prime child-bearing years.

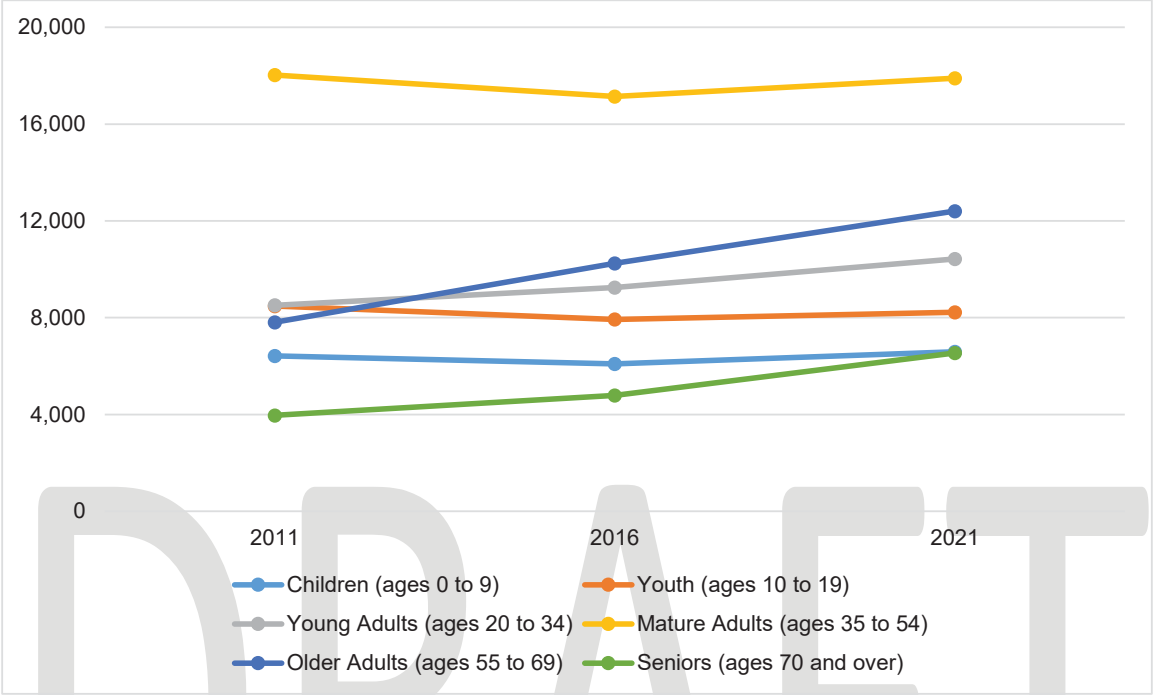
Table 1 – Census Population by Age Group, Town of Aurora, 2011 - 2021

Age Cohort	2011	2016	2021	Change from 2011-2021
Children (ages 0 to 9)	6,415	6,090	6,590	+3%
Youth (ages 10 to 19)	8,480	7,925	8,220	-3%
Young Adults (ages 20 to 34)	8,510	9,250	10,425	+18%
Mature Adults (ages 35 to 54)	18,025	17,140	17,895	-1%
Older Adults (ages 55 to 69)	7,810	10,240	12,405	+37%
Seniors (ages 70 and over)	3,965	4,790	6,540	+39%
Total	**53,205**	**55,435**	**62,057**	**+14.3%**
Median Age	39.5	41.5	42.0	+2.5 years

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada

DRAFT

Figure 6 – Population by Age Group, Town of Aurora, 2011 to 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada

The following maps illustrate the distribution of the town's population (2021) by age group, which provides some broad findings that may be useful for more site-specific planning. Some observations include:

- areas west of Yonge Street have a higher proportion of residents aged 20 to 34 years, suggesting that new families may be more prevalent in this area in the future;
- areas east of Yonge Street have a higher proportion of residents aged 34 to 54 years, indicating that this area has the greatest number of families at present; and
- areas south of Wellington Street contain more established and mature neighbourhoods and have a higher proportion of residents aged 70+ years.

DRAFT

Figure 7 – Population Density, Ages 0 to 9 Years (2021)

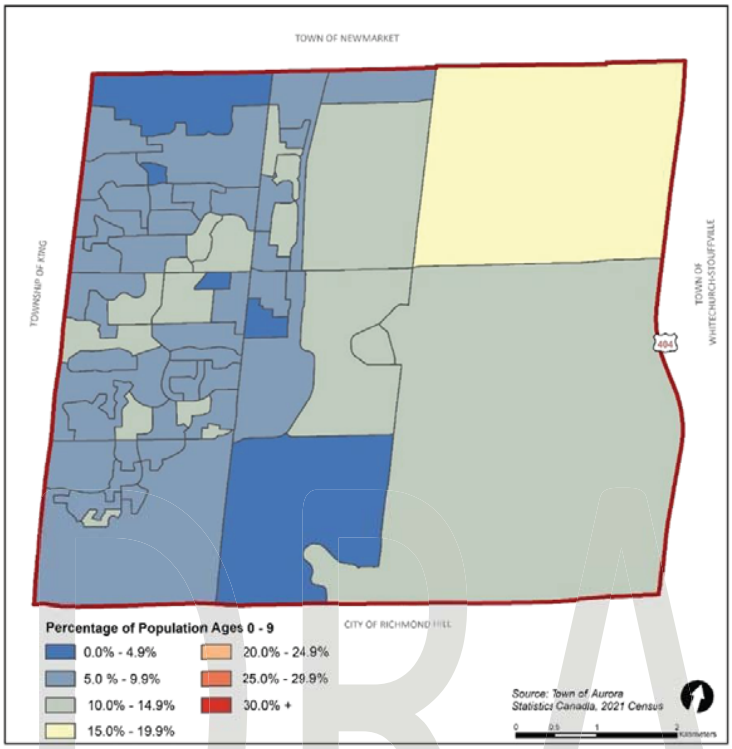
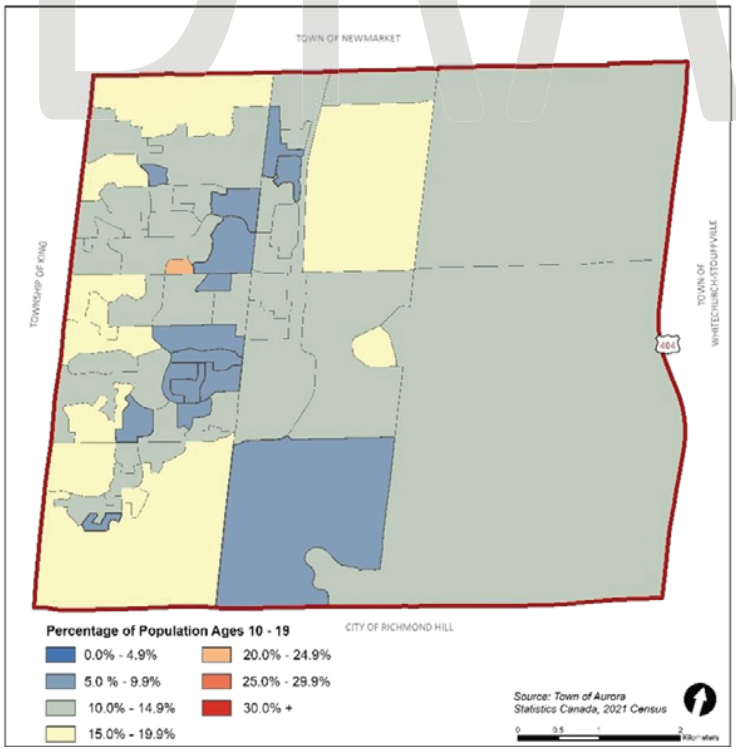


Figure 8 – Population Density, Ages 10 to 19 Years (2021)



DRAFT

Figure 9 – Population Density, Ages 20 to 34 Years (2021)

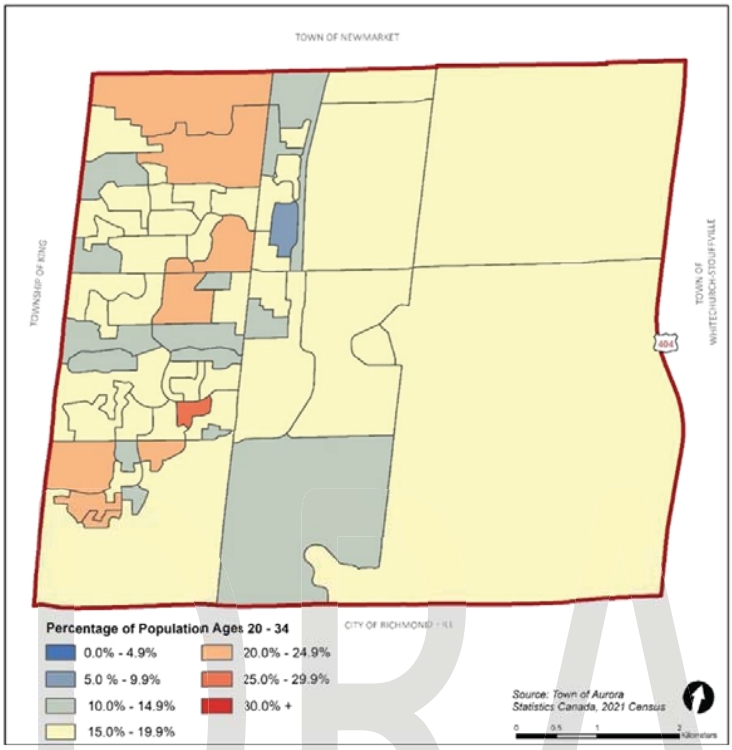
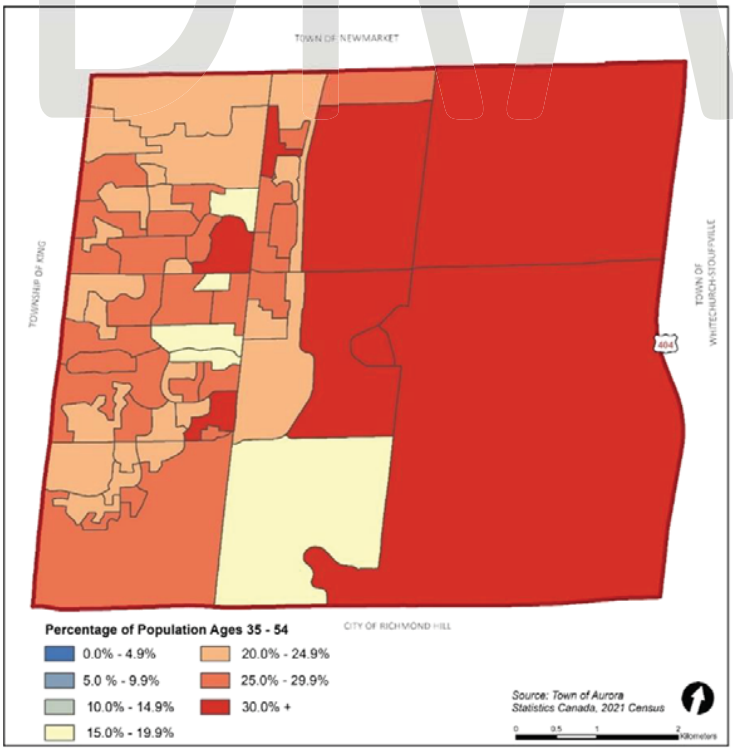


Figure 10 – Population Density, Ages 35 to 54 Years (2021)



DRAFT

Figure 11 – Population Density, Ages 55 to 69 Years (2021)

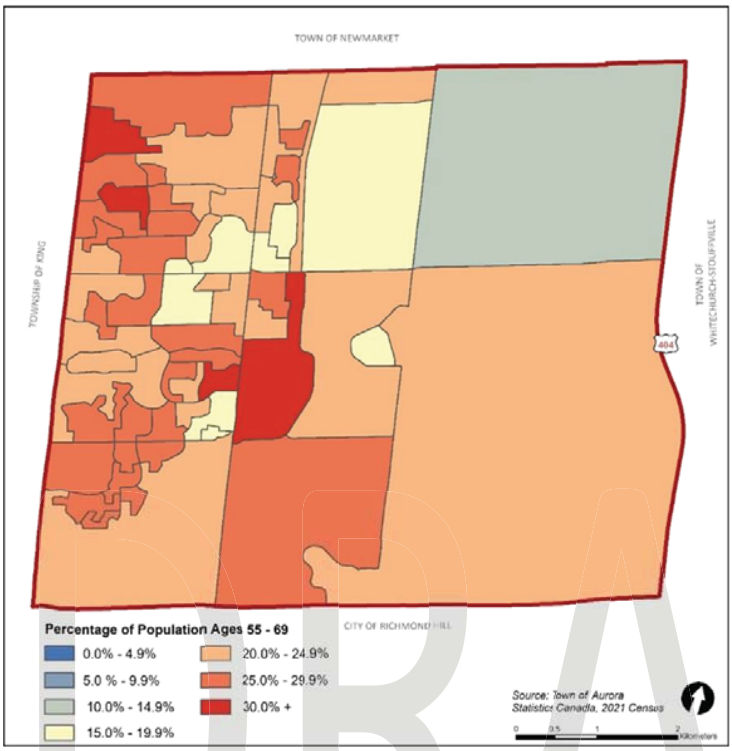
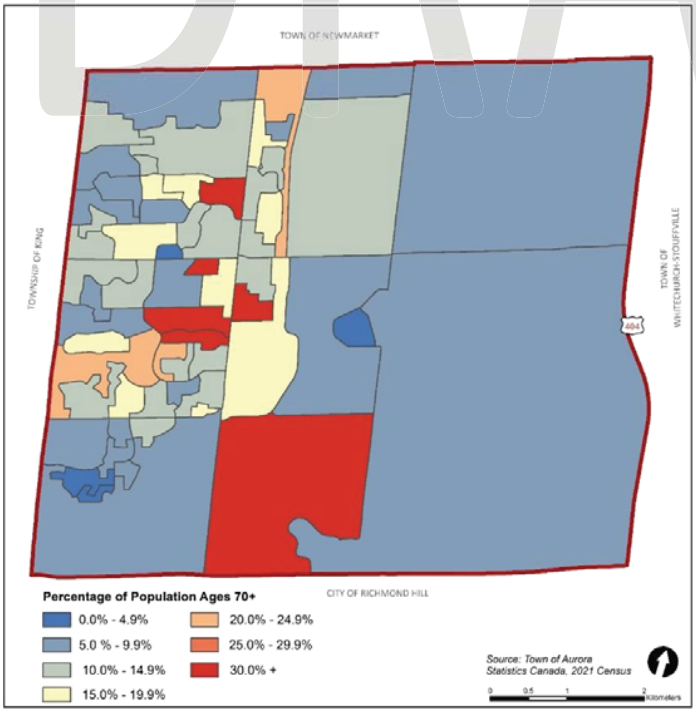


Figure 12 – Population Density, Ages 70+ Years (2021)



DRAFT

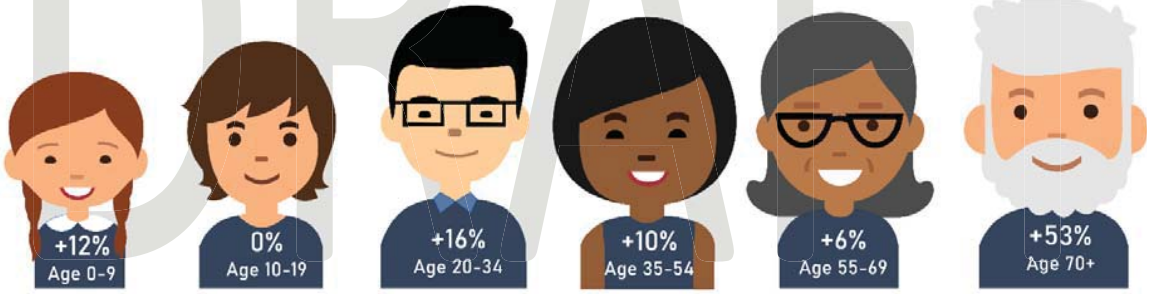
Looking ahead, the age cohort projections prepared by the Ontario Ministry of Finance provide a reasonable indicator of anticipated age-based trends across the entirety of York Region. As shown in the following table, the greatest amount of growth is forecasted in the seniors age group (aged 70 years and over), which is anticipated to increase by 53% by 2031. Most other age cohorts are expected to grow in similar proportions to the overall population, although it is notable that the number of youth (ages 10 to 19) and older adults (ages 55 to 69) are forecasted to increase at slower rates.

Table 2 – Change in Population Projections for York Region, 2021-2046

Age Cohort	2021-31	2031-46	2021-46
Children (ages 0 to 9)	12%	20%	35%
Youth (ages 10 to 19)	0%	19%	18%
Young Adults (ages 20 to 34)	16%	9%	26%
Mature Adults (ages 35 to 54)	10%	22%	35%
Older Adults (ages 55 to 69)	6%	4%	10%
Seniors (ages 70 and over)	53%	40%	115%
Total	**14%**	**18%**	**35%**

Source: Ontario Ministry of Finance projections (Summer 2022); Reference Scenario

Figure 13 – Change in Population Projections for York Region, 2021-2031



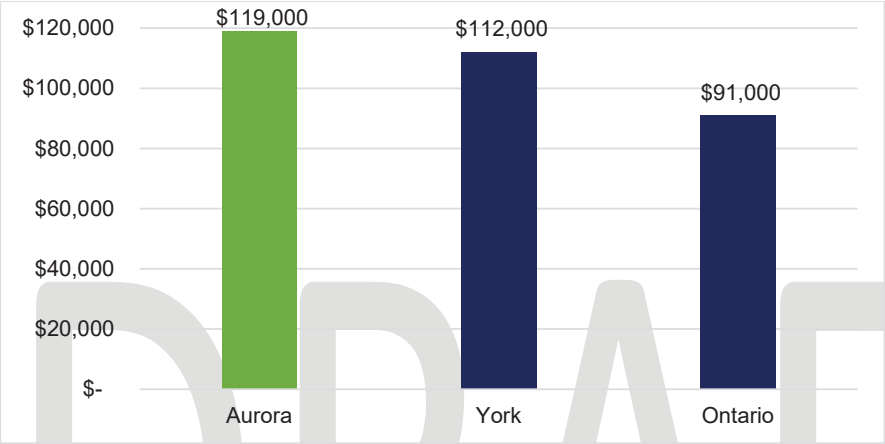
Source: Ontario Ministry of Finance projections (Summer 2022); Reference Scenario

DRAFT

Income and Education

Research has found that income and education levels can be an indicator of participation levels in parks and recreation. Generally, the higher one's income, the more likely they are to have the time and resources to be able to participate in leisure activities. The median total income of Aurora households in 2020 was $119,000, which was well above the provincial and regional medians.

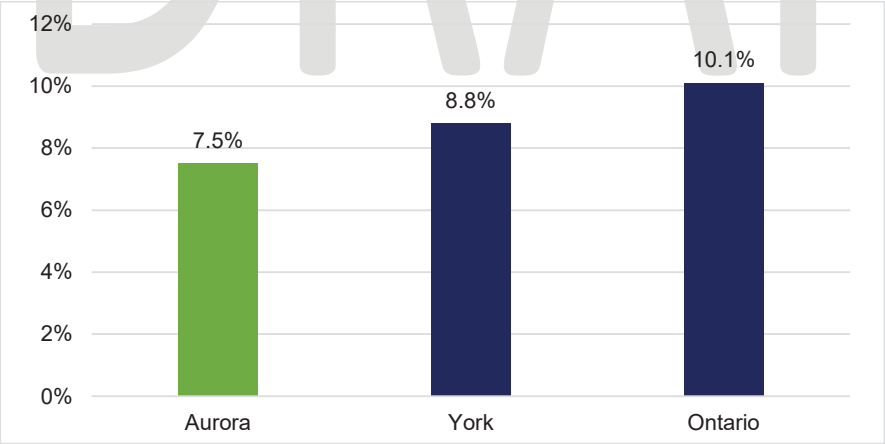
Figure 14 – Median Total Income of Households in 2020 ($)



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Canada

The Town of Aurora also has a lower proportion of low-income residents, with 7.5% living below the low-income measure (after tax) in 2021. By comparison, 8.8% of residents within York Region live below the low-income measures (after tax).

Figure 15 – Prevalence of Low Income based on the Low-Income measure, after tax, Aurora

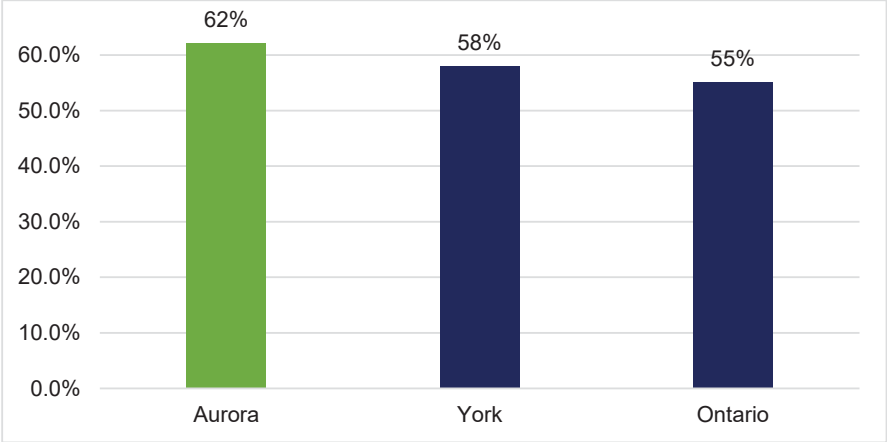


Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Canada

In addition, the proportion of residents in Aurora that have completed a Postsecondary certificate, degree or diploma (62.2%) is higher compared to York Region (58.1%) and Ontario (55.1%).

DRAFT

Figure 16 – Postsecondary Certificate, Diploma or Degree



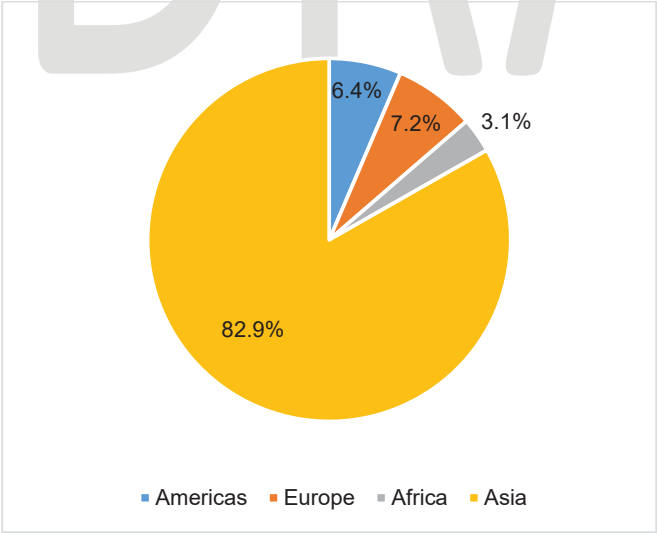
Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Canada

The town's income and education profile suggest residents may be more engaged in parks and recreation programs due to their greater ability to pay user fees. Aurora's provision of affordable parks and recreation opportunities sees to it that all residents can participate.

Immigration and Ethnicity

As of 2021, 36.8% Aurora residents were foreign-born, up from 30.2% in 2016 and 26.4% in 2011. The most common places of birth for immigrants in Aurora are China (23%) and Iran (14%). As the trend of high immigration rates continues to persist throughout the Greater Toronto Area and Canada, culturally-based parks and recreation interests are likely to emerge.

Figure 17 – Place of Birth Recent Immigrants in Aurora



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Canada
'Recent immigrant' refers to an immigrant who first obtained his or her landed immigrant or permanent resident status between January 1, 2016 and May 11, 2021.

DRAFT

The following figure illustrates the areas of Aurora in which recent immigrants live; in this case, the definition of immigrant has been extended to those that have migrated to Canada within the past ten years.

Figure 18 –Immigration in the Town of Aurora (2011 to 2021)

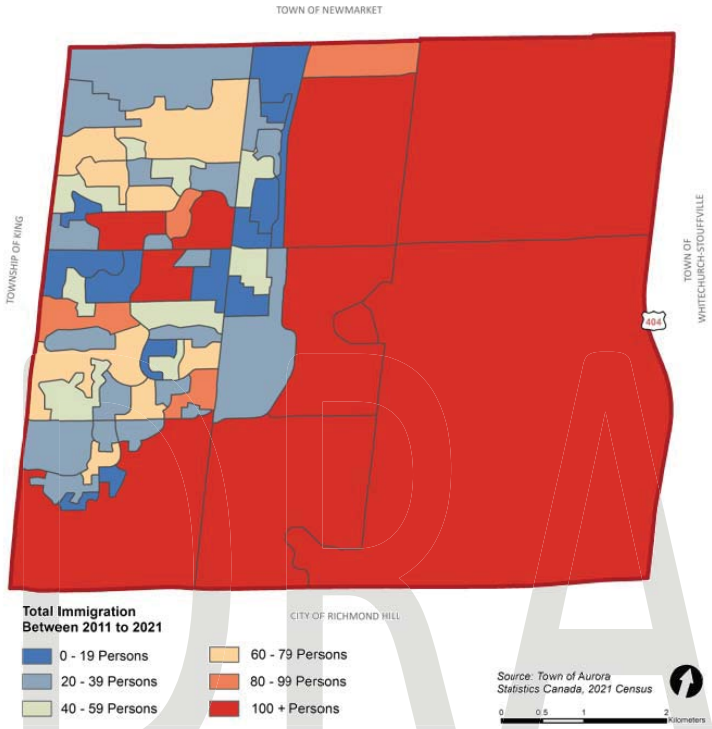
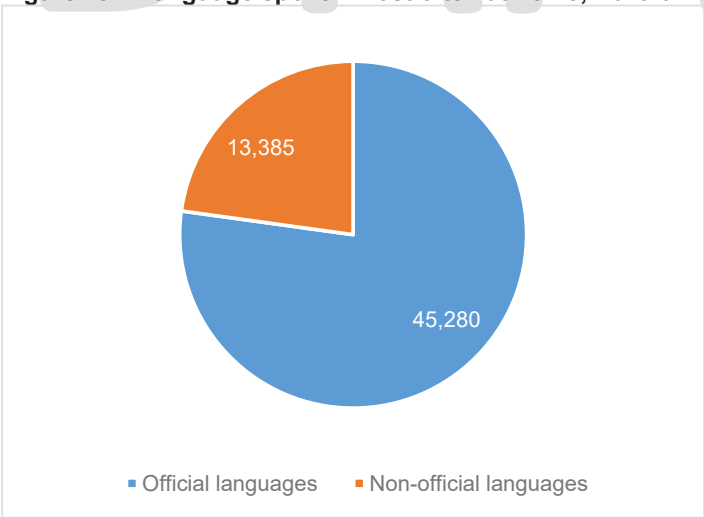


Figure 19 – Language spoken most often at home, Aurora



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Canada

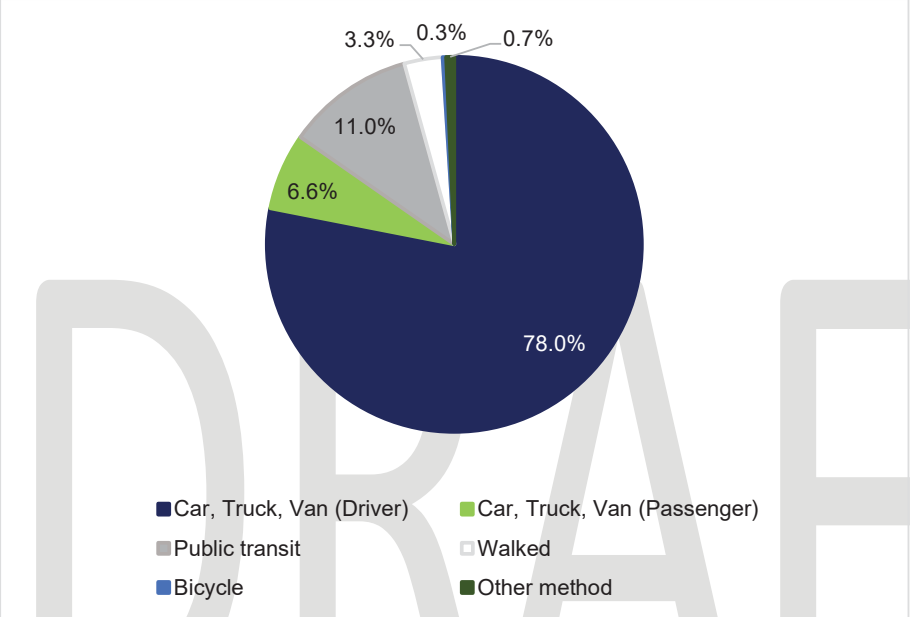
Furthermore, English is primary language spoken at home for 77% of residents, with Cantonese, Mandarin, and Iranian Persian being the most common non-official languages as of 2021.

DRAFT

Transportation and Mobility

The employed labour force in Aurora heavily uses automobile transportation as their main mode of commuting. Four-fifths (78%) of residents identified as a car, truck, van (driver), while 6.6% identified as a car, truck, van (passenger) as their main modes of commuting. Alternative modes of commuting consisted of public transit (11.1%), walked (3.3%), bicycle (0.3%) and other (0.7%).

Figure 20 – Main Mode of Commuting



Source: Statistics Canada (2016), Census of Canada (25% sample data)

Mobility status throughout the Town of Aurora is largely represented by non-movers (87.3%) who are persons who have not moved within the last five years. The majority of the town's movers (12.7%), who are persons who have moved from one residence to another within the last five years, are largely represented by migrants (8.7%), with the balance of this population group represented by non-migrants (4%).

DRAFT

3. Parks and Recreation Sector Context

The Town of Aurora is the primary provider of parks and recreation facilities and programs in the community. The Town seeks to provide opportunities to engage residents with the community through a balanced and responsive range of programs and activities within its facilities and park spaces. As the community continues to grow, the Town will work to align events, partnerships, promotions, scheduling, staffing levels, etc., with the evolving demand of residents.

This section provides more detail as to the current state of the Town departments involved in parks and recreation service delivery, as well as an in-depth analysis of trends impacting the sector.

3.1 Departmental Structure

The Community Services Department and the Operational Services Department are responsible for the planning, development and general/financial management and administration of all parks and facilities. Responsibilities of the Departments include planning, construction, maintenance of operations, community, and heritage program development. The goal of the Town is to enhance and improve the Aurora citizens quality of life through their participation in recreation programs and the utilization of recreation facilities and active/passive green spaces.

The Community Services Department and the Operational Services Department provide essential public services which are necessary for ensuring a high quality of both the natural and urban environments that provide a healthy, satisfying lifestyle for all Aurora citizens. Parks and open spaces, recreational and cultural/arts facilities, sports, fitness, creative and social programs are all to be facilitated with the aim of providing the greatest possible participation.

3.2 Recent Accomplishments

Aurora takes pride in its recreation and parks system which contributes to the community's small-town lifestyle. Town Park, Sheppard's Bush Conservation Area and area trails are amongst the community's most beloved outdoor spaces. The Town's recreation facilities also offer high quality amenities and programs that engage residents and visitors in a wide range of wellness and sport activities.

In recent years, the Town has been able to make significant strides in implementing previous frameworks and plans aimed at improving the local quality of life while proving value for tax dollars spent, whether through enhancing service delivery or upgrading existing facilities and parks. Consolidation of building and infrastructure costs creates efficiencies that better position the Town to respond to priority needs generated by growth and other emerging requirements.

Some of the Town's many recent parks and recreation-related **accomplishments** include (but are not limited to):

- Development of the Aurora Town Square (estimated completion fall 2023) to create a community focal point and cultural destination. Key components include an outdoor square with amphitheatre and seasonal skating loop/water feature, as well as a 29,000 square foot expansion to the historic Church Street School building featuring a flexible performance space (with seating for up to 250 people) and multi-purpose rooms, along with enhanced space for the Aurora Cultural Centre and the Aurora Museum & Archives.
- Planning and funding for the addition of a gymnasium, program space and office space to the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex (planned to open in 2024).
- Opening of a six-court tennis bubble (Marilyn Redvers Centre).
- Purchase of the Aurora Sports Dome (now Lind Realty Team Sports Dome), with the vision to expand accessibility and provide affordable year-round services for the citizens and sports groups within the community.

DRAFT

- Completion of an Aquatics Feasibility Study that identifies future indoor aquatic needs, notably interest in a new 50-metre pool (with a minimum requirement for an additional 25-metre, 6-lane rectangular pool tank).
- Continued implementation of the Sport Field Development Strategy, including the development of two baseball diamonds on the former Hallmark lands and installation of outdoor artificial turf fields at Sheppard's Bush and Stewart Burnett Park.
- Negotiation of a sponsorship agreement to extend community access to Stronach soccer fields to 2025.
- Planning for a community park in Northeast Aurora (Hartwell Way Non-Programmed Park), including community gardens, trails, natural playground, free play areas, naturalized areas, etc.
- Completion of the David Tomlinson Nature Reserve.
- New neighbourhood parks have been opened (e.g., Thomas Coates Park), as well as playground upgrades (including accessible features) and tennis and pickleball courts in several locations.
- Offered enhanced virtual and outdoor programming during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as Seniors Centres Without Walls, virtual camps, additional outdoor ice rinks, etc.
- Development of a Pricing Policy and Financial Assistance Program to ensure that all residents have equitable access to recreational opportunities.
- Achieved Platinum Youth Friendly Community Status in 2019.

3.3 Aligning with Existing Departmental Studies

To improve recreation and parks in the Town of Aurora through comprehensive planning, policies and objectives must be consistent with current and prior legislature. The following bodies of legislature represent goals and strategies outlined to assist growth and provide guidance to recreation and parks planning in the community.

Aurora Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2016)

This previous Master Plan has been used to guide the provisions of the community's parks and recreation facilities for a five-year period beginning in 2016. The Plan identifies facility and parkland needs, and discusses the impacts of infill and intensification on facilities and servicing. A timeline for servicing priorities up until 2021 outlined the Plan's five-year approach to implementing its targeted improvements.

The 2016 Master Plan contained 45 recommendations identifying project-specific initiatives or best practices to strive toward. **Three-quarters (76%) of these recommendations have been completed or are in progress, a very high percentage given the short period of time and challenges associated within the COVID-19 pandemic.**

One-quarter (24%) have not been acted upon for various reasons, such as lack of funding, other priorities, or a change in direction. Many of the recommendations that have not been implemented relate to parkland policy and acquisition, items that are being considered through the Town's Official Plan Review. More information on recommendations can be found in **Appendix C.**

DRAFT

Table 3 – Report Card: 2016 Parks and Recreation Implementation to Date

Action (to date)	Number of Recommendations	Percent
Completed	17	38%
Ongoing	17	38%
Review Required	11	24%
Total	**45**	**100%**

Aurora Outdoor Sports Field Development Strategy (2020)

The Outdoor Sports Field Development Strategy established a detailed implementation framework to guide the improvement and maximization of existing sports fields in light of rising sports field needs and field capacity issues. The study included a comprehensive needs assessment for rectangular sports fields (soccer, football, lacrosse, rugby, field hockey) and ball diamonds, finding a need for 20 additional rectangular fields by 2031 and five additional diamonds by 2031 (two have since been provided on the Hallmark lands).

Given that opportunities for land acquisition are extremely limited, a focus was placed on strategies that optimize existing parks (through new field development, field reconfiguration, artificial turf, etc.), expand partnerships, and modify operational practices. Key recommendations included:

- Pursuing opportunities to develop multi-field sports fields at a single location.
- Expanding existing or form new partnerships, such as with the YRDSB (access, maintenance, new fields) for access to existing fields and field improvements (e.g., artificial turf).
- Continuing to explore strategic land acquisition (e.g., hardball diamond).
- Developing full-size fields with supporting amenities (e.g., lighting, seating, parking, etc.).

Aquatics Feasibility Study (2020)

The Aquatics Feasibility Study was conducted in 2020 to determine the extent of the Town's aquatic facility needs and the type of facilities that would best meet current and long-term needs. The Town engaged the Isaac Sports Group, LLC to conduct an in-depth aquatic analysis and Feasibility Study.

Key study findings included:

- A recommendation to provide a 50-metre pool at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex (SARC)
- Providing a third recreation or sport centre in Aurora when the overall need for expanded recreation and sport facility justifies an additional facility
- Updating current pools at SARC and the Aurora Family Leisure Complex (AFLC) with accessible features and warming water temperatures by several degrees
- Replacing the existing mechanical system for all pools at SARC and the AFLC
- Capital and operating costs for the recommended provision options are articulated in the study

The study acknowledges that the Town's last indoor pool was built in 2006, prior to a current day population growth of 35% (updated to 2021). The study notes the strong community support and demand for aquatic facilities that provide a wider range of temperature options matching specific program needs, which can only be accomplished with additional pools.

The Aquatic Feasibility Study and the 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan indicates that at minimum, an additional 25-metre pool with 8 lanes is needed for the Town of Aurora to meet the current and future demands of the Aurora community. Council will need to make a decision on the level of service and investment they are willing to make with respect to a new aquatic facility, including securing additional

DRAFT

land to build another pool. A 25-metre pool will serve the needs of the immediate community but limits the economic impacts and benefits a larger, competition pool would provide.

Sport Plan (2016)

The Aurora Sport Plan is intended to ensure the Town becomes "Canada's most active community" through extensive consultation to reach out to a wide demographic of residents. The Plan was completed in concert with the development of the 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, addressing goals that support recreation and park services. The Plan provides in-depth analysis pertaining to existing sport programs within the community, providing a framework and guiding principles to achieving increased participation. The Town has been acting on the Sport Plan recommendations and anticipated providing a status update to Council and the community in the near future.

Trails Master Plan (2011)

The Trail's Master Plan is a long-term 50-year plan that oversees cycling and pedestrian related policies that impact the Town of Aurora. The plan provides recommendations for its connected trails network, input on the design of off-road trails, policies related to trail planning, potential education and healthy living promotion programs, and a phased implementation strategy. Opportunities for the Town's trail systems presented by the ongoing growth of the community are provided in this report's analysis. The Town is currently working on an update of the Active Transportation Master Plan that will include aspects of future trail development and maintenance.

3.4 Facility Provision Levels and Municipal Benchmarking

When undertaking plans of this nature, there is often interest in the number of facilities provided in other communities – a way to benchmark the Town against others. A benchmarking exercise was undertaken to collect information on facility provision levels in other jurisdictions. The comparator group used to benchmark facility provision includes 13 similarly sized municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area, as well as all other municipalities in York Region[2]. This data is one of several inputs that has informed the development of provision targets for the Master Plan.

The data represents a snapshot in time and must be viewed in context with other factors. For example, the benchmarking data does not address the difference between facility quality, size, access and service, all of which contribute greatly to the value provided by each of these facilities. Combining the observations from this exercise with other analyses will allow the Master Plan to achieve balance in defining the needs of future growth, historically underserved areas, and changing trends.

The following table identifies facility provision levels in other jurisdictions, compiled from a variety of sources. Unless otherwise noted, the data includes facilities that are owned and/or under agreement for public use by the municipality. Mapping and analysis of Town facilities is contained in Sections 6 and 7 of this report.

It is noted that Aurora's geographic placement in York Region makes it a convenient and desired location for many sports organizations with regional memberships, thus the Town's inventory tends to be higher on a per capita basis for many recreational facilities.

[2] Facility benchmarking taken from approved master plans in Bradford West-Gwillimbury (2021), Caledon (2016), East Gwillimbury (2016), Georgina (2015), Halton Hills (2020), King Township (2019), Markham (2019), Milton (2022), Newmarket (2022), Pickering (2017), Richmond Hill (2022), Vaughan (2018), and Whitchurch-Stouffville (2022).

Table 4 – Average Municipal Facility Provision Levels (selected facilities)

Facility Type	Town of Aurora*		Comparator Average
Indoor Facilities	#	Per Capita Average	Per Capita Average
Community Centres	3	1:21,370	1:31,140
Indoor Aquatic Centres	2	1:32,050	1:33,170
Gymnasiums (excluding school gyms)	1	1:64,100	1:50,850
Fitness Centres	1	1:64,100	1:80,300
Arenas (Ice pads)	5	1:12,820	1:22,440
Curling Facilities	0	n/a	1:508,540
Indoor Turf Fields	1	1:64,100	1:152,560
Outdoor Facilities	#	Per Capita Average	Per Capita Average
Soccer and Multi-use Fields (total fields)	56	1:1,145	1:2,730
Ball Diamonds (total fields)	20	1:3,210	1:4,290
Cricket Fields	0	n/a	1:138,690
Pickleball Courts (dedicated use)	9	1:7,120	1:13,620
Tennis Courts	15	1:4,270	1:3,860
Basketball Courts	17	1:3,770	1:7,300
Skateboard Parks (and skate spots)	3	1:21,370	1:35,480
Bike Parks	1	1:64,100	1:305,130
Splash Pads	5	1:12,820	1:16,230
Outdoor Pools	0	n/a	1:117,360
Off-leash Dog Parks	1	1:64,100	1:101,710
Playgrounds	40	1:1,600	1:1,840
Outdoor Skating Rinks (refrigerated)	0	n/a	1:69,350
Parkland	Hectares		
Active Parkland (ha/1000)	174.5	2.7 ha / 1000 persons	3.3 ha / 1000 persons

Source: Adapted from recent municipal master plans, 2022
Note: The table includes facilities that are owned and/or under agreement for public use by the municipality
* Based on a 2022 population estimate of 64,100 persons. Rates are rounded.

DRAFT

3.5 Parks and Recreation Trends

This section identifies several trends that are influencing the demand for and delivery of parks and recreation services in Canadian municipalities. Some of these trends have emerged as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, while others have been affecting service provision for several years. We firmly believe that long-term planning and strategic investment are vital to support the significant role that the parks and recreation sector plays in our personal, social, and economic recovery and revitalization.

For continuity with leading sector resources, the trends are organized by the five goals of the Framework for Recreation in Canada (FRC). The FRC was developed in 2015 by a team led by the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association. It presents a renewed definition of recreation and supports coordinated policies and practices in recreation and related sectors in Canada. Its aim is to improve the wellbeing of individuals, communities, and the built and natural environments. Part of the FRC's legacy is how it has created a common language for recreation professionals, with its goals being used to align community priorities with initiatives in the sector.

Figure 21 – Goals from the 2015 Framework for Recreation in Canada

Table 5 – Listing of Key Parks and Recreation Trends by FRC Goal

FRC Goal	Trend
Active Living	• Parks and Recreation are Essential Services • Recreation is Vital to Community Health and Wellbeing • Combating High Levels of Physical Inactivity • Popularity of Unstructured, Self-Directed Activities • Encouraging Free Play • Pandemic Impacts on Community Sport • Pandemic Impacts on Programming • Engaging the Aging Population in Healthy Activities • Emerging Recreational Activities
Inclusion & Access	• Growing Concerns over Affordability • Making Recreation Accessible for Persons with Disabilities • Improving Gender Equity in Sports • Using Parks and Recreation to Support Indigenous Reconciliation • Safe Spaces for Marginalized and Displaced Populations
Connecting People & Nature	• Rising Use of Parks and Outdoor Recreation • Improving our Connections with Nature • Growing Emphasis on Neighbourhoods and Local Opportunities • Supporting Active Transportation • Keeping Pace with Parkland Needs in Growing Communities • Increasing Focus on Environmental Design and Climate Change
Supportive Environments	• Multi-Use Recreation Facilities as Community Hubs • Providing High Quality, Multi-functional and Flexible Facilities • Rationalizing and Addressing Aging Infrastructure • Designing Facilities to be Sport-Friendly
Recreation Capacity	• The Great Resignation – Significant Turnover in Recreation Programming Staff • Declining Volunteerism • Pandemic Challenges for Canadian Recreation Sport Organizations • The Necessity of Partnerships • Data, Technology and Digital Transformation • Evolving Financial Challenges

These trends are elaborated on further in **Appendix B**.

DRAFT

4. Community Engagement

The Town of Aurora has involved residents through several community consultations to enhance its municipal parks and recreation services. Each consultation has been tailored to maximize participation and collect the most input, allowing these services to reflect demand and community expectations.

Engagement with residents and stakeholders (e.g., service clubs, sports organizations, Town staff and officials, etc.) was critical to understanding current issues and future opportunities for supporting the parks and recreation system in Aurora.

Figure 22 – Public Engagement Tactics

Engagement opportunities were promoted through the project website, media releases, social media, and email networks. The Master Plan project included a blend of in-person and virtual/online community engagement tactics due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This created new opportunities for the public and stakeholders to become involved in the planning process.

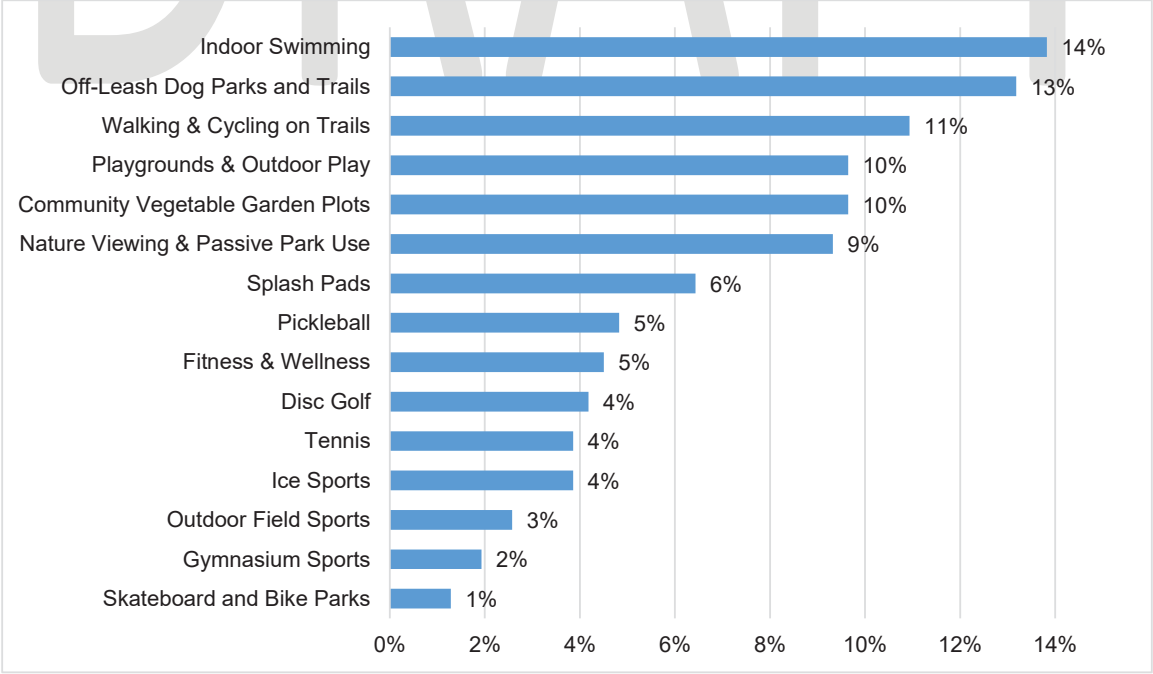
<u>Note</u>: It is important to note that the information and suggestions presented in this section should not be interpreted as recommendations. Community input has not been altered even in instances where comments may incorrectly reflect the Town's actual policies, practices or level of provision.

4.1 Launch Event (Pop-up Consultation)

A pop-up open house was held on October 1 at the Aurora Farmers Market in Town Park to introduce the Master Plan project to the community. The event consisted of information boards detailing the study scope and process, as well as an interactive voting station to identify public priorities. Additionally, commenting stations were available to gather qualitative input regarding parks and recreation-related strengths and challenges, as well as future needs. The session was promoted through the Town's website, social media accounts, and traditional media. We engaged 77+ participants at the event.

Support was generally greatest for casual outdoor recreation opportunities (e.g., dog walking, trail use, playground use, etc.) and indoor swimming programs. The following chart identifies the priorities that participants placed on additional activity choices in Aurora.

Figure 23 – Pop-up Event – What Activities do you want More of in Aurora?



DRAFT

Specific suggestions were also received for:

- additional programs and activities, such as:
  - children's fitness
  - women's futsal
  - cooking classes
- upgrades to existing sites such as:
  - an updated playground and splash pad in Machell Park
  - adding lights to the basketball court in Mavrinac Park
  - more modern playground features in northwest Aurora (e.g., Tom's Park)
  - enhanced maintenance in parks (garbage pick-up, tree pruning, etc.)
- new recreation amenities such as:
  - an indoor playground
  - facilities in the south end
- new parks amenities such as:
  - off-leash dog trails and a small dog park on the west end
  - cross-country ski trails
  - pollinator gardens
  - BMX park along trails
  - electrical outlets in parks to support events outdoor fitness equipment
  - outdoor rinks
  - bocce courts
  - roller skating pad
  - outdoor pool
  - trails and active transportation choices

4.2 Community Online Survey

To support the development of this Master Plan, a community survey was available for eight (8) weeks beginning in August and extending through October 2022. The survey was promoted extensively by the Town (traditional and social media, email networks, website, within municipal facilities, etc.). There were options to complete the survey online through the Town's public engagement site or in-person at Town recreation centres. A total of **455 unique responses from Aurora residents** were received. Being a voluntary, self-directed survey, response rates varied by question.

The purpose of the community survey was to elicit information on the parks and recreation needs of Aurora residents. The questions were designed to gather information regarding: participation rates in both organized and unorganized activities; barriers to activity; park and facility use; recommended improvements; support for investment; and opinion / agreement with various statements. Finally, the survey helped to establish a profile of parks and recreation users in Aurora by collecting relevant demographic information. Tabulated survey response data has been provided in **Appendix D**.

Note: To improve the representativeness of the survey, responses from households that identified themselves as living outside of Aurora (i.e., non-residents, not directly paying taxes to the Town) have been removed from the results. This accounted for 89 responses. The data suggests that many of these non-resident respondents represented a particular special interest group (disc golf/ frisbee golf) which, if included in the results, would have improperly skewed the findings.

DRAFT

Participation in Parks and Recreation Activities

The following figure summarizes the five (5) most popular parks and recreation activities respondents have participated in Aurora or elsewhere since 2019 (the period both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic). Interestingly, with the exception of indoor swimming, four of the top five were outdoor activities, suggesting that individual use park space activities are the most accessible for participants.

Figure 24 – Most Popular Parks and Recreation Activities

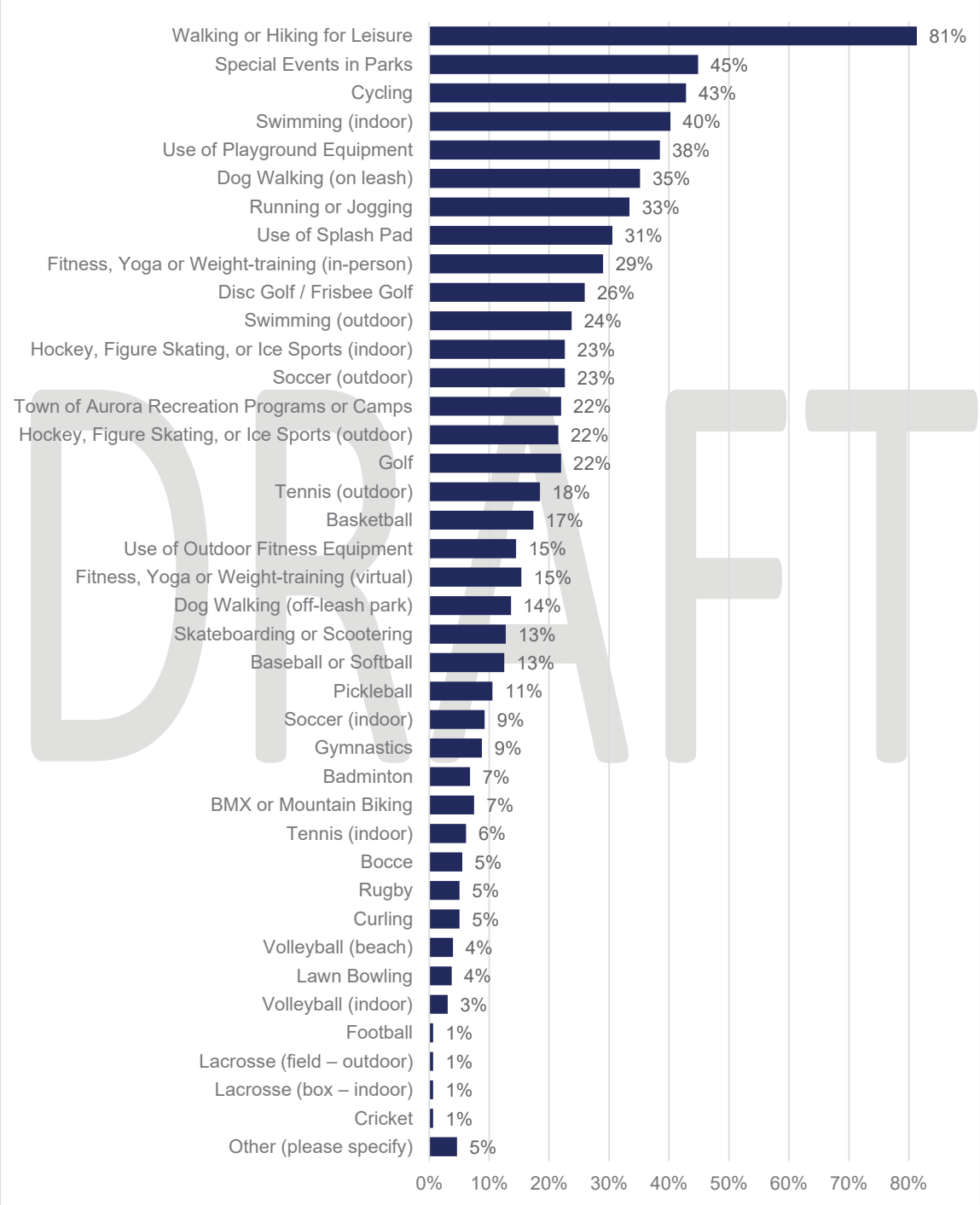
81%	45%	43%	40%	38%
Walking or hiking for leisure	**Special events in parks**	**Cycling**	**Swimming (indoor)**	**Use of playground equipment**

The following figure displays the full list of activities and household participation rates. In addition to the four outdoor activities among the top five, survey results suggest that dog walking (on leash), running or jogging, use of splash pad, disc golf/frisbee golf are popular activities with over one in four households participating. This suggests that low to no cost activities are in high demand.

Some of the most popular indoor recreation activities include swimming, fitness, and ice sports, with at least one in five households participating. Lower participation activities include sports (e.g., cricket, lacrosse, football, lawn bowling, volleyball, rugby, curling, bocce, etc.) that have a more limited appeal often based on age or ability.

DRAFT

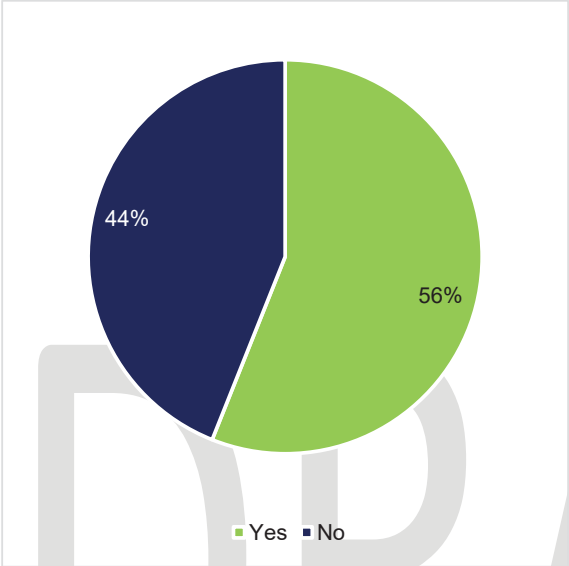
Figure 25 – Since 2019, which of the following activities did you or anyone in your household participate in, in Aurora or elsewhere? (n=455)



DRAFT

Respondents were asked if they are able to participate in parks and recreational activities as often as they would like. Four-out-of-nine (44%) indicated that they were not able to participate as often as they would like.

Figure 26 – Are you and members of your household able to participate in parks and recreation activities as often as you would like? (n=455)



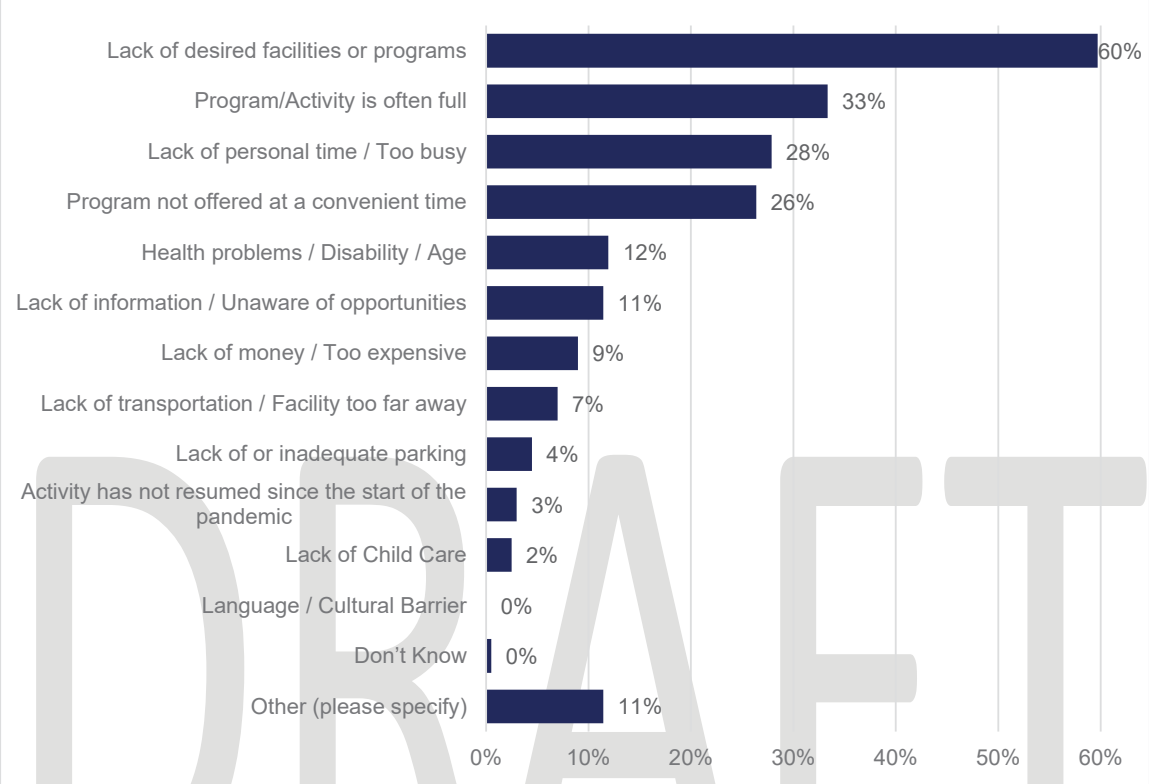
Those that expressed an inability to participate as often as they would like more frequently identified indoor swimming as a common activity and were generally less satisfied with the Town's parks, facilities and programs, including the location of facilities.

Amongst this group, top barriers to participation included:

- Lack of desired facilities or programs (60%)
- Program /Activity is often full (33%)
- Lack of personal time / too busy (28%)
- Program not offered at a convenient time (26%)

DRAFT

Figure 27 – Why are you and members of your household not able to participate in parks and recreation activities as often as you would like? (n=201)



DRAFT

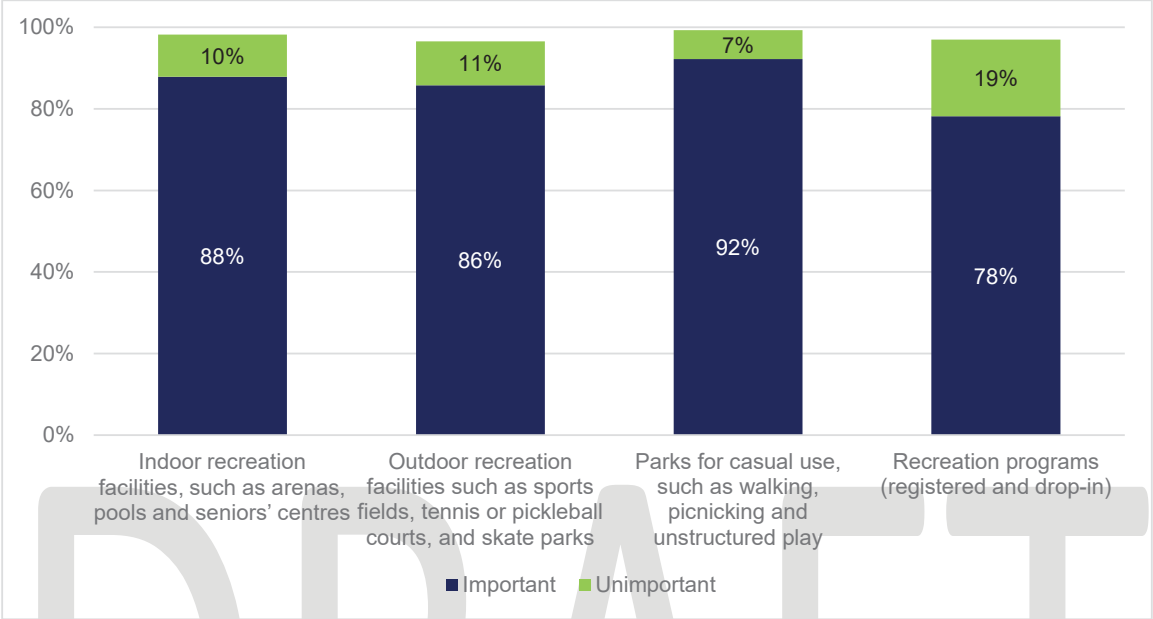
Importance and Satisfaction Levels

Levels of importance and satisfaction with respect to specific categories of parks and recreation facilities are illustrated through the two figures below. Amongst these categories:

- 92% indicated that parks for casual use, such as walking, picnicking and unstructured play were important to them, with 79% indicating that they were satisfied with this service area.
- 88% indicated that indoor recreation facilities, such as arenas, pools and seniors' centres were important to them, with 72% indicating that they were satisfied with this service area.
- 86% indicated that outdoor recreation facilities such as sports fields, tennis or pickleball courts, and skate parks were important to them, with 60% indicating that they were satisfied with this service area.
- 78% indicated that recreation programs (registered and drop-in) were important to them, with 61% indicating that they were satisfied with this service area.

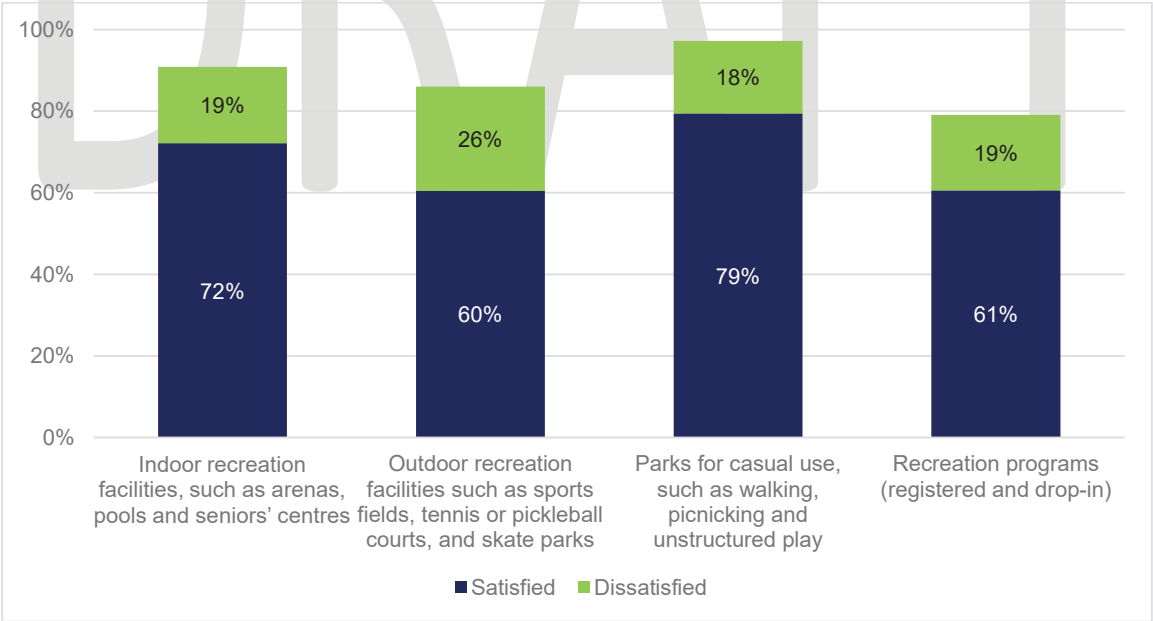
While it is not unusual in surveys such as this to have higher stated levels of importance than levels of satisfaction, it is notable that the gap between these two measures is highest for outdoor recreation facilities. **This suggests that current levels of service may not be meeting many needs in this service area (outdoor recreation facilities such as sports fields, tennis or pickleball courts, and skate parks).**

Figure 28 – In general, how important are the following items to your household? (n = 431 to 438)



Neutral and "Don't Know" responses not shown.

Figure 29 – What is your level of satisfaction with the following parks and recreation services in Aurora? (n=431 to 438)



Neutral and "Don't Know" responses not shown.

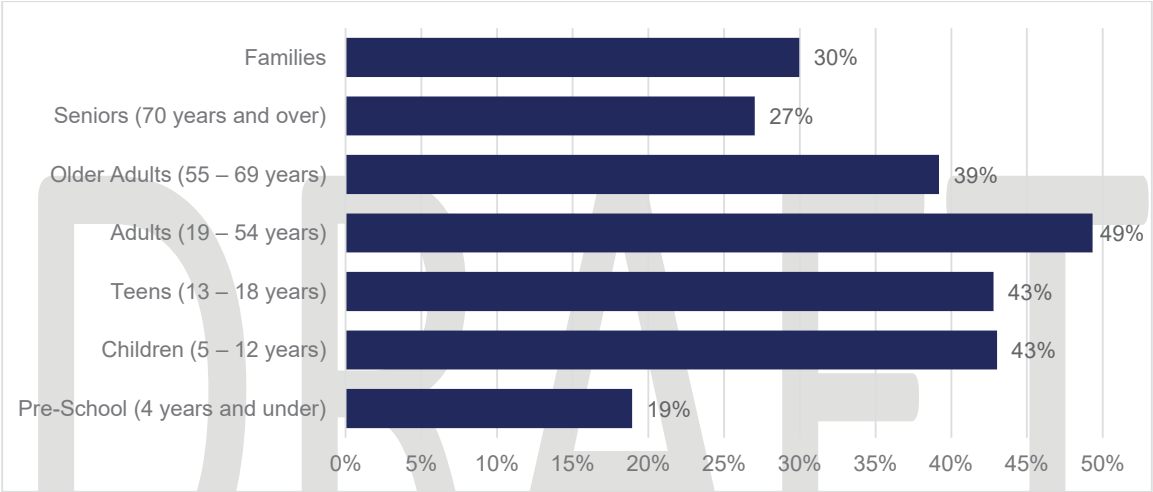
DRAFT

Programs and Activity Priorities

Respondents were asked to identify the age groups they felt should be a priority if the Town were to provide additional programs or activities. These highest identified priorities were:

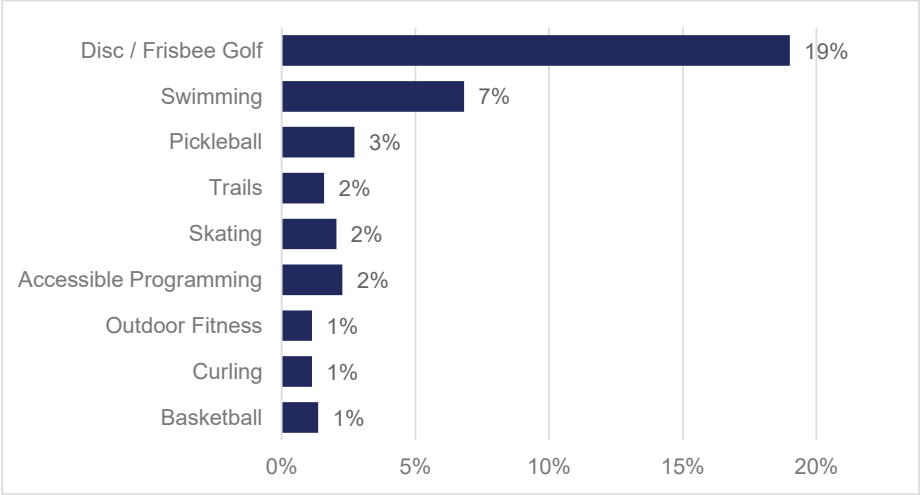
- Adults aged 19 - 54 years (49%)
- Children aged 5 - 12 years (43%)
- Teens aged 13 - 18 years (43%)
- Older Adults aged 55 – 69 years (39%)

Figure 30 – If the Town were to provide additional programs or activities, which age groups should be a priority? (n=444)



One-half (51%) of respondents identified specific parks and recreation activities that are not currently available (or they were not aware are available) but would like to see offered in the Town of Aurora. Top suggestions are shown in the following figure.

Figure 31 – What activities would you like to see offered? (open-ended response) (n-223)



Disc golf was a common request, particularly on surveys completed by non-residents, with 81% of non-residents participating in disc golf and 91% identifying disc golf as a capital priority. To improve the representativeness of the results, non-resident responses were excluded from the sample. Given the volume of open-ended comments, it is believed that the opportunity to participate in this survey was shared widely amongst the disc golf community. **As a result, the interest and demand for disc golf illustrated through this survey is likely overstated, even amongst Aurora residents.** Nevertheless, it appears that there is an engaged group of enthusiasts within the town and beyond that are seeking additional opportunities to participate in disc golf activities.

Facility Priorities

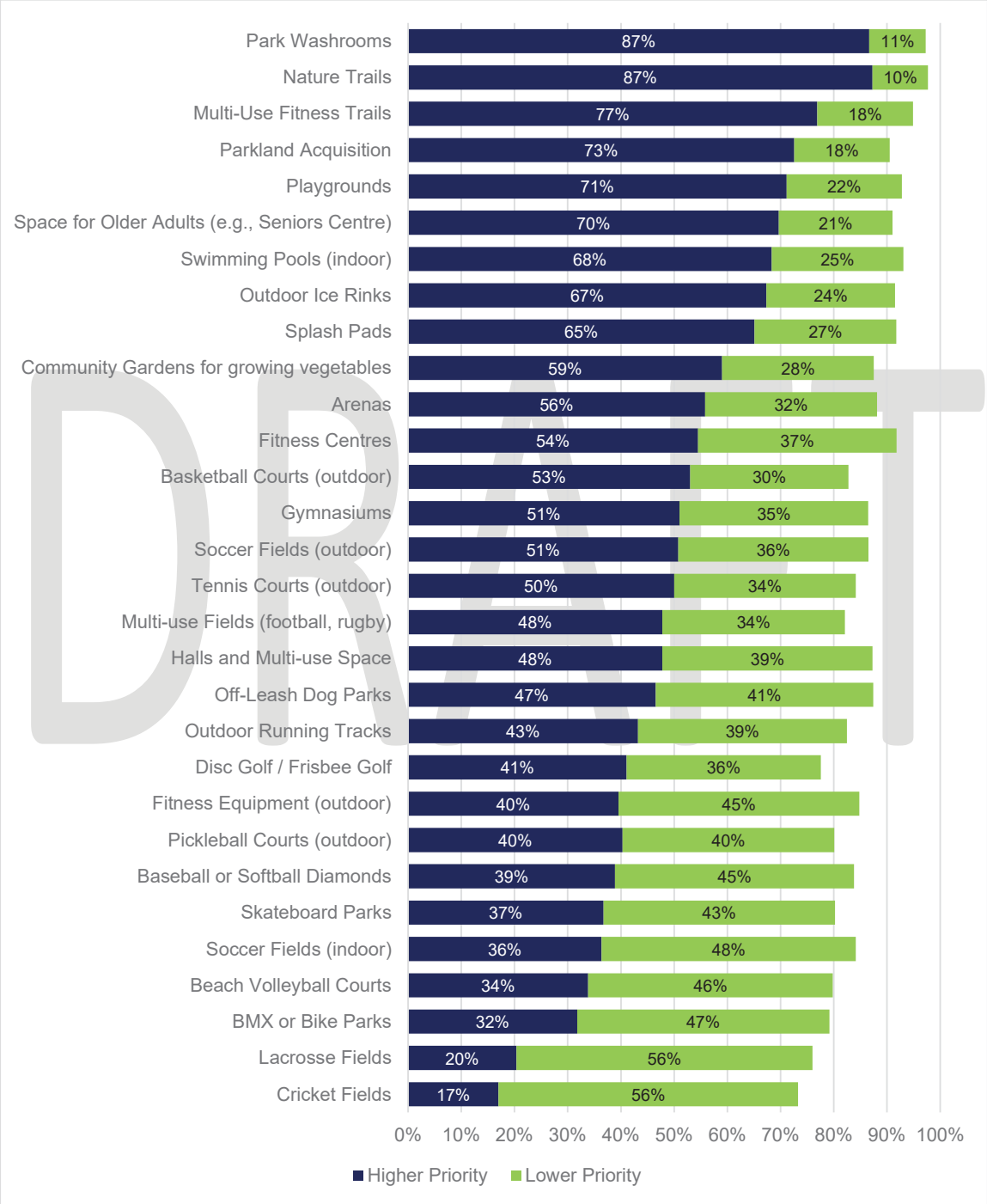
The top priorities for improved or new facilities types identified by respondents include:

- Nature trails (87%)
- Park washrooms (87%)
- Multi-use fitness trails (77%)
- Parkland acquisition (73%)
- Playgrounds (71%)
- Space for older adults (e.g., Seniors' Centre) (70%)

The findings generally reflect the activities that respondents like to participate in the most, with outdoor, casual use amenities being the highest priority for future investment. Other high priorities included indoor swimming pools (68%), outdoor ice rinks (67%), and splash pads (65%). Lower priority facility types (such as cricket and lacrosse fields) have a more limited appeal in the community.

DRAFT

Figure 32 – To assist the Town in prioritizing spending, please indicate the level of priority that you feel should be placed on improving or developing each of the following facility types? (n=381 to 405)



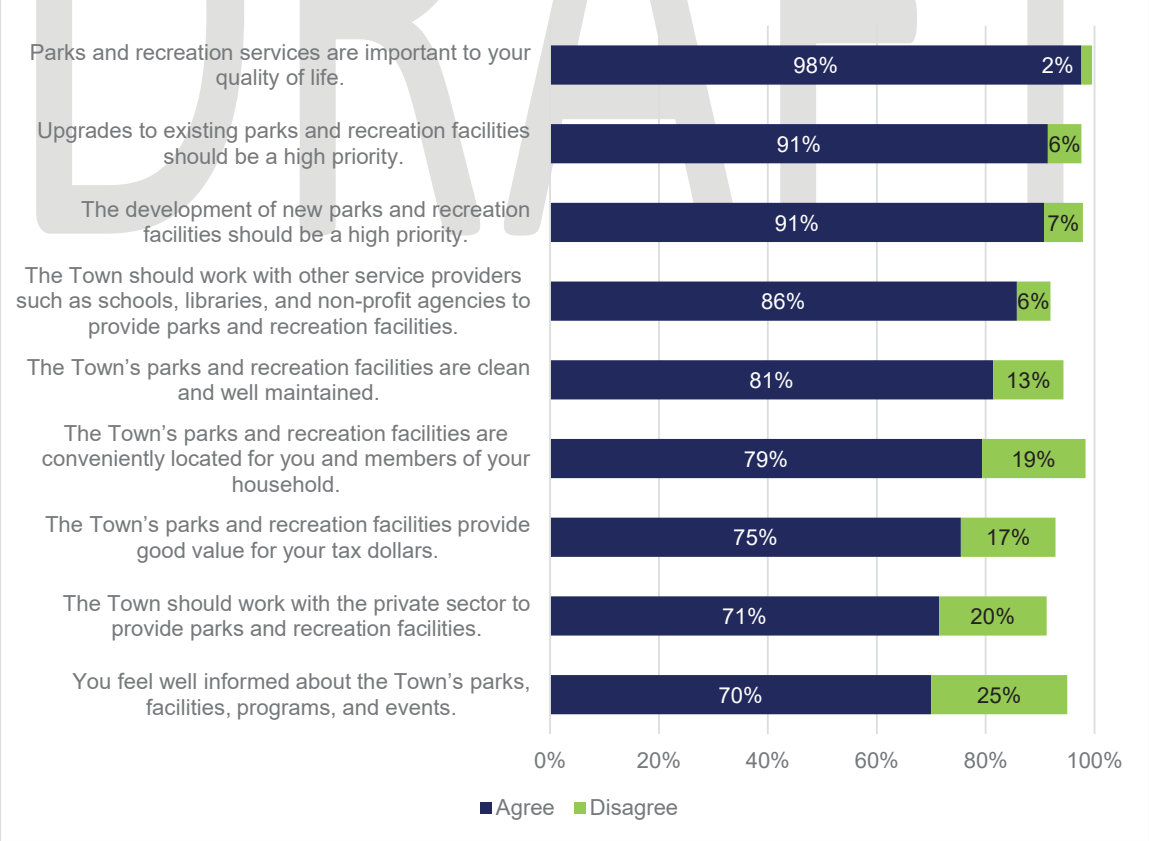
"Don't know" responses are not shown.

Testing of Key Opinions

Public opinion was tested for a series of key statements:

- 98% agreed that "Parks and recreation services are important to your quality of life."
- 91% agreed that "The development of new parks and recreation facilities should be a high priority."
- 91% agreed that "Upgrades to existing parks and recreation facilities should be a high priority."
- 86% agreed that "The Town should work with other service providers such as schools, libraries, and non-profit agencies to provide parks and recreation facilities."
- 81% agreed that "The Town's parks and recreation facilities are clean and well maintained."
- 79% agreed that "The Town's parks and recreation facilities are conveniently located for you and members of your household." 19% disagreed with this statement.
- 75% agreed that "The Town's parks and recreation facilities provide good value for your tax dollars." 17% disagreed with this statement.
- 71% agreed that "The Town should work with the private sectors to provide parks and recreation facilities." 20% disagreed with this statement.
- 70% agreed that "You feel well informed about the Town's parks, facilities, programs, and events." 25% disagreed with this statement.

Figure 33 – Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements (n=420 to 421)



"Don't Know" responses are not shown.

DRAFT

General Comments

Nearly half (47%) of respondents provided additional open-ended input regarding parks and recreation in the Town of Aurora. The following categories represent the top **key themes** from the comments provided:

- disc golf (9%)
- indoor swimming pools (5%)
- trail maintenance (5%)
- additional programming (4%)
- playground maintenance (4%)
- washroom servicing (2%)
- ball diamonds (1%)
- splash pads (1%)
- pickleball courts (1%)
- outdoor fitness equipment (1%)

A sampling of comments that represent key themes heard through the survey include:

- "Disc golf is inclusive, easy, inexpensive, family friendly, and loads of fun for all ages."
- "Additional aquatic facilities, specifically a 50m pool and better maintenance of current pools."
- "We love taking advantage of the trails in Aurora [and] would like to see these continue to be developed."
- "Would also like to see more washrooms at parks [open year-round]. With small kids, it's important to have access to washrooms when spending the day outside being active in the community."
- "Need more children's swimming options and upgrades to older playgrounds."
- "The Town needs additional Class A softball/baseball diamonds."

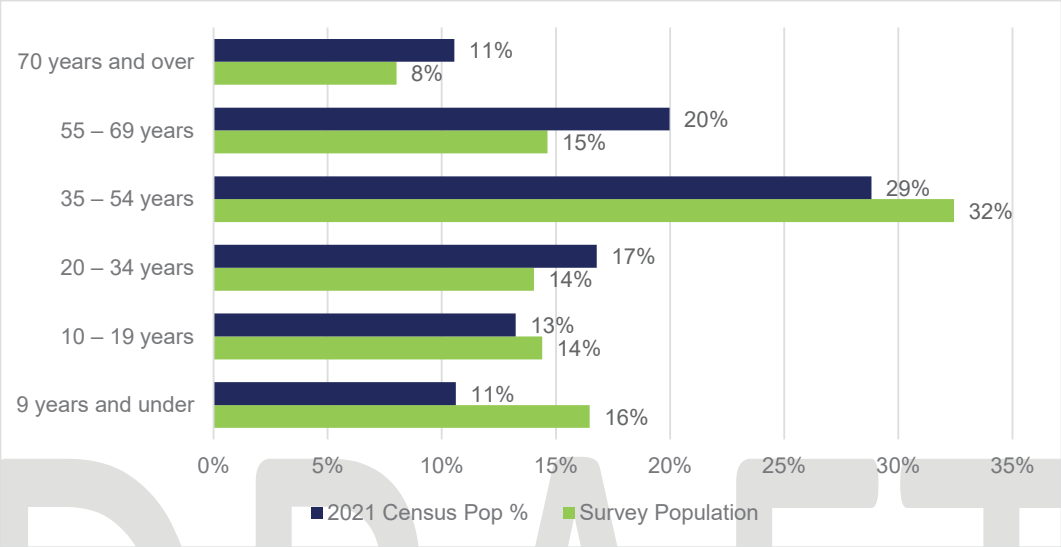
Profile of Respondents

Key household characteristics of community survey respondents are noted below:

- The average household size was 3.3 persons, slightly higher than the Town average of 2.9 persons per private household.
- It is estimated that the survey represents the opinions of approximately 2.1% of Aurora's households and 2.4% of Aurora's population. The response rate (455 surveys) is considered adequate and – when combined with other consultation tactics and inputs – provides a strong basis for future planning.
- The survey gathered input from residents of all ages. As shown in the following figure, the ages of household members of survey respondents are generally representative of Aurora's population. Residents with younger children were slightly more likely to participate in the survey, while residents aged 55 or more were slightly less likely to participate in the survey.

DRAFT

Figure 34 – Please indicate the total number of persons within your household that fall into the following age categories (n=402)



- 38% of survey respondents own a dog. These respondents were much more likely to support improvements to off-leash dog parks (67% identified this as a high priority).
- All (100%) of the respondents in this summary self-identified as residents of the Town of Aurora.
- Three-out-of-five (61%) have lived in Aurora for more than ten years, 18% for 5 to 10 years, and 21% less than 5 years.
- The survey gathered input from residents across the entire town. The following percentage apply to those that identified their ward of residency; it is generally representative of populations in each ward:
    - Ward 1 (21%)
    - Ward 2 (18%)
    - Ward 3 (22%)
    - Ward 4 (14%)
    - Ward 5 (17%)
    - Ward 6 (7%)

DRAFT

4.3 Stakeholder Consultation

Aurora is home to numerous service clubs, sports groups and community organizations that provide a wide variety of recreation, sport, event and community services to residents and visitors.

More than 50 community groups consisting of sports associations, recreation service providers and community agencies were sent an invitation to provide feedback through virtual workshops (held on September 28 and October 6, 2022) and written submissions. The following 17 groups provided input into the Master Plan process:

- Adult Hockey Leagues (2)
- Aurora Aquatics (also submitted written input)
- Aurora Diggers Girls Softball Association (submitted written input)
- Aurora King Baseball Association
- Aurora Minor Hockey Association
- Aurora Skating Club
- Aurora Special Ducks (submitted written input)
- Aurora Youth Soccer Club
- Central York Girls Hockey Association
- Elevation Athletics
- Rising Stars Soccer Academy
- Redbirds Lacrosse (submitted written input)
- Aurora Barbarians Rugby Football Club (also submitted written input)
- Special Olympics Aurora
- Sport Aurora (also submitted written input)
- Total Tennis
- York Artistic Swimming Club
- York Region Lions Football

The following is a summary of themes from the discussion groups. Details from each session have been considered in the development of the Master Plan.

What are the strengths of parks and recreation in Aurora? What does the Town and/or others do well?

Most organizations expressed considerable appreciation for the high quality of parks and recreation services in Aurora. The Town of Aurora's common strengths identified by stakeholders include:

- The Town's **recreation programming** is viewed as a strength in the community. Specific references were made to several programs having waitlists and drop-in sessions consistently filling up.
- Aurora's diversifying demographic profile has a significant influence on recreation. **New Canadians** in Aurora have expressed strong interest in existing programs. In particular, Learn to Skate is a program that has been in high demand recently.
- The **sports community is vibrant**, and there are new hotels to support sport tourism.
- There is a wide range of quality parks and recreation **facilities**, as well as cultural assets.
- Stakeholders recognize that municipal **customer service staff are responsive** to their needs. Several stakeholder group representatives indicate that permit bookings and submissions are generally performed in a fast-paced manner.
- The Town's **sport fields** are well maintained and serviced. Surveys conducted by Sport Aurora after tournaments reportedly show that facilities are well received.
- The new management model for the **Lind Realty Team Sports Dome** has been well received.
- The Town of Aurora is recognized by many stakeholders as **home to a vibrant sports community**.

DRAFT

- Many recreation groups have a **regional membership** and frequently travel to other neighbouring communities to use their facilities (e.g., sports leagues, swim programming in Newmarket, etc.).

What trends are affecting your organization? Are there barriers to participation?

There are several trends impacting stakeholder organizations in Aurora, some of which may contribute to barriers to broader participation. Stakeholder organizations identified:

- Aurora has been impacted by **declines in volunteerism**. Many associations are struggling with attracting and retaining volunteer coaches, instructors, and officials, which has affected how organizations have competed with programs in neighbouring communities that pay these positions.
- The **pandemic** dramatically reduced programming for some groups such as Special Olympics, has limited access to schools, and has made fundraising more challenging.
- **Aquatic programs** are becoming over-subscribed and the therapy pool in Newmarket (Southlake Regional Health Centre) has been permanently closed. There is a suggested demand by organizations for a pool expansion.
- There is increased interest in **learn to skate and learn to swim programs** as we emerge from the pandemic (including newcomer adults).
- Several groups indicated that they have **waitlists** for their programs.
- Programming is changing to align with evolving **community demographics**. For example, many newcomers require language and culturally sensitive facilities and programs (e.g., cricket).
- Growing levels of **female participation** were noted by rugby and lacrosse groups and has also been an emphasis of Sport Aurora's initiatives.
- Aurora's population is aging, but residents are looking to remain active. An **aging population** is influencing a growing demand of adult recreational programming, including pickleball and physiotherapy programming.
- In terms of barriers, it was noted that **change rooms** at some facilities are insufficient to accommodate all users.
- There is a lack of **lights at sports fields** that limit organizations' ability to conduct evening practices.
- The **high cost** of youth hockey, aquatics, etc. is a barrier for some families.

How well are our existing parks, facilities and services meeting your organization's needs? Are additional parks, facilities and services required?

Existing parks, facilities and services meet each organization's needs on different levels. Stakeholders indicated the following regarding how their needs are met, and if they see a new and/or improved parks, facilities and services to be necessary for in the Town of Aurora:

- The Town's Aquatics Feasibility Study identified a strategy for expanding access to **aquatic services** (including improvements to existing pools, expansion of pool space, adjustments to programming, etc.); this direction continues to be supported by swimming clubs and aquatics advocates, with a view toward a regional initiative that could serve northern York Region.
- Organizations have requested the addition **of lighting to some outdoor basketball courts** to allow for evening play.
- New **artificial turf multi-use fields** (with lines for different sports) are needed to facilitate broader scope of programming; consideration should be given to change rooms, washrooms, storage, etc. at selected sites. One group identified an initiative to partner with the Town for the development of a second artificial turf field at Sheppard's Bush.
- Maximizing **ball diamond and field usage** should be a priority (block booking can create challenges). Some suggested that ball diamond drainage issues and surface conditions of older fields need to be addressed. There was a request for an additional mounded ball diamond to support youth and adult hardball.

DRAFT

- Recognizing the lack of undeveloped tableland in Aurora, the soccer club suggested using more constrained lands for **soccer field development**.
- Condensation at the **AFLC arena** is a significant issue and many groups prefer not to book the space. Some suggested that this space would be better used for dry floor activities (ball hockey, roller skating, lacrosse, etc.), but would need to replace the ice time through a new arena elsewhere.
- Multiple user groups identified **cleanliness** of AFLC and SARC as an issue; additional staffing may be required to address this, as well as grooming of ball diamonds.
- The expansion to the SARC will help to alleviate the significant need for **gymnasium space**, but some groups suggested that there will be a shortfall.
- Suggestion for a **second soccer dome** to support winter programming.
- Suggestion for an **outdoor artificial ice rink** as natural rinks are weather -dependent and too volatile.
- The **permitting system for tennis courts** is not well understood by public (which can lead to conflict); there was a suggestion to use an online app, coupled with greater public education.
- It was reported that the **Active Transportation strategy** has not been widely embraced, though trails remain an important component of the town's quality of life.

How can your organization, the Town and others work together to address these priorities?

The following approaches were suggested to support the priorities addressed by multiple stakeholder organizations:

- In general, there was wide support for **partnerships** that support participation and drive revenue.
- Multiple organizations expressed a desire in **attracting new participants** at all levels to join their respective groups. The decline of volunteerism has collectively impacted recreation in Aurora. Community events and tournaments offer opportunities for organizations to promote themselves to new members.
- A growing emphasis on **diversity, equity, and inclusion** is needed as the town's population becomes more diverse.
- Additional discussion around modified approaches to **facility allocation** are desired. With declining volunteerism, the ability to allocate programming in larger scheduling blocks was suggested. Further, it was noted that allocation practices make it difficult for adult-serving groups to secure time, though there remains a desire to ensure that residents have priority access. Consideration may also be given to a website that publicizes and allows permitting of last-minute space cancellations.
- Multiple organizations are seeking a higher priority be placed on the **development of athletes**. It was suggested athlete development and grass roots programs be re-evaluated, and that the Town work with others to build a sport volunteer and coaching program to help organizations with a qualified base of community supports.
- One land-based opportunity was mentioned to assist in addressing community needs, being continued progress on a partnership with the school board to use the **Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School lands**.
- The potential of **different construction methods**, such as aluminum-supported membrane structures, should be considered.
- It was suggested that the Town consider a more **revenue-centric operating model** to help support a new additional pool and multi-sport centre.
- More **strategic planning workshops** with local sport organizations were suggested in order to provide information pertaining to ongoing initiatives and community needs.

DRAFT

4.4 Youth Input

Feedback was sought from the Town of Aurora Youth Engagement Committee in November 2022. The Committee consists of local youth aged 12 to 17 years old that who serve to guide and advise on appropriate programs, special events, and services for youth in the town. Their input is summarized below.

PARTICIPATION: What activities do you like doing in parks and recreation facilities

Multiple youth indicated that they use the following amenities and activities in parks and recreation facilities:

- Using the trails for biking and hiking/walking, preferring to use trails near their houses and schools that are easy to access. One youth commented that they enjoy running on trails throughout Aurora because there are lots of other users and it feels nice to connect with others while exercising.
- Playing basketball and tennis in local parks on courts
- Playing sports in the AFLC Gymnasium, mostly basketball.
- Skating at the Arenas and on outdoor rinks in local parks.
- Playing soccer at the Sports Dome and soccer fields at Sheppard's Bush.
- Swimming at the SARC, going approximately every other week.
- Volleyball on the Beach Volleyball courts.
- Using the dog park and dog friendly parks with family.

BARRIERS: What stops you from using our parks and recreation facilities or participating in recreation programs?

- Dog Park; the wood chips coating the ground are an injury risk as they have gotten stuck in their dogs' paws and some families have stopped attending the dog park for that reason. Families are also having difficulty finding other areas to walk or play with their dog since the majority of other parks don't allow unleashed dogs.
- Lack of Swim Lesson Availability; seasonal swimming lessons fill up fast so they often missed out on opportunities to continue lessons. More availability in lessons would be helpful.
- Community Recreation Facilities; the majority of youth mentioned that they don't have access to a car or have to wait for parents to get home to drive them. They commented that if their family has conflicting schedules, they have stopped their recreation activities (e.g., soccer at the Sports Dome) since they can't get a ride to the activity. Other youth commented that the distance between facilities and their houses or schools is far. Another youth agreed and mentioned it is hard to take transit to get to facilities for programs.
- Lack of Soccer Nets: youth mentioned that the soccer nets at Sheppard's Bush or other parks are often missing netting. They said it makes it hard to play and is discouraging.
- Lack of Communication About Programs; youth commented that they had a hard time finding opportunities while onsite in recreation complexes (no central location to read over activities such as a bulletin board) or found the website hard to navigate. Youth mentioned repeatedly that if they don't know about a program they don't go. Some youth commented they don't use online tools like websites as often as others do, that they prefer flyers and pamphlets.
- Common Language for Program Advertising; one youth mentioned that they find it hard to find programs they're looking for because they're often titled differently or not similar to past programs. Promotions don't use common language and it can be hard to find programs if they don't know what they're called.

DRAFT

IMPROVEMENTS: How can we make our parks and recreation facilities more youth-friendly?

- Aurora is a very car-oriented community. It would be nice to see more pedestrian-friendly design, or improvements made to help residents that are travelling by walking or biking.
- Installation of bike repair stations around trails that are on tethers so they can't be taken.
- More dog friendly events like NewBarkIt (Newmarket event) or more parks with the ability to take dogs off leash. Canine Commons is tough to get to and it doesn't feel inclusive to families who have dogs.
- Gravel trail surfaces can be challenging for biking, scootering and skateboarding. It would be helpful for major trails leading to Rec Complexes to be paved. It was noted that it's harder for bikes to brake on the gravel, which can be a safety issue, especially on hilly trails.
- Adding Bike lanes to bigger or main roads that are utilized by students getting to and from school; it would promote helping the environment and healthy living.
- Addition of water fountains to parks or adding bottle filling stations to parks with public washrooms.
- Additional lights for basketball courts in parks. Lights could be on timers or sensors with a final use time of 10 pm. It would encourage healthier routines and allow families more access to parks and trails. Teens have noticed that trails are well lit, but parks often aren't.
- Some major streets/walkways (e.g., St. John's Side Road to access connecting trails) don't have a lot of shade. It would be nice to see more shade-bearing trees, or some shade structures built into the trail path.
- Adding outdoor exercise machines to more parks along trails.
- Shuttle service to bring kids or teens to community centres or recreation facilities more regularly.
- Rental Bikes for community to rent and use in community.
- In-person advertising for recreation programs and opportunities at events, specific areas of community, etc. Adding more community bulletin boards at Town Park, Aurora Town Square, the Library, etc. Creating more youth specific promotions, including a teen program guide flyer to be distributed through schools or an email distribution list for teens.
- Additional trail signage like a colour coding system or more signage that indicates how trails connect to major areas of Aurora and landmarks (e.g., Aurora Town Square, SARC, Town Hall, Library, etc.).
- Bulletin boards that advertise upcoming programs at recreation complexes would be helpful at other locations around the community.

DRAFT

4.5 Internal Consultation

Consultation was undertaken with Town Council and staff involved in the management, operation and maintenance of parks and recreation facilities and services. Input from these sources was wide-ranging and has been used to inform the Master Plan.

4.6 Emerging Directions from the Initial Public Input and Research Phase

Key findings of the initial public engagement and research phase are summarized below. These themes have been assessed along with community profiles, usage data, and promising practices from other communities to inform the Master Plan's recommendations.

1. **Parks and recreation services are very important to Aurora residents.** 98% of survey respondents agree that parks and recreation services are important to their quality of life. The survey also found high levels of satisfaction with park and recreation facility provision and maintenance; however, improvements are required to address aging infrastructure, gaps, and emerging needs.

2. **Aurora is growing and becoming more diverse.** More than one-third of the town's population are foreign-born and this is likely to increase as Aurora grows (the average rate of growth between 2021 and 2031 is more than 1,000 persons per year, mostly through intensification). Aurora's population is also aging and seeing greater demand for barrier-free opportunities for persons with disabilities and mobility challenges. These changes may influence demand for certain recreation activities (including accessible and inclusive spaces) and will place upward pressure on existing resources.

3. **The pandemic has highlighted the vital role of parks, trails and outdoor recreation opportunities in staying active and connected.** Unstructured park and trail use has increased during the pandemic and these spaces have become more important to supporting resident health and wellness. Accessible washrooms in parks and public spaces are also required to support these uses. Long-term planning and strategic investment are vital to support the significant role that the parks and recreation play in our personal, social, and economic recovery and revitalization.

4. **Demand is growing for unstructured activities for all ages.** The survey found that the most popular activities in Aurora are those that appeal to all ages and abilities, such as use of parks, walking/hiking, special events, cycling, swimming, and fitness. Interest is also growing for self-directed leisure pursuits such as outdoor ice skating, disc golf, off-leash dog park use, outdoor basketball and volleyball, and community gardening – some of these activities appeal to residents of all ages and some can be done across all seasons.

5. **Multi-use and flexible spaces help in accommodating emerging sports and activities.** New and changing recreation interests create new opportunities to engage residents in innovative ways, but also place pressure on existing resources, parks and facilities. Flexibility in design and approach is required, and facilities that can accommodate multi-uses are desired. Some examples include multi-use outdoor courts, artificial turf fields, and gymnasiums.

6. **Aurora has a prominent sport community and there is strong interest in quality facilities that can support high performance athletics.** The consultation program yielded several requests for additional indoor swimming programs and facilities, as well as dryland spaces such as gymnasiums. While the Town has taken some steps to address these demands, funding and land availability are notable constraints. Partnerships may be necessary in some cases to ensure that community recreation facilities are "sport-friendly" and have the level of amenities (e.g., dimensions, change rooms, scoreboards, lighting, etc.) requested by the full range of user groups.

7. **Many groups and residents are seeking additional access to municipal recreation facilities and sports fields.** Town facilities are well used, sometimes resulting in waitlists especially for specific programs or locations at peak times. The Town works hard to ensure equitable access and address conflicts, and there is high satisfaction with the Town's customer service. Reviewing

DRAFT

and updating the Town's allocation policies and permitting practices may assist in maximizing access and streamlining procedures.

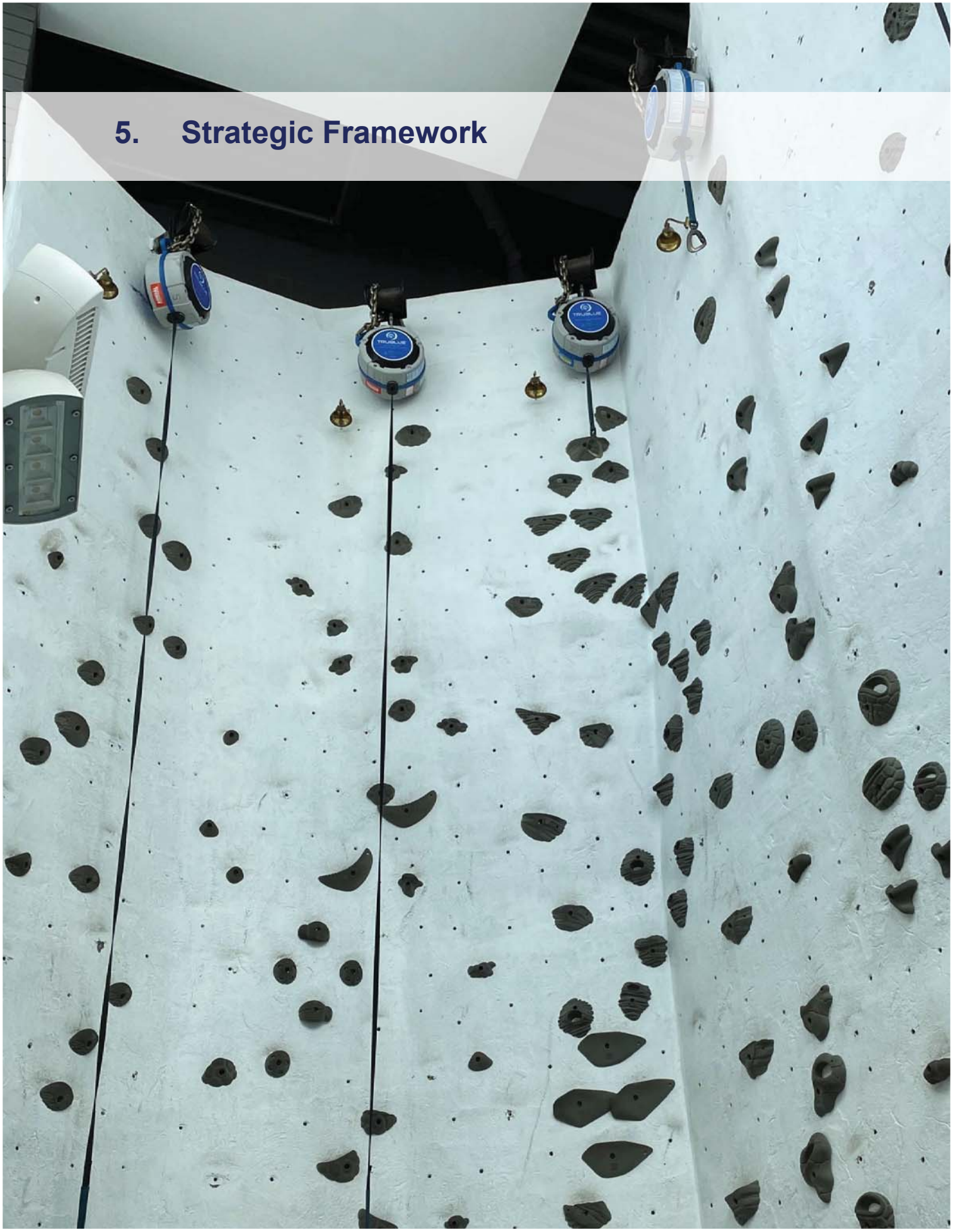
8. **The COVID-19 pandemic has been a significant challenge for many organizations and continues to impact service levels.** Labour shortages have been widespread across Canada and this has been particularly acute in industries such as recreation that rely partially on part-time and seasonal employees. Many local organizations also expressed challenges with recruiting and retaining volunteers to support their sports and recreation programs. Continued efforts to enhance outreach, training, wages, and other benefits may help to address this issue over time.

9. **The Town's parks are largely built-out with little ability to accommodate new amenities, and parkland provision standards are declining.** This will place more pressure on existing parks and amenities and will require greater emphasis on capital maintenance, such as the timely replacement of playground equipment. Population growth and community expectations suggest a need for additional parkland; however, the legislation governing parkland conveyance is changing, making it more difficult to secure parks of adequate size and location.

10. **The community places a high value on the natural landscape and environmental sustainability.** Climate change adaptation and mitigation measures are increasingly being integrated into public sector practices, becoming one of several ways to define the success of municipal projects.

DRAFT

5. Strategic Framework



This section identifies the strategic framework that will guide the Master Plan's development and implementation. In creating this framework, the overarching strategies established in the 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan have been revisited through the lens of updated consultation and research, including alignment with foundational documents such as the Town's Strategic Plan and Framework for Recreation in Canada.

5.1 SWOT Analysis

Before identifying a strategic path forward, it is necessary to undertake an honest examination of the current state. The table below summarizes key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to the Town's parks and recreation system that have been identified through the research and consultation to date.

Table 6 – SWOT Analysis for Town of Aurora Parks and Recreation System

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Town offers a broad variety of high quality, affordable, year-round services and facilities - Public satisfaction levels are generally high in most areas - Customer service and responsiveness of staff were frequently mentioned as strengths by the community - Town has made parks and recreation a priority – Aurora has a high capital spending rate but is operationally-efficient - Aurora's open space and trails network is a significant asset - The Departments responsible for parks and recreation services are in a mature state with established policies and procedures	- Aurora is largely built-out and there is a lack of available land for large parks or major recreation facilities - Challenged to keep pace with needs of sport community (indoor pools, sports fields and courts, gymnasiums, etc.) and adult recreation - Underfunding of park amenity replacements (e.g., playgrounds) and new infrastructure to maintain existing levels of service - Older parks and facilities may not always address needs of a population that is aging and becoming more diverse - There can often be local resistance to adding new amenities to existing parks
Opportunities	**Threats**
- The Town is preparing a new Official Plan in 2023 to guide parkland acquisition, among other aspects of community growth and development - Growing opportunity to foster partnerships with schools, sports associations, and others (e.g., artificial turf fields, Dr. G.W. Williams SS, etc.) - New Ward system may place a greater emphasis on under-served areas - Aurora's central location in North York Region make it an attractive location for tournaments, events, and higher-order facilities/services - Aurora Town Square project will provide a multi-use event and gathering space for residents and visitors	- Funding sources such as Development Charges and cash-in-lieu of parkland are becoming more constrained - Growth, density, and changing planning legislation makes parkland more difficult to secure - Some Town facilities are aging and not fully barrier-free - Rising cost of land and demand for housing will lead to loss of Stronach soccer fields - Current labour shortages have made it difficult for the Town to attract staff and many organizations to retain volunteers - The pandemic and economic situation has made access to recreation services less affordable for some (but Town has new policies in place)

DRAFT

5.2 A Vision for Parks and Recreation in Aurora

Based on supporting documents and public input, the following vision and guiding principles have been established to guide the development and implementation of this Master Plan. This strategy reflects the values and aspirations articulated by the Town and the community as a whole. Together, the framework describes the core directions that the Municipality and its partners should strive to achieve over time.

Vision

Setting a "vision" for the Town in the delivery of parks and recreation programs, facilities and services is the initial step in setting a strategic path forward. A strategic vision depicts how Aurora wants to be viewed in the future and compels Council, staff and the community to work together to achieve their collective goals over time.

The following **vision statement** is proposed for parks and recreation in Aurora:

An active, healthy, and engaged community supported by responsive recreation services, facilities and parks.

DRAFT

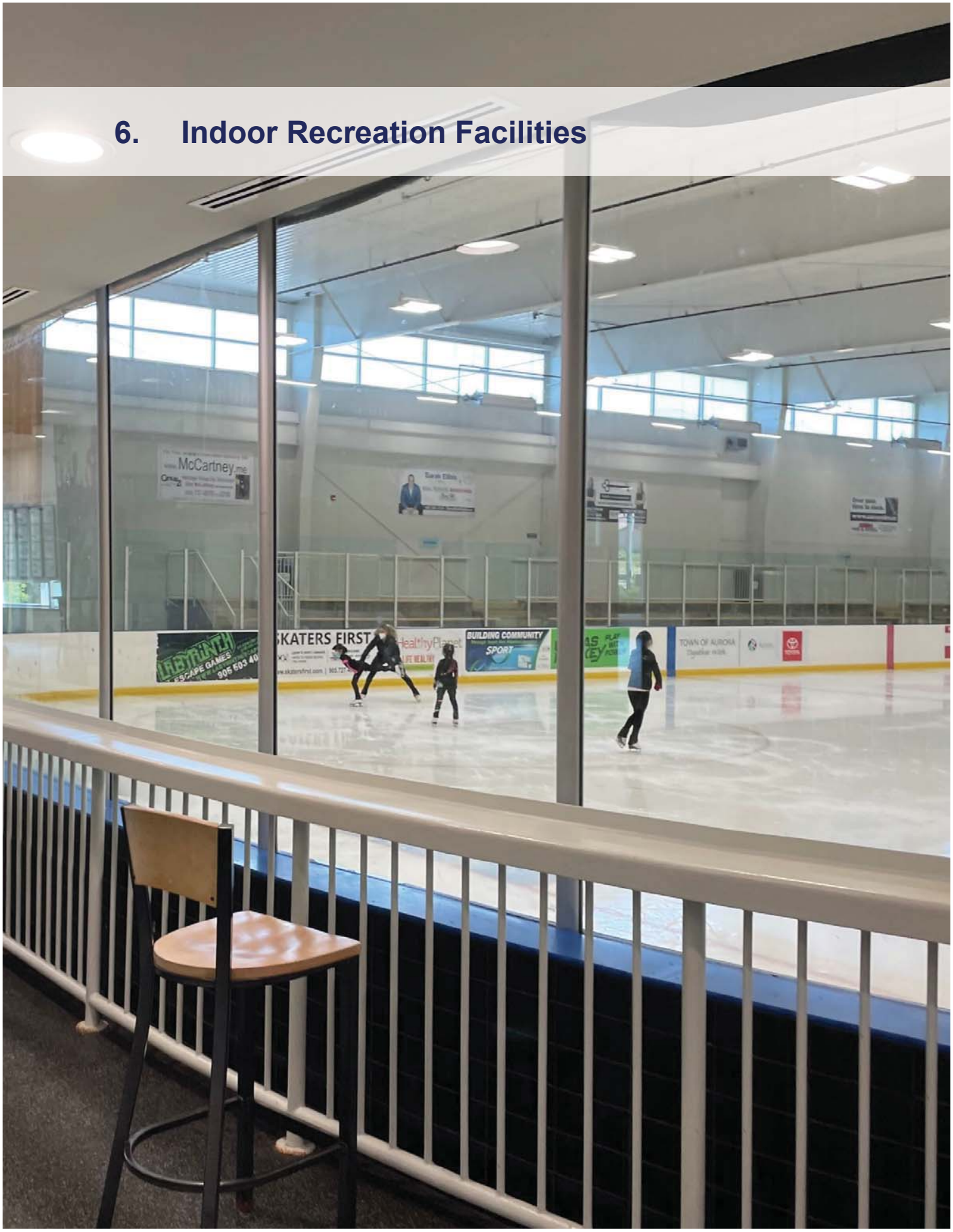
Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles reflect input received from the Aurora community and municipal staff and officials. They are intended to inform and direct the Town's approach to decision-making and investment over the next five years and beyond. Everything the Town does in relation to parks and recreation should further the vision and one or more of the guiding principles.

1. Expand Resident Participation	2. Optimize our Recreation Facilities	3. Enhance our Parks & Amenities	4. Foster Innovation & Service Excellence
We will increase accessible opportunities for community recreation, active and healthy living, and sport for residents of all ages and abilities.	We will respond to evolving community needs by planning ahead and investing strategically in sustainable recreation infrastructure.	We will sustain a high quality parks system that encourages participation, builds a sense of place, and promotes stewardship.	We will deliver exceptional parks and recreation services and pursue partnerships to leverage community benefits.

Detailed recommendations that will assist the Town and the community to achieve the vision and guiding principles can be found in the following sections of this Master Plan.

6. Indoor Recreation Facilities



Recreation facilities play an important role in the daily life of Aurora's residents. The Town invests in infrastructure to promote physical activity, healthy lifestyles, skill development, athletic competition, community building, and economic growth. These assets have positive impacts on residents and contribute to the community's wellbeing. This section identifies needs and considerations for the indoor recreation in Aurora.

6.1 Summary of the Indoor Recreation Facility Supply

The Town's major indoor recreation facilities include the Aurora Community Centre, Aurora Family Leisure Complex, Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex, and Aurora Seniors' Centre. These venues provide multiple activity-specific and flexible spaces for a wide variety of programming and rentals.

Table 7 – Indoor Recreation Facilities

Facility Type	Number	Location
Community Centres	**3**	Aurora Community Centre, Aurora Family Leisure Complex, Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex
Indoor Aquatic Centres	**2**	Aurora Family Leisure Complex, Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex (multiple tanks)
Gymnasiums	**1**	Aurora Family Leisure Complex Note: A gymnasium is planned to be added to the SARC (opening in 2024). The Town also permits several school gymnasiums.
Fitness Centres (full-service)	**1**	Aurora Family Leisure Complex (Club Aurora)
Arenas (Ice Pads)	**5**	Aurora Community Centre (2), Aurora Family Leisure Complex (1), Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex (2)
Indoor Racquet Courts	**2 locations**	Tennis: 6 courts at the Marilyn Redvers Centre (operated by third-party) Squash: 4 courts at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex
Indoor Turf Fields	**1**	Lind Realty Team Sports Dome
Multi-Purpose Rooms	**18**	Aurora Community Centre (3), Aurora Family Leisure Complex (4), Aurora Public Library (4), Aurora Seniors' Centre (3), Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex (1), Town Hall (2), Victoria Hall (1)
Dedicated Youth Space	**1**	Aurora Family Leisure Complex
Dedicated Older Adult Space	**1**	Aurora Seniors' Centre

In addition to these municipal facilities, residents also benefit from a number of facilities owned and/or managed by others (note: some may not be broadly accessible to the public), such as:

- **Other Public Facilities:** the Town owns and/or operates other facilities not listed above that offer some opportunity for community-based programming and events, such as the Aurora Public Library, Town Square/Church Street School, and Aurora Armoury;
- **Schools**: most elementary and secondary schools include gymnasiums, classrooms and/or outdoor facilities (e.g., sports fields, playgrounds);

DRAFT

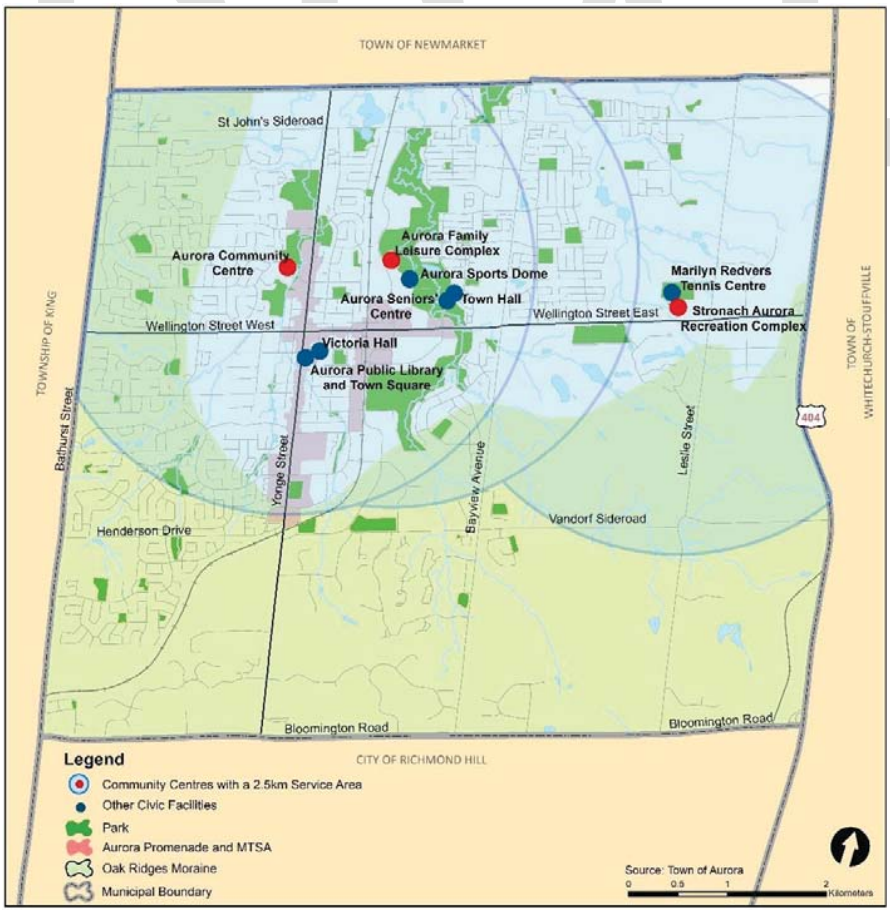
- **Non-profit and private sector providers**: examples churches and places of worship, service clubs, fitness clubs, martial arts and dance studios, etc.
- **Adjacent municipalities/communities**: various recreation facilities and parks are provided in adjacent municipalities (e.g., Newmarket, Richmond Hill, etc.).

6.2 Community Centres

The Town operates three (3) community centres: Aurora Community Centre (ACC); Aurora Family Leisure Complex (AFLC); and Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex (SARC). These facilities serve as multi-use hubs that support a wide variety of indoor registered and drop-in programming, casual use, bookings and permits, and events that reflect the needs of the community. Community Centres contain amenities such as indoor pools, gymnasiums, fitness centres, arenas, meeting spaces, and more.

Note: Facilities that are designed or function primarily for a single type of recreational activity (e.g., ice sports, community halls, cultural centres) are not defined as community centres within this plan. While the Aurora Seniors Centre serves similar functions for an older population, older adult space is discussed separately in this Master Plan.

Figure 35 – Town of Aurora Community Centres and other Notable Civic Facilities



The Town has made several investments in its community centres in recent years to ensure that they remain modern and responsive to local needs. This includes major upgrades to the AFLC, updates to the ACC, and the planned addition of a gymnasium and lobby renovation at the SARC (2024). However, all three facilities are largely built-out on their sites and have limited capacity for future expansion. Any growth-related needs for additional recreation space will likely need to be accommodated through either a conversion of existing space or through the establishment of new space off-site.

The primary need arising from this and past studies is for a new indoor aquatic centre. Most recently, the 2020 Aquatics Feasibility Study supported options for expanding the SARC or establishing a new pool location elsewhere in Aurora. The current distribution of facilities and population would suggest that a location in the southwest would be most desired from a community recreation perspective. A longstanding lack of available land in this area is one of several reasons why such a project has not advanced further.

The Town has funding identified in its long-term capital forecast for such a facility in the 2025-2027 range. In order for the Town to address the growing demand for indoor aquatics, sport training and development, and other program areas, it is imperative that the Town work to secure land for future facility development. With the planned closure of Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School, the Town is encouraged to continue conversations with the school board regarding community use of this site, whether it be for sports fields, access to indoor spaces, or long-term use potential. Other sites in southwest Aurora or the vicinity may also emerge, such as lands owned by the Ontario Heritage Trust (Smith property), former George Street School, etc. A minimum of 3 hectares of land should be considered for such a facility, giving the Town flexibility for future programming.

In the interim, the new Township-Wide Recreation Centre in nearby King Township (consisting of two ice pads, six-lane 25-metre lap pool and leisure pool, multi-purpose athletic fieldhouse, and sports fields) will help to meet broader needs in the region, potentially easing some demand on Aurora's facilities and improving access to facilities the town's southwest area.

Furthermore, there may be opportunities to replan some spaces at existing community centres. For example, the AFLC has longstanding issues with condensation in the arena enclosure, as well as a growing need for expanded fitness space, floor sports, and more. By converting the arena to alternative uses, these issues would be addressed while accommodating emerging needs. Arena needs and options are discussed in more detail later in this section.

Table 8 – Provision Analysis – Community Centres

Current Supply	3
Current Per Capita Provision	1:21,370
Future Per Capita Provision (2031)	1:24,333
Municipal Benchmark	1:31,140
Recommended Target	1:25,000
Future Needs: • Secure a site (ideally in southwest Aurora) to support a fourth community centre adressing demand for indoor aquatics and other recreation programming	

Recommendations

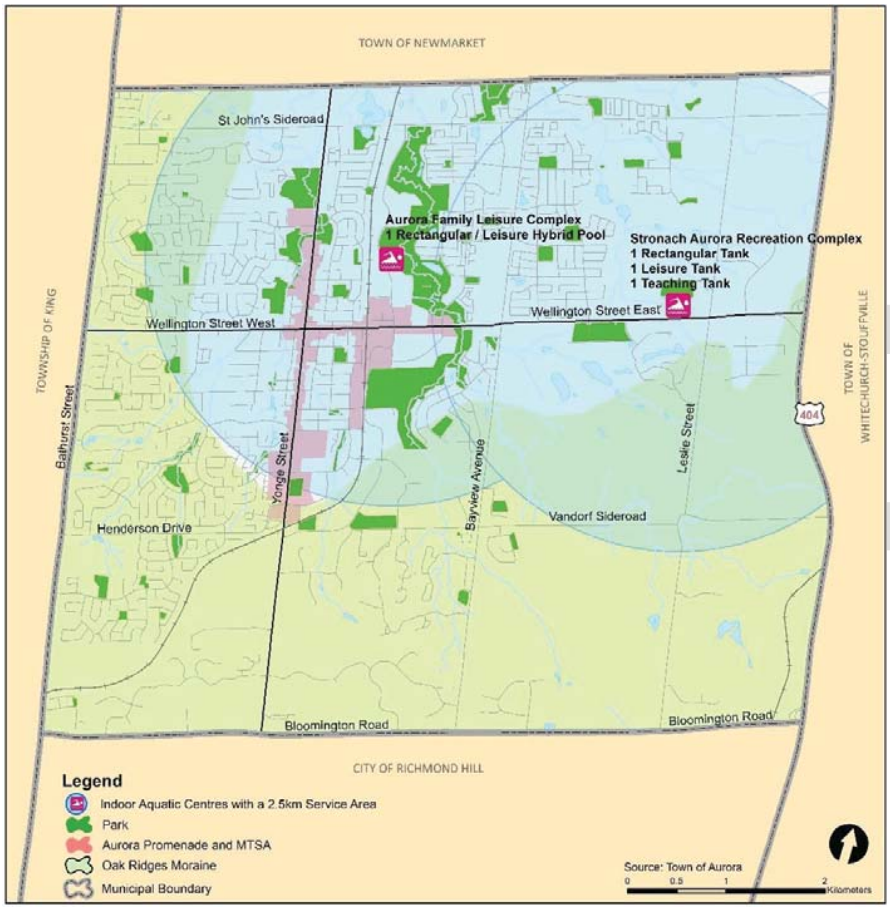
#1 Secure **land in southwest Aurora** through partnership or purchase to accommodate a new **multi-use recreation centre**, potentially consisting of an indoor aquatic centre, gymnasium, walking track, supplementary program spaces (e.g., community kitchen, etc.), sports fields, etc. Confirm facility needs through a business plan once a site is established, with the goal of beginning detailed design within the five-year timeframe of this plan (by 2028).

DRAFT

6.3 Indoor Aquatics

The Town operates two indoor aquatic complexes, located at the AFLC (single tank; leisure/lane hybrid pool) and SARC (multiple tanks; 8-lane 25-metre and leisure pools). The SARC is the town's premier aquatic centre and is heavily used for recreational swimming, programs, sport training and rentals.

Figure 36 – Town of Aurora Indoor Aquatic Facilities



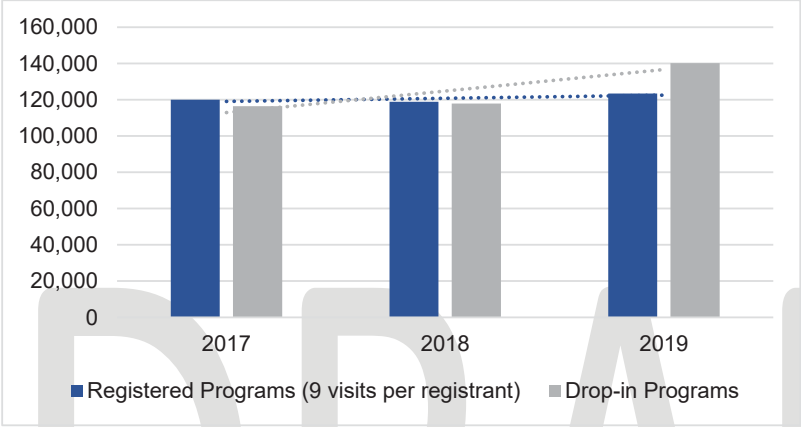
Community and stakeholder interest in aquatic facilities has been increasing in Aurora. The Master Plan survey found that two-fifths (40%) of Aurora households have participated in swimming indoors since 2019, ranking 4th out of 39 leisure activities surveyed.

Participation in swimming is strong as the activity appeals to people of all ages and abilities, either in a structured or drop-in format. The Town, as with most communities, places considerable focus on learn-to-swim and aquatic fitness through its programming. While learn-to-swim is usually the highest demand use for an indoor pool, there is a growing aquatic fitness market which is well suited to adults and older adults as it is a low impact, social activity that promotes physical health. Swim teams and aquatic clubs (many with regional memberships) are also major users that tend to prefer traditional rectangular pool configurations with lanes and cooler water temperatures, while the aquafit and early childhood learn-to-swim markets are increasingly shifting their preferences to warmer water leisure/teaching pools.

The following chart illustrates the estimated number of swims generated from aquatics programming offered by the Town of Aurora at both the SARC and AFLC between 2017 and 2019 (pre-pandemic).

Overall swims increased by 9% during this time period, most notably due to a rise in drop-in swimming (all age groups) and growth in registered programming for older adults. Fill rates for registered aquatic programming (excluding summer and holiday camps) averaged around 60%, indicating additional capacity for use. However, like most recreation facilities and programs, the peak times (Saturday mornings, early evenings, etc.) fill up fast while non-peak times (e.g., weekday daytime, etc.) have fewer registrants.

Figure 37: Estimated Swim Visits to Aurora Indoor Pools, 2017-2019



Note: Excludes swim visits generated from rentals.
Source: Town of Aurora, 2022.

The pandemic had a profound impact on many recreation activities, including swimming and related disciplines. For example, Aurora and many other communities were unable to retain their full complement of accredited lifeguards and aquatics instructors. At the same time, when facilities fully re-opened and programming resumed, the demand for learn-to-swim programs skyrocketed as families sought to catch-up for lost time. It may take time for the Town to rebuild its staffing levels to support the full spectrum of aquatics programming.

Assuming a return to pre-pandemic participation levels, the Town may also see increased demand from newcomers and seniors, both of which are growing markets in Aurora. This suggests a continued focus on lifelong learning skills, recreational swimming, and warmer-water activities. At the same time, input from local aquatic clubs suggest that they are looking for more prime time access to the pools, particularly sport-friendly lane pools with cooler water temperatures. Pool quality and supporting amenities are major influences on participation. Pools with multiple tanks, different water temperatures, and modern design standards respond to the widest variety of user groups and aquatic programming options, including parallel and multi-generational programming.

Recognizing these growing needs, the Town prepared an Aquatic Feasibility Study and Business Plan in 2020 to examine the feasibility of new pool, including its preferred size, location, and programming. This study identified a preferred provision model consisting of a 50-metre pool addition to the SARC, but also indicated that, at minimum, an additional 25-metre pool with 8 lanes is needed to meet current and future needs.

In supporting this recommendation, the Feasibility Study noted the following (summarized for brevity):

- An additional 25-metre pool will serve the needs of the immediate community, but will limit the economic impacts and benefits a larger, competition pool would provide.
- The Town's last indoor pool was built in 2006, prior to a current day population growth of 35%.
- Stated community support and demand for aquatic facilities can only be addressed through additional pool tanks that can offer a wider range of design configurations and temperature

options matching specific program needs. Further, it is noted that since the study was completed, the Southlake Regional Health Centre in Newmarket has permanently closed its therapy pool.

Through the Master Plan consultation program, the community continues to strongly support investment in additional pool facilities. Two-thirds (68%) of survey respondents identified indoor swimming pools as a high priority, ranking 7th out of 30 facility types. Additionally, comments were received regarding access to swimming lessons, which have become more difficult for some residents to register for due to a combination of factors largely impacted by the pandemic (e.g., program capacities, staffing levels, preferred program times, etc.); the Town is working to increase its capacity in order to mitigate these concerns going forward.

The Aurora Aquatics Advocacy group also provided written input regarding their mission to "support the development of a premiere accessible aquatic facility that will benefit the recreational, competitive, and community users in Aurora and York Region." The group indicates that there is a sport training gap in York Region North and supports adding a 10-lane 50-metre pool and related wellness components to the SARC. The group envisions that this facility would better meet the needs of competitive sport and drive new creative program offerings, revenue sources, and partnerships, thereby creating opportunities for offsetting capital and operating costs.

Indoor pools serve residents of all ages and abilities in a controlled year-round environment. They are planned based on geographic accessibility and population. A service level target ranging between 1 indoor aquatic facility per 30,000 to 35,000 residents is typical for a community such as Aurora, though this can range widely based on several factors. Looking beyond this benchmark, the preferred design and number of lanes should be based on contemplated programming, something that the Town has examined through the recent Aquatic Feasibility Study. Experience from other municipalities indicates that the highest use pools tend to be newer and contain multiple tanks.

A 50-metre pool is a service level that is not currently supported by the Town. In addition to funding concerns, there are logistical issues to significantly expanding the SARC, including the acquisition of land and additional parking. If Aurora wished to consider a 50-metre pool further, the Town cannot build and support one alone. The market for such a facility is regional and would require a different approach to scheduling and programming (as outlined in the Aquatic Feasibility Study). Furthermore, community opinion has been divided between investing in higher order sport training facilities as opposed to more modest investments in facilities that address broader community-level needs. The Town's Sport Plan supports increased levels of participation in sport and recognized the impact of sport tourism within the community.

Based on the findings of the Aquatic Feasibility Study, it is recommended that the Town continue to advance the recommendation for a new 25-metre 8-lane community pool, but remain open to partnership discussions that could elevate the level of service while protecting the interests of taxpayers.

Table 9 – Provision Analysis – Indoor Aquatics

Current Supply	2
Current Per Capita Provision	1:32,050
Future Per Capita Provision (2031)	1:36,350
Municipal Benchmark	1:33,170
Recommended Target	1:30,000
Future Needs: • One new pool location, with planning to begin in the short-term • At minimum, the pool should be a 25-m 8-lane tank, but have the potential to be designed as larger tank through a partnered project	

Recommendations

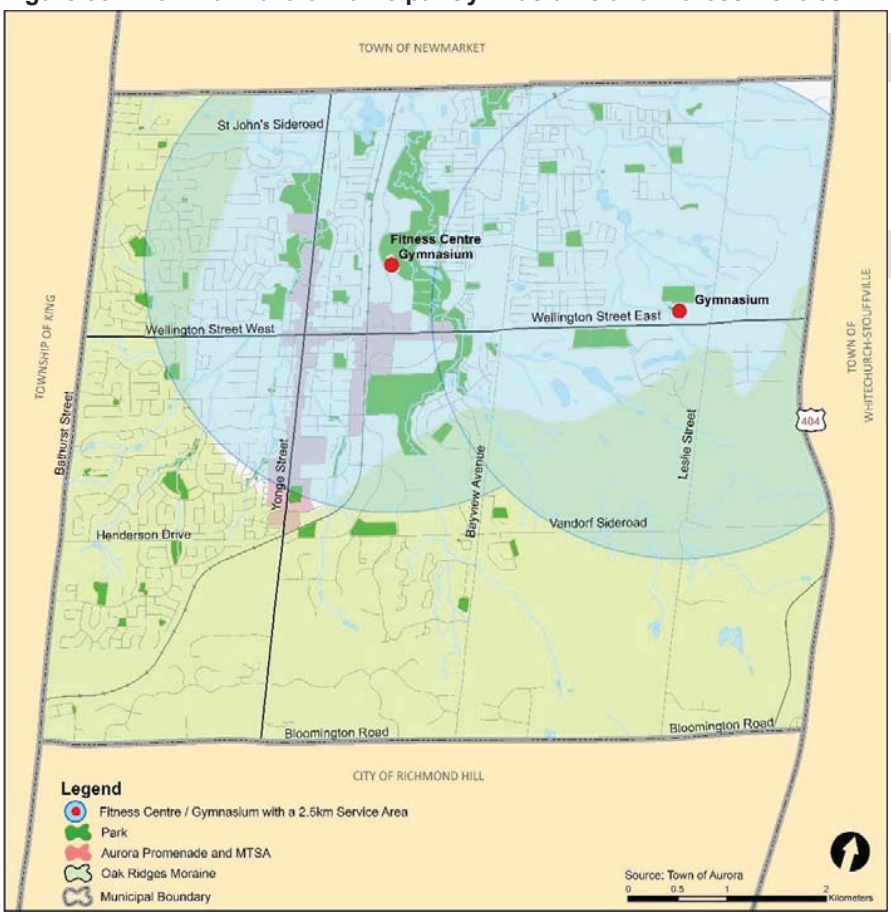
#2 Continue to pursue the development of a new **25-metre 8-lane community pool,** but remain open to partnership discussions that could elevate the level of service at no additional costs to the tax base.

#3 Update the Town's **Pool Allocation Guidelines** to ensure that pool time is being used effectively and that priority markets and organizations are afforded fair and transparent access to available times. Consider developing a formal allocation policy.

6.4 Gymnasiums

The Town currently offers one municipal gymnasium at the AFLC (under-sized as it was a fitness centre conversion) and is planning to add a full-size gym to the SARC (opening in 2024).

Figure 38 – Town of Aurora Municipal Gymnasiums and Fitness Centres



Note: Gymnasium at SARC is planned to be constructed and opened for 2024.

The Town also permits selected school gymnasiums through which it runs recreation programming, although there is no formal reciprocal use agreement in place. Municipal and community access to school facilities has been increasingly challenging as schools expand their programming and restrict access, often on short notice. During parts of the pandemic, access to school facilities was completely

unavailable, even when Town facilities were open to the public. These restrictions – along with a rapid growth in several court sports – mean that municipal gymnasiums are in high demand in Aurora and beyond.

To assess demand for the proposed SARC expansion, the AFLC gymnasium schedule has been regularly evaluated by staff. Demand for use of the space is high and Town staff are regularly adjusting the schedule to maximize use. Gymnasium time is well utilized for Town run activities; however, little time is left for community use, a point that was reiterated through the stakeholder consultations. One half (51%) of survey respondents also identified gymnasiums as a high priority, ranking 14th out of 30 facility types.

Municipalities are increasingly including gymnasiums within new recreation centres as they can accommodate many growing sports (e.g., basketball, pickleball, badminton, group fitness, etc.), municipal programming, rentals, and larger community events. Gymnasiums (especially full-size/double gyms) are appealing to a wide variety of active and community uses for people of all ages. Another emerging trend is the development of indoor sport courts by the private sector or under air-supported domes (e.g., Whitchurch-Stouffville's Ballantrae Park).

The Town should include gymnasiums with each new or expanded community centre, ensuring that they are designed to meet a broad variety of uses, with appropriate dimensions and ancillary spaces (e.g., change rooms, storage, etc.). Indoor walking tracks should also be included in most new community centres, encircling gymnasiums, ice pads, or other features. Should the Town proceed with building a new community centre in southwest Aurora, a gymnasium and walking track should be core components. The longer-term need for additional gymnasiums may be considered through the next Master Plan update pending the successful operation of the gymnasium planned for the SARC.

Table 10 – Provision Analysis – Gymnasiums

Current Supply	1
Current Per Capita Provision	1:64,100
Future Per Capita Provision (2031)*	1:36,350
Municipal Benchmark	1:50,850
Recommended Target	1 per multi-use community centre
Future Needs: • Provide gymnasiums and walking tracks within new community centres (e.g., southwest Aurora)	

* Including new gymnasium at the SARC (2024)

6.5 Fitness Centres

The Town's only municipal membership-based fitness centre (Club Aurora) is located at the AFLC. Club Aurora offers an equipment-based workout space, group fitness studio, and a variety of fitness programs and services for a wide range of age groups and interests. Residents may access the centre through memberships or pay-as-you pricing; members also have access to the pool and squash courts. Club Aurora underwent a major renovation in in 2015 and the workout space was subsequently down-sized. As a result, membership has been reduced – in 2019 prior to the pandemic, Club Aurora had approximately 1,000 members, down from 2,200 in 2010. A draft Business Plan for Club Aurora was completed in 2019, with a new membership and pricing structure considered as part of the User Fee Review.

In addition, certain spaces at the SARC and ACC are also used for dryland training and/or fitness activities. There are also many private sector fitness providers serving Aurora, including large chains and smaller fitness studios.

DRAFT

Demand and competition are both strong in Aurora for personal heath and fitness services – the Town is just one of many providers. Three-out-of-ten (29%) Aurora households have participated in in-person fitness, yoga or weight-training activities since 2019, ranking 9th out of 39 leisure activities surveyed. However, with at-home and virtual fitness options thriving during the pandemic (one-half of fitness participants – or 14% of households – indicate recently participating in virtual fitness activities), many people have been slow to return to fitness centres on a full-time basis.

Staff have indicated that Club Aurora services the older adult community well, but that more programs, instructors, and space may be needed to better engage youth. The Town will need to continue to promote and adjust its services to match with these changing behaviours. Fortunately, locations like Club Aurora that can offer a range of services from workout space to group programs to personal training will have the greatest flexibility in managing these ups and downs.

Given the proliferation of private operators, additional fitness facilities not recommended at this time. However, the Town should continue to offer floor-based wellness programming at its community centre locations to promote active and healthy lifestyles and to supplement Club Aurora operations. As discussed in the arena section below, there may be long-term opportunities to repurpose the AFLC arena to expand floor space for fitness and other activities.

Recommendations

#4 Continue to implement the **Club Aurora Business Plan** with a view toward engaging a broad range of members through responsive service offerings and membership plans, while continuing to offer floor-based wellness programs across the Town's system of community centres.

6.6 Arenas

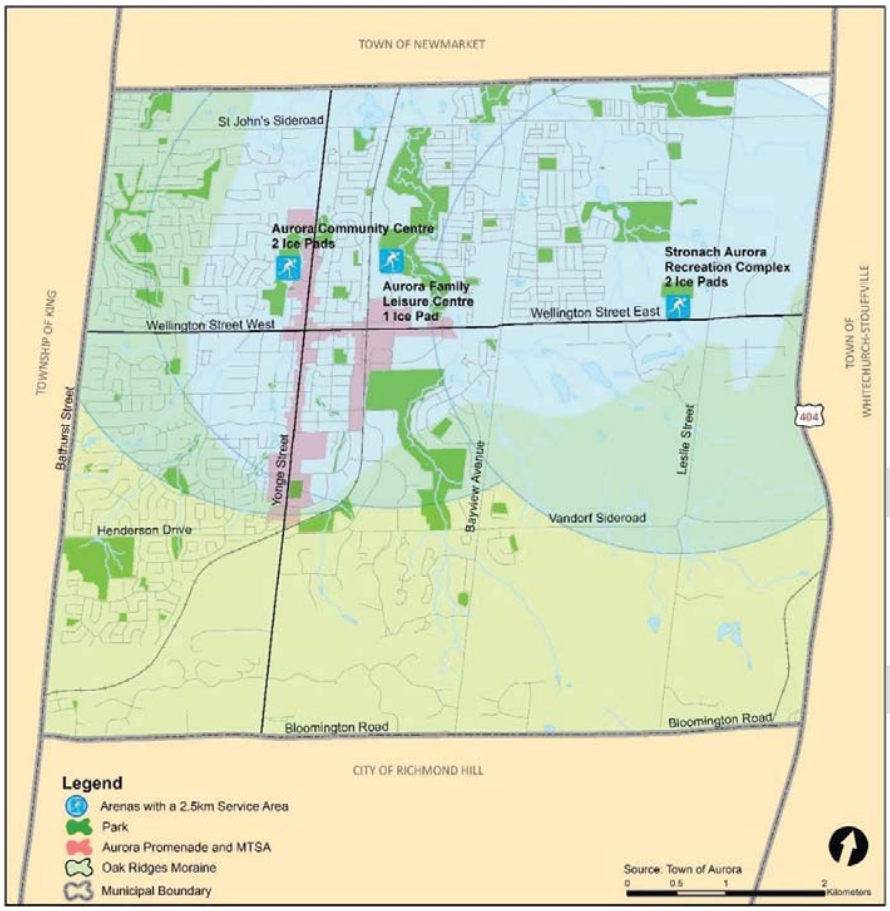
The Town offers five (5) indoor ice pads, located at the ACC (2 pads, built in 1966/1996), AFLC (1 pad, built in 1986), and SARC (2 pads, built in 2006). All arenas offer ice during the peak winter season, while regional demand allows the Town to operate three to four arenas year-round.

Participation in ice sports is declining across Ontario and Canada. Just prior to the pandemic, registration in Hockey Canada affiliated minor programs had declined by 16% since peaking in the 2008-2009 season. This reduction is most prevalent amongst boys and can be linked to several factors such as the high cost of ice sports, changing demographics (immigration from non-ice playing countries, aging of the population), concerns over safety, growing competition from other sports (e.g., indoor soccer, basketball, etc.), and a rise in the number of unsanctioned leagues and organizations. As a result of COVID-19 and the impact on programs, youth registration dropped an additional 34% in Ontario in 2020/21.[3]

Locally, nearly one-quarter (23%) of Aurora households participated in indoor ice sports or skating since 2019, ranking 12th out of 39 leisure activities surveyed. This is a notable decline from the 30% that indicated playing ice sports or skating in 2015. While this may be partially explained by the pandemic (although both surveys asked about participation prior to the pandemic), the Town's growing ethnic diversity and other factors may also be at play, suggesting a stabilizing of local demand.

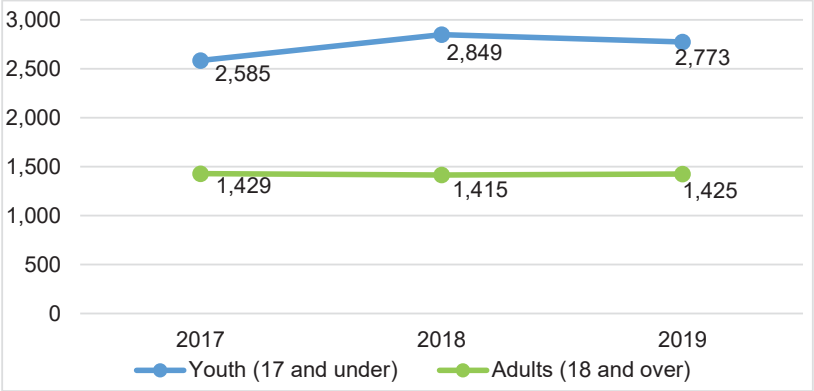
[3] Source: Hockey Canada Annual Reports. Includes players registered in youth hockey (U7 to U21).

Figure 39 – Town of Aurora Arenas



In part through the implementation of the previous Master Plan, the Town began collecting registration data on arena groups in 2017 to help inform usage and needs. This data (shown below) also illustrates a relatively stable participation profile between 2017 and 2019 (pre-pandemic), with a total of 4,198 persons participating in organized ice sports at Town of Aurora arenas in 2019. Several user groups have regional memberships and may also use facilities outside of Aurora. Approximately 50% of these arena users are Aurora residents; this figure is slightly lower for youth (~45%) and higher for adults (~60%). Additionally, approximately two-thirds (66%) of arena users are youth (aged 17 years and under).

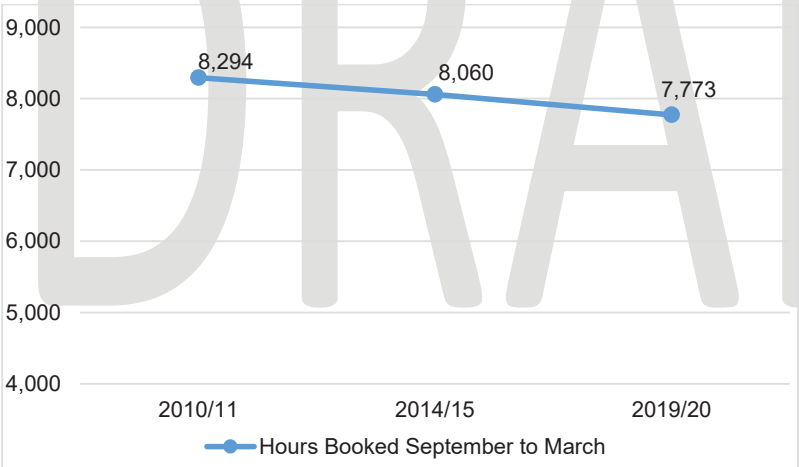
Figure 40 – Number of Participants Registered with Organizations using Town of Aurora Arenas (2017-2019)



Source: Town of Aurora, 2022.

Taking a longer view, the following chart shows a 6% decline in the number of hours used since 2010/11. Most of this decrease has been seen in shoulder hours (e.g., between 10:00 and 11:00 p.m. in the evening); however, some weakening of prime time ice usage has also been witnessed.

Figure 41 – Hours of Ice Time Booked at Town of Aurora Arenas



Source: Town of Aurora, 2022.

Recent trends indicate that participation in house league hockey is declining in many communities, while competitive development experiences and rep hockey remain in high demand. Private training facilities are springing up, offering paid instructors that teach area hockey skills, often on synthetic ice. This had led to growing requests for ice time at arenas from commercial renters representing broader memberships. Unfortunately, this “professionalization” of minor hockey comes at a cost that can create barriers, making the sport less inclusive and accessible for some families. Growth in the house league ranks is vital to the long-term sustainability of the system; the Town is encouraged to collect more granular data on user groups to assist with tracking of these trends.

On the point about affordability, research from 2018 found that the cost of children’s activities put a strain on the finances of a majority (55%) of Canadian parents. As many as one in three (32%) Canadians used debt to fund the extracurricular activities of their children. Hockey topped the list as the most expensive extracurricular activity (an average cost of nearly $750) and the research found that parents were

DRAFT

increasingly less likely to enroll their children in hockey as a result.[4] These results are compelling considering the current challenging economic climate.

Looking ahead, there is a possibility that demand will soften not only based on these trends, but also demographics. Population projections anticipate that the number of 5 to 19 year olds in York Region will remain stable to 2031, which has the potential to further erode demand since this age group is the main user of prime ice times.

On this basis, it is clear that additional indoor ice pads are not required in Aurora for the foreseeable future. The Town's provision of arenas is much higher than the municipal benchmark, in part because several organizations serving regional markets have made Aurora their home base – as noted earlier, only one-half of arena users are Aurora residents. It is recommended that the Town adjust its arena provision targets to one ice pad per 15,000 population. No additional ice pads are required during the next five years and this provision target should be reassessed through the next Master Plan update.

On a related matter, aging arena infrastructure will be a growing concern for Aurora in the years to come. This is a common issue across the municipal sector – the 2019 Canadian Infrastructure Report Card reported that 39% of Canada's municipal arenas and pools are in fair to very poor condition, with many built between 1956 and 1980. The original ice pad at the Aurora Community Centre was built during this era, but has since been refurbished. The arena at the AFLC was built shortly after this time (1986) and is approaching an age where greater investment will be required to address asset management and upgrades.

On the matter of the AFLC arena, staff and several stakeholders indicated lower levels of satisfaction with the facility due to issues with condensation/humidity, older change rooms, and the provision of only a single pad (the Town's other rinks are twin pads, which are preferred by many groups). There have been suggestions to convert this arena into a multi-use space for non-ice, dry floor activities such as ball hockey, roller skating, lacrosse, soccer, etc. Repurposing this venue into a space that can accommodate a variety of sports and programs would help to alleviate some of the other space demands at the AFLC, including fitness and potentially gymnasium sports. Given the age of the AFLC arena and its operational challenges, the Town will soon be forced into a decision around major refurbishment. There is currently sufficient support for this arena; however, a further reduction in arena demand may allow the Town to consider removing this arena and repurposing it into other uses. This may need to be accompanied by adjustments to the ice allocation policy to ensure that ice time at the four remaining arenas is equitably distributed amongst priority markets (e.g., local youth). Further study of this option is recommended prior to major capital reinvestment in the AFLC arena, which is likely to be required in the short-term.

Table 11 – Provision Analysis – Indoor Ice Pads

Current Supply	5 Ice Pads
Current Per Capita Provision	1:12,820
Future Per Capita Provision (2031)	1:14,540
Municipal Benchmark	1:22,440
Recommended Target	1:15,000
Future Needs: • No additional ice pads are recommended; this provision target should be revisited through the next Master Plan update • Further study is required to consider the potential of repurposing the AFLC into other uses	

[4] Ipsos. One in Three (32%) Families Going into Debt to Fund their Children's Extra-Curricular Activities, Up 5 Points from Last Year. 2018. https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/news-polls/back-to-school-2018

Recommendations

#5 In the short-term and prior to undertaking significant capital improvements to the **AFLC arena**, complete an ice needs assessment and provision study to assess the long-term need for arena facilities and to consider the potential of converting this venue into multi-use space for non-ice, dry floor activities.

#6 Review the Town's **Ice Allocation Policy** to ensure that ice time is being used effectively and that priority markets and organizations are afforded fair and transparent access to available times. The Town is encouraged to collect more granular data on user groups (e.g., level of play) to assist with trend tracking and policy development.

6.7 Indoor Racquet Courts

The Town provides four (4) squash courts at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex and also leases the Marilyn Redvers Tennis Centre (a year-round air-supported dome covering 6 tennis courts located in Stewart Burnett Park) to a third-party provider. Additional indoor racquet courts are provided in Aurora and/or the Region private sector providers.

Indoor tennis is largely played by those seeking club-type experiences with programs, round-robin play, etc. along with those looking to train year-round. Indoor tennis courts have long been dominated by private sector racquet clubs and are not a core level of service in most municipalities, though there are exceptions. In Aurora, the Town has an agreement with a private operator that is responsible for all operations and related costs. Through the survey, 6% of households indicated participating in indoor tennis since 2019 and it is likely that fewer households play squash due to its smaller base of participation.

As with indoor tennis, provision of squash courts is not a norm among most Ontario municipalities, where again the private sector has traditionally addressed demands. However, downward participation trends in squash since the mid-1990s and growth in group fitness segment have caused many fitness providers to rethink inclusion of squash facilities (some have been converted to group fitness space, golf practice, etc.). The Town indicates that the AFLC squash courts are well used and in 2020 refinished the floors to support their continued use. As a result of this and the Town's efforts to promote participation, there has been sufficient growth in registered squash programs to support the courts provided at AFLC. As long as these courts remain viable, the Town should continue to maintain them for their intended use. No additional courts are recommended at this time.

6.8 Indoor Turf Fields

The Town owns and manages the Lind Realty Team Sports Dome (formerly the Aurora Sports Dome) adjacent to Lambert Willson Park and the AFLC, which offers a full-size artificial turf field that can also be divided into three junior sized fields. The dome was purchased by the Town in 2021 from a private group and has contracted with Aurora Youth Soccer Club (the largest user of field time) to operate the facility. This arrangement has allowed the Town to expand its programming and allocate field time according to municipal policies, resulting in greater utilization during the peak winter season (November to mid-April). The dome remains inflated year-round.

Indoor turf fields predominantly accommodate winter field activities such as soccer, football, rugby, baseball training, etc.; some of these activities may also use gymnasiums. The usage profile is heavily weighted toward soccer and relatively balanced between children/youth and adult play. In Aurora, nearly one-in-ten (9%) have played indoor soccer since 2019, ranking 25th out of 39 leisure activities surveyed. Most indoor turf facilities generate positive cash flows, but can be challenged to maximize usage during

the summer and daytime hours. While not necessarily a revenue generator, utilization of the field for a variety of recreation programs during off-peak times can add significant benefit to the community.

Some field users indicated that there is sufficient demand to support a second soccer dome during the winter season as they are unable to secure all requires hours at the Lind Realty Team Sports Dome. The community survey did not substantiate this demand, with further investment in indoor soccer fields ranking 26th out of 30 facility types. As the Town has only recently taken over management of the facility, it is too early to evaluate long-term needs and trends (the Town will be completing a review of dome operations in 2023). Furthermore, it is noted that there is an increasing array of options for indoor play in the region as most adjacent municipalities also offer indoor soccer venues, including proposed facilities in King Township and the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

As stated in the Town's previous Parks and Recreation Master Plan, if the Town anticipates demand for a second indoor turf field, the request should be considered through the preparation of a feasibility study, business plan and fundraising strategy, with consideration of partnerships and impacts on existing operations. One option may be adding a seasonal dome over an existing or proposed artificial turf field, potentially in partnership with a local school board (there are several similar examples in York Region).

Recommendations

#7 Consider low-risk involvement in a community partnership should demand for a second **indoor turf venue** emerge, possibly through a seasonal dome over an existing or proposed artificial turf field. Prepare a business plan to more closely evaluate needs, benefits, locations, costs, and risks.

DRAFT

6.9 Multi-Purpose Rooms

Multi-purpose community and program spaces largely reflect the supply of rooms/halls that are available for community rental while also providing a venue for municipal programs and meetings. Most community facilities operated by the Town contain one or more meeting and/or multi-use rooms, including the ACC (3 rooms), AFLC (4 rooms), SARC (1 room), Aurora Public Library (4 rooms), Aurora Seniors' Centre (3 room), Town Hall (2 rooms), and Victoria Hall (1 room) – a total of 18 rooms are identified in the inventory.

Meeting and program rooms are core elements of civic facilities – they are flexible spaces that bring the community together and support a broad range of uses. The provision of multi-use space should be considered when constructing or renovating community centres. For example, additional multi-purpose rooms will be included in the Town Square Project and the SARC gymnasium expansion will also result in expanded programming space. Nearly one-half (48%) of survey respondents identified halls and multi-use space as a high priority, ranking 18th out of 30 facility types.

The utilization rates of Aurora's multi-purpose rooms vary from location to location based on various factors, but there is overall capacity for these spaces to accommodate additional use. The Town regularly assesses and upgrades these spaces where needed to address emerging needs and programmatic requirements.

6.10 Dedicated Youth Space

The Town operates "The Loft", a free drop-in space for youth ages 12 to 17 years created during the Aurora Family Leisure Complex's most recent renovation. This dedicated space features an entertainment/media corner, pool table, electronic basketball, table tennis, air hockey, etc. The space is designed as a safe place to hang out, socialize, do homework, attend special events and movie nights, and more. Youth outreach programming is delivered through other spaces at the AFLC and other community centres.

Meaningful, inclusive and engaging parks and recreation opportunities support youth as they develop into healthy and fully functioning adults. This is an important objective for the Town of Aurora, which achieved Platinum Youth Friendly community status in 2019.

Age cohort forecasts for York Region predict that the number of youth between the ages of 10 and 19 years will remain stable between 2021 and 2031, despite overall population growth. With that said, certain areas of Aurora have higher proportions of teens, such as northeast Aurora. The planned renovation at the SARC will result in additional multi-use space (gymnasium and program rooms) through which activities for youth and others can be offered. The Town is encouraged to continue considering the needs of youth and other priority populations when renovating and developing parks and facilities.

6.11 Dedicated Older Adult Space

In partnership with the Aurora Seniors' Association, the Town operates the Aurora Seniors Centre, a facility that offers a dedicated space oriented to the interests of residents 55 years of age and over. The venue contains a lounge, games room, library, full kitchen, woodworking shop, computer area, and other engaging spaces available to its approximately 1,000 members. Usage of the Centre is highest on weekdays (morning and afternoon). The facility is also available for sponsored events and programs on evenings and weekends.

The Aurora Seniors Centre operates through a blend of Town staff and community volunteers that support a wide range of social activities, fitness and sport programs (including pickleball), educational seminars, and more. The Centre operated a successful "Seniors Centre Without Walls" community outreach program to support vulnerable and isolated seniors and adults during the pandemic. In-person programming has returned to the Centre, although virtual or hybrid options are still in place for some activities.

Aurora's older adult and seniors' populations are growing faster than any other age group. Age cohort forecasts for York Region predict that the number of seniors aged 70 years and older (typically the core market for seniors' centres) will increase by 53% between 2021 and 2031, a growth rate four times greater than the overall population.

Feedback from the Master Plan's consultation program suggests that the programmatic needs of "seniors" are well addressed, although the survey found some support for additional investment in space and activities for "older adults" (generally those in the baby boomer generation). The Town has been planning for the surge in this age group for many years, and the Aurora Seniors Centre is a well regarded facility that is well positioned to respond to the aging population. Additionally, expanded program offerings through other community spaces will help to address growing needs.

The Town should continue to position the Aurora Seniors Centre as the primary hub for 55+ programming, while extending the reach of services into neighbourhoods through use of other community facilities and parks (often in partnership with other groups, such as the Aurora Seniors' Association), recognizing that not all seniors will seek membership in the Seniors Centre.

6.12 Other Recreation Facilities

The Town occasionally provides other recreation facilities that are not specifically addressed within this Master Plan. For example, there are no **curling facilities** in Aurora, although there are clubs in nearby King, Newmarket, and Richmond Hill. Community-based curling clubs are the most common model in Ontario, most of whom own and operate their own private facilities. The proportion of Ontarians that curl has been declining for several decades (resulting in several facility closures), although the aging population is helping to sustain the sport in some communities. Curling facilities are not a core level of service in the Town and, should a demonstrated need for such a facility emerge, proponents would be

DRAFT

encouraged to prepare a business plan for the Town's consideration, recognizing the Town's many other capital priorities.

There are no service targets for many of these types of facilities as there are several factors that need to be considered including, but not limited to, site context, geography, market demand, alternate providers, partnership opportunities, and/or available resources.

Requests for municipal participation in capital projects not identified in this Plan can be expected. In the interest of providing facilities and recreation options that support healthy, active lifestyles for residents, the Town should be open to exploring and discussing opportunities for new and emerging activities. The Town may consider low-risk participation in projects that address unmet demands, make use of underutilized resources, promote healthy living/physical activity, encourage public access, and support other municipal objectives. The Master Plan may be used as a starting point in determining if a proposal serves a priority need in the community.

More specifically, the evaluation of potential capital partnerships should require the proponent to provide information to the satisfaction of the Town, such as (but not limited to):

- a comprehensive business plan, including a needs analysis and operating and capital costs;
- the organization's financial capacity (including fundraising commitments) and a demonstration of the sustainability of the project;
- detailed evidence of community benefits; and
- full risk analysis.

Recommendations

#8 Municipal provision of **non-core recreation facilities** not explicitly addressed within this Master Plan will generally not be made a priority, but may be considered in partnership with local organizations where demonstrated demand exists. A **standardized partnership framework** should be used to evaluate and respond to such requests.

DRAFT

7. Outdoor Recreation Facilities

The Town of Aurora has a mature parks system that supports a wide range of outdoor amenities, such as sports fields, playgrounds, splash pads, sports courts and more. These amenities are used heavily by the residents and organizations for both unstructured and structured activities, keeping residents active and engaged in the community. This section contains a town-wide assessment of needs and strategies relating to outdoor recreation facilities.

7.1 Summary of the Outdoor Recreation Facility Supply

A well-designed outdoor parks and recreation system offers health, economic, environmental, and social benefits. Outdoor parks and recreation provide accessible opportunities for all residents, possessing the potential to strengthen the community's well-being. This section highlights the Town of Aurora's outdoor recreation facility supply.

This section identifies the outdoor recreation facilities owned and operated by the Town of Aurora. A summary of notable community facilities and amenities owned and operated by the Town of Aurora is provided in the table below.

Table 12 – Outdoor Recreation Facilities

Facility Type	Number	Location
Soccer and Multi-use Fields*	**56 (62)**	**Artificial Lit**: Sheppard's Bush, St. Maximillian Kolbe Catholic School (shared-use), Stewart Burnett Park
Artificial – Lit	3 (7.5)	**Standard Lit**: Fleury Park, Highland Park, Optimist Park
Standard (11v11) – Lit	3 (4.5)	**Standard Unlit**: Confederation Park, Craddock Park, Ecole secondaire catholique Renaissance, Lambert Willson Park, Machell Park, Norm Weller Park, St. Andrews College (4), Stronach Group (2), Summit Park
Standard (11v11) – Unlit	13	**9v9:** Hamilton Park, Sheppard's Bush (3), Stronach Group (2)
9v9	6	**7v7**: Ada Johnson Park, Aurora Grove P.S., Confederation Park, Harmon Park, Hickson Park, Holy Spirit P.S., Light of Christ P.S., Queen's Diamond Jubilee Park, Sheppard's Bush (5), St. Andrews College, Stronach Group (2)
7v7	16	**5v5**: Stronach Group (10)
5v5	10	**3v3**: McMahon Park (2), Stronach Group (3)
3v3	5	
Ball Diamonds*	**20 (26)**	**Hardball Senior Lit**: Lambert Willson Park, Stewart Burnett Park
Hardball		**Softball Senior Lit**: Fleury Park, Hallmark Lands (2), James Lloyd Park, Lambert Willson Park (3), Norm Weller Park, Optimist Park, Town Park
Senior – Lit	2 (3)	**Softball Senior Unlit**: Copland Park
Senior – Unlit	0	**Softball Junior Unlit**: Confederation Park (2), Elizabeth Hader Park, Machell Park (2), Summit Park
Softball		
Senior – Lit	10 (15)	
Senior – Unlit	1	
Junior - Unlit	7	
Cricket Fields	**0**	None
Tennis Courts	**15**	David English Park (2), Fleury Park (4), McMahon Park (3 Tennis and 1 shared with Pickleball), Norm Weller Park (2 shared with pickleball), Summit Park (2), Thomas Coates Park (2)

DRAFT

Facility Type	Number	Location
Pickleball Courts	**9**	Edward Coltham Park (2), McMahon Park (1 shared with tennis), Norm Weller Park (2 shared with tennis), Thomas Coates Park (2), Trent Park (2)
Basketball Courts Full Courts Half Courts Multi-use	**17** 8 8 1	**Full Courts**: Chapman Park, Confederation Park (2), Hamilton Park, James Lloyd Park (2), Summit Park, Thomas Coates Park **Half Courts**: Ada Johnson Park (2), Hickson Park (2), Seston Park, Trent Park, Thompson Park, William Kennedy Park **Multi-Use Court**: Edward Coltham Park (shared with pickleball)
Beach Volleyball Courts	**2**	Lambert Willson Park (2)
Skateboard Parks	**3**	Aurora Family Leisure Complex, Hickson Park, Thompson Park
BMX Circuit/Loop	**1**	Hickson Park
Splash Pads	**5**	Ada Johnson Park, Edward Coltham Park, Stewart Burnett Park, Town Park, Trent Park
Off-Leash Dog Parks	**1**	Canine Commons Leash-Free Dog Park
Playgrounds (locations)	**40**	Ada Johnson Park, Atkinson Park, Benjamin Pearson Parkette, Brookfield Parkette, Chapman Park, Confederation Park, Copland Park, David English Park, Edward Coltham Park, Elizabeth Hader Park, Evans Park, Fleury Park, Forest Grove Parkette, Graham Parkette, Hamilton Park, Harmon Park, Hickson Park, Jack Wood Park, James Lloyd Park, Khamissa Park, Lambert Willson Park, Lundy Park & Open Space, Machell Park, Martin Jaekel Park, McMahon Park, Optimist Park, Queen's Diamond Jubilee Park (accessible), Seston Park, Stewart Burnett Park, Summit Park, Tamarac Green, Taylor Park, Thomas Coates Park, Thompson Park, Timbers Park, Tom's Park, Town Park, Trent Park, William Kennedy Park, Wilson Park
Outdoor Fitness Stations	**2**	Ada Johnson Park, Sheppard's Bush
Outdoor Skating Rinks (natural) Town-operated Volunteer-maintained	**8** 6 2	**Town-operated:** Ada Johnson Park (2), Confederation Park, Machell Park (2), Town Park **Volunteer-maintained:** James Lloyd, Queen's Diamond Jubilee Park
Lawn Bowling	**1**	McMahon Park (operated by Aurora Lawn Bowling Club)
Disc Golf Courses	**0**	n/a
Community Gardens	**1**	Industrial Parkway South (plus 1 planned for Hartwell Way Neighbourhood Park)
Trails	**62 km**	Several notable trails systems including Tim Jones Trail, Klaus Wehrenberg Trail, Willow Farm/ Lakeview Trail

* Note: Includes permitted school fields. Each lit natural grass and artificial turf soccer field provides an equivalent capacity of 1.5 and 2.5 unlit natural fields, respectively. Each lit ball diamond provides an equivalent capacity of 1.5 unlit fields.

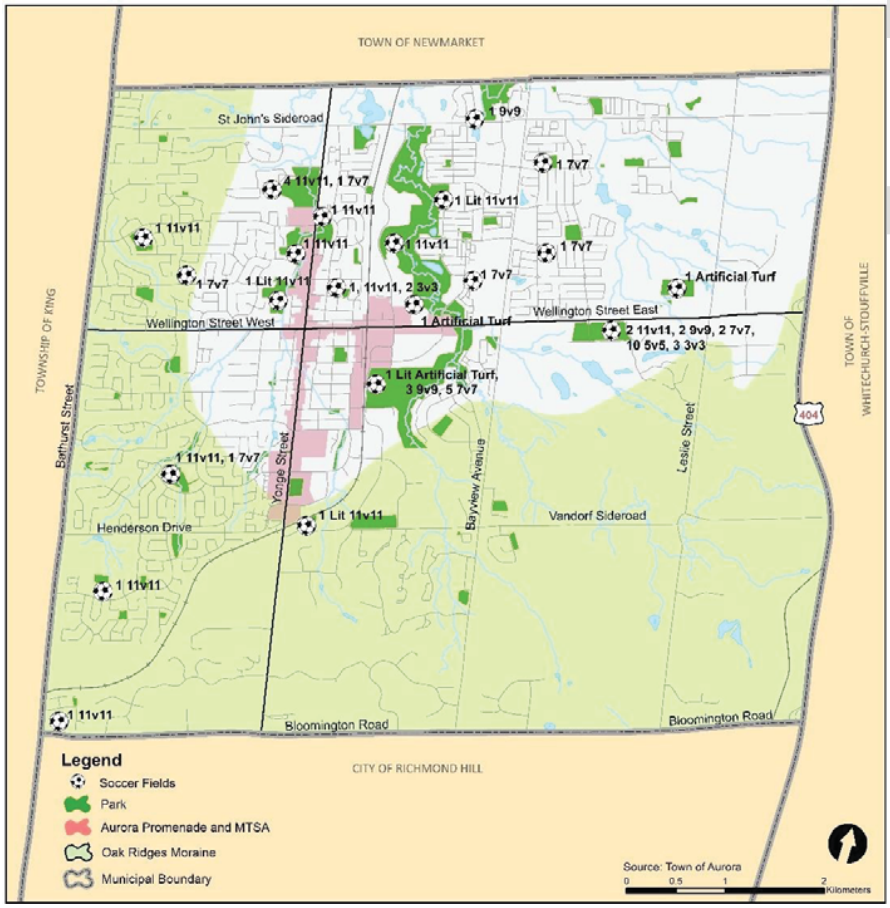
DRAFT

7.2 Soccer and Multi-use Fields

The Town of Aurora currently permits 56 rectangular fields for soccer (ranging in size from 3v3 to 11v11) and other field sports such as football, rugby, and lacrosse. Six of these fields have lights for extended play, three of which are artificial turf. The effective supply of rectangular fields amounts 62 unlit natural field equivalents due to the extended play at these fields support. Full-size fields with artificial turf are in particularly high demand in Aurora, with several stakeholders seeking more as these fields can support more hours of use throughout and at the beginning and end of the playing season.

The inventory includes 26 fields that are owned and maintained by the Town and 30 fields permitted under agreement with the school boards, St. Andrew College, and The Stronach Group. School fields are often used for practice rather than game play as some are of lower quality due to their dual use as school grounds and lower standard of maintenance (the Town does not have the staff capacity to take on this role for school fields). In terms of the Stronach Group lands, the Town entered into an agreement for the continued short-term use of the 19 Stronach soccer fields on Wellington Street (ending after the 2025). A long-term replacement strategy is required for these fields.

Figure 42 – Town of Aurora Municipal Soccer Fields



In 2020, the Town completed a Sports Field Development Strategy (SFDS) to examine sports field requirements and recommendations for addressing the highest priority needs. The Strategy found that artificial and full size (Class A) fields were in the highest demand, while that some smaller and lower quality fields were not fully utilized. Furthermore, prior to the pandemic, the number of youth registrants

with Aurora-based soccer and many other field organizations had reached capacity based on available field time, while modest growth was reported in adult soccer participation. Nearly one-quarter (23%) of Aurora households indicated participating in outdoor soccer since 2019, ranking 13th out of 39 leisure activities surveyed. Since the pandemic, most sport groups are still building back their programs and have not fully reached past participation levels; some national studies are now indicating that girls and women are particularly less likely to return, which is a concern for sports such as soccer that have a relatively balanced gender mix.

The SFDS recommended a target of one rectangular field (unlit equivalent) per 85 participants, meaning that growth-related demands would result in a need for an additional 7 fields by 2031, plus approximately 13 fields of varying sizes to offset the loss of the Stronach fields. This results in a total need for **20 additional rectangular fields by 2031**; at minimum, two of these are recommended to be lit artificial turf fields. To achieve this, sports field development must focus on improving existing fields and parks (e.g., adding lights, installing artificial turf, expanding fields, etc.), acquiring land, and working in partnership with owners of other large sites.

Specifically, the SFDS made the following recommendations for rectangular sports fields:

- Convert fields to better match dimensions and uses with demands.
- Add lighting to extend play opportunities.
- Improve fields to enhance playability and address areas of demand.
- Construct new fields to strengthen the supply of rectangular sports fields.
- Permit more fields in existing parks.
- Consider opportunity-based acquisition for sports field development.
- Partner with School Boards to permit available school fields, most notably the York Region District School Board. This would require the Town to allocate additional operating funding toward field maintenance, in agreement with the respective school boards.
- Partner with School Boards to improve and/or construct fields.
- Upon termination of the third-party lease agreement, resume Town-operations of the Aurora Sports Dome (now Lind Realty Team Sports Dome – transfer completed in 2021) and investigate the potential to add air conditioning to maximize usage during the summer months (to be completed in 2023).
- Work with surrounding municipalities to ensure that cross-border sports organizations that serve regional players have coordinated access to fields within and outside of Aurora and that field capacity is properly managed. Consider restricting usage from organizations representing memberships having a high percentage of non-Aurora residents.

The SFDS identified the potential to increase the supply by **up to 37.0 rectangular sports fields (unlit equivalents or ULE)** through new fields, access agreements, and enhancements. Not all will be required to meet community needs (20 additional fields are required by 2031), nor are all options mutually exclusive and some enlargements may result in a net loss of fields. Town staff are currently undertaking a review of the SFDS recommendations to assess feasibility.

Figure 43 – Summary of Rectangular Sports Field Development Strategies

DRAFT

Facilitating community access to YRDSB fields may be the Town's most viable solution to replacing the Stronach fields as it could be implemented quickly (with additional Town staff resources for seasonal maintenance). In addition, the Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School site (which is slated for closure in 2025) presents an excellent opportunity due to its location and size; additional discussions with the school board will be required to explore future options. Other school closures and access to quasi-public lands (e.g., Ontario Heritage Trust, former George Street School, etc.) should also be evaluated to determine their viability for accommodating the Town's parkland-based needs. It is understood that the Town will soon be completing a review of the Sports Field Development Strategy and recent progress in order to identify further priorities and opportunities; this review should include a scan of local participation rates that may have been impacted by the pandemic.

Through the consultations undertaken to support this Master Plan, user groups were very supportive of expanding the supply of artificial turf fields. Given the absence of available land in Aurora, artificial turf presents a viable option due to its greater capacity for use and lower maintenance cost, therefore reducing the need for land acquisition and operational resources. Opportunities to partner with other organizations for the future development of turf fields should be a priority, with consideration given to change rooms, washrooms, storage, etc. at appropriate sites.

For example, the Town has entered into an agreement to assist the YRDSB with the installation of an artificial turf field at the new secondary school on Bayview Avenue in 2025/26 (similar to how the Town jointly funded a field at St. Maximillian Kolbe Secondary School), and similar opportunities may exist at the former Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School or St. Andrew's College. Additionally, the Town has received a proposal from the Aurora Barbarians Rugby Football Club to co-fund the development of a second artificial turf field and clubhouse at Sheppard's Bush.

The Town can expect to receive more requests from sport organizations for fields and specialized amenities (e.g., scoreboards, on-site washrooms and dressing room facilities, spectator seating, etc.). to support competitive and high performance teams. Proposals that go beyond the Town's established level of service should be evaluated using the criteria advanced in the SFDS and will typically require a cost-sharing agreement while still maintaining an appropriate degree of public access to the site (i.e., exclusive access is strongly discouraged).

Table 13 – Provision Analysis – Soccer and Multi-use Fields

Current Supply	56 (62 ULE)
Current Per Capita Provision	1:1,145
Future Per Capita Provision (2031)	1:1,212
Municipal Benchmark	1:2,730
Recommended Target	1 field (ULE) per 85 participants
Future Needs: • The 2020 Sports Field Development Strategy identified a need for 20 additional fields by 2031 (to address growth and the loss of the Stronach fields)	

Recommendations

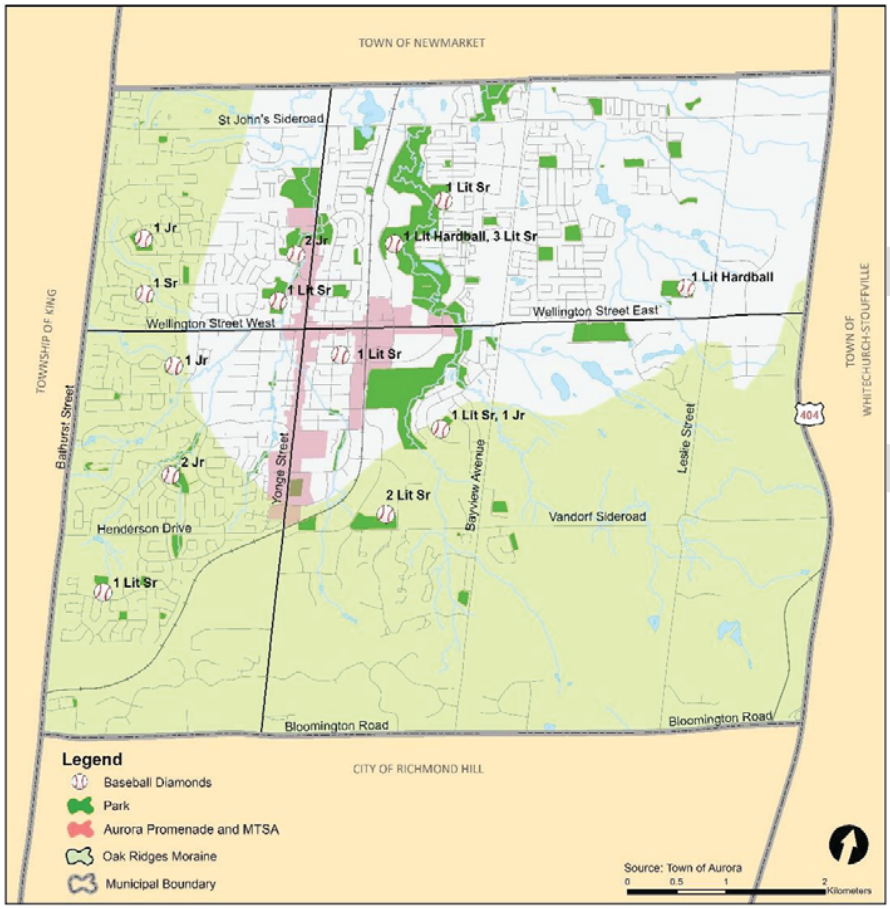
#9 Complete a scoped review and update of the **2020 Sports Field Development Strategy** and recent progress in order to identify short-term priorities and opportunities for enhancing soccer and multi-use field capacity. Seek to expand the supply of full size rectangular fields (e.g., through artificial fields at partnered school sites, strategic park improvements, etc.) and to replace the field time used at the Stronach fields when the agreement is up at the end of the 2025 season (e.g., through integration of smaller fields in parks, use of schools, Dr. G.W. Williams SS, under-utilized properties, etc.).

DRAFT

7.3 Ball Diamonds

The Town of Aurora permits a total of 20 ball diamonds, all of which are Town-owned. The supply includes two hardball and 18 softball diamonds. Each lit ball diamond is considered equivalent to 1.5 unlit diamonds due to their extended capacity, so the Town currently has an effective supply of 26 unlit equivalent ball diamonds. This includes the Town's most recent park development project that saw the construction of two lit softball diamonds on the Hallmark Lands.

Figure 44 – Town of Aurora Municipal Ball Diamonds



The 2020 Sports Field Development Strategy (SFDS) identified ball diamond requirements and strategies for meeting community needs. The Strategy found that higher class diamonds were in greatest demand and supported the development of the two diamonds recently built on the Hallmark Lands.

Prior to the pandemic, local participation in baseball was increasing, particularly for adult play. Participation in youth ball was also increasing (especially at the competitive level), but at a slower rate. An estimated 13% of Aurora households have participated in baseball or softball activities since 2019, ranking 23rd out of 39 leisure activities surveyed. Since the pandemic, most sport groups are still building back their programs and have not fully reached past participation levels.

The SFDS recommended a target of one ball diamond (unlit equivalent) per 90 participants, and identified a need for **5 additional diamonds by 2031** (excluding the Hallmark diamonds). The Strategy acknowledged that options for enhancing the supply of ball diamonds were few, but identified the

potential to add up to 4.5 ball diamonds (unlit equivalents), largely through new field development. Due to their size and buffer requirements (especially hardball fields), ball diamonds are hard to fit within many parks. Further, there are no schoolyards or private parks in Aurora that contain ball diamonds, putting the onus for provision solely on the Town.

Specifically, the SFDS made the following recommendations for ball diamonds:

- Improve fields to enhance playability and address areas of demand.
- Construct new fields. This would require land acquisition (aside from the Hallmark Lands).
- Work with St. Andrew's College to improve community access to the hardball diamond.
- Work with surrounding municipalities to ensure that cross-border sports organizations that serve regional players have coordinated access to fields within and outside of Aurora and that field capacity is properly managed. Consider restricting usage from organizations representing memberships having a high percentage of non-Aurora residents.

Figure 45 – Summary of Ball Diamond Development Strategies

DRAFT

It is understood that the Town will soon be completing a review of the Sports Field Development Strategy and recent progress in order to identify further priorities and opportunities; this review should include a scan of local participation rates that may have been impacted by the pandemic. Maximizing ball diamond usage through the addition of lighting on full-size diamonds, field improvements, and expanded playability (e.g., through the addition of a hardball mound, netting, etc.) should continue to be explored.

Table 14 – Provision Analysis – Ball Diamonds

Current Supply	20
Current Per Capita Provision	1:3,210
Future Per Capita Provision (2031)	1:3,635
Municipal Benchmark	1:4,290
Recommended Target	1 field (ULE) per 90 participants
Future Needs: • The 2020 Sports Field Development Strategy identified a need for 5 additional diamonds by 2031	

Recommendations

#10 Complete a scoped review and update of the **2020 Sports Field Development Strategy** and recent progress in order to identify short-term priorities and opportunities for enhancing ball diamond capacity. Seek to expand the supply of full size ball diamonds (e.g., through diamond improvements, new fields, expanded partnerships, etc.).

7.4 Cricket Fields

There are no cricket fields within the Town's parks system. Aurora residents should be well served by the Maple Leaf Cricket Ground in nearby King Township, which has five fields and is a primary cricket venue in Canada.

Cricket – which requires a large, flat, oval-shaped playing surface with a turf pitch in the middle – is popular with many of Canada's growing immigrant communities that come from cricket-playing nations (e.g., South Asia and the Caribbean). The survey found that only 1% of Aurora households have one or more members that have played cricket since 2019. Although many larger communities have been designing cricket fields into their parks for years, Aurora is less than halfway to the municipal benchmarking average of one field per 140,000 persons, suggesting low support for provision at this time.

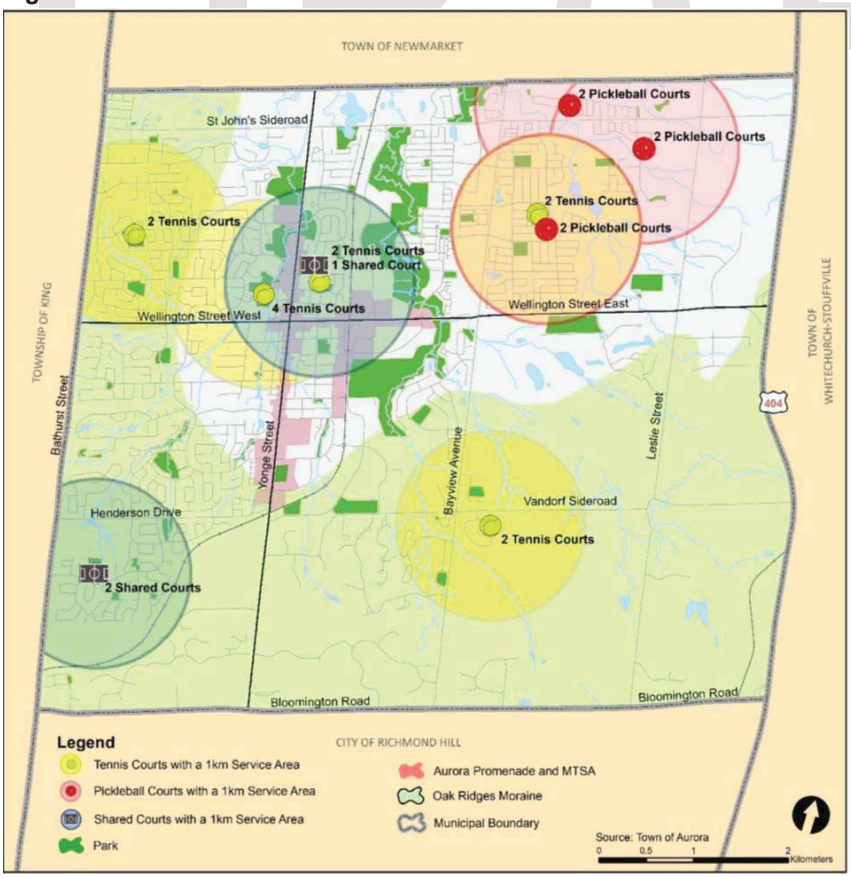
The Town can expect demand for cricket to rise, but remain below thresholds that would support the provision of a dedicated field. As cricket requires large blocks of land, should the Town receive requests, options for overlaying a cricket field across two soccer fields (with the pitch placed between them) may be considered.

7.5 Tennis & Pickleball Courts

DRAFT

The Town currently provides 15 tennis courts and 9 pickleball courts within its parks system. There are 21 courts in total as 3 of these courts have lines for both tennis and pickleball.

Figure 46 – Town of Aurora Outdoor Tennis and Pickleball Courts



Tennis Courts

All of the Town's tennis courts consist of an asphalt surface (some have coloured acrylic treatments) that are designed to regulation size and have lights for evening play. The McMahon Park tennis facility is leased to the Aurora Community Tennis Club which provides quality programming to the community. The Tennis Club permits public access to these courts during specified hours and low use periods. In addition, the Town permits two courts at Fleury Park to a private operator for tennis lessons and camps during specified times.

Although not included in this court, the Marilyn Redvers Tennis Centre (operated by a third-party under agreement with the Town) offers 6 courts to members in a year-round indoor environment. There is a growing desire amongst frequent tennis players to play year-round. In 2019, Tennis Canada prepared a Municipal Tennis Facilities Strategy and Partnership Framework to advocate for more covered courts and to get more people playing tennis more often. The Town of Newmarket is planning to open a new facility with 8 indoor courts in 2023 to replace the Keith Davis Tennis Centre and serve this growing market.

Research indicates that tennis is experiencing a resurgence in recent years after being in decline. Tennis Canada reported that 6.5 million Canadians played tennis at least once in 2018 (45% of these are considered frequent players), translating to growth of more than 32% since 2012. The study also found that over 50% of Canadians have played tennis in their lifetime and 61% of Canada's tennis players utilize outdoor courts. With pandemic-related trends leading to increased participation outdoors, it is possible that these figures have grown further since that time. In Aurora, 18% of households participated in outdoor tennis since 2019, ranking 17th out of 39 leisure activities surveyed.

The popularity of tennis can be attributed to several factors such as:

- the growing segment of baby boomers that seek social, lower impact activities (tennis has the second fewest injuries after baseball);
- its gender balance (56% of players are male and 44% female);
- its appeal to diverse populations (23% of Canadian tennis players were born outside of the country);
- its high fitness quotient (playing tennis extends one's life expectancy by 9.7 years according to the Copenhagen City Heart Study, which found tennis to be the leading sport in increasing life expectancy);
- a focus on promoting the sport at the grassroots level (Tennis Canada reported that in 2018, over 2 million children and youth age 17 years and under played tennis in the past year); and
- the success of Canadian men and women competing on the professional tours. [5]

To address this growing demand, the Town has recently installed two tennis courts at Thomas Coates Park (recommended in the 2016 Master Plan) and converted the courts at Norm Weller Park to shared use with pickleball. These courts are well distributed across the Town, allowing convenient access for all residents. The public consultation program yielded relative satisfaction with tennis court provision, with one-half (50%) of survey respondents identifying tennis courts as a high priority, ranking 16th out of 30 facility types.

With 15 outdoor tennis courts, the Town's current provision level is one court per 4,270, which is slightly below the municipal benchmark of one per 3,860 persons, but above the target of one court per 4,500 residents established in past Master Plans. It is recommended that the Town continue to provide courts in pace with population growth, guided by the target of one court per 4,500 residents. As a result, one additional court will be required to meet needs by 2031. As courts are best provided in groupings of two

[5] Tennis Canada. 2019. Let's Play Year-Round. Retrieved from https://www.tenniscanada.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/02.-Executive-Summary.pdf

or more, it is recommended that the Town seek opportunities to provide a two-court complex in a future park or park redevelopment, ideally in Southwest Aurora to improve distribution ratios.

Table 15 – Provision Analysis – Tennis Courts

Current Supply	15 courts
Current Per Capita Provision	1:4,270
Future Per Capita Provision (2031)	1:4,850
Municipal Benchmark	1:3,860
Recommended Target	1:4,500
Future Needs: • 16 courts, one more than are currently provided • A two-court complex is recommended through future park development or redevelopment, with a focus on Southwest Aurora	

Pickleball Courts

Pickleball is the number one growing sport in North America and is gaining popularity in Aurora within numerous age groups, particularly adults and older adults. In response to growing demand, all of the Town's 6 dedicated outdoor pickleball courts have been established in the past few years within new parks in Northeast Aurora. Pickleball lines have also been added to 3 tennis courts to allow for shared use. Pickleball is also played indoors at the AFLC gymnasium and Aurora Seniors Centre, area schools, and within private facilities (churches, residences, etc.).

Pickleball is an accessible, affordable and social sport, able to be played by newcomers and more seasoned players alike. Doubles is more popular than singles, and many players have a very high frequency of play, participating multiple times per week if possible. Due to its popularity with older adults and seniors, daytime usage is more frequent than evening use.

From the consultant's work throughout the province, pickleball courts are among the most requested facilities at public input sessions and have been for the last few years. Comments typically relate to the growth of pickleball and the lack of facilities, with a desire for dedicated outdoor courts and more opportunities for indoor play. More non-profit and private groups are forming with the intent of developing (mostly) indoor complexes to serve the sport, including the growing tournament market.

As the sport matures in Canada, participation is becoming broader and more diverse. This includes more competitive leagues (leading to the establishment of sport organizations and advocates for higher-quality facilities) and instructional programs for youth (it is beginning to be taught in schools). A survey[6] completed in January 2022 by Pickleball Canada showed that 8% of Canadian households report at least one household member plays pickleball once per month. This suggests that there are now one million Canadians playing pickleball at least once a month, a near tripling of the number of pickleball players in Canada in two years.

Although pickleball was not raised as a significant priority through the community survey (40% supported more outdoor pickleball courts, ranking 23rd out of 30 facility types), the activity is trending upward and there have been several public requests (11% of survey respondents indicated that members of their household have recently played pickleball). As a result, Council has expressed an interest in advancing the development of pickleball in Aurora, including establishing new venues and creative responses to support play during the spring, summer and fall seasons. Pickleball has been offered as part of the

[6] https://pickleballcanada.org/january-2022-survey-national-release/

Town's standard level of service for a few years now, and these courts are considered as part of new or redeveloped park sites in response to community interest.

As an emerging sport, most Ontario municipalities are gradually adopting strategies to address needs, although most responses would appear to be ad hoc, testing demand along the way. Initially, many communities (including Aurora) painted pickleball lines on outdoor tennis courts. However, this approach has its limitations (e.g., net height, line confusion, conflicts over access, etc.) and is generally not recommended in communities where there is sustained demand for tennis. Some municipalities have also established temporary pickleball courts on a variety of surfaces, such as tennis courts, ball hockey rinks, arena floors, parking lots, and more (e.g., pop-up courts were offered at Richmond Green Park in Richmond Hill and the City Hall parking lot in Markham). Overall, the provision of purpose-built dedicated pickleball courts is the preferred approach.

Due to the rapid rise of the sport, very few municipalities have established targets for outdoor pickleball court provision. A recent benchmarking exercise of municipalities in the region indicates that there is an average of one municipal outdoor pickleball court (shared or dedicated) per 13,620 residents, though this will surely be reduced further over the coming year. Aurora is currently offering 9 courts (6 dedicated and 3 shared with tennis), for an average of one court per 7,120 residents. Another useful metric – for more formalized play – has been established by the City of Mississauga, which uses the following minimum membership thresholds for the creation of new tennis and/or pickleball clubs: 2 to 3 courts = 100 members; 4 to 5 courts = 200 members; and 6 to 8 courts = 300 members. Following the tennis model, member-supported pickleball clubs using public parks are becoming more common.

Observations from other communities suggests that many users are willing to travel past lower quality courts to access higher quality courts, including multi-court complexes that can support league play. The provision of municipal pickleball complexes with four or more courts has been recommended in several master plans and more of these facilities are emerging, often in partnership and with financial support from pickleball associations. Pickleball Ontario notes the following court requirements for tournament hosting (note: may be shared across multiple sites):

- less than 12 courts – local and regional tournaments
- 12 courts – provincial-level tournaments spanning 3 4 days, with 300+ players
- 24 to 40 courts – national and international-level tournaments spanning up to 8 days, with 400-3,000 players

As of 2021, our research indicates that there were nearly 30 permanent outdoor dedicated pickleball hubs within public parks in Ontario (minimum 4 courts). These complexes are as large as 12 courts (Hamilton) and offer an average of 6 courts per location.

Increasingly, communities are citing problems with pickleball courts being located too close to residential areas due to both the racquet noise and the social nature of the game. In 2022, a court case brought by a resident neighbouring a park in the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake was successful in forcing the Town and community group to stop using converted tennis courts for pickleball due to the noise impacts.[7] Our research suggests that setbacks from housing of 100 to 150 metres (smaller if attenuation measures are used) can alleviate undue noise issues. This should be considered as the Town establishes future locations for outdoor pickleball.

In terms of court provision, a population-based target is not a useful metric at this time. However, public input and trends would suggest that there is demand for additional outdoor pickleball courts at this time. Our research indicates that multi-court complexes are best at satisfying needs for organized play, as well as generating economies of scale. **A complex with a minimum of 6 pickleball courts is recommended in the short-term.** Court conversion opportunities are not apparent and the Plan recommends maintaining or growing the availability of public tennis and basketball courts. A site evaluation and

[7] https://www.thoroldtoday.ca/local-news/court-orders-niagara-on-the-lake-to-shut-down-pickleball-courts-5485825

selection process is recommended using the criteria established below. Potential sites may include (but should not be limited to) Edward Colthom Park (court expansion), Confederation Park, Queen's Diamond Jubilee Park, etc.

As an interim measure, the Town could explore expanding indoor options for pickleball, installing temporary pop-up courts in under-utilized spaces, working with other groups or private interests that can enhance access to court space, and/or promoting a full listing of sites that can support casual pickleball play. Consideration may be given to online booking systems to manage access to courts that are in high demand.

Table 16 – Provision Analysis – Pickleball Courts

Current Supply	9 courts
Current Per Capita Provision	1:7,120
Future Per Capita Provision (2031)	1:8,075
Municipal Benchmark	1:13,620
Recommended Target	n/a
Future Needs: • A complex with a minimum of 6 pickleball courts is recommended in the short-term, along with other interim measures that may be able to meet immediate demands • Tracking and monitoring of participation should be undertaken to inform future studies and facility development.	

DRAFT

The following **criteria** are offered for the Town's consideration as they seek to expand local opportunities for outdoor pickleball:

a) Pickleball courts may be established through conversion of under-utilized amenities or new construction. The Town may establish minimum standards for court surfacing.

b) Courts should be developed in pairs (ideally oriented north-south), using fixed pickleball net equipment and fencing to support dedicated use. Consolidating courts is more economically efficient, will help to leverage community partnerships, and can better support organized play.

c) Shared use courts (e.g., pickleball, tennis, basketball, etc.) are less desired and will not typically be supported as long-term options.

d) Court locations must consider potential for noise impacts on adjacent properties (e.g., within approximately 100-metres).

e) Nearby parking, washrooms, and lights for night play are desired, but will only be considered within appropriate park types, such as community parks.

f) Enhanced levels of service (such as winds screens, acrylic surfacing, and other supporting amenities) may be considered through sponsorship of other partnership opportunities.

g) Restricted access may be considered through an appropriate agreement with a community-based club, with proper allowances for public access.

Currently in Aurora, most pickleball play is occurring organically through loosely-organized groups. The Town offers some pickleball programming, as do area tennis clubs, but there is no one sanctioned club. It is possible that a community-based pickleball club may emerge over time. Should this occur, the Town will need to decide how best to permit usage of the courts. Some options include: (1) publicly accessible to all residents on a first-come, first-served basis; (2) permitted play through the scheduled use of courts for league play; or (3) third-party agreements with community clubs. Due to the sport's growth trajectory,

this is a fluid situation – tracking and monitoring of participation should be undertaken to inform future studies and facility development.

Recommendations

#11 Seek opportunities to establish a **two-court outdoor tennis complex** in a future park or park redevelopment, ideally in Southwest Aurora to improve distribution ratios.

#12 Evaluate opportunities to introduce or enhance **outdoor court permitting options** for selected tennis and pickleball courts, combined with public education and signage.

#13 Establish a dedicated **outdoor pickleball complex with 6 or more courts** at a site to be determined, potentially as a joint venture with a third-party club. Initiate a site evaluation and selection process using the criteria identified in this Master Plan.

#14 Consider short-term **interim measures to accommodate pickleball**, such as installing temporary pop-up courts in under-utilized spaces, working with other groups or private interests that can enhance access to court space, and/or promoting a full listing of sites that can support casual pickleball play.

#15 Establish processes to **track and monitor** pickleball participation in order to inform future studies and facility development. If a sanctioned **community-based pickleball club** is formed, a framework should be established to determine partnership potential, cost-sharing, and public access.

DRAFT

7.6 Basketball Courts

There are 17 basketball courts within Aurora's parks system, consisting of eight full courts, eight half courts, and one multi-use court (basketball and pickleball). Several school properties also contain outdoor hoops, although they are of varying size, quality, and access.

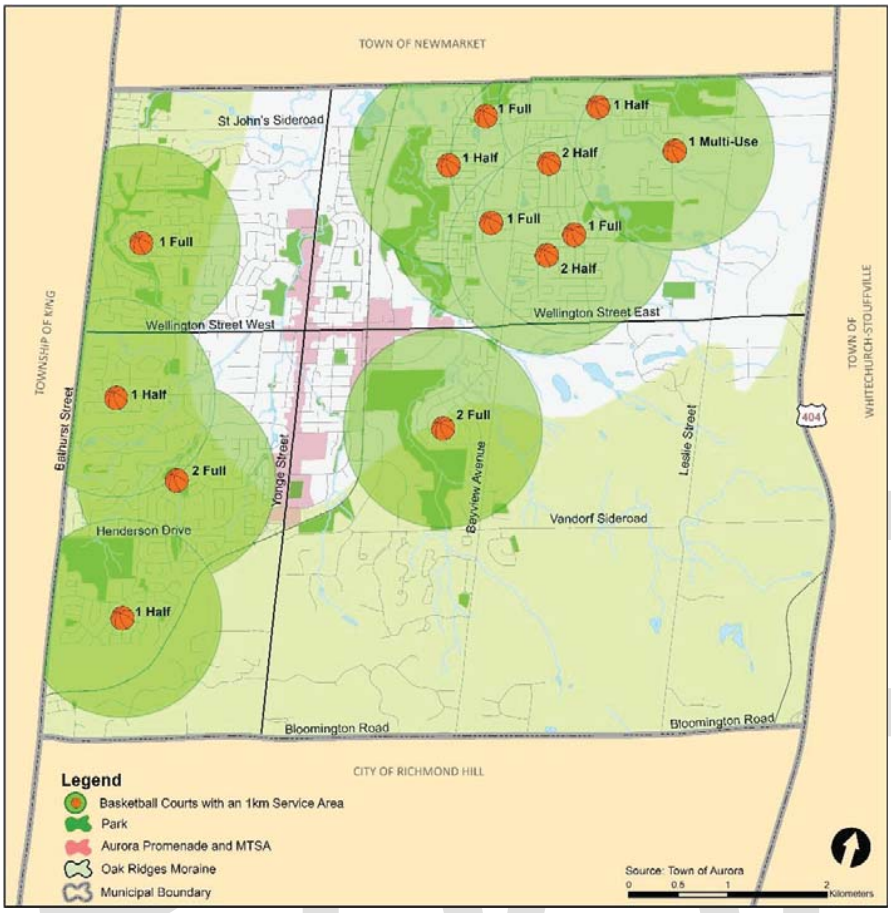
As an outdoor activity, participation in basketball and other court sports was positively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Basketball is becoming increasingly popular with both boys and girls (including newcomer children and youth) due to its international appeal and the Toronto Raptors championship in 2019. It is an affordable and accessible sport that can be played by most ages and abilities, both individually and as a team.

A moderate level of community demand was expressed for additional courts. Nearly two-fifths (17%) of Aurora households participated in basketball since 2019, ranking 18th out of 39 leisure activities surveyed and more than one-half (53%) of survey respondents identified outdoor basketball courts as a high priority, ranking 13th out of 30 facility types.

Basketball is played by people of all ages, though youth are the primary market. Past Master Plans have set a provision target of 1 basketball court per 800 youth (ages 10 and 19). With 8,220 youth recorded in the 2021 Census, application of this target would yield a need for approximately 10 basketball courts, suggesting that the existing volume of courts is adequate. The number of Aurora residents aged 10 to 19 years is expected to remain relatively stable over the planning period.

Because basketball courts are a neighbourhood-level service that supports use by those living in proximity (including children and youth without vehicles), the distribution of courts is also an important consideration. Using a 1-km service radius, geographic gaps are seen within the Yonge Street corridor and the Aurora Promenade and MTSA areas. Greater demand for courts in can be expected as residential development occurs in this area.

Figure 47 – Town of Aurora Municipal Basketball Courts (outdoor)



All of Aurora's courts are constructed with asphalt and most courts are designed or basketball only, though a multi-use court at one park also allows for use by pickleball players. Multi-use designs – such as those accommodating year-round use through ice skating in the winter – may be considered for park revitalization projects containing full court templates.

The consultation program yielded requests for the addition of lighting to selected outdoor basketball courts to allow for evening play. Lighting should not be considered a core level of service, but it is recognized that lights at one or more selected locations would extend participation. Through the 2023 budget, the installation of lighting has been recommended for Summit Park. This may be treated as a pilot project that can be evaluated to determine the need and feasibility of expanding lights to a limited number of future locations. Ideally, candidate courts for lighting would be those located in Community Parks, offering good visibility to the street, distance from residential areas, supporting amenities such as nearby parking, and be of adequate quality.

Table 17 – Provision Analysis – Basketball Courts

Current Supply	17
Current Per Capita Provision	1:3,770
Future Per Capita Provision (2031)	1:4,276
Municipal Benchmark	1:7,300
Recommended Target	1-km service radius
Future Needs: • An improved distribution of courts is sought, with gaps along the Yonge Street corridor and areas of residential intensification • Consider adding lights to an existing court as a pilot project	

Recommendations

#16 Seek to expand the supply of **basketball and multi-use courts** through park development and renewal projects in areas where geographic gaps exist, with a focus on service to the Aurora Promenade and MTSA.

#17 As a pilot project, **install lights on an existing basketball court** (Summit Park) that can suitably accommodate extended play into the evening.

DRAFT

7.7 Beach Volleyball Courts

The Town offers two (2) beach/sand volleyball courts at Lambert Willson Park. Usage of these courts is on a first-come, first-served basis and, anecdotally, Town staff indicate that they are well used.

Outdoor volleyball is a social sport that appeals largely to youth and young adults (especially women). Interest is greatest for organized play, often facilitated by providers that promote and deliver programs. The Master Plan survey found that 4% of Aurora households have played beach volleyball in recent years and 34% identified beach volleyball courts as a high priority, ranking 27th out of 30 facility types.

The Town has recently received requests for a 6-court complex to support camps and clinics, local recreational play and leagues, and competitions. Establishing a competition-ready facility at Lambert Willson Park is the preferred option as this site has access to parking, washrooms and other supports, although it is possible that only 4 courts could be accommodated at this location. The participation profile for volleyball supports the Town's goals in advancing gender equity and sport tourism. The Town is encouraged to work with interested sport organizations to upgrade this site through an agreement that supports both public access and programming. Design and maintenance standards should be developed to support the provision of these amenities.

Recommendations

#18 Work with sport organizations to pursue the expansion of **beach volleyball courts and programming** at Lambert Willson Park.

7.8 Skateboard and Bike Parks

The Town provides two (2) permanent concrete skateboard parks containing ramps, bowls, stairs, ledges, and rails at the AFLC (a community-level park) and Hickson Park (a neighbourhood-level park). Both sites are considered “all wheels” parks that can be used by skateboards, bike, inline skates, and scooters. Additionally, the Town encourages young children and beginner-level skateboarders to hone their skills through a smaller neighbourhood-level skate zone consisting of basic features within Thompson Park.

Feedback from the community suggests that 13% of Aurora households have members that have skateboarded or scootered since 2019, while slightly more than one-third (37%) of survey respondents identified skateboard parks as a high priority, ranking 25th out of 30 facility types. It is common for skateboard parks to be under-supported through surveys as the activity still holds a stigma as a non-mainstream activity for some.

Skateboarding appeals to children and adults (not just youth). The use of skateboard parks has broadened to other wheeled action sports and activities, most notably scootering which is now a dominant use in many locations. Skate and bike parks are now considered to be a core recreation facility in most municipalities across Ontario. They offer opportunities for physical activity, self-expression, and resilience, often appealing to those that do not participate in organized sport.

These amenities take many forms depending upon their intended type of use, skill level, and fit within a park and its surrounding land uses. Only one community-level skate park is required in Aurora; however, it is noted that the skate park in front of the AFLC is deteriorating and requires reconstruction to maintain a safe environment – this should be made a priority, in consultation with users that can comment on potential design modifications.

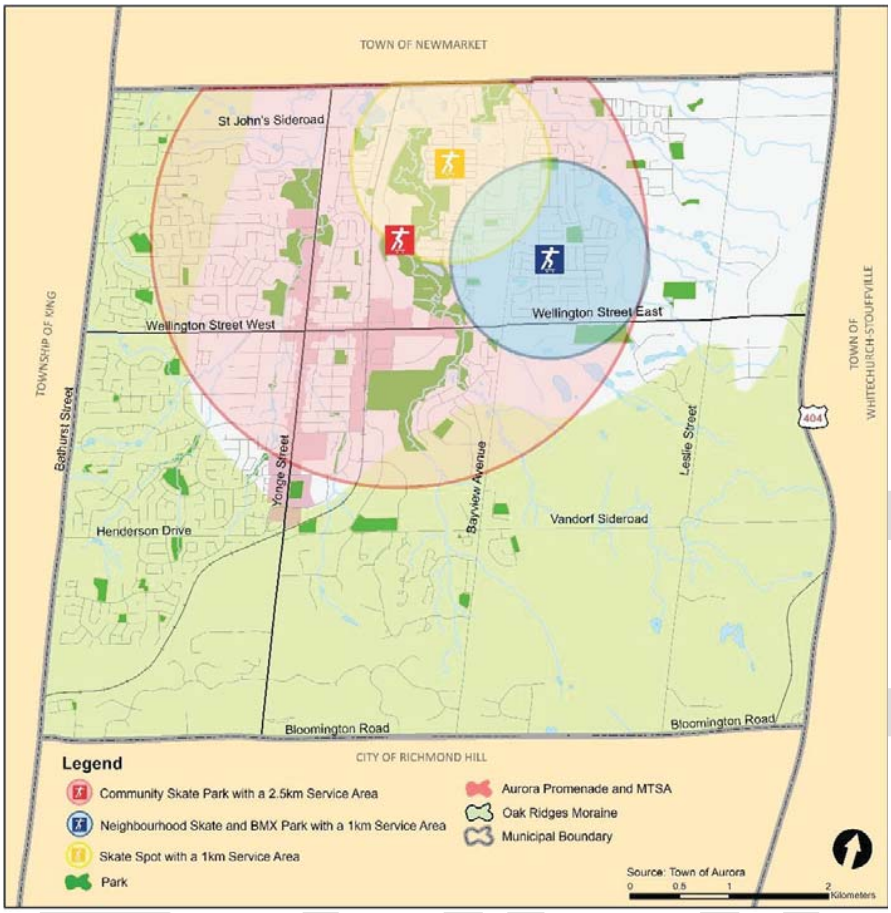
Equity of access is important as many users travel to skate parks by walking, skateboarding or transit. Further, different designs appeal to different rider groups, thus there is a need to diversity skate park typologies over time. Through the establishment of new neighbourhood-level skate parks (smaller, more localized features integrated within parks), the Town is able to address gaps in distribution. Currently, all of Aurora’s skate parks are in the northeast. Plans are in place to develop a smaller skate park in Summit Park in northwest Aurora, and further opportunities to support a neighbourhood-level feature in southwest Aurora should be explored through park development and renewal projects beyond the immediate 5-year timeframe of this plan.

The Town also provides a localized BMX feature at Hickson Park, adjacent to the skateboard park, and consisting largely of a series of jumps. This bike park does not appear to be well used by the community, perhaps because is was not designed to be a proper pump track. The Town may consider removal of this feature in the future, following a period of observation.

The consultation program did not yield any actionable feedback on bike parks, suggesting that changes are a low priority at this time. However, bike parks – and pump tracks in particular – are beginning to be introduced by many area municipalities (e.g., Whitchurch-Stouffville, Uxbridge, etc.). These are specially designed courses – often consisting of berms, rollers, ramps and/or similar features – used by cyclists to enjoy off-road cycling and build skills. Dirt tracks are beginning to give way to hardscape pump parks that are more Inclusive of different ages or abilities. These parks provide safe spaces for bikers to develop their skills and connect with others within a purpose-built environment, deterring property damage from illegal biking in environmental areas. Many are co-located with skate parks to create an “all wheels” environment.

DRAFT

Figure 48 – Town of Aurora Skateboard and Bike Parks



The latest evolution includes “bicycle playgrounds”, which are mini street courses that can be used by younger children on bikes. These amenities can be designed to meet any budget and location by incorporating basic features such as a rail, kickbox setup, or progressive bike ramps that can be implemented into neighbourhood parks and future park designs.

While neither is a high priority at this time, a pump track and/or bicycle playground may be considered through future park renewal or development projects, ideally in proximity to growing residential neighbourhoods.

Pump Track – Uxbridge

Bicycle Playground – Prince George BC

Recommendations

#19 Advance the reconstruction of the **AFLC skate park** to ensure sure safe, long-term, recreational use of the facility. Seek input from users in the redesign of the park.

#20 Consider the removal of the **bike park feature at Hickson Park** following a period of observation. Explore the potential for installing a **pump track and/or bicycle playground** through a future park renewal or development project.

7.9 Splash Pads

The Town provides splash pads in five (5) parks (Ada Johnson Park, Edward Coltham Park, Stewart Burnett Park, Town Park, and Trent Park), more than doubling its supply since the 2016 Master Plan was completed. The splash pads feature a variety of user-activated spray features that are available during the warmer months. In addition, the Aurora Town Square will feature a seasonal water feature that will serve similar functions, activating this public space with unstructured, spontaneous play opportunities.

One-third (31%) of Aurora households have used splash pads since 2019, ranking 8th out of 39 leisure activities surveyed, while two-thirds (65%) of survey respondents identified splash pads as a high priority, ranking 9th out of 30 facility types. Children are the primary user of splash pads, an age cohort that is forecasted to increase in Aurora at a similar rate as overall population growth by 2031.

Several requests have been received for splash pads in recent years and they are starting to become a standard level of service in many newer parks. However, due to their cost and infrastructure requirements, the Town must be strategic in their provision and placement. Most municipalities strive to provide splash pads in higher-order parks that serve multiple neighbourhoods and are complementary to other on-site recreation facilities such as playgrounds, washrooms, and off-street parking.

Aurora is currently providing splash pads at a higher rate than the benchmarked communities. In providing Aurora's children and families with suitable access to splash pads, two factors should be considered:

1) that splash pads are equitably distributed across the town so that they are within reasonable proximity of all residential communities; a service radius of 1-km is used to measure this; and
2) that splash pads are available within higher-order parks that serve as community destinations (busier parks can sustain larger splash pads with more features and have other necessary support amenities such as shade, seating, washrooms, parking, etc.), such as many Community Parks.

A specific long-range provision target has not been identified, rather it is expected that geographic distribution will inform the decision of how many and where new splash pads are required. An examination of current distribution identifies geographic gaps in northwest Aurora (extending east of Yonge Street) and southwest Aurora; these should be resolved as appropriate park development and redevelopment opportunities arise, such as Confederation Park.

DRAFT

Figure 49 – Town of Aurora Splash Pads

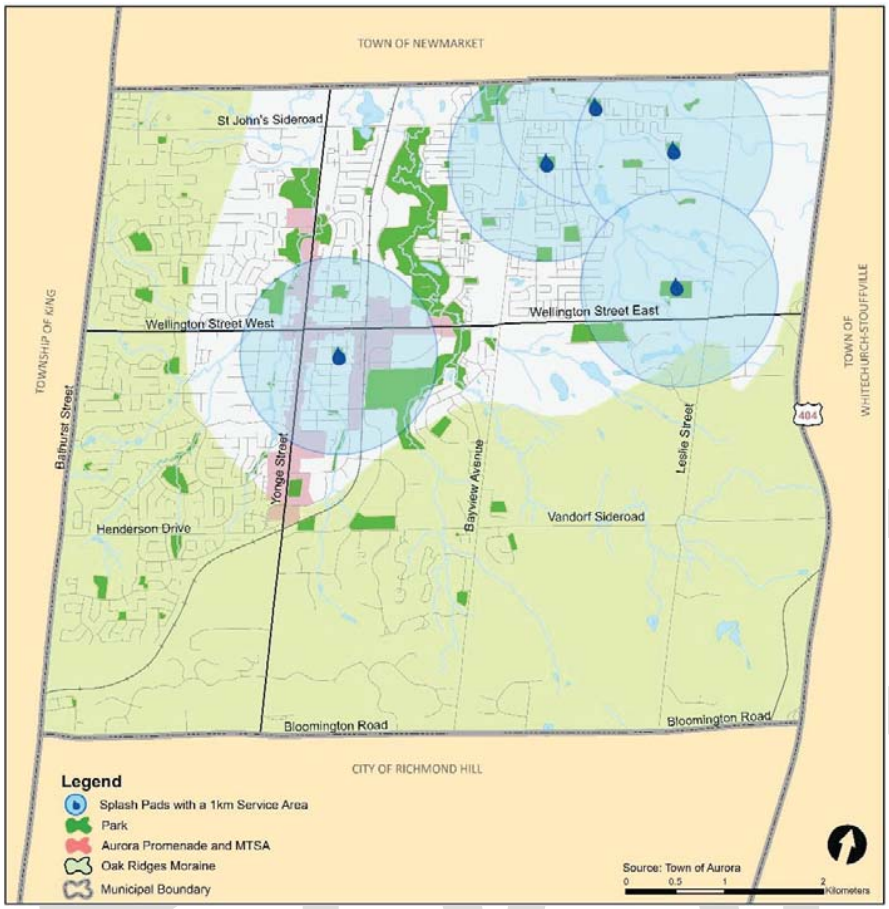


Table 18 – Provision Analysis – Splash Pads

Current Supply	5
Current Per Capita Provision	1:12,820
Future Per Capita Provision (2031)	1:14,540
Municipal Benchmark	1:16,230
Recommended Target	1-km service radius
Future Needs: • An improved distribution of splash pads is sought, with gaps in northwest and southwest Aurora	

Recommendations

#21 Seek to address gaps in the distribution of **splash pads** through park development and renewal projects in northwest Aurora (extending east of Yonge Street) and southwest Aurora (e.g., Confederation Park).

7.10 Off-Leash Dog Parks

The Canine Commons Leash Free Dog Park is Aurora's sole off-leash area; it is partially maintained through volunteer resources. This site provides pet owners with an opportunity to legally exercise and socialize their dogs off-leash in a controlled area. These spaces are increasingly being provided by urban municipalities as one approach to reduce conflict within shared park spaces, as well as to offer a social opportunity for responsible dog owners.

Pet ownership has been on the rise for several years and was heightened during the recent pandemic. As Aurora's urban structure evolves to include more multi-unit residential buildings, there will be an increased reliance on public space for exercising and toileting dogs.

Town Council is supportive of expanding opportunities for off-leash areas to address growing needs and to discourage unauthorized use of public parklands. The current off-leash park (northeast Aurora) is well used and there is demonstrated demand for one or more locations in other areas of Aurora (south and/or west). Convenience helps to promote use, particularly since many users visit off-leash parks multiple times a week, often throughout the year.

Recognizing that most families are not dog owners (35% of Aurora households have gone dog walking and 14% have used the off-leash dog park since 2019), modest support for additional investment was expressed through the Master Plan survey. Nearly one-half (47%) of survey respondents identified off-leash dog parks as a high priority, ranking 19th out of 30 facility types.

Identifying suitable locations for leash free dog areas can be challenging due to concerns of conflicting uses, nuisance, and perceptions of safety. Suitably-sized remnant public lands and under-utilized portion of parks that are distanced from sensitive land uses are good candidates to be short-listed for consideration as off-leash areas. Effective sites are critical to their success and maintaining community support. Sponsorships with volunteer organizations for site stewardship can be helpful in maintaining this support.

This is a matter that is best informed by a town-wide strategy, site-specific analysis, establishment of pilot projects, and a period of monitoring. To this end, the Town examined the potential to establish off-leash areas in various sites and along shared-use trails in 2022. Despite a comprehensive evaluation, many of the previously proposed sites were met with opposition from residents and have not proceeded. More recently, a remnant parcel of land on the east side of Engelhard Drive (near the Hallmark Lands and south of Sheppard's Bush) has been approved by Council for an off-leash dog area. The Engelhard site will help to address immediate community needs as it is in south Aurora and connected to residential areas through a trails system.

Naturalized lands (excluding sensitive environments) and the town's hydro corridors may also present opportunities for off-leash dog zones, although public access is currently restricted by Hydro One. Communities such as Toronto, Ottawa and Guelph have had success in establishing agreements for public use of their hydro corridors and the Town of Aurora is encouraged to continue its discussions with the agency to determine future viability of such a project.

Lastly, as the town grows and sees more higher density residential development, leash free areas serving these areas may require different approaches due to competing interests for parkland. Condominium developers should be encouraged to provide pet-friendly spaces to support their residents. The City of Toronto's recently published Pet Friendly Design Guidelines and Best Practices for New Multi-use Buildings may be a helpful reference in this regard.

DRAFT

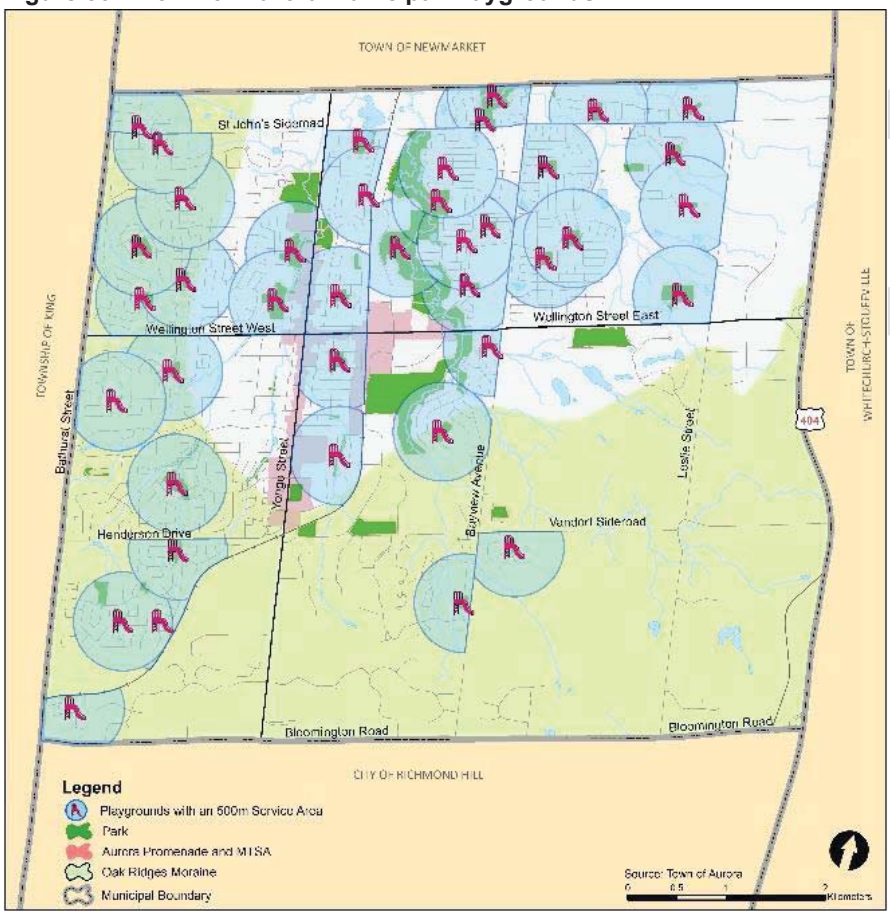
Recommendations

#22 Continue to advance the Town's **off-leash strategy** through the development of an off-leash dog park in south Aurora in the short-term (Engelhard Drive) and assessments of sites within west Aurora in the longer-term based on established criteria and public consultation.

7.11 Playgrounds

The Town of Aurora provides playground equipment at 40 park sites. Most of these sites employ a standard creative playground installation and swings. There is one fully accessible playground, located at Queen's Diamond Jubilee Park. There are many other providers of playgrounds (most notably elementary schools, places of worship, etc.), though public access can be restricted.

Figure 50 – Town of Aurora Municipal Playgrounds



Two-fifths (38%) of Aurora households have used playgrounds since 2019, ranking 5th out of 39 leisure activities surveyed. More than two-thirds (71%) of survey respondents identified playgrounds as a high priority, ranking 5th out of 30 facility types. Residents expect high quality playground features that facilitate unique experiences, particularly at destination park sites. They also anticipate that playgrounds and surrounding spaces will be accessible to persons with disabilities. Town Park is a good example of a destination park that will be receiving an accessible play structure when the current installation is replaced.

Playgrounds are neighbourhood-level amenities that support childhood development, foster cognitive development and social skills, and encourage physical activity. They are a base level of provision for most new parks and are generally planned on the basis of geographic distribution. As Auror's urban structure intensifies, it is recommended that the provision target be reduced from 800-metres to 500-metres (roughly a five to ten minute walk) of all built up residential areas, unobstructed by major barriers. Based upon this amended service radius, the majority of Aurora's residential areas have ready-access to a playground. The most notable gap is to the west of the Aurora Promenade area in southwest Aurora; while there are currently no appropriate municipal parks in this area of accommodate a playground, future development may provide a suitable opportunity.

Municipal playgrounds should be replaced at the end of their lifespan (generally 20 years); however, current funding levels are insufficient to support this recommended cycle. On average, the Town should be replacing 2 playgrounds each year (5% of its inventory) based on lifecycle needs. It is recommended that the Town establish an annual line item in the budget to support playground replacement. Through revitalization projects, the Town will ensure that its playgrounds and supporting infrastructure (e.g., pathways, seating, etc.) meet or exceed the accessibility legislation. Engagement with the Accessibility Advisory Committee may assist in determining how playgrounds (and the parks in which they are located) can be designed to be more inclusive.

Table 19 – Provision Analysis – Playgrounds

Current Supply	40
Current Per Capita Provision	1:1,600
Future Per Capita Provision (2031)	1:1,818
Municipal Benchmark	1:1,840
Recommended Target	500-m service radius
Future Needs: • Consider playground provision as part of future park development, including in Aurora Promenade and MTSA • Emphasize timely playground replacement and barrier-free accessibility	

DRAFT

Recommendations

#23 **Playgrounds** should be provided in new and existing residential areas where geographic gaps exist, generally calculated through application of a **500-metre service radius** that is unobstructed by major pedestrian barriers. This includes a gap in the vicinity of the Aurora Promenade and MTSA areas.

#24 Establish an annual line item in the Town's capital budget to support the **replacement of aging playgrounds** (an average of two sites per year). Through revitalization projects in Community Parks, emphasize **barrier-free playground** components and infrastructure to support inclusive participation.

7.12 Outdoor Fitness Stations

The Town offers outdoor fitness equipment ("fitness parks") at two (2) park sites: Ada Johnson Park and Sheppard's Bush. These amenities represent a relatively new level of service for Aurora and the installations are in good condition.

Popular throughout the United States and Europe, many Canadian municipalities have begun introducing low-impact outdoor fitness equipment that use resistance created by a person's own body weight. Locations typically contains multiple pieces of equipment for free public use. They are best situated around playgrounds or along key trails.

Interest in outdoor unstructured recreation activities soared during the pandemic, making outdoor fitness an important option for many. Approximately one-in-seven (14%) Aurora households have indicate using outdoor fitness equipment since 2019. Two-fifths (40%) of survey respondents identified outdoor fitness equipment as a high priority, ranking 22nd out of 30 facility types. Our experience suggests that their appeal is strongest with active older adults and seniors, an age group that will increase over the study period.

Outdoor fitness locations offer residents affordable opportunities to stay fit and may be provided in strategic locations. They are most effective in higher-order parks that are connected to a trail system and close to residential areas (including where newcomers live). Ideally, these spaces should also have access to shade (shelters, trees, etc.) and washrooms. Funding partnerships should be encouraged.

Recommendations

#25 Undertake a site evaluation process to establish a **third fitness park** outfitted with outdoor fitness equipment. To create a differentiated experience, consideration may be given to clustering the equipment around a playground site at a site that also has access to shade and washrooms.

7.13 Outdoor Skating Rinks

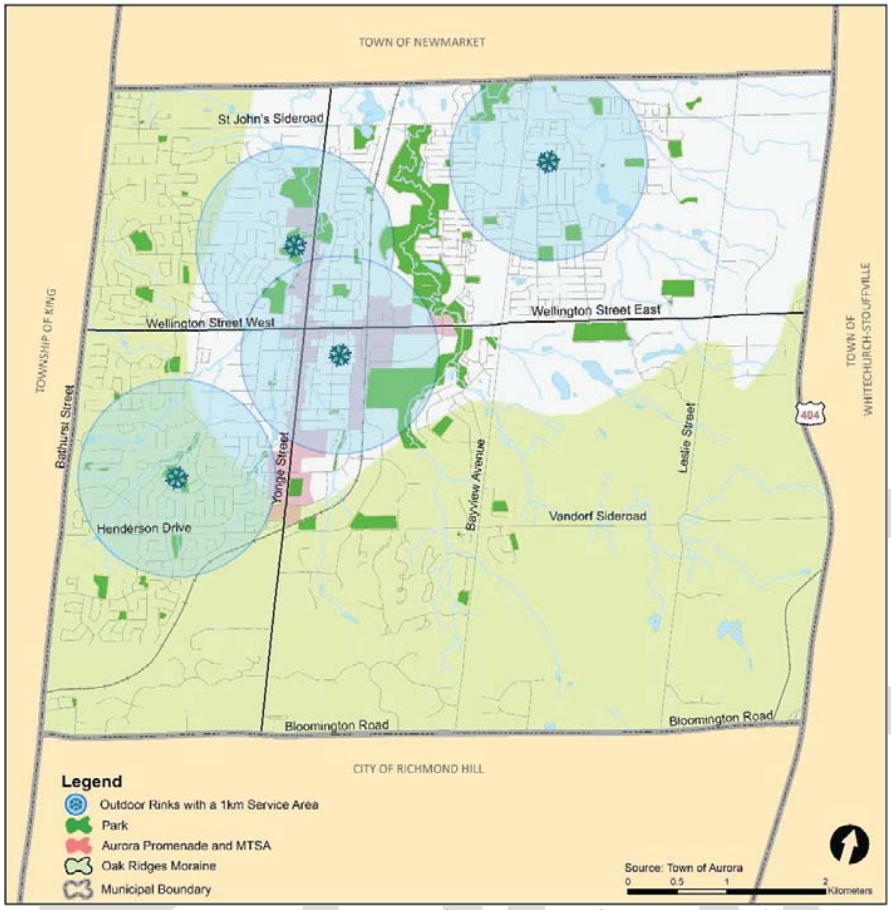
The Town of Aurora establishes and maintains six (6) large outdoor natural skating rinks during the winter, distributed at four (4) park sites throughout the town (Ada Johnson Park, Confederation Park, Machell Park and Town Park). Two of these park sites incorporate multiple ice rinks to simultaneously accommodate leisure skating and ice sports. A seasonal skating loop (refrigerated) is also being developed within the Aurora Town Square.

Additionally, the Town supports volunteer-maintained rinks in two (2) other parks at this time; however, interest in the volunteer rink maintenance program has diminished in recent years. All rinks are free to use but are weather dependent. When they are not being used for winter skating, these rinks serve other recreational purposes during the warmer months (e.g., sports fields, open space, etc.).

During the pandemic, additional outdoor rinks were a popular request in Aurora. More than two-fifths (22%) of Aurora households participated in outdoor ice sports or skating since 2019 (ranking 15th out of 39 leisure activities surveyed), while two-thirds (67%) identified outdoor ice rinks as a high priority for investment, ranking 8th out of 30 facility types. Attendance at the Town's outdoor rinks has been strong, and the community appears supportive of service level enhancements in this area.

Unfortunately, climate change, unpredictable weather, and fluctuating volunteer commitments are having an impact on the viability of natural rinks. This is leading many municipalities to consider developing artificial or synthetic rinks that can operate for a longer season (sometimes supported by community partnerships); the municipal benchmarking exercise found an average of one refrigerated rink per 70,000 persons, a population threshold that Aurora is expected to reach prior to 2031.

Figure 51 – Town of Aurora Municipally-Operated Outdoor Rinks in Parks



Note: two park sites accommodate two rinks (location varies from year to year); map excludes volunteer-maintained rinks, which may vary from year to year.

The distribution of outdoor rinks maintained by the Town of Aurora is robust and is supplemented by a volunteer rink program that offers additional opportunities at the neighbourhood-level. As a result, no new Town-maintained natural outdoor rink sites are recommended. However, a closer examination of the benefits and costs of establishing an artificial outdoor rink at an existing park site may be required to support sustainable outdoor winter skating in the longer-term. Following one to two years of the Aurora Town Square skating loop being in operation, it is recommended that the Town undertake a site evaluation exercise and business plan to consider the viability of establishing an outdoor artificial rink (refrigerated, with boards) to replace one or more natural rink locations.

Temperature is the primary determinant of whether outdoor skating is feasible. Refrigerated outdoor rinks offer a safer, accessible, and more reliable skating surface, and are also available for an extended season – in Aurora's climate, a three to four month season (approximately 100-120 days) may be possible, compared to about a one month season (approximately 20-30 days) for natural rinks. However, artificial rinks represent a significantly higher level of service both in terms of capital and operational resources. For example, artificial rinks require support buildings for washrooms, change rooms and mechanical systems; opportunities to co-locate them with other community facilities or in community parks should be considered to generate efficiencies and enhance accessibility. Users are increasing requesting that these rinks be covered with a roof (but not enclosed) to further extend the season by reducing sun-melt and improving the overall experience. Their design should also consider uses during the warmer months, such as ball hockey, pickleball, basketball, roller skating, and more.

Operationally, refrigerated rinks require a greater level of care and maintenance, with regular ice checks, flooding, and activity scheduling much like municipal arenas. Most outdoor skating rinks in Ontario are open exclusively for drop-in skating, but depending on demand, there may be opportunities to allow for limited rentals during non-peak times.

Recommendations

#26 Continue to maintain up to four municipally-operated **outdoor skating rinks** in Town parks (plus the skating loop proposed for Aurora Town Square) and support volunteer-led rinks. Prepare a **business plan** to consider the costs and benefits of establishing a refrigerated boarded ice rink to replace one or more natural rinks (consider potential locations, capital costs, operating requirements, community partnerships, and more).

7.14 Lawn Bowling

Under agreement with the Town, the Aurora Lawn Bowling Club operates the two lawn bowling greens and clubhouse within McMahon Park on a membership-basis, with the Town providing capital maintenance. Upgrades to the complex were completed in 2016.

Lawn bowling is a social recreational activity that is largely played by older adults and seniors, an age group that is expected to grow faster than the overall population in the years to come. Across Ontario, there have been efforts to grow the sport by introducing it to younger adults; for example, some adult social clubs have added lawn bowling to their list of activities.

Data on membership in the Aurora Lawn Bowling Club was not able to be sourced, but memberships across most clubs in Ontario are stable to declining, with growing concerns over a loss of volunteers to maintain the greens that have resulted in closures in some cases.

With the existing facility having capacity for greater usage, additional lawn bowling greens are not recommended. Monitoring of participation and volunteer trends would help to inform future provision strategies and continued municipal support.

7.15 Outdoor Running Tracks

There are no outdoor running tracks in Town parks, though several parks contain pathways that are well used for jogging. To support active residents seeking opportunities to walk and jog, pathway systems in parks may be expanded over time in coordination with the local trails system.

Through its range of providers, Aurora's sport system can accommodate most stages of athletic development and competition. For example, some local schools (St. Andrew's College, high schools, etc.) offer 400-metre multi-lane oval running tracks encircling sports fields. The track at St. Maximillian Kolbe Catholic High School is a premier venue in Aurora and is frequently used for competitions and training offered by the school and community organizations, although it cannot be fully utilized when the interior soccer field is in use. Area schools should be encouraged to maintain their running tracks to a standard that continues to support community use.

7.16 Disc Golf Courses

Disc golf is a sport in which players throw a flying disc on a course consisting of between 9 and 18 targets (or baskets). The sport is a century old game that originated in Canada in the early 1900s that is now played across the world. It has been gaining interest in recent times as an increasing number of young adults have been taking up the sport. Part of disc golf's recent popularity is that it is an outdoor sport that

DRAFT

promotes safe distancing and it can be played by people of almost any age. It also has a low barrier to entry as most people have thrown a frisbee at some point in their life and are also familiar with the rules of golf.

The Aurora Montessori School recently installed a 9-hole disc golf course on their lands, the first of its kind in Aurora. The Professional Disc Golf Association website currently lists fewer than 100 public and private courses in Ontario. Courses are provided by several sectors including municipal (e.g., City of Toronto, City of Brampton, City of Hamilton golf course, etc.), other government agencies (e.g., Tottenham Conservation Area – the nearest public course to Aurora – schools, etc.), and the private sector (e.g., golf courses, etc.). The courses can be used casually by members of the public, or for organized games and tournaments sponsored by disc golf clubs.

While the Town of Aurora does not currently provide an outdoor disc golf course within its parks system, there have been requests for this type of amenity. Two-fifths (41%) of survey respondents identified disc golf as a high priority, ranking 21st out of 30 facility types. From the survey – which would appear to have attracted an engaged group of enthusiasts within the town and beyond (26% of respondents indicting participating in the sport, despite there being no nearby courses) – the current lack of courses in York Region is contributing to demand.

One or more new courses in Aurora and/or other nearby municipalities may go a long way towards addressing regional needs. Opportunities to provide this type of amenity in Aurora have recently been explored; however, a proposal to establish a course within the Highland Gate community was not supported by residents.

The preferred approach to establishing a disc golf course is to partner with a club, sponsor, or land-owner that will assist with course development and operation. Disc golf enthusiasts are seeking a sanctioned course that can support both casual play and tournaments, which can attract a significant number of players on a weekend. As a result, sites should be chosen for their ability to address usage impacts, including parking. Furthermore, courses require larger blocks of land (potentially 2 to 10 hectares depending on the design and number of holes) with the ideal location combining wooded and open terrains and a variety of topographical change. There are examples of disc golf courses within multi-use park sites (e.g., Centennial Park in Scarborough) as well as courses that make use of natural areas (e.g., Sandy Hollow Disc Golf Course in Barrie).

DRAFT

Recommendations

#27 Further explore the potential to establish a public **disc golf course** in Aurora, on town-owned or other lands. Establish a **working group** to undertake a site evaluation and selection process to identify potential sites (with public consultation), fundraise for course development, and support a sponsoring organization.

7.17 Recreational Trails

The Town of Aurora maintains approximately 62 kilometres of trails connecting neighbourhood parks, Town facilities, and green spaces. Most trails are compact gravel surfaces with some asphalt sections through neighbourhood and community parks and are considered multi-purpose trails for a variety of activities. Notable trail segments include the Tim Jones Trail, Klaus Wehrenberg Trail, Willow Farm/ Lakeview Trail System, and various off-road linkages between parks.

Driven by the increasing importance of active transportation choices and the pursuit of healthy lifestyles, trails and pathways are one of the most desired recreational facility types in most communities. During the pandemic, Aurora's trails were especially well used. Four-fifths (81%) of Aurora households indicated walking or hiking for leisure, ranking 1st out of 39 leisure activities surveyed. Furthermore, a large majority of survey respondents identified nature trails (87%) and multi-use fitness trails (77%) as high priorities for

investment, ranking 2nd and 4th out of 30 options. Suggestions from the public were also received to expand the trails system, add more lighting in busy locations, and consider winter maintenance of trails.

Trails support physical activity, foster social connections, and contribute to complete communities. Recognizing this, the Town prepared a Trails Master Plan in 2011 that established a long-term 50-year plan for establishing a connected trails network. The Town is also currently preparing an updated Active Transportation Master Plan ("Aurora Connects") to develop a continuous Town-wide network that connects to all neighbourhoods within Aurora and adjacent municipalities. There is strong public support to continue prioritizing the improvement and expansion of the Town's trails and pathways networks.

Recommendations

#28 Continue to place a high priority on maintaining, improving, and expanding the system of trails and pathways through implementation of the Town's **Trails Master Plan** and **Active Transportation Master Plan**.

7.18 Community Gardens

Community gardens are allotment-style garden plots – sometimes on municipal lands – that are leased to residents for the purpose of growing seasonal plants for personal consumption. The Town has one community garden location (Industrial Parkway South) and will soon be establishing a second garden plot site in Hartwell Way Neighbourhood Park in northeast Aurora. The York Region Food Network operates the community gardens on behalf of the Town of Aurora.

With a growing, aging, and diverse population, it is anticipated that the demand for community gardens in Aurora will rise, offering improved food security and healthy food options for residents. Smaller residential lots and more multi-storey buildings are also leading to fewer opportunities for backyard gardens, creating greater demand for community plots. Additionally, community gardens bring residents together and offer educational and stewardship opportunities. Although some of the Town's previous attempts to establish community gardens in parks have been met with opposition, the survey found considerable support for community gardens, with 59% identifying them as a high priority, ranking 10th out of 30 facility types.

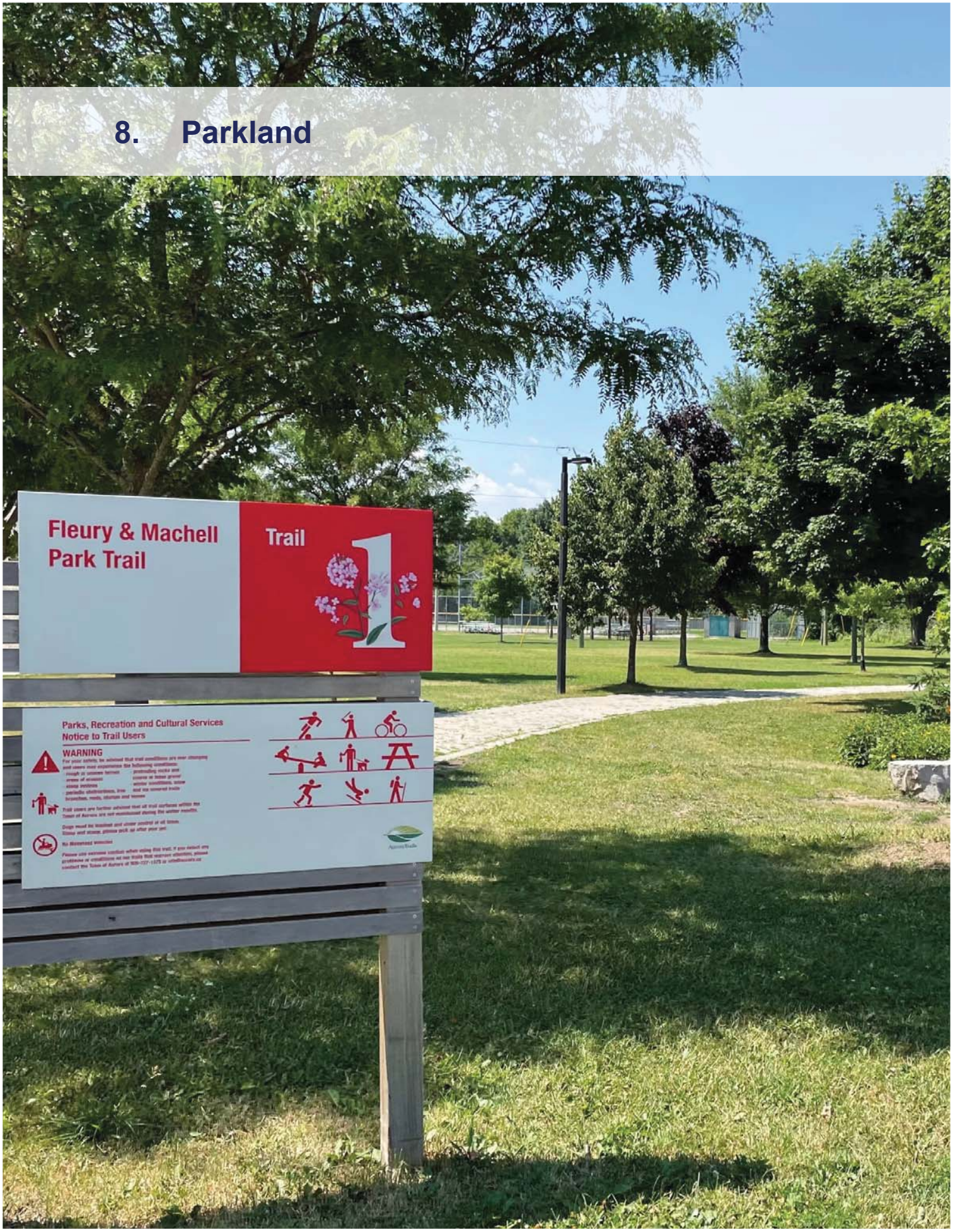
The Town should work with the York Region Food Network to monitor uptake of its garden plots to inform demand for future sites. Under-utilized portions of Town parks or other lands can be used for gardens if they have the necessary infrastructure (e.g., water source, nearby parking, etc.) and community support. Preferred locations will be those in proximity to higher-density forms of housing as these residents will have more limited opportunities for "backyard gardening". The Town is encouraged to continue working with an outside agency in the management of its community gardens.

Recommendations

#29 Monitor uptake of existing **garden plots** to inform demand for future sites, in cooperation with the operating agency (York Region Food Network).

DRAFT

8. Parkland


Fleury & Machell
Park Trail
Trail
1
Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
Notice to Trail Users
WARNING

Public parks are important places for active play and sports, casual leisure activities and respite, special events, social belonging, and environmental protection. To ensure that the Town keeps pace with land-based demands, this section examines Aurora's parks system, along with future requirements and policy considerations.

8.1 Parkland Classifications and Policies

Defining Parkland

Parkland and open space are provided by a variety of agencies in Aurora and take different forms. For the purposes of this Master Plan, the focus is on municipal parkland, which is defined as follows:

> **"Parkland"** refers to all lands owned, leased and/or managed by the Town and classified in the Aurora Official Plan as Community Parks, Neighbourhood Parks, Parkettes, Squares and Greens, and Urban Squares. Parkland typically consists of tableland suitable for the development or installation of built recreational or civic amenities (such as sports fields, playgrounds, courts, gardens, etc.) that may be used for both organized and unorganized activities, although these parks may also incorporate natural features. Excluded from this definition are open space lands that are classified as Environmental Protection and may be used for purposes such as environmental conservation, stormwater management, buffers, etc.

Parks are essential public infrastructure and are vital to improving and sustaining the health of individuals, the community, environment, and economy. Well-planned parks provide extensive benefits to individuals and communities and can attract investments in tourism, business, industry, and housing. They also provide places of respite, improved air quality, venues for physical activity, and help the Town achieve its environmental objectives. Many studies and land development trends suggest that proximity to parks can increase property values.

Aurora residents place a high value on the Town's parks system – 92% of survey respondents indicated that parks for casual use are important to them. Further, the Town's 2023 Draft Official Plan identifies the establishment of a diverse parkland and recreation area system as a fundament principle of the plan.

Parkland Classifications and Official Plan Targets

Local land use planning – including planning for municipal parks – is guided by the Town of Aurora **Official Plan.** In late 2022, the Town released for public input a draft Official Plan containing a revised vision for town planning over the next 30 years. Although the new Official Plan is not in effect and may be subject to change through the approvals process, it is important to bring this Master Plan (and the Town's Parkland Dedication By-law) into conformity with the new Official Plan and related legislation. For the purposes of this section, all references to the Official Plan represent the draft Official Plan dated February 2023.

Section 13 of the Town's 2023 draft Official Plan identifies several policies that support the establishment and maintenance of a diverse parkland system, including both public and private parkland (note: private lands are intended to augment the Town's parks system and are not part of any required land dedication).

The Public Parkland designation is of most relevance to this Master Plan since it is this type of parkland that the Town has the greatest ability to acquire and program for a diverse range of recreational uses. The draft Official Plan includes a **parkland classification hierarchy** that is used as a guideline for the acquisition, spatial distribution, and development of a diverse range of parks and recreation facilities.

DRAFT

This parkland hierarchy consists of:

1) **Community Parks** servicing the entire community and visitors to the Town, of which the minimum size is 4 to 8 hectares to allow for facilities such as playgrounds, major sport fields, skateboard parks, hard surface courts, outdoor aquatics facilities, horticultural facilities, amphitheatres, etc.
2) **Neighbourhood Parks** servicing the immediate surrounding residential area, of which the minimum size is 1.6 to 4 hectares to allow for facilities such as playgrounds, sports fields, outdoor skating rinks, picnic areas, etc.
3) **Parkettes** that are a minimum of 0.35 hectares in size, and intended to provide neighbourhood green space, visual amenity and minor open space areas and/or linkages within strategic areas of the town.
4) **Squares and Greens** within the Aurora Promenade and MTSA, offering formal spaces that may include hard surfaces, gardens, pavilions, memorials, fountains, and modest concession stands".
5) **Urban Squares** within the Aurora Promenade and MTSA offering multi-purpose programming spaces that bring life and energy to the Downtown core. Specific development criteria for Urban Squares are defined in Section 9 the draft Official Plan.
6) An **Urban Wildlife Park** designation that provides a special focus on ecological management and conservation in recognition of the David Tomlinson Nature Reserve in Northeast Aurora (note: these lands are considered open space, rather than parkland as it is defined in this Master Plan).

The parkland hierarchy is a core element of park planning, design, and development. Classifications define the range of characteristics found in municipal parks, such as their size, form, function and/or level of amenity. Such definition encourages a broad range of park types and facility combinations that enables a consistent management approach that can be tailored to respond to community needs. The identification of provision targets also helps to ensure appropriate service level across the town, while providing the community, developers, and planners with an understanding of the Town's parkland provision objectives.

Most municipalities use population-based targets to calculate and plan parkland supply. A parkland target is particularly important as it is becoming more complex and costly to secure quality parcels for parkland within new higher density forms of development. Traditionally, residential intensification has generated less parkland per capita than greenfield development – and certainly smaller park blocks – making it difficult to accommodate the desired recreational activities that residents have come to expect from the Town's parks system.

The Town's draft Official Plan establishes the following **servicing ratios for parkland, totalling a town-wide supply of 2.0 to 3.0 hectares per 1,000 residents**. These ratios were updated as recommended within the last Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Park Classification	Official Plan Servicing Ratio
Community Parks	1.0 to 1.5 hectares per 1,000 residents
Neighbourhood Parks	1.0 to 1.5 hectares per 1,000 residents
Total	2.0 to 3.0 hectares per 1,000 residents

The Town is generally meeting these service ratios at this time. However, with much of Aurora's future growth to occur through infill and intensification, land use patterns and characteristics of Aurora's built form will be markedly different than in the past, leading to smaller and more intensely developed parkland blocks. Additional analysis of future parkland needs is contained later in this section.

DRAFT

Parkland Dedication (Planning Act and Bill 23)

Parkland conveyance authority is established in the Planning Act and facilitated through the Town's Official Plan policies and Parkland Cash-in-Lieu (Dedication) By-law. Specifically, this includes Planning Act Section 42 (which pertains to parkland conveyances associated with development and redevelopment) and Sections 51.1 and 53 (which pertain to parkland requirements as a condition of plan of subdivision approval and consent).

Under the Act (most recently amended through Bill 23), municipalities may levy a standard rate of 5% of developable residential lands (or cash-in-lieu) or 2% of commercial and industrial lands, or an alternative rate of up to one hectare of land for every 600 hundred residential units or an equivalent to one hectare of land for every 1,000 units when requiring cash-in-lieu of land. The alternative rate typically generates more parkland when densities exceed 30 units per hectare when accepting land and 50 units per hectare when accepting payment, although recent changes to the Act have instituted caps on this (10% of land or its value for sites under 5 hectares, and 15% for sites greater than 5 hectares).

The Town's draft Official Plan will require updating to address the legislative changes introduced by the More Homes Built Faster Act (Bill 23). **These changes will result in reductions to parkland dedication and cash-in-lieu requirements compared to the previous legislation, especially for areas of higher density.** One of the reasons for these changes is that previous parkland requirements had the potential to consume most or all of the development site (particularly for very high density developments), impacting the viability of the development. Additionally, the provincial mandate to increase housing supply has led to parkland dedication exemptions for affordable residential units (also exempted in the Town's draft Official Plan), attainable residential units, inclusionary zoning residential units, non-profit housing, and additional residential unit developments.

Striking an appropriate balance across the Town's urban structure is vital, including the Aurora Promenade, MTSA and key corridors. However, planning, designing, and maintaining parks in densely populated areas presents several new challenges, including smaller parkland blocks that are used more intensely and are thus more costly to construct and maintain. Given the scarcity and higher cost of land in these areas, new approaches are required to both acquire suitable land for parks and to program these parks to meet the unique range of needs, such as **privately-owned public spaces (POPS), strata parks (e.g., on top of a parking garage, utility, etc.), and/or naturalized lands (such as lands in the Oak Ridges Moraine)**. The Town's draft Official Plan includes policies that permit each of these options based on their merits.

The Act also requires that a municipality prepare a **Parks Plan** before passing a parkland dedication by-law. The Town is encouraged to use this Master Plan as the basis for their Parks Plan, in consultation with local school boards.

Recommendations

#30 Update the Town's **Official Plan and Parkland Dedication By-law** to align with amendments to the Ontario Planning Act and Bill 23.

#31 Use this Master Plan as the basis for the Town's **Parks Plan** (in support of an updated Parkland Dedication By-law), in consultation with local school boards. Financial analysis examining per unit valuations and a variety of residential development contexts may be helpful in supporting the Parks Plan.

#32 Update the Town's GIS databases to include the **classifications of existing parkland** to assist in tracking and the assessment of land requirements.

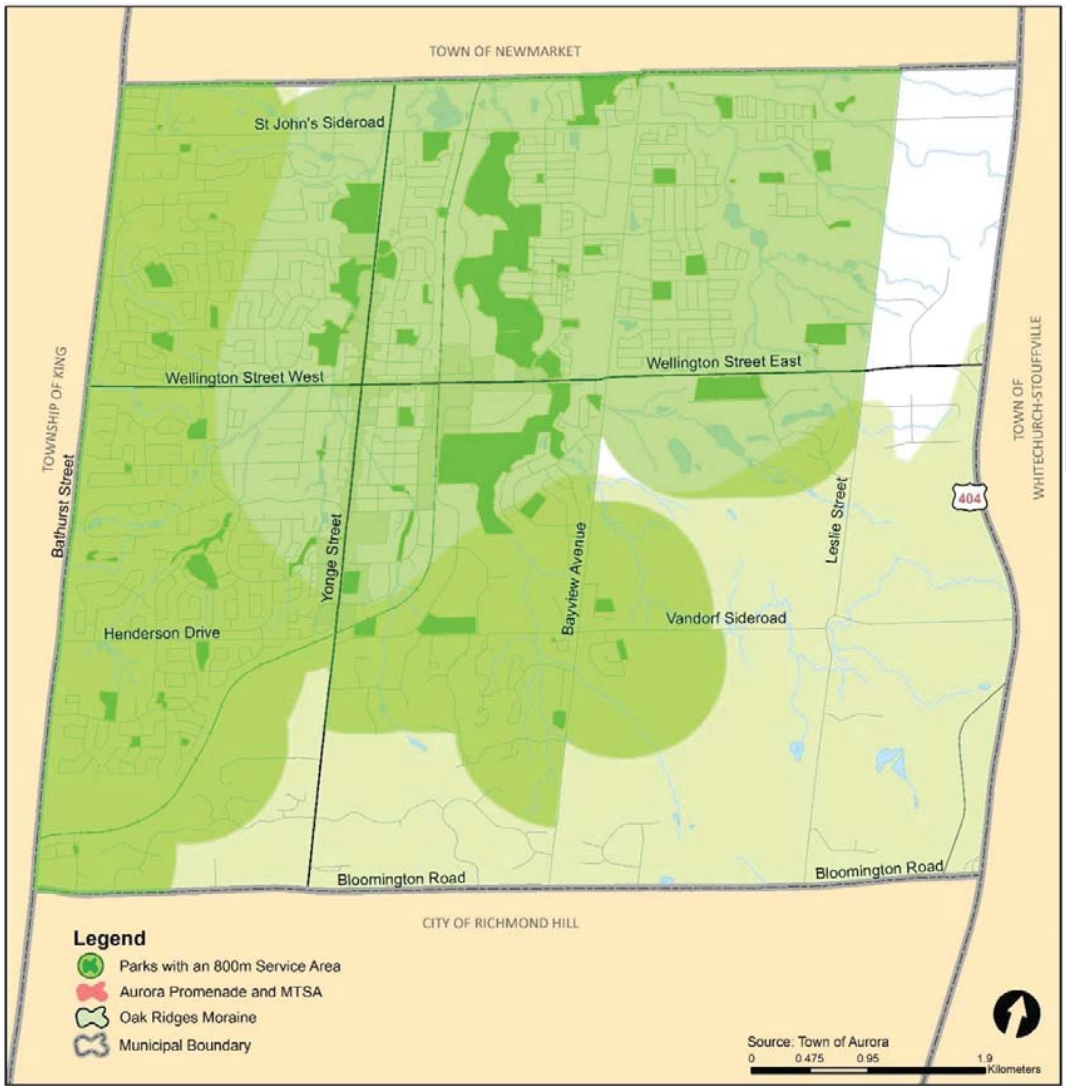
8.2 Parkland Supplies and Needs

Current Parkland Supply

Inventory data provided by the Town indicates that Aurora offers **174.5 hectares** of parkland distributed across 73 sites (excluding open space properties). This represents a level of service of **2.7 hectares per 1,000** residents at the present time. This level of service compares favourably to other municipalities across Ontario that generally provide parkland in the range of 2.0 to 4.0 hectares per 1,000 residents.

The provision of parkland in Aurora is both a measure of local parkland supply and access. A distributional analysis (using a distance of 800-metres from each park; note: service radii may differ by park type) was undertaken by applying this service area to Aurora's parks to understand where residents are located within walking distance to a park or where gaps exist. The analysis found that residents living within Aurora's urban boundary are generally well served with some form of active parkland.

Figure 52 – Distribution of Municipal Parkland



Future Parkland Needs

An appropriate supply and equitable distribution of parkland is critical to ensuring a high quality of life and maximizing accessibility to services and amenities that achieve community objectives. As town grows, there will also be a growing need for more parkland to serve the increasing number of residents. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of survey respondents identified parkland acquisition as a high priority, ranking 4th out of 30 investment options.

Understanding current parkland dedication tools and prospective ratios is important in establishing a parkland target that is both realistic and achievable. **Through the Bill 23 provisions now in force within the Planning Act, application of the standard and/or alternative rate will generally result in parkland dedication ratios of between 0.5 to 1.0 hectares per 1,000 residents (or lower depending on the impact of the new exemptions).** The actual ratio will vary depending on the density of the development and the number of persons per unit, but parkland dedication alone will not allow the Town to keep pace with growth-related needs.

Applying the Town's current parkland provision level (2.7 ha/1000) to future growth is not attainable or realistic as all new residential development that occurs within Aurora will reduce the Town's overall ratios.

Instead, a Town-wide parkland provision target at the lower-end of the range identified in the draft Official Plan – being 2.0 hectares per 1,000 residents, to be applied to new growth – is recommended in order to support a broad range of public outdoor recreation uses. This target is greater than what can be achieved solely through the provisions of the Planning Act and will require other means of acquiring parkland. It is also important to recognize that this target is supplemented by other public lands that are not defined as parkland, but that can provide valuable contributions to community life, such as schools, greenways and natural areas, conservation areas, and alternative open spaces.

Applying this target to Aurora's population forecasts, projected population growth to 2031 will generate a need for approximately **17.2 hectares of new parkland**. Opportunities to address these needs are discussed further below.

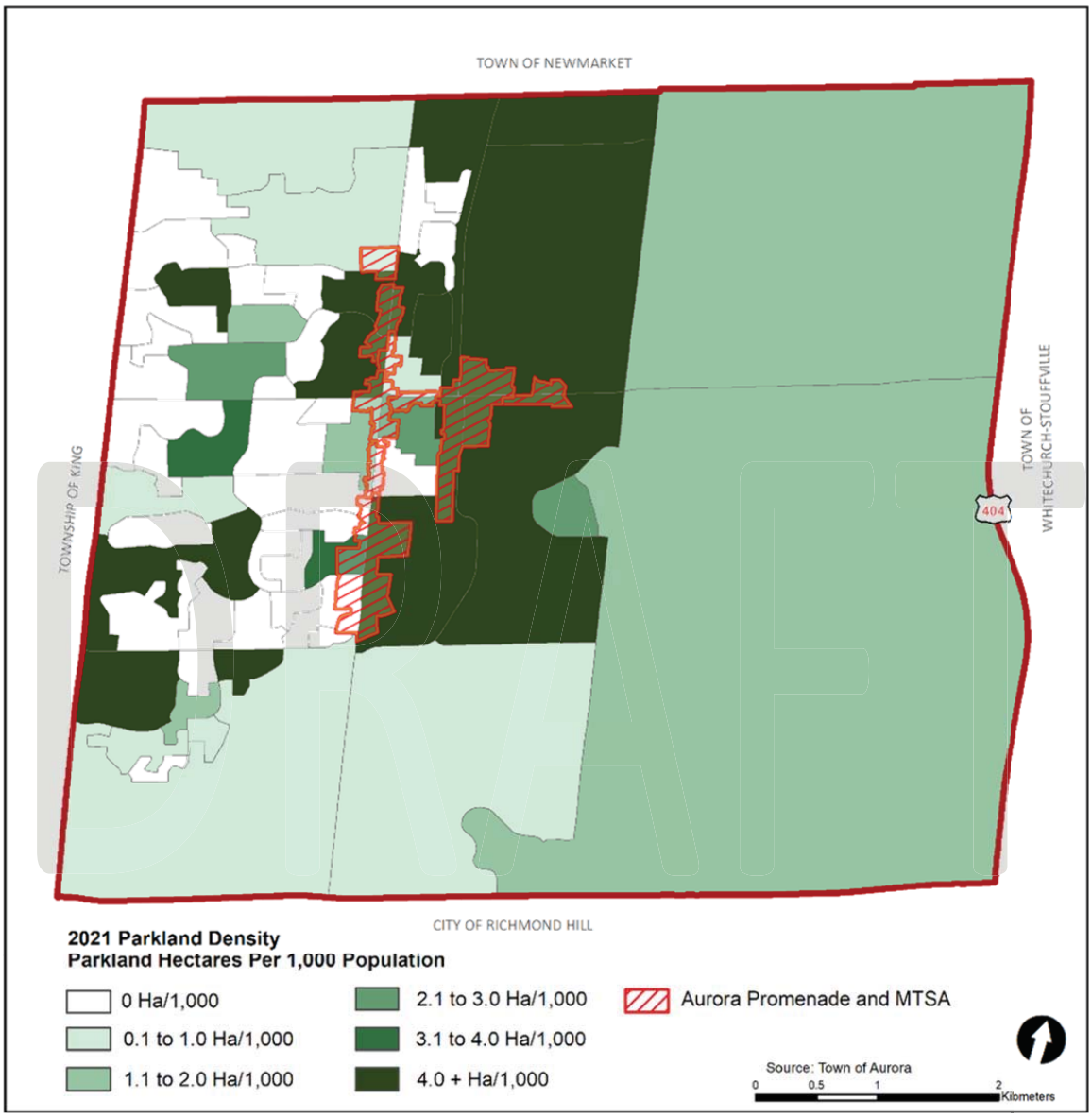
Table 20: Current and Projected Parkland Needs to 2031

Current Population (2021)	64,100 persons
Forecasted Population (2031)	72,700 persons
Projected Growth (2023-2031)	8,600 persons
Future Growth-related Parkland Needs, based on 2.0 ha/1000	**17.2 hectares**

To help guide the Town in identifying priority areas for parkland acquisition across Aurora, a parkland to population ratio analysis was prepared. Based on Aurora's public parkland supply and 2021 Census population by dissemination area, the exercise identified areas that were below the minimum parkland ratio identified in the draft Official Plan (less than 2.0 hectares per 1,000 residents), within the Official Plan range (2.0 to 3.0 hectares per 1,000 residents), or above this range (more than 3.0 hectares per 1,000 residents). To assist with identifying priority areas, consideration was also given to the Town's strategic growth areas, given that these areas are expected to grow over time and include a mixture of uses including residential.

DRAFT

Figure 53: Distribution of Parkland Ratios across Aurora (2021)



This analysis reveals localized parkland shortfalls across much of Aurora's western half, including several established neighbourhoods. It is suggested that these areas are be considered **Priority Acquisition Areas**. As residential growth through infill and intensification can be anticipated within several of these locations (particularly those within the Aurora Promenade and MTSA), the pressure for parkland will continue to increase over time. It will be important to ensure that an adequate supply of parkland is available within these areas, or within walking distance, to respond to an increase in population over the long-term.

Parkland Acquisition

Through future development applications, there is the potential to add to the Town's current parkland supply, including new neighbourhood parks and/or parkettes in greenfield areas and urban squares and/or greens in the Aurora Promenade and MTSA.

However, changes to urban structure and land valuation will mean that these opportunities will become fewer and are less likely to result in large blocks for parkland. To help achieve the desired parkland target, is recommended that the Town adopt a **"parkland-first" approach** that directs the Town to prioritize the dedication of land rather than cash-in-lieu of parkland during the development review process. This means that:

a) Policies and practices that support on-site parkland dedication and encourage front-end acquisition of parkland should be encouraged.

b) Parkland will be required when development will result in a park block that: (i) is at least 0.35 hectares in size; (ii) expands an existing park site; or (iii) meets the needs and parameters for a square/green within the Aurora Promenade and MTSA or other priority acquisition area.

c) The Town may still accept cash-in-lieu of parkland when it is determined to be more beneficial, especially for development projects that would not meet the minimum requirements. For example, cash-in-lieu may be considered for higher density development or redevelopment sites that cannot physically accommodate a typical park block (including urban squares and greens that are less than 0.35 hectares). In addition, privately-owned public spaces may be permitted as per Town policy.

d) All lands to be dedicated for park purposes must be to the Town's satisfaction and will not include restricted lands such as Environmental Protection Areas, hazard lands, steep slopes, contaminated lands, easements, stormwater ponds, etc.

However, the Planning Act can only deliver on a portion of the Town's future parkland needs. **A growing focus will also need to be placed on municipal acquisition (partly funded through parkland reserves) and other tools in order to meet the Town's parkland provision goals.** At a preliminary level, the Town has identified the Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School, former George Street School, Ontario Heritage Trust lands (Smith Property), and lands owned by the Stronach Group and Shining Hill Developments as large land holdings that may have the potential to support future park uses if brought into municipal ownership or under a long-term agreement for public access. Non-traditional public spaces also may play a greater future role in ensuring continued public access to green spaces and park-like places in strategic growth areas.

To meet long-term parkland targets, Aurora may need to utilize **alternative parkland acquisition approaches and financial tools** beyond traditional parkland conveyance mechanisms[8], including (but not limited to):

a) Municipal land purchase or lease (with a focus on priority areas, expansion of existing park sites, or land-banking in the Oak Ridges Moraine), funded from cash-in-lieu reserves, Community Benefit Charges, general tax funding, grants, donors, etc.;

b) Land exchanges or swaps;

c) Off-site conveyance of parkland (ideally in priority areas);

d) Establishment of a Parks Foundation (e.g., community, corporate or municipal donations towards parkland acquisition);

e) Reallocating surplus municipal lands (or purchasing surplus school sites) to park use;

[8] See also "Land Securement" policies of the Town of Aurora Official Plan.

f) Partnership/joint provision of lands with local partners under agreement; and/or

g) Although not a land-based expansion, enhancements to existing parks to increase recreational opportunities in the vicinity of growth areas may also be considered.

Recommendations

#33 Strive to achieve a target of 2.0 hectares of parkland per 1,000 residents, applied to new growth (through conveyance or other means). This projects to a need for approximately **17.2 hectares of additional parkland** by 2031. Create a **financial plan** to move the toward this target.

#34 Seek to **maximize parkland dedication** through development and redevelopment applications, as well as alternative parkland acquisition strategies (e.g., purchase/lease, land exchanges, partnerships, land banking, reallocation of surplus lands, etc.).

#35 Work with area school boards and other service providers to **maximize community access to quality outdoor parks and recreation amenities on non-municipal sites** through permitting, long-term access agreements, etc.

#36 Adopt a "**Parkland First" approach** that prioritizes parkland conveyance over cash-in-lieu of parkland in order to address parkland deficits. Parkland conveyances should: (a) be acceptable to the Town; (b) not include restricted lands; (c) result in blocks that are at least 0.35 hectares in size (urban squares and greens in the Aurora Promenade and MTSA may be smaller) or expand an existing park site.

DRAFT

8.3 Park Design

Access to **quality parks** is an important aspect of complete communities and allows people to spend more time in their neighbourhoods. While there will continue to be demand for traditional forms of parkland for recreation and sport, public spaces are increasingly being recognized for their contributions toward healthy communities, community greening, urban renewal, placemaking, public art and expression, and more. A wide range of public spaces are needed to fill a variety of community roles and Aurora has responded to this through a robust parkland classification system and greater diversity in park designs and amenities.

The public consultation program identified a growing need to incorporate **more amenities** (e.g., seating, shade, washrooms, pathways, sport courts, community gardens, etc.) that increase the usability of parks for residents of all backgrounds. While a significant majority (87%) of survey respondents identified park washrooms as a high priority, ranking 1st out of 30 facility types, the Town cannot offer these in all parks and should continue to only consider them in Community Parks.

Relatively modest investments can have dramatic improvements on parks and encourage participation and physical activity for everyone, regardless of age, gender, or income. For example, walking is the most popular activity and looped trails and pathways draw people of all ages and abilities into parks, helping to increase a sense of safety and community.

The **renewal** of existing parks and park infrastructure will become a greater concern over time and the allocation of resources needs to be examined in this light. For example, **Neighbourhood Parks** are the most convenient and common park type in Aurora. They are a critical resource for building a sense of community and social belonging, but some may not be achieving their potential because they do not contain the amenities that residents are seeking. Fortunately, some of these parks are well situated to accommodate growing demand for unstructured activities and casual uses, subject to available budget resources. A renewed focus on neighbourhood park design is recommended (as the Town has done with the new Hartwell Way Neighbourhood Park in Northeast Aurora), in tandem with a thoughtful strategy to enhance comfort amenities, outdoor programming, and unstructured activities to help people make use of the space. Small parks can make a big difference.

To respond to growing **residential intensification**, the Town must be creative with existing spaces and seek new ways of doing things as it has done with Aurora Town Square. The repurposing of redundant spaces can also bring new life to the parks system; however, some park features (e.g., off-leash dog parks, skateboard parks, trails, etc.) may require innovative designs to reduce impacts or conflicting uses. The Town should continue to engage residents early in the planning process and work with stakeholders to mitigate concerns. Some other opportunities may include (but will not be limited to):

- enhancing or renewing existing parks, public spaces, and streetscapes;
- developing parks with urban qualities (civic parks, squares, etc.) that are built to higher design standards and that integrate multi-functional spaces and public art;
- improving connections (e.g., linear parks) and access to nearby parks and facilities;
- promoting innovation and excellence in design;
- making use of less conventional spaces (e.g., streets, cemeteries, greyfield sites, etc.) such as through partnerships, strata parks, etc.;
- integrating privately-owned publicly accessible spaces; and,
- considering other options through negotiation with developers, such as land swaps or public realm improvements.

Based on the foregoing, the Town should continue to consider the following **design principles** (at a minimum) for new and redeveloped parks, in addition to those design policies identified in

The Official Plan contains a series of **design policies** that should be regarded when developing and redeveloping park sites, including direction related to accessibility, safety (CPTED principles), public art, landscaping and plantings, pathway connections, and more. These policies are contemporary and represent best practices for continued consideration.

To aid the Town in future park planning and responding to special requests for park redevelopment or renewal, the following table below identifies **general space planning guidelines** for common land-based park amenities. These figures should be considered preliminary and must be validated on a case-by-case basis, subject to site-specific requirements.

DRAFT

Recommendations

#37 Maintain a commitment to **universal accessibility, safety and comfort** within the Town's parks system. Regularly consult with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and ensure compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), recognizing that some parks may include areas of natural terrain that are more difficult to access.

#38 Emphasize the provision of amenities such as **benches/seating areas, bike racks, shade (structures, tree canopy, etc.), and barrier-free washrooms** in appropriate park types to address the needs of all age groups.

#39 Undertake **park amenity condition assessments** on a regular basis to inform the Town's asset management plan and long-term capital plan.

#40 Develop a strategy for the **renewal of key park sites** (e.g., Confederation Park, etc.), including funding amounts and sources. Emphasize projects that promote usage by people of all ages, such as the introduction of shade, seating, pathways, unprogrammed space, etc. Engage stakeholders and the public when designing new and redeveloped parks.

Table 21: Space Planning Guidelines for Park Amenities

Facility Type	Required Land Area (ha), excluding setback to residential and parking
Artificial Turf Field (full size)	1.3 ha
Senior Soccer Field	1.0 ha
Senior Hardball Diamond	1.5 ha
Senior Softball Diamond	0.7 ha
Intermediate Ball Diamond	0.5 ha
Cricket Pitch	2.2 ha
Multi-use Court	0.05 ha
Basketball Court (full)	0.05 ha
Basketball Court (half)	0.03 ha
Tennis Courts (2)	0.11 ha
Pickleball Courts (6)	0.09 ha
Playground	0.05 ha
Splash Pad	0.08 ha
Skateboard Park (community)	0.1 ha
Off-leash Dog Park	1.5+ ha
Outdoor Ice Rink	0.08 ha
Community Garden Plot	0.05 ha

Note: The estimates shown represent the minimum land area to construct the recreational asset alone. They do not account for buffer spaces (from asset to property lines, or in between park uses), parking, or other support amenities.

DRAFT

9. Service Delivery and Program Support

This section provides guidance on service-related topics that were identified through the public consultation program, including the Town's role in service delivery, programming, policies, and more.

9.1 Municipal Role in Service Delivery

The **vision and guiding principles** identified in Section 5 of this Master Plan provide focus to the Town's role in supporting parks, recreation, and sport in Aurora. All Town actions relative to parks, recreation, and sport should further the vision ("an active, healthy and engaged community…") and one or more of the guiding principles (expand resident participation; optimize our recreation facilities; enhance our parks and amenities; and foster innovation and service excellence).

The Town's current service model takes a two-pronged approach of "direct" and "indirect" delivery structured around a **"strengths-based" system** that leverages contributions from a broad range of providers. Many services and programs are provided directly through resources deployed by the Community Services and Operations (Parks & Fleet) Departments. At the same time, several services and programs are delivered by community groups, non-profit organizations, public agencies, and the private sector. The relationships with providers are paramount to the successful delivery of quality services. Through a combination of these approaches, the Town strives to ensure a diverse and accessible range of opportunities for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

Aurora has a thriving sport community comprised of the Town and self-governing sport organizations such as volunteer sport groups and non-profit organizations such as the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame and Sport Aurora. Organizations work collaboratively to ensure that facilities, services, and programs can adequately meet the current and future needs of sport participants.

The Town's **Sport Plan** also provides a framework and guiding principles for achieving increased participation in sport through safe, supportive, and inclusive environments. The Town has also prepared a **Sport Tourism Strategy** that seeks to enhance the visitor experience, bring new events into the community, highlight hometown athletes, and incorporate cultural experiences for the community and visitors. Creating performance measures and annual reporting around the goals of these strategies will ensure that stakeholders and partners keep priorities in focus and continue to work cohesively toward the vision by each playing their part.

Within this context, the **suggested roles** identified below may be considered as the Town more formally defines its responsibilities relative to parks, recreation, and sport:

a) Engaging the community in meaningful participation through planning, decision-making, and service delivery;
b) Working to include all residents and advocating for marginalized individuals and groups, including youth, seniors, persons with disabilities, low-income households, etc.;
c) Assessing and responding to changing demographics, community issues, and emerging trends;
d) Creating awareness of municipal services, community engagement initiatives, and opportunities for participation;
e) Educating about and promoting the benefits of participation (healthy living/aging, physical and mental wellness, drowning prevention, leadership, environmental benefits, etc.);
f) Determining service gaps and needed improvements;
g) Providing and maintaining core facilities where gaps exist or the capacity is not present in the community;
h) Building and fostering partnerships with key providers and stakeholders in the delivery of services;
i) Playing an ongoing role in supporting community groups, volunteers, and partners;
j) Delivering core programs that promote community and individual health and wellness;
k) Supporting activities and events that promote community interaction, vibrancy, and cohesion;
l) Developing effective and meaningful policies and procedures that enhance safety, accountability, and transparency; and
m) Providing exceptional customer service.

DRAFT

In order to effectively fulfill this role, it is recommended that decision-making be aligned with the guiding principles of this Master Plan. The Town can create alignment with this strategic framework in several ways, such as:

- Formally endorsing the vision and guiding principles at a Council level;
- Referencing them within staff reports;
- Using the framework to evaluate submissions to the partnership and grant programs;
- Informing the annual budget process; and
- Embedding the vision and principles within staff training, policy development, etc.

Recommendations

#41 Align service delivery priorities and decision-making with the **vision and guiding principles** of this Master Plan.

#42 Prepare regular updates on the 2016 **Sport Plan** and report out to Council and the community. Performance measures, annual work plans, and assigned responsibilities will ensure that this plan remains a flexible, living document.

9.2 Affordability and Accessibility

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

The Town of Aurora recognizes the importance of including all residents in a broad range of inclusive parks and recreation services and has launched several initiatives that support this objective, including (but not limited to):

- **Pricing Policy and Ability to Pay Program:** Updates were made to the Community Services pricing policy in 2021 to demonstrate transparency in setting user fees. Furthermore, a Recreation Access Policy was created to strategically support those who may need financial assistance to participate.
- **Sport Plan:** Several initiatives from the Sport Plan were recently initiated to enhance inclusion, such as participation by women and girls in sport, engagement with culturally diverse groups, etc.
- **Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Strategic Action Plan:** This report provides direction on diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace, providing a roadmap for the Town to improve the organizational culture and value the Town provides to its citizens.
- **Service Delivery Review:** Completed in 2021, this corporate study acknowledged Aurora's growing and diverse population and recommended the creation of a Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee to ensure that efforts are coordinated and Council-endorsed. Further opportunities to engage and amplify the work of community partners, who already undertake diversity and inclusion programming for their respective community groups, were also supported.

A review of relevant programs, policies and procedures involving access and inclusion should be undertaken on a regular basis to ensure that participation is maximized and that barriers are addressed.

DRAFT

Recommendations

#43 Focus **staff training and community outreach** on engaging **under-represented populations** (e.g., persons with disabilities, newcomers, lower-income households, LGBTQ+ community, women/girls, etc.) and removing barriers to their participation in parks and recreation activities. Complete a **Recreation Needs Assessment for Persons with Disabilities** to recommend improvements for service delivery and ways to remove barriers to participation for this population.

#44 Fully implement the **Recreation User Fee and Pricing Policy** and complete a review every three years. Regularly **review and update other policies and initiatives** supporting broad participation by under-represented populations (e.g., Emergency Procedures and Security Strategies, Accessibility Standards, etc.).

9.3 Programming

Programming offered by the Community Services Department (e.g., aquatics, fitness and wellness, camps, children's, older adults, etc.) is wide ranging and high quality. Most programs are in high demand and book up quickly, while special events often achieve their capacity. More than one-fifth (22%) of Aurora households indicate participating in town-run programs or camps since 2019 – this percentage is higher than many communities of comparable size and speaks to the strong brand and customer loyalty that the Town has built with residents. The Town frequently conducts and exit surveys for its programs, with most participants expressing high levels of satisfaction.

In making decisions to support existing or new services and programs, the Town should prioritize those that align with the goals of this Master Plan and the Framework for Recreation in Canada. This includes programs that:

a) Focus on children/youth, older adults/seniors, and under-represented populations;
b) Are affordable and accessible;
c) Incorporate physical literacy into child and youth activities;
d) Support healthy living and healthy aging;
e) Strengthen community partnerships, including ;
f) Support unstructured and self-scheduled activities;
g) Promote the appropriate use of parks and facilities for special events;
h) Optimize the use of municipal parks and facilities; and
i) Allow people to connect with nature and be good stewards of their environment.

Some specific opportunities to achieve this mandate through programming include:

- **Focusing on children, youth, and older adults.**
  Although there is growing demand for adult program, there is community value in investing in activities that engage children/youth and older adults. As we begin to recover from the pandemic, service to these age groups will be more important than ever in order to address growing issues of social isolation, physical inactivity, and mental wellness. Furthermore, a wider range of programming may be needed to address the needs of today's older adults, many of whom are more active than previous generations and are making better use of municipal parks and facilities in response.

- **Offering convenient, casual/drop-in activities.**
  A lack of time is often a main barrier to participation for all ages. Activities that are convenient, accessible, affordable, and relevant – like drop-in activities – have proven to be popular prior to the pandemic. Across the Province, exercise and fitness classes, learn to swim/skate programs, pickleball, and activities for pre-school children and caregivers have been on the rise. Casual activities must continue to be emphasized and adapted to emerging trends.

DRAFT

- **Expanding low-cost outdoor programming within parks.**
  Communities are increasingly animating their park spaces through programming and new forms of community engagement. Some examples include (but are not limited to) fitness in the park, food trucks, and cultural events like music, concerts, and plays. Viewing parks as "outdoor living rooms" helps to broaden their scope of use and engages a wider audience, leading to experiential learning, participation, and community mobilization. When complete, the Aurora Town Square will offer many exciting possibilities for programming and events.

The Town has recently implemented new registration software that will allow for improved performance tracking for direct-delivered programs. A program review with established metrics should be prepared to set a baseline for continuous improvement. Furthermore, analyzing participation rates annually provides useful indicators and may highlight any existing gaps. Strategies should be developed to assess this data, identify gaps, and evaluate the value of contracted programming within municipal facilities.

Recommendations

#45 Conduct a **review of direct-delivered recreation programming** to determine the effectiveness of programs, emerging trends and gaps, and potential improvements in program delivery.

#46 Continue to **measure program performance, track utilization, and collect registration data** annually from all organizations that use Town parks and facilities to assist in understanding trends, monitor changing demands, and inform allocation.

#47 Complete the refresh of the Town's **Cultural Master Plan** to guide the Town's growth and development of the local cultural sector, including expanded arts programming.

DRAFT

9.4 Permitting and Allocation

The Town is the main provider of parks and recreation facilities, and demand for access to the spaces often outstrips supply (especially during peak times). Policies and procedures are in place to manage the permitting and allocation of these spaces, with a focus placed on serving priority groups and programs such as children/youth, residents, non-profit groups, etc.

The consultation program yielded several suggestions for streamlining and modifying the way in which the Town manages access to its facilities. Some of these suggestions were in response to changes that are occurring in sport, which is leading to increased competition for time and space. Earlier in this Master Plan, recommendations were made supporting a review of the Town's ice and pool allocation policies and guidelines. These policies should be examined as part of a broader review that identifies and address matters related to allocation (e.g., priorities, procedures, standards of play, etc.), internal and external permitting of all exclusive-use municipal facilities, unauthorized use of facilities and monitoring, online booking and last minute rentals, etc. With a new gymnasium coming online at the SARC, demand for this space will be significant and this review would be timely for addressing this and other emerging concerns.

Recommendations

#48 Conduct a comprehensive review of **permitting procedures and allocation policies** within Community Services, with the goal of ensuring appropriate access from priority markets and clarifying/streamlining procedures that discourage participation.

9.5 Staffing and Volunteers

Parks and recreation services are a strength of the Town. There is strong employee engagement and satisfaction levels within the Community Services work team. The leadership team has worked to empower staff to readily suggest improvements for their respective disciplines and there is a sense of dedication and belief in the value of their services to strengthening the health of the community. This common vision has served to engage staff and create a strong corporate culture.

Looking to the future, a greater emphasis on customer service (e.g., bookings, registration, communications, data/software management, etc.) can be anticipated due to the broadening of services and facilities, as well as the rising expectations of residents. Opportunities to streamline data management and communications continue to be explored.

As a result of the pandemic, part-time staff recruitment (for parks maintenance, lifeguarding, program instruction, etc.) continues to be a challenge and affects the Town's ability to offer some programs and services. Similarly, both the Town and community organizations have witnessed a decrease in volunteerism throughout the pandemic, with fewer people available to support events, leagues, etc. The sustainability of community events and sports relies on volunteers and an effort to understand volunteer needs and recruit additional volunteers is required. New and sustainable approaches are required. Some municipalities have been successful by holding job fairs in high schools, offering free leadership training, and converting part-time positions to full-time. The Department may also benefit from recruiting greater diversity within the staff team, which may be a priority for the proposed Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee.

Further, the Community Services Department has indicated that staff resources to support special events – a growing area of emphasis in Aurora – are at or beyond capacity. Requests were made in the 2023 budget to begin addressing this matter. The preparation of a Special Events Policy that establishes event categories and corresponding service levels will help to further inform the need for additional resources in this area.

DRAFT

Recommendations

#49 Consider streamlined and **non-traditional recruitment and hiring practices** to address the current backlog of part-time staff and volunteer resources.

#50 Prepare a **Special Events Policy** to clarify service levels, and using these service levels to support decisions relating to special event staffing levels and municipal responsibilities.

9.6 Communications and Promotion

While there is broad awareness of parks and recreation services within the community, 25% of survey respondents indicated that they do not feel well informed about Town parks, facilities, programs, and events. As the population grows, Aurora will attract more newcomers that are not familiar with all the Town has to offer, thus communications and marketing will require greater emphasis.

The Community Services Department has a well-established online presence, providing program, facility, and park information through the Town's website, which also supports online registration through the Town's recreation management platform. Marketing and communications are mostly a Departmental function, led by the Recreation Marketing Coordinator. The Town's corporate social media outlets also provide relevant updates and notifications regarding to parks, recreation and culture, in addition to providing information about special events. The Community Services Department does not maintain its own social media accounts, aside from an Instagram page for The Loft (@AuroraTeens). It was noted that the Department could benefit from more "Aurora-specific" photos to use within its promotions. Print material is more limited, but does exist, such as topic-specific brochures and monthly events. Despite

being more internet savvy, the youth consulted for this plan expressed an interest in hard copy promotions directed to their age group.

To ensure that these communication and marketing tactics are effective in reaching the desired audiences, the Town should regularly test this through surveys or feedback from program participants. Recognizing that Aurora is a growing community and that some new/existing residents prefer hard copy materials, selected print materials should continue to be provided. Additionally, registrant profiles through the Town's recreation management software may provide a lens that can be used for more targeted marketing. The key is to ensure that messaging is consistent, accurate, and in formats that are accessible to as many residents as possible, including messaging around the benefits of participation.

An open line of communication with community groups and residents would also help to proactively address issues, ideas, and concerns. Several communities have had success with (at minimum) annual open forums to discuss initiatives and topics of broad appeal within the parks and recreation sector. Furthermore, public and stakeholder engagement should continue to be a mandatory requirement for all major capital projects and policy decisions that impact the community.

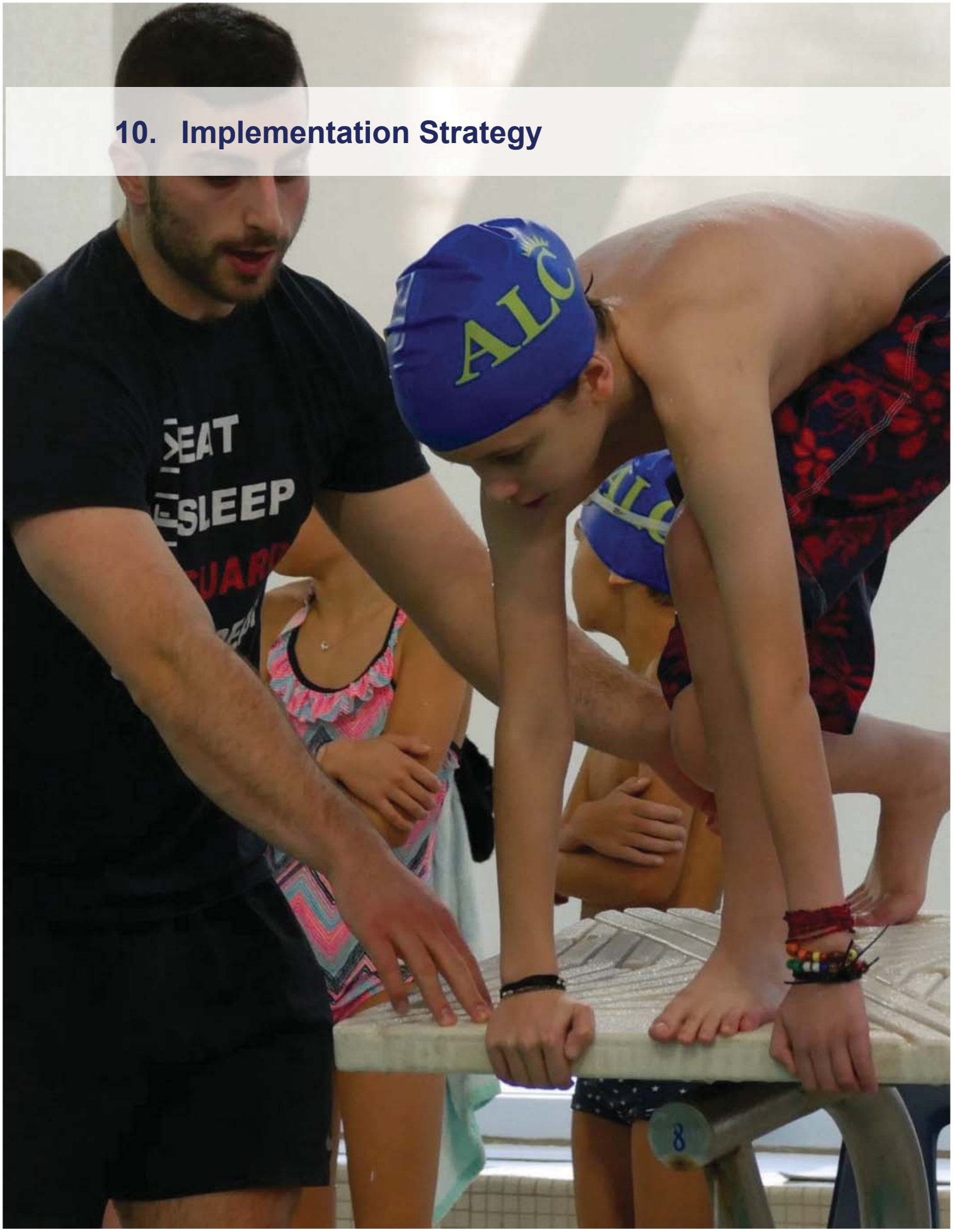
Recommendations

#51 Regularly review the Department's **communication and marketing strategies** to guide the use of various digital and print tools in promoting and gathering feedback on parks and recreation services and initiatives.

#52 Host **annual forums** with community groups and stakeholders to discuss initiatives and topics of interest related to local parks and recreation and services.

DRAFT

10. Implementation Strategy



Active implementation of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is fundamental to its success. This requires coordinated efforts and a commitment from Council, staff, stakeholders, and the public, as well as a variety of funding options to implement certain aspects of the Plan. This section provides guidance on the Master Plan's implementation.

10.1 Monitoring and Updating the Plan

The Town should regularly review and assess – and periodically revise – the recommendations of this Master Plan to ensure that they continue to reflect local conditions and that they are responsive to the changing needs of the community. This will require monitoring population projections and growth patterns, tracking activity trends and user satisfaction levels, coordinating with community organizations and the public, reporting on progress, and undertaking a comprehensive ten-year update to the Plan. Through these strategies – or as a result of other internal or external factors – adjustment of resource allocations and priorities identified in this Plan may be required.

The Plan should be reviewed annually as part of the Town's budget cycle. The following steps may be used to conduct an **annual review of the Master Plan**:

a) Review of the past year (recommendations implemented, capital projects undertaken, success/failure of new and existing initiatives, changes in participation levels, issues arising from the public and community groups, etc.);

b) Identification of issues impacting the coming year (anticipated financial and operational constraints, emerging opportunities, etc.);

c) Cursory review of the Plan for direction regarding its recommendations;

d) Preparation of a staff report to indicate prioritization of short-term projects and determination of which projects should be implemented in the following year based on criteria established by staff (e.g., financial limitations, community input, partnership/funding potential, etc.);

e) Communication to staff and Council regarding the status of projects, criteria used to prioritize projects and projects to be implemented in the following year; and

f) Budget requests/revisions as necessary.

DRAFT

Recommendations

#53 Regularly **monitor Master Plan progress**, including tracking of growth and demographic characteristics, activity patterns, facility usage, activity levels, trends and completed recommendations. Provide annual status reports to Council and the community.

#54 Establish **annual work plans** to identify Master Plan recommendations requiring implementation within the coming year. Work plans should identify departmental leads, partners, funding requirements and sources, and other.

#55 Undertake a **comprehensive review and update** of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan to begin no later than 2028/29. Timing may be adjusted based on the pace of implementation and changes within the community.

10.2 Financial Considerations

The Master Plan calls for continued financial investment and outlines a series of planning priorities for the provision of new and upgraded parks and recreation infrastructure for the next five or more years. The Town has limited resources and cannot afford to do everything that the community desires; underscoring the importance for undertaking the Master Plan in the first place. Although Aurora may experience various challenges in providing the applicable financial and human resources to achieve the Master Plan's recommendations, it is expected that the Town will make every effort to implement these strategies through appropriate means.

Full implementation of the Master Plan will require the use of **numerous funding sources**, including (but not limited to):

- Development Charges and Community Benefits Charges
- Parkland Cash-in-Lieu for land purchases
- Municipal Taxation and Reserves
- Fundraising, Donations and Sponsorships
- User Fees and Surcharges
- Debenture Financing
- One-Time Grants
- Ongoing Government Programs, such as Provincial Gas Tax Revenues (for active transportation projects)
- Partnerships and Sponsorships (see next section)

DRAFT

Recommendations

#56 Where appropriate and consistent with Town policies and priorities, consider **alternative funding and cost-sharing approaches** such as (but not limited to) fundraising, grants, private-public partnerships, sponsorships, surcharges, capital reserve contributions, and various forms of collaboration to provide the best value to residents.

#57 Use this **Master Plan as a resource** in establishing the Town's annual budget documents, Development Charges, and other related studies.

#58 Support a **capital reserve** to fund the repair and replacement of major capital infrastructure. This reserve should be an annual line item in the budget, with linkages to the Asset Management Plan.

#59 Assess and ensure that **operating budget implications** are identified and appropriately resourced prior to approving major capital projects.

#60 Conduct **feasibility studies and business plans** (with input from the public) prior to undertaking major capital projects to ensure that projects are aligned with community needs, partnership opportunities, and financial capabilities.

10.3 Community Partnerships and Sponsorships

The Town works with community partners to provide the highest level of service to the public while maximizing resources. Examples of successful partnerships include strategic alliances with local service clubs for fundraising and facility operation (e.g., sports dome, etc.), rental agreements with sports groups (e.g., minor sports, etc.), and service agreements with program providers (e.g., tennis instruction, concessions, etc.).

Partnerships are key to creating a versatile range of parks, recreation, and sport services in Aurora. They allow the Town to leverage outside resources and maximize public funds, while meeting gaps and needs that are not traditionally within the municipal mandate. The community has expressed support in principle

for more multi-sectoral partnerships that leverage resources, avoid duplication, accelerate innovation, and enhance user convenience.

From time to time, the Town may consider various arrangements with the private sector, non-profit sector, or other levels of government to develop and/or operate various facilities and services to achieve the desired community and municipal benefits. The goal is to maximize the community's assets and increase service levels while sharing an appropriate balance of costs and risks.

Relationships with outside groups may considered when:

- the Town does not have capacity or budget for direct program delivery or facility management;
- there is an established provider/partner already working with the Town;
- the provider fills or augments service gaps that are a priority to the Town; and/or
- the provider is the preferred/specialist for program delivery.

In all partnership arrangements, specifications and requirements must ensure that the partner respects and aligns with the Town's key goals and objectives. The value in seeking out and formalizing partnerships provides a net benefit to both organizations and reduce costs to the municipality. Where possible, the Town is encouraged to work with community partners and in coordination with other public entities to implement recommendations contained in this Master Plan that would benefit from shared roles, responsibilities, and resources. It is recommended that staff develop written agreements with community partners who may share public spaces or work collectively to offer programs and services.

To assist the Town in evaluating current and future partnerships, the following **criteria** may be considered:

a) The outcome of the partnership should be aligned with municipal values, mandate, and priorities.

b) There should be an articulated need for the proposed program or service in the community.

c) The financial and liability risks to the Town should be shared or reduced.

d) The partner should be equipped and qualified to co-deliver the service through identified efficiencies, with the ability to reach an identified segment of the population.

e) The quality of the program or service provided through the partnership should meet municipal quality assurance and risk management requirements and complies with legislation.

f) Unsolicited for-profit partnership proposals should be dealt with transparently and through a competitive process as identified in a procurement process.

g) Accountabilities and responsibilities should be clearly defined and complied with.

h) Annual reporting requirements should capture participation numbers, expenditure reduction or revenue enhancement, and are clearly aligned with departmental objectives.

The Town does not employ a standard approach for developing arrangements with outside groups or for responding to unsolicited proposals, especially propositions arising from the private sector or involving non-traditional facility types. A standardized approach to partnership development would assist the Town to be consistent in its dealings with individuals or organizations at arm's length to the municipality. Additional detail on the requirement for a proponent-led business plan when assessing unsolicited proposals is included in Section 6.12 of this report.

Recommendations

#61 Regularly **review agreements with partners** to ensure an appropriate and sustainable distribution of operational and financial responsibilities.

#62 Be proactive in partnership development through regular communication and establishment of a **standardized framework and/or criteria** to simplify and expedite partnership outcomes.

DRAFT

#63	Continue to utilize the **sponsorship, advertising, and naming rights programs** to leverage alternate funding to enhance parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services.
#64	Continue to collaborate with **school boards and other community service providers** to maximize community access to existing sites, surplus sites, and future campuses that may function as community hubs.

10.4 Summary of Recommendations – Priority and Timing

This section contains a summary of the recommendations contained within this Master Plan. By approving this Plan, the Town is not bound to implementing every recommendation or providing facilities/services in the order, amount or timing indicated; rather, this Plan provides guidance on community priorities and sets a general course for meeting the needs as they are presently defined.

The timing of the recommendations proposed in this Master Plan recognizes the need for phased implementation and/or outside funding sources as some recommendations are based upon what is needed and not necessarily what may be financially achievable at the present time. As part of the annual budget process, this Plan will be reviewed to identify areas where the availability of resources may affect the timing of implementation. Analysis of implementation options and budget implications should be undertaken prior to approving major projects. The full implementation of this Plan will require the use of various funding sources and partnerships with others.

Though annual planning and budgeting processes, Town Staff will update and/or establish the estimated capital and operating costs associated with each recommendation prior to implementation. **It is expected that the Town will make decisions on individual projects and funding sources annually at budget time.**

Priorities have been established based on an assessment of need, as identified throughout the planning process (including public engagement, trend and demographic analysis, assessments of amenities and services, etc.). Municipalities generally seek to address the widest range of needs and achieve maximum community benefit through the efficient use of resources. Determining priorities is an exercise that should be revisited each year prior to the Town's capital and operating budget development exercise. In addition to funding availability, factors that might change priorities year to year may include:

- capital lifecycle and considerations of safety;
- legislation and mandated requirements;
- changes to service standards;
- public input and community interests;
- emerging trends and changes in participation rates;
- availability of alternate providers; and
- socio-demographic changes and growth forecasts.

Within the tables that follow, the priorities of the recommendations are organized into the following categories. Priority is often aligned with timing, except for those recommendations that are tied to population thresholds.

<u>Priority</u>

- **High Priority**: Immediate attention is strongly suggested during the planning timeframe.
- **Medium Priority**: Attention is required when high priority recommendations have been initiated or completed, or when suitable partners have been identified for funding.
- **Lower Priority**: Attention is required when high and medium priority recommendations have been initiated/completed.
- **Ongoing**: This represents a best practice or guideline that is to be followed on a continual basis.

DRAFT

Table 22 – Master Plan Recommendation Summary

Recommendation		Priority	Comments
Indoor Recreation Facilities (Section 6)			
#1	Secure **land in southwest Aurora** through partnership or purchase to accommodate a **new multi-use recreation centre**, potentially consisting of an indoor aquatic centre, gymnasium, walking track, supplementary program spaces (e.g., community kitchen, etc.), sports fields, etc. Confirm facility needs through a business plan once a site is established, with the goal of beginning detailed design within the five-year timeframe of this plan (by 2028).	High	Estimated costs for new facility $45M+; Land securement required (estimated land costs are $1.5M to $2.5M per acre)
#2	Continue to pursue the development of a new **25-metre 8-lane community pool,** but remain open to partnership discussions that could elevate the level of service at no additional costs to the tax base.	High	See also recommendation #1; Partnership potential
#3	Update the Town's **Pool Allocation Guidelines** to ensure that pool time is being used effectively and that priority markets and organizations are afforded fair and transparent access to available times. Consider developing a formal allocation policy.	High	See also recommendation #48
#4	Continue to implement the **Club Aurora Business Plan** with a view toward engaging a broad range of members through responsive service offerings and membership plans, while continuing to offer floor-based wellness programs across the Town's system of community centres.	Medium	Internally-drive strategy
#5	In the short-term and prior to undertaking significant capital improvements to the **AFLC arena**, complete an ice needs assessment and provision study to assess the long-term need for arena facilities and to consider the potential of converting this venue into multi-use space for non-ice, dry floor activities.	High	Additional study required ($75,000 consulting fees)
#6	Review the Town's **Ice Allocation Policy** to ensure that ice time is being used effectively and that priority markets and organizations are afforded fair and transparent access to available times. The Town is encouraged to collect more granular data on user groups (e.g., level of play) to assist with trend tracking and policy development.	High	See also recommendation #48
#7	Consider low-risk involvement in a community partnership should demand for a second **indoor turf venue** emerge, possibly through a seasonal dome over an existing or proposed artificial turf field. Prepare a business plan to more closely evaluate needs, benefits, locations, costs, and risks.	Lower	Partnership potential
#8	Municipal provision of **non-core recreation facilities** not explicitly addressed within this Master Plan will generally not be made a priority, but may be considered in partnership with local organizations where demonstrated demand exists. A **standardized partnership framework** should be used to evaluate and respond to such requests.	Ongoing	Request-based

DRAFT

Recommendation		Priority	Comments
Outdoor Recreation Facilities (Section 7)			
#9	Complete a scoped review and update of the **2020 Sports Field Development Strategy** and recent progress in order to identify short-term priorities and opportunities for enhancing soccer and multi-use field capacity. Seek to expand the supply of full size rectangular fields (e.g., through artificial fields at partnered school sites, strategic park improvements, etc.) and to replace the field time used at the Stronach fields when the agreement is up at the end of the 2025 season (e.g., through integration of smaller fields in parks, use of schools, Dr. G.W. Williams SS, under-utilized properties, etc.).	High	Costs will be project- and site-specific (e.g., $2.5M for new artificial turf fields); See also recommendation #10
#10	Complete a scoped review and update of the **2020 Sports Field Development Strategy** and recent progress in order to identify short-term priorities and opportunities for enhancing ball diamond capacity. Seek to expand the supply of full size ball diamonds (e.g., through diamond improvements, new fields, expanded partnerships, etc.).	Medium	Costs will be project- and site-specific; See also recommendation #9
#11	Seek opportunities to establish a **two-court outdoor tennis complex** in a future park or park redevelopment, ideally in Southwest Aurora to improve distribution ratios.	Medium	Estimated cost $300,000; Site tbd
#12	Evaluate opportunities to introduce or enhance **outdoor court permitting options** for selected tennis and pickleball courts, combined with public education and signage.	Lower	See also recommendation #48
#13	Establish a dedicated **outdoor pickleball complex with 6 or more courts** at a site to be determined, potentially as a joint venture with a third-party club. Initiate a site evaluation and selection process using the criteria identified in this Master Plan.	High	Estimated cost $350,000; Site tbd
#14	Consider short-term **interim measures to accommodate pickleball**, such as installing temporary pop-up courts in under-utilized spaces, working with other groups or private interests that can enhance access to court space, and/or promoting a full listing of sites that can support casual pickleball play.	High	Additional direct required
#15	Establish processes to **track and monitor** pickleball participation in order to inform future studies and facility development. If a sanctioned **community-based pickleball club** is formed, a framework should be established to determine partnership potential, cost-sharing, and public access.	High	Partnership potential
#16	Seek to expand the supply of **basketball and multi-use courts** through park development and renewal projects in areas where geographic gaps exist, with a focus on service to the Aurora Promenade and MTSA.	Medium	Estimated cost $1500,000 per court; Sites tbd

DRAFT

Recommendation		Priority	Comments
#17	As a pilot project, **install lights on an existing basketball court** (Summit Park) that can suitably accommodate extended play into the evening.	Medium	In 2023 budget; Site tbd
#18	Work with sport organizations to pursue the expansion of **beach volleyball courts and programming** at Lambert Willson Park.	Medium	Cost will depend on partnership parameters
#19	Advance the reconstruction of the **AFLC skate park** to ensure sure safe, long-term, recreational use of the facility. Seek input from users in the redesign of the park.	High	Estimated cost $1.2M
#20	Consider the removal of the **bike park feature at Hickson Park** following a period of observation. Explore the potential for installing a **pump track and/or bicycle playground** through a future park renewal or development project.	Lower	Estimated cost for bicycle playground ($150,000) and bike park ($450,000); Site tbd
#21	Seek to address gaps in the distribution of **splash pads** through park development and renewal projects in northwest Aurora (extending east of Yonge Street) and southwest Aurora (e.g., Confederation Park).	Medium	Estimated cost $450,000 per site; Sites tbd
#22	Continue to advance the Town's **off-leash strategy** through the development of an off-leash dog park in south Aurora in the short-term (Engelhard Drive) and assessments of sites within west Aurora in the longer-term based on established criteria and public consultation.	High	Estimated cost $130,000
#23	**Playgrounds** should be provided in new and existing residential areas where geographic gaps exist, generally calculated through application of a **500-metre service radius** that is unobstructed by major pedestrian barriers. This includes a gap in the vicinity of the Aurora Promenade and MTSA areas.	Ongoing	Estimated cost $150,000 to $250,000 each; Sites tbd
#24	Establish an annual line item in the Town's capital budget to support the **replacement of aging playgrounds** (an average of two sites per year). Through revitalization projects in Community Parks, emphasize **barrier-free playground** components and infrastructure to support inclusive participation.	High	See costs above (average of $375,000 per year to replace 2 sites)
#25	Undertake a site evaluation process to establish a **third fitness park** outfitted with outdoor fitness equipment. To create a differentiated experience, consideration may be given to clustering the equipment around a playground site at a site that also has access to shade and washrooms.	Medium	Estimated cost $150,000; Site tbd
#26	Continue to maintain up to four municipally-operated **outdoor skating rinks** in Town parks (plus the skating loop proposed for Aurora Town Square) and support volunteer-led rinks. Prepare a **business plan** to consider the costs and benefits of establishing a refrigerated boarded ice rink to replace one or more natural rinks (consider potential locations, capital costs, operating requirements, community partnerships, and more).	High	Additional study required ($75,000 consulting fees); Estimated cost $1.5M to $3M for artificial rink

DRAFT

Recommendation		Priority	Comments
#27	Further explore the potential to establish a public **disc golf course** in Aurora, on town-owned or other lands. Establish a **working group** to undertake a site evaluation and selection process to identify potential sites (with public consultation), fundraise for course development, and support a sponsoring organization.	Medium	Additional study required; Costs will be site-specific; recommend budgeting $100,000+
#28	Continue to place a high priority on maintaining, improving, and expanding the system of trails and pathways through implementation of the Town's **Trails Master Plan** and **Active Transportation Master Plan**.	High	Costs identified within Trails and Active Transportation Master Plans
#29	Monitor uptake of existing **garden plots** to inform demand for future sites, in cooperation with the operating agency (York Region Food Network).	Lower	Internally-driven strategy
Parkland (Section 8)			
#30	Update the Town's **Official Plan and Parkland Dedication By-law** to align with amendments to the Ontario Planning Act and Bill 23.	High	Ongoing through Official Plan
#31	Use this Master Plan as the basis for the Town's **Parks Plan** (in support of an updated Parkland Dedication By-law), in consultation with local school boards. Financial analysis examining per unit valuations and a variety of residential development contexts may be helpful in supporting the Parks Plan.	High	Ongoing through Official Plan
#32	Update the Town's GIS databases to include the **classifications of existing parkland** to assist in tracking and the assessment of land requirements.	High	Internally-driven strategy
#33	Strive to achieve a target of 2.0 hectares of parkland per 1,000 residents, applied to new growth (through conveyance or other means). This projects to a need for approximately **17.2 hectares of additional parkland** by 2031. Create a **financial plan** to move the toward this target.	High	Alternative acquisition approaches and funding required; Estimated land costs are $1.5M to $2.5M per acre; See also recommendation #36
#34	Seek to **maximize parkland dedication** through development and redevelopment applications, as well as alternative parkland acquisition strategies (e.g., purchase/lease, land exchanges, partnerships, land banking, reallocation of surplus lands, etc.).	Ongoing	Ongoing through Official Plan
#35	Work with area school boards and other service providers to **maximize community access to quality outdoor parks and recreation amenities on non-municipal sites** through permitting, long-term access agreements, etc.	Ongoing	Partnership potential See also recommendation #64

DRAFT

Recommendation		Priority	Comments
#36	Adopt a "**Parkland First" approach** that prioritizes parkland conveyance over cash-in-lieu of parkland in order to address parkland deficits. Parkland conveyances should: (a) be acceptable to the Town; (b) not include restricted lands; (c) result in blocks that are at least 0.35 hectares in size (urban squares and greens in the Aurora Promenade and MTSA may be smaller) or expand an existing park site.	High	Implement through development applications;' See also recommendation #33
#37	Maintain a commitment to **universal accessibility, safety and comfort** within the Town's parks system. Regularly consult with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and ensure compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), recognizing that some parks may include areas of natural terrain that are more difficult to access.	Ongoing	Park-specific analysis required
#38	Emphasize the provision of amenities such as **benches/seating areas, bike racks, shade (structures, tree canopy, etc.), and barrier-free washrooms** in appropriate park types to address the needs of all age groups.	Ongoing	Park-specific analysis required
#39	Undertake **park amenity condition assessments** on a regular basis to inform the Town's asset management plan and long-term capital plan.	Medium	Park-specific analysis required; costs consider under asset management budget
#40	Develop a strategy for the **renewal of key park sites** (e.g., Confederation Park, etc.), including funding amounts and sources. Emphasize projects that promote usage by people of all ages, such as the introduction of shade, seating, pathways, unprogrammed space, etc. Engage stakeholders and the public when designing new and redeveloped parks.	Medium	Park-specific analysis required; Recommend budgeting minimum of $750,000 per site
Service Delivery and Program Support (Section 9)			
#41	Align service delivery priorities and decision-making with the **vision and guiding principles** of this Master Plan.	High	
#42	Prepare regular updates on the 2016 **Sport Plan** and report out to Council and the community. Performance measures, annual work plans, and assigned responsibilities will ensure that this plan remains a flexible, living document.	High	Internally-driven strategy
#43	Focus **staff training and community outreach** on engaging **under-represented populations** (e.g., persons with disabilities, newcomers, lower-income households, LGBTQ+ community, women/girls, etc.) and removing barriers to their participation in parks and recreation activities. Complete a **Recreation Needs Assessment for Persons with Disabilities** to recommend improvements for service delivery and ways to remove barriers to participation for this population.	Medium	Internally-driven strategy

DRAFT

Recommendation		Priority	Comments
#44	Fully implement the **Recreation User Fee and Pricing Policy** and complete a review every three years. Regularly **review and update other policies and initiatives** supporting broad participation by under-represented populations (e.g., Emergency Procedures and Security Strategies, Accessibility Standards, etc.).	High	Internally-driven strategy
#45	Conduct a **review of direct-delivered recreation programming** to determine the effectiveness of programs, emerging trends and gaps, and potential improvements in program delivery.	Medium	Internally-driven strategy
#46	Continue to **measure program performance, track utilization, and collect registration data** annually from all organizations that use Town parks and facilities to assist in understanding trends, monitor changing demands, and inform allocation.	Ongoing	Internally-driven strategy See also recommendation #53
#47	Complete the refresh of the Town's **Cultural Master Plan** to guide the Town's growth and development of the local cultural sector, including expanded arts programming.	Medium	Ongoing initiative
#48	Conduct a comprehensive review of **permitting procedures and allocation policies** within Community Services, with the goal of ensuring appropriate access from priority markets and clarifying/streamlining procedures that discourage participation.	High	Additional community consultation required; See also recommendations #3 and #6
#49	Consider streamlined and **non-traditional recruitment and hiring practices** to address the current backlog of part-time staff and volunteer resources.	High	Internally-driven strategy
#50	Prepare a **Special Events Policy** to clarify service levels, and using these service levels to support decisions relating to special event staffing levels and municipal responsibilities.	Medium	Internally-driven strategy
#51	Regularly review the Department's **communication and marketing strategies** to guide the use of various digital and print tools in promoting and gathering feedback on parks and recreation services and initiatives.	Ongoing	Internally-driven strategy
#52	Host **annual forums** with community groups and stakeholders to discuss initiatives and topics of interest related to local parks and recreation and services.	Ongoing	
Implementation (Section 10)			
#53	Regularly **monitor Master Plan progress**, including tracking of growth and demographic characteristics, activity patterns, facility usage, activity levels, trends and completed recommendations. Provide annual status reports to Council and the community.	Ongoing	Internally-driven strategy See also recommendation #46

DRAFT

Recommendation		Priority	Comments
#54	Establish **annual work plans** to identify Master Plan recommendations requiring implementation within the coming year. Work plans should identify departmental leads, partners, funding requirements and sources, and other.	Ongoing	Coordinate with budget process
#55	Undertake a **comprehensive review and update** of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan to begin no later than 2028/29. Timing may be adjusted based on the pace of implementation and changes within the community.	High	Estimated costs $100,000 (consulting fees)
#56	Where appropriate and consistent with Town policies and priorities, consider **alternative funding and cost-sharing approaches** such as (but not limited to) fundraising, grants, private-public partnerships, sponsorships, surcharges, capital reserve contributions, and various forms of collaboration to provide the best value to residents.	Ongoing	Coordinate with Finance Department See also recommendation #63
#57	Use this **Master Plan as a resource** in establishing the Town's annual budget documents, Development Charges, and other related studies.	Ongoing	Coordinate with Finance Department
#58	Support a **capital reserve** to fund the repair and replacement of major capital infrastructure. This reserve should be an annual line item in the budget, with linkages to the Asset Management Plan.	Ongoing	Funding requirements tbd; Coordinate with Finance Department
#59	Assess and ensure that **operating budget implications** are identified and appropriately resourced prior to approving major capital projects.	Ongoing	Coordinate with Finance Department
#60	Conduct **feasibility studies and business plans** (with input from the public) prior to undertaking major capital projects to ensure that projects are aligned with community needs, partnership opportunities, and financial capabilities.	Ongoing	Project-specific analysis required
#61	Regularly **review agreements with partners** to ensure an appropriate and sustainable distribution of operational and financial responsibilities.	Ongoing	Internally-driven strategy
#62	Be proactive in partnership development through regular communication and establishment of a **standardized framework and/or criteria** to simplify and expedite partnership outcomes.	Ongoing	Internally-driven strategy
#63	Continue to utilize the **sponsorship, advertising, and naming rights programs** to leverage alternate funding to enhance parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services.	Ongoing	See also recommendation #56
#64	Continue to collaborate with **school boards and other community service providers** to maximize community access to existing sites, surplus sites, and future campuses that may function as community hubs.	Ongoing	See also recommendation #35

DRAFT

Appendix A: Summary of Supporting Documents

Key municipal studies and reports related to parks and recreation are summarized below.

Town of Aurora – Strategic Plan (2011 to 2031)

The Strategic Plan is a long-term planning document that describes the vision for the community in 2031, identifying several guiding principles to provide direction. Theses guiding principles consist of:

1. Commitment to the Strategic Plan as a long-term planning document.
2. Leadership in corporate and financial management.
3. Broad community outreach and engagement with partners, businesses, newcomers and community groups to ensure inclusiveness.
4. Recognition and encouragement of community contributions and volunteerism and a commitment to quality customer service.
5. Leverage partnerships.
6. Respect and integrity.
7. Progressive corporate excellence, innovation and continuous improvement.

The Strategic Plan is aligned with the goal of supporting an exceptional quality of life for all, by encouraging an active and healthy lifestyle. The Town endeavors to develop a long-term needs assessment for recreation programs, services and operations that match the evolving needs of the growing and changing population.

York Region Official Plan (2022)

The York Region Official Plan was approved in 2022 with the intent to guide the growth of its communities throughout the next 30 years. The Plan provides for growth to a forecasted 2.02 million people and 990,000 jobs by 2051 and places a high priority on complete communities that support healthy and active living and provide a full range of amenities and housing types for all ages and stages of life.

One of the key objectives of the new Official Plan is to support complete and inclusive communities. This means designing communities to be “accessible, dense and walkable, where most amenities are in close proximity, and meet people’s needs for daily living through their lifetime. The Plan contains several directions that support community infrastructure such as parks and recreation facilities. A sampling of key policies includes:

- 2.3.7 That human services facilities be accessible and co-located, or within community hubs, where appropriate. Facilities shall be in close proximity to where people live and work and have active transportation linkages to public transit.
- 2.3.10 That communities shall be designed to provide an integrated open space network that contributes to a sense of place and identity, promotes physical activity and social inclusion, to include: a. A variety of active recreational facilities, programmed parks and passive parks for year-round use...
- 4.4.7 That the majority of residential intensification shall be directed to locations which provide access to human, educational and social services, retail, employment, arts, culture, parks, recreational facilities and transit within a 15 minute walk ...

DRAFT

Town of Aurora – Draft Official Plan (2022)

The Town of Aurora's Draft Official Plan was released in June 2022 and is one of the primary tools to direct actions of local government, shape development decisions and manage growth in the short and long-term (to 2051). The Plan is written to direct change in accordance with Provincial and York Region policy, providing a new emphasis on the development of a complete community, environmental responsibility, support for transit and the efficient use of infrastructure. The Plan is also intended to provide clear direction to Council for proposed changes to land use and/or built form. The Town has established a target completion date of June 2023 for adoption of the new Official Plan.

The Plan establishes the following objectives for community services and facilities:

- Ensure that the Town plans for and supports a full range of community services and facilities to meet the needs of its current and future residents;
- Ensure that community services and facilities are well located in relation to their service area, encouraging access by walking and cycling active transportation and transit;
- Ensure that community services and facilities are compatible with adjacent uses and their surrounding area;
- Encourage the co-location of community facilities within community hubs which incorporate multiple community service uses together in one place, providing for a mix of uses and activities for a range of different people and purposes; and
- Establish a strong sense of place by designing community facilities as community focal points through high quality architectural design, integration with the public realm, incorporation of placemaking elements and connections to parks, open spaces and active transportation.

Furthermore, public parkland components consist of community parks, neighbourhood parks, urban wildlife parks and parkettes. Policies for parkland dedication are established within the Official Plan, including objectives to achieve 1.0 to 1.5 hectares of Community Parks per 1,000 residents and 1.0 to 1.5 hectares of Neighbourhood Parks. The Plan establishes the following objectives for a diverse parkland system:

- Promote an active, healthy lifestyle for its residents through the provision of a diverse system of parks, trails and outdoor recreation facilities that are well distributed, strategically located and well maintained;
- Create a continuous parkland system, which allows for a full range of year-round active and passive outdoor and cultural activities for all current and future residents of Aurora;
- Enhance Aurora's parkland system and connect it to the Greenlands System through a comprehensive network of trails that provide for a continuous greenway in accordance with the Trail Network policies of Section 15.6, Schedule 'K' and the Town's Trails Master Plan
- Maintain parkland as open space with facilities that meet the recreation needs of residents, tourists and visitors, in accordance with the Town's Parks and Recreation Master Plan; and
- Establish parks as placemaking destinations that enhance the public realm experience for a variety of users by providing gathering spaces, opportunities for temporary uses and events, public art, outdoor games, play structures, interactive exhibits, pop-up patios, and food vendors, among other uses.

Town of Aurora – Service Delivery Review (2021)

StrategyCorp conducted a Service Delivery review on behalf of the Town of Aurora with the objective of addressing frequently used municipal services and determining approaches for how these can be efficiently improved. Analysis and findings of Recreation and Culture services identify a need for continual innovation to keep pace with population's evolving demographics and the Town's continual growth through infill development. Overall satisfaction with recreation and parks was found through survey regarding key resident-facing services. The report also found Aurora to spend the second highest proportion of recreation and culture capital expenditures (43.7%) amongst compared GTA communities in 2019 (based on submitted Financial Information Returns), but the lowest per capita amount of operational

DRAFT

expenditures. As noted in the report, “This can explain why the Recreation Development Charge reserve has been negatively impacted as spending has exceeded growth”.

Specific opportunities related to the Community Services Department that may be considered further by the Town include:

- Better empower and train front-line staff to manage customer service requests.
- Develop a Council-approved policy for Special Events Calendar planning.
- Review the mandate and resourcing for Facilities Management to ensure alignment with Town growth and Council expectations.
- Review the mandate and resourcing of Culture to ensure implementation of master plans.

Town of Aurora – Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2022-2026)

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan provides a strategy to ensure that parks and recreation are accessible for all residents through retrofits and enhanced facility standards. The plan includes the provision of acoustic accessibility and a sensory pathway at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex. The Plan prioritizes existing built environment barriers at parks and retrofitting the design of outdoor public use eating areas, outdoor play spaces, exterior paths of travel, accessible parking and recreational trails, aligning with the new Town of Aurora Accessibility Design Standards. The Accessibility Advisory Committee is to be consulted by the Town prior to building new or retrofitting existing parks and recreational spaces.

Town of Aurora – Asset Management Plan (2021)

The Town’s Asset Management Plan (AMP) provides a framework for the development and implementation of asset management strategies and long-term financial planning for municipal infrastructure, with an objective to minimize lifecycle costs and manage the associated risks. The AMP includes an assessment of inventory, estimated timelines and the replacement costs of recreation and cultural services in the Town of Aurora. The incorporation of this plan in municipal projects provides a fiscal outline for decisions servicing long- and short-term growth.

Town of Aurora – Development Charges Background Study and By-law (2021)

Watson & Associates conducted a Development Charges Background Study and By-law in 2021. Local development charges and timelines for parks and recreation services are included amongst these infrastructure costs. This provides an in-depth analysis of how servicing costs are distributed amongst the specific amenities, developments, facilities, and trails that exist within the community. The Town will be undertaking a Development Charges update in 2023, spanning a 10-year period.

Town of Aurora – Corporate Environmental Action Plan (2018)

The Corporate Environmental Action Plan (CEAP) is designed for a five-year period to provide corporate direction on key strategic environmental initiatives in the Town of Aurora. Focus areas of the CEAP include Biodiversity and Natural Heritage, Climate Change and Energy, Environmental Awareness, Sustainable Urban Development, Waste Reduction and Diversion, and Water Conservation. The CEAP promotes trails and open space in the design of energy efficient, innovative and sustainable communities to be achieved for 2031. The CEAP is set out for review every 5 years to enhance its policies, review its annual implementation plans in accordance with departmental business plans and prepare an annual progress report.

DRAFT

Appendix B: Parks and Recreation Trends

Identified below are trends that are influencing the demand for and delivery of parks and recreation services in Canadian municipalities. For continuity with leading sector resources, the trends are organized by the five goals of the Framework for Recreation in Canada (FRC).

Active Living

Parks and Recreation are Essential Services

The evidence is clear – communities are increasingly viewing recreation and parks as essential services and believe that these spaces and services will be a critical contributor to our recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. There is strong public support for this sector and this should be reflected in the municipality's policy and funding decisions.

The pandemic impacted personal levels of stress and anxiety and caused challenges associated with work/life balance for many. Recreation services play a critical role in the mental and physical health recovery of citizens – particularly those living in urban environments – and play an equally important role in community economic revival. The large majority (82%) of Canadians said that parks and outdoor spaces have become more important to their mental health during COVID-19 and 70% indicated that their appreciation for parks and green spaces had increased during the pandemic[9]. Access to public spaces and programs is a fundamental service for Canadians and we are living in a time where we need more public space, not less.

Recreation is Vital to Community Health and Wellbeing

Community health and wellbeing is a fundamental objective of the parks and recreation sector. Brought into focus through the COVID-19 pandemic and the emerging health and wellness needs of individuals, parks and recreation departments are being valued as community wellness hubs that provide equitable access to vital programs, services and spaces that advance health equity, improve health outcomes and enhance the overall quality of life for everyone. There is a growing range of municipal recreation centres leasing space for community health providers (e.g., rehabilitative services, etc.) and offering a wider variety of programming focused on physical activity and mental wellness, mindfulness, inter-generational opportunities, and outdoor programs (e.g., meditation, nature walks, yoga, etc.).

This approach addresses systemic barriers of health by integrating additional holistic health and wellness services into facilities and programming. The focus on community wellness emphasizes health equity, ensuring that all park and recreation services and programs serve users in a fair and equitable way. The results are improved physical, social, and mental health outcomes that also offer educational and economic opportunities.[10]

Combating High Levels of Physical Inactivity

Physical inactivity rates remain alarmingly high. The 2021 ParticipACTION report card on physical activity graded overall physical activity levels a "D"[11] for children and youth and "F" for adults, reflecting a decline from prior years as activity levels dropped during the COVID-19 pandemic. Reliance on automobiles (as

[9] Park People. COVID-19 and Parks Survey. July 2020. https://parkpeople.ca/2020/07/16/covid-19-and-parks-highlights-from-our-national-surveys
[10] NRPA. Parks and Recreation: Advancing Community Health and Well-being. 2021.
[11] The ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Adults (2021) and Children and Youth (2022). https://www.participaction.com

opposed to walking or biking) has contributed to a culture of physical inactivity, while activities such as watching television, playing video games, or using a computer further exacerbate sedentary behaviours.

Levels of inactivity rose further during the COVID-19 pandemic as more sedentary activities took hold, particularly among children and youth in both school and community settings. The Canadian Community Health Survey found that the percentage of youth meeting the Canadian physical activity recommendation dropped from 51% in the fall of 2018 to 37% in the fall of 2020; this decline was most pronounced in Ontario and within urban areas [12] Further, 42% of adults described their level of vigorous physical activity to be somewhat or much less in March 2021 compared to the pre-pandemic period[13].

Physical inactivity has been found to be a contributor to Canada's growing obesity problem. In 2017, a study by Statistics Canada found that nearly one-third of Canadian children and youth (age 5-17) are obese or overweight, which was an increase from 23% reported in 1979.[14] During the same period, almost two-thirds (64%) of adults over the age of 18 were found to be obese or overweight, which was an increase from 49% in 1979.[15] The downstream health care costs are significantly higher than the upfront preventative costs associated with active living.

For many, municipal parks and recreation services provide critical supports to maintain personal health and physical literacy by addressing inactivity levels, social isolation, stress and anxiety. Access to outdoor spaces, physical literacy, and affordable, accessible leisure activities are key determinants in engaging people in active recreation. There is evidence that larger parks have a more direct impact on physical activity as they have the space to accommodate a wider variety of amenities and experiences. Proximity to parks and facilities is also correlated with higher levels of physical activity.[16] Dog ownership is often linked to higher levels of activity and social engagement, providing support to the provision of off-leash dog parks and pet-friendly public spaces.

In addition, education initiatives can focus on both raising awareness of the importance of increasing physical activity and reducing sedentary behaviours. Piloting new programs that fit physical activity into peoples' daily lives should also be encouraged, including participation in outdoor activities such as walking, wheeling or cycling along the municipal trails system.

Popularity of Unstructured, Self-Directed Activities

Participation is gradually shifting away from structured programs and set schedules as people are demonstrating a desire for more drop-in, unstructured and self-directed participation options. This is compounded by changes in demand for prime-time access – more adults and seniors are seeking activities during the evening, a shift from traditional daytime (seniors programing) or late-evening provision (in the case of many adult sports). Participation in adult recreational activities is also growing at the same time that municipalities seek new ways to engage youth in meaningful activities.

A lack of free time is commonly identified as a barrier to participation. Activities such as organized sports, particularly at competitive levels, often require considerable time commitment for training, practices, travel and other league activities. With increasingly busy lifestyles, competing interests, and inability for people to commit to structured activities, unstructured activities can help to fill the void as many do not require advanced registration and can be self-scheduled. Many municipalities are working to provide flexible opportunities to engage in casual activities and increasing the range and frequency of drop-in programs.

[12] Statistics Canada. Catalogue no. 82-003-X. The unequal impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the physical activity habits of Canadians. https://doi.org.10.25318/82-003-x202200500003-eng
[13] CFLRI. 2020-2021 Impact of COVID-19 on Physical Activity Survey.
[14] Public Health Agency of Canada. Tackling obesity in Canada: Childhood obesity and excess weight rates in Canada. 2017. https://www.canada.ca
[15] Ibid.
[16] Urban Institute. The Health Benefits of Parks and their Economic Impacts: A Review of Literature. February 2022.

There is also a growing desire for innovative programming and space for unstructured activities. Increasingly, this is leading to opportunities that go beyond traditional activities and by creating "experiences" often linked to broader interests in community life, the arts, and more. Municipalities that have typically just been "facility providers" are evolving into "activity enablers", often through partnerships with other service providers. Spaces and activities that are "Instagram-worthy" – meaning that they can be widely shared on social media – are highly sought after.

Encouraging Free Play

A majority (57%) of Canadian parents believe that children these days spend too much time in organized activities, and not enough time just playing. [17] According to some, the erosion of play has become a silent emergency across the world, with 1 in 5 children saying they are 'too busy' to play.[18] Play is so important to children's holistic development that both the American Academy of Pediatrics and the UK Children's Commissioner have called for "play prescriptions" from public health authorities.

We are living in an ever increasingly urban world, with more children growing up in cities than ever before. In addition, lifestyles are changing, with a growing prevalence of insecurity and parental risk aversion, the increasing role played by technology in our lives, and a recurring time-scarcity problem, each of which impact children's play experiences. Play is often seen as an activity confined to playgrounds or schools, but communities are increasingly looking for ways to design public spaces and the built environment to support play and learning opportunities for children, including the introduction of more natural play features and loose toys/tools for imaginative play. Everyday activities such as walking and cycling can also support a physically active population.

Pandemic Impacts on Community Sport

Prior to the pandemic, about 75% of Canadian children age 5 to 17 years participated in organized sport[19] and participation increased from 2005 to 2016[20]. Rates of sport participation are largely the same for girls and boys, but participation decreases with age – 70% of teens aged 13–19 reported participating in sport, compared with 83% of youth aged 5–12.[21] Participation is consistently lowest in lower-income and other marginalized groups, indicating that more can be done to include all persons in affordable and accessible sport opportunities.

Amongst adults, just over one-quarter (27%) participate in sport, a figure that has varied little over the years. Men are nearly twice as likely to participate in sport as women, and participation generally declines with age (from 44% of people aged 18 to 24 years, to 16% of adults aged 65 years or older). Those with higher levels of income and educational attainment are also significantly more likely to participate in sport. However, a lower rate of sport participation was observed among immigrants (21%) compared to Canadians overall.[22]

More recently, sport participation has been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic due to public health restrictions and facility closures. A report from 2022 indicates that one-half (49%) of parents say the number of organized sports their child participates in has declined and 45% say that their child is no

[17] Ipsos. One in Three (32%) Families Going into Debt to Fund their Children's Extra-Curricular Activities, Up 5 Points from Last Year. 2018. https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/news-polls/back-to-school-2018
[18] Real Play Coalition. Reclaiming Play in Cities. 2020. https://www.arup.com/perspectives/publications/research/section/reclaiming-play-in-cities
[19] Canadian Heritage. (2013). Sport Participation 2010. Ottawa, Canada: Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada.
[20] Barnes, J. D. & Tremblay, M. S. Changes in indicators of child and youth physical activity in Canada, 2005–2016. Can. J. Public Health Rev. Can. Santé Publique 107, e586–e589 (2016).
[21] Canadian Fitness & Lifestyle Research Institute. Kids CAN PLAY! Bulletin 2: Participation in organized physical activity and sport. 2018. https://cflri.ca/sites/default/files/node/1671/files/CPLY%202014-2016%20Bulletin%202%20-%20Organized_EN.pdf
[22] CFLRI. 2019-2021 Physical Activity Monitor.

longer playing sports.[23] Most children ages 6 to 12 playing a team sport quit by age 11, and since the pandemic, three in 10 children who previously played say they are no longer interested in playing again.[24]

Parents are noticing adverse effects of this on their children. 74% of Canadian parents indicated that their children feel isolated and lonely, 69% indicated that their children are showing signs of decreased physical fitness and 64% said their children are finding it difficult to reduce their stress and anxiety.[25] A return to activity is critical for children and youth to once again achieve the many positive benefits of participation.

The sport community has made several strides in recent years to improve and sustain "quality sport" experiences, including the establishment of long-term player development resources to help participants achieve their goals. While there are concerns around early age sport specialization and rising year-round training, multi-sport development is encouraged. A continued focus on expanding free and low-cost activities for all residents could also help to boost participation.

Pandemic Impacts on Programming

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted municipal programming as a result of facility closures and capacity restrictions. From 2020 until the beginning of 2022, public participation in organized activities plummeted. During *this time, close-to-home recreation and* at-home fitness became common, with one-third (33%) of Canadian gym-goers streaming exercise videos at home[26]. While virtual programming will provide municipalities with an additional tool by which to deliver their services in the future, *it is* less accessible for many vulnerable populations and *does not offer nearly the same revenue potential as traditional models.*

In addition, many communities in the United States are offering Esports programming as it becomes more of a mainstream activity that engages and connects with older youth. The global Esports audience has grown exponentially and is projected to increase from 474 million in 2021 to 577 million in 2024.[27] Research shows a strong correlation between gaming and weekly physical activity, suggesting that participation in both Esports and actual sports is not mutually exclusive.[28]

With public health restrictions now lifted, more recent trends indicate that programming is beginning to rebound to pre-pandemic levels for a number of different activities such as youth sports leagues, childcare and camps, adult fitness classes, older adult programming and holiday events/festivals. The recovery is likely to be quicker for certain programs (such as outdoor sport and arena activities) due to the established volunteer network and a lower reliance on municipal program staff; though it is worth noting that many community organizations are dealing with a loss of volunteers, underscoring the need to engage the younger generation to sustain these services moving forward. For other services that rely on the municipality's leadership and certification programs (most notably aquatics, camps and specialized programs) it will take longer to regain past registration levels.

[23] Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities. Jumpstart State of Sport Report. March 2022.
[24] Dolesh, Richard. Top Trends in Parks and Recreation for 2022. Parks & Recreation. January 2022.
[25] Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities. Jumpstart State of Sport Report. 2021. https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0122/8124/9892/files/Jumpstart_State_of_Sport_Report_March_2021.pdf?v=1616793836
[26] IHRSA. The COVID Era Fitness Consumer. IHRSA, Oct. 2020, https://www.ihrsa.org/publications/the-covid-era-fitness-consumer.
[27] Newzoo. Global Esports & Live Streaming Market Report. 2021.
[28] Bhatt, Neelay. Shaping the future with next practices for programs, places and paying for it all. Parks & Recreation. January 2022.

Engaging the Aging Population in Healthy Activities

Canada's population has been getting older for many decades. In 2021, the median age in Canada was 41.6 years, an increase of four years since 2001 (37.6 years). Aging is a significant driver of increased health care costs and is also significantly influencing parks and recreation opportunities. An aging population may mean demand for activities that support social connections and healthy active aging, including more daytime services.

In response, municipal recreation departments are offering an increased variety of older adult programming opportunities for those wishing to remain active as they age, including those seeking lifelong learning opportunities, persons managing chronic illness and disease, and those that are seeking low-impact, therapeutic, and rehabilitative programs. However, there can be significant variation among different segments within the older adult community based on age, abilities, lifestyles, and interests – as a result, there is no "one size fits all approach". Age-friendly planning has also been a prominent theme for nearly two decades now as municipalities seek ways to increase participation and access for persons of all ages and abilities.

Emerging Recreational Activities

The popularity of recreation and sport activities changes with time and can be affected by several factors, most notably socio-economic characteristics, lifestyle trends, and the exposure and accessibility of the activity. National registration figures indicate that, where once ice hockey and baseball were dominant, soccer has taken rise since the 1990s. More recently, a national study found that interest in children's activities was beginning to shift away from these sports towards other less formal extracurricular activities, such as music lessons, dance lessons, language classes, and drama classes.[29]

Additionally, the once popular sports of curling, racquetball, and aerobics – though still prevalent in some areas – have generally given way to new and emerging activities such as pickleball, disc golf, skateboarding and BMX biking, outdoor fitness and new forms of body weight training, cricket, year-round indoor athletic training, challenge courses and adventure play, plus other sports that are established but growing such as basketball and tennis.

The pandemic and rising interest in outdoor activities has led to increased requests in many communities for spaces that support individual or small group usage, such as off-leash dog parks, multi-use trails, sport courts, community gardens, outdoor classrooms, outdoor skating rinks, unstructured spaces, and digital infrastructure (such as Wi-Fi in parks).

Inclusion & Access

Growing Concerns over Affordability

Affordability is a concern for many households given the current challenging economic climate and the fact that participation in leisure activities is one of several spending choices for discretionary income. In particular, income can be a significant barrier to participation in organized sports where equipment, travel and rental fees result in greater costs to the participant. For households experiencing financial barriers, the provision of subsidy programs and low-to-no-cost programming options can help reduce the financial burden of participation.

Research from 2018 found that the cost of children's activities put a strain on the finances of a majority (55%) of Canadian parents. Further, as many as one in three (32%) Canadians used debt to fund the extracurricular activities of their children. Hockey topped the list as the most expensive extracurricular

[29] Ipsos. One in Three (32%) Families Going into Debt to Fund their Children's Extra-Curricular Activities, Up 5 Points from Last Year. 2018. https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/news-polls/back-to-school-2018

activity (an average cost of nearly $750) and the research found that parents were increasingly less likely to enroll their children in hockey as a result. Conversely, swimming was one the most affordable and popular after-school activities for children.[30]

Making Recreation Accessible for Persons with Disabilities

One in five Canadians aged 15 years and over (amounting to 6.2 million individuals) have one or more disabilities relating to physical, sensory, cognitive or mental health[31]. As the average age of Canadians continues to increase, so can the number of persons living with disabilities. Further, persons with more severe disabilities and lone parents / persons living alone are more likely to be living in poverty.

Accessibility-related barriers affect persons with disabilities from achieving the benefits of participating in leisure activities and other aspects of daily life. Since play is essential for physical, cognitive, social and emotional development, it is important to engage persons with disabilities within the recreation, sport, arts and culture, and parks service spectrum. Doing so can provide such individuals with opportunities to bolster quality of life and health outcomes. For example, 60% of youth with disabilities have a mental health-related disability, thus access to the outdoors and exposure to recreation and the arts can be valuable in providing therapeutic relief. Similarly, exercise and cognitive stimulation afforded through leisure participation can mitigate the onset of chronic conditions associated with aging such as limited mobility and dementia.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, (AODA) directs municipalities to consider the needs of persons with disabilities through facility design and service delivery. By 2025, municipalities are required to remove all barriers within new and redeveloped municipal facilities, including those related to physical space and through customer service training. Barriers are defined to include anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of disability, including physical, architectural, informational, communicational, attitudinal, technological, or policy/practice barriers.

Older facilities were designed to the standards of the day and many lack full barrier-free accessibility, which creates challenges for some users. The municipality is committed to promoting inclusion and removing accessibility barriers from public spaces and services for all users. From regular customer service training, to offering safe spaces for residents, to providing gender-neutral washrooms and more, all new and redeveloped facilities will be designed with accessibility at the forefront. The same commitment is expected for parks as they are built and redeveloped – many communities are beginning to incorporate spaces that directly benefit persons with disabilities, such as sensory gardens, quiet areas, raised garden beds, and autism-friendly playgrounds.

Improving Gender Equity in Sports

A substantially higher percentage of boys and men participate in sport compared to girls and women. Starting in late adolescence, one-in-three women leave sport as compared to one-in-ten boys[32]. This trend has worsened since the onset of the pandemic, when it was reported that 90% of female recreation participants were negatively impacted (specifically young women ages 6 to 18 years old). The research suggests that young women are participating substantially less than they did pre-pandemic and that 25%

[30] Ibid.
[31] Statistics Canada. Canadian Survey on Disability. 2017. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/181128/dq181128a-eng.htm
[32] Canadian Women & Sport. The Rally Report. 2020. https://womenandsport.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Canadian-Women-Sport_The-Rally-Report.pdf

are not committed to returning to sport after the pandemic.[33] Among the barriers cited, girls stated low levels of confidence, low body image, lack of skills and feeling unwelcomed in a sport environment.

To bolster participation among women, the Federal government established a goal of achieving equity in sport participation by the year 2035. Participation in parks, recreation and sport activities provide females and those who identify as females with encouragement, confidence, physical activity and skill mastery. These benefits are significant and transfer to other facets of life, including future employment opportunities and overall health and wellness.

Many municipalities and recreation providers have been instrumental in providing leadership opportunities, gender-specific sport leagues, and local engagement initiatives. A recent survey found that 84% of Ontarians believe recreation programs, parks and community facilities make it easier for people to socialize and feel included.[34] Beyond sport, thoughtful design of public spaces can make them more fun, safer for diverse groups, and generally more inclusive of everyone. Examples include providing a wider variety of play opportunities, including gender-neutral forms of play such as climbing (e.g., natural elements) and building (e.g., loose parts).

Using Parks and Recreation to Support Indigenous Reconciliation

Indigenous awareness, recognition, understanding, and reconciliation are addressed through a number of sectoral documents, such as Parks for All (2017) and the calls to action identified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. The following Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) relate to "Sports and Reconciliation" and are applicable to all levels of government:

- 87. We call upon all levels of government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, sports halls of fame, and other relevant organizations, to provide public education that tells the national story of Aboriginal athletes in history.
- 88. We call upon all levels of government to take action to ensure long-term Aboriginal athlete development and growth, and continued support for the North American Indigenous Games, including funding to host the games and for provincial and territorial team preparation and travel.

All communities have a role to play in recognizing the importance of Indigenous voices in parks, recreation, and sport. For example, many municipalities are showcasing Indigenous history through public art and plaques in community centres and parks, along with exploring sports programs and ceremonial events that deepen our understanding of these cultures. A recent survey saw that 59% of Canadians want to see Indigenous place names restored and 68% support more Indigenous representation through art, native plant gardens, and signage.[35] Reconciliation is an ongoing process that must occur in a respectful manner recognizing Indigenous cultural traditions and practices. Ensuring that Indigenous voices are sought and included in planning and policy development is growing as a priority for many municipalities.

Safe Spaces for Marginalized and Displaced Populations

The pandemic has intensified social inequities and negatively impacted vulnerable populations such as lower-income households, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities. The research is clear that marginalized populations have been disproportionately impacted and finding it harder to remain active.

[33] Canadian Women & Sport and E-Alliance. COVID Alert Pandemic Impact on Girls in Sport. 2021. https://womenandsport.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/COVID-Alert-final-English-July-2021.pdf.
[34] Parks and Recreation Ontario. Value Survey, 2021.
[35] Park People. Reclaiming Urban Spaces is a Decolonial Act. 2022. https://ccpr.parkpeople.ca/2022/stories/inclusion/reclaiming-urban-spaces-is-a-decolonial-act

Intentional decisions and meaningful action are required to improve equity in resource provision and access to recreation services for all populations.

For example, 90% of cities have indicated that homelessness in parks, trails and recreation spaces is a challenge.[36] Many municipalities are evaluating the role of parks in response to the housing crisis and encampments, ensuring that our most vulnerable have access to essential services and opportunities to safely spend time outdoors. In addition, some recreation facilities can play a role in supporting under-housed and displaced populations, serving as cooling centres, community showers, food pantries, and safe spaces. Most parks and recreation departments are not well equipped to deal with this complex challenge and greater education and dialogue are often required. While policies and approaches for accommodating transient residents may differ, municipalities are increasingly serving a wider range of needs and working with other sectors to connect residents to essential services.

Connecting People & Nature

Rising Use of Parks and Outdoor Recreation

Communities witnessed increased demand for unstructured outdoor recreation activities within parks and trails during the COVID-19 pandemic as people found or rediscovered new ways to remain active and connected. Although this created some operational challenges and created added strain on budgets, it has largely been viewed positively as it has strengthened residents' connections with their community and nature, and introduced many people to new activities, often within their local neighbourhood. Park usage has continued to climb during the pandemic, 55% said they spent more time in parks in 2021 than in 2020, and 58% indicate that they would like to spend even more time in parks.[37]

As a result of this renewed interest, residents expect more from their parks in terms of amenities and quality. Many communities are reimagining existing spaces in creative ways, such as car-free streets (or temporary street closures), outdoor workout areas, and open space enhancements that allow for creative programming and community interaction (e.g., Wi-Fi in parks, increased seating options, creation of new activity zones, etc.). Public demand is especially strong for year-round washrooms in parks and natural areas. Although meeting these needs will be a challenge due to rapidly rising costs and supply chain issues, a recent report suggests that there is substantial support for public investment – 87% of city residents support more public funding for parks.[38]

Even prior to the pandemic, there was a movement citing the benefits associated with "challenging or risky play" and encouraging opportunities for children to explore creative play, often in outdoor settings. There continues to be great potential to animate unused or non-traditional outdoor spaces for community activities and nature-based programming.

Improving our Connections with Nature

There is a growing amount of research highlighting the physical and psychological health benefits of interacting with nature for people of all ages. For example, children with access to parks, playgrounds and other outdoor amenities are more likely to be physically active, and are less likely to be overweight and obese; this is especially true if the parks are within walking or biking distance and have facilities that encourage physical play. Time in nature also provides children the chance to develop social-emotional skills and healthy behaviors critical to thrive. Unfortunately, children's overall exposure to nature has been steadily declining.

[36] Park People. 2020 Canadian City Parks Report. 2020.
[37] Park People. The Canadian Parks Report: Nurturing Relationships & Reciprocity. 2022.
[38] Ibid.

Some ways that municipalities have encouraged residents to spend time outdoors are through the provision of off-road trail networks, community gardens, naturalization initiatives, nature-based programming, stewardship activities, educational programs, designing parks that provide access to nature in urban settings, and offering free transit passes to larger parks. The local trails system offers residents and visitors an opportunity to connect with nature through natural environments within and surrounding the community. Emphasis is also being placed on expanded outdoor play opportunities for children and youth, including natural playgrounds.

Nearly half (48%) of city residents indicate that they have been spending more time in naturalized spaces during the pandemic.[39] In some places, concern has been expressed over over-use of natural areas due to increased visitation (large parks in particular saw a spike in usage). Intentional planning is critical to ensuring that natural areas are properly managed and able to support priorities such as expanded biodiversity.

Growing Emphasis on Neighbourhoods and Local Opportunities

Our changing urban structure and community composition has a significant influence on recreation needs and participation. For example, locally-accessible spaces and services will be needed to address increasingly busy lifestyles and growth areas, including new ways of delivering services in higher density areas.

Furthermore, most populations have been somewhat or significantly more active at home and around their neighbourhood during the pandemic. Even before this time, there was a strong trend toward close-to-home recreation. This could continue to enhance interest in neighbourhood parks and other local and low-cost activities. Recently, the concept of a “15-minute city” has been gaining prominence, requiring that neighbourhoods be designed to allow people access to basic and essential services at distances that can be accessed by foot or bicycle within 15 minutes of their home.

Supporting Active Transportation

Active transportation offers many personal health and wellness benefits and is a core element of complete communities. During the pandemic, municipalities observed a surge in recreational trail use as residents participated close-to-home and sought connections with nature. Expanded use of these networks can be expected to continue – interest in bike lanes, off-road trails and cycling infrastructure are common requests in most communities. Active transportation is environmentally-friendly as it reduces road congestion and vehicle-related greenhouse gas emissions.

Keeping Pace with Parkland Needs in Growing Communities

Access to outdoor space matters. There is a growing recognition of the broader utility and value of parks for individuals and communities, including their many physical and mental heath, social, environmental, and economic benefits. However, with many communities experiencing fast growth in population and density, most are finding it challenging to develop new parks to meet growing demand due to land scarcity and rising land values.

Another issue is equity. Several studies have found that under-served populations (e.g., low-income households, visible minorities, recent immigrants, Indigenous communities and more) tend to have below average access to parks, particularly larger open space areas[40]. It is important not only to ensure that sufficient parkland is secured, but that it is equitably distributed across communities so that all residents can enjoy the personal and public benefits. Now more than ever, municipalities have an obligation to

[39] Ibid.
[40] Green Infrastructure Ontario Coalition and RePublic Urbanism. Improving Access to Large Parks in Ontario’s Golden Horseshoe. March 2022.

target investment (including park development and renewal, facility development) within neighbourhoods without adequate access.

Increasing Focus on Environmental Design and Climate Change

There is an increasing need to reduce our impact on the environment to be more sustainable and resilient to climate change. The way in which we design and operate our recreation and parks facilities and services can help us meet our environmental objectives. Increasingly, municipalities are designing facilities to meet "net zero" and "carbon neutral" targets through the use of technologies that enhance energy efficiency, reduce waste, and lower our greenhouse gas emissions. Although these enhancements often come with a higher initial capital cost, they must be balanced against improved sustainability, resiliency, and potentially longer-term operational savings.

Already thought of as "green infrastructure", parks are being positioned to be more environmentally sustainable through reducing grass cutting and naturalization initiatives, planting of native species, tree canopy targets, and programs that educate about local natural heritage features (e.g., outdoor classrooms or interpretive signage). More communities are also experimenting by piloting new approaches in parks, such as bioswales, rain gardens, pollinator gardens, habitat restoration, and biodiversity initiatives. Green infrastructure strategies that include directions for parks are becoming more common and helping to ensure these practices become standard.

Fortunately, the many environmental benefits of parks and public spaces – such as reducing the urban heat island effect, mitigating flooding, and improving air quality – illustrate the critical importance of their role as public infrastructure and lend support for further investment. As noted by the City Parks Alliance, "urban parks are not luxuries – they make cities more livable, environmentally resilient, attract business and jobs, increase economic competitiveness, and create new revenue streams – all while saving billions on traditional infrastructure costs."[41]

Supportive Environments

Multi-Use Recreation Facilities as Community Hubs

In this era of user convenience and cost recovery, most municipalities are centralizing multiple recreational and cultural facilities under one roof. There are a range of benefits of multi-use facilities including the creation of a "one-stop-shop" destination where all household members can gather and engage in recreation activities, thereby contributing to sport development, tourism, and operational efficiency. During the pandemic, many of these spaces provided critical services relating to public health (e.g., testing and vaccination centres) and continue to serve an important role by connecting people to necessary services that extend well beyond traditional sport and recreation activities (e.g., child care, food distribution, warming and cooling centres, emergency shelters, etc.).

Increasingly, these facilities are being designed as "community hubs" that provide a central access point for a range of needed health and social services – along with cultural, recreational and greenspaces – to nourish community life. Partnerships with service providers can help municipalities leverage resources and reach new audiences.

Providing High Quality, Multi-functional and Flexible Facilities

Today's consumers expect and demand high quality sports and recreation facilities that can support an increasingly sophisticated network of users, athletes, and related service providers. Part of this can be explained by the exposure of residents to newer facilities in other communities. With many smaller

[41] City Parks Alliance. Infrastructure Principles: Parks are Infrastructure. 2020. https://cityparksalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/infrastructure-principles-1.pdf

communities witnessing significant population growth and in-migration of residents from larger urban centres, these residents are bringing their bigger city expectations with them and anticipating similar levels of service. Complete communities with a variety of accessible leisure opportunities will be poised to capitalize on this trend, while those with under-funded or inadequate amenities will be expected to increase investment to keep pace.

This trend also reflects the expectations that come with increased spending in the sector. In 2019, Canadians allocated 5% of their annual household expenses to recreation and culture activities (including the purchase of sports equipment, art supplies and musical instruments, as well as admission to movies, live performances, and museums, membership payments towards recreation and leisure facilities, etc.), an average of over $4,600 per household.[42]

The provision of high quality, multi-use facilities encourage physical and social activity among all age groups, while also creating opportunities for sport tourism at a regional scale. Best practices in facility design consider safety, accessibility, comfort, placemaking and opportunities for community gathering, socialization, and inclusive experiences. A recent focus has been placed on the provision of experiential amenities (e.g., indoor playgrounds, challenge courses and rock climbing, functional training areas, etc.).

There may be new infrastructure needs in a post-COVID-19 setting, with a priority being placed on accessible, resilient, and human-scaled spaces that provide for adequate separation and improved ventilation. An emphasis may be placed on flexible spaces that can be closed off from other areas and subdivided for a variety of small and large group activities, as well as non-recreational use during public health emergencies. Economic stimulus to the sector – such as continued senior government grants – may help many communities to address needed infrastructure improvements, particularly those projects with wide-ranging benefits and sound rationale. Added costs for design and capital construction can be anticipated for certain facility types given recent supply chain issues, labour shortages, and rising inflation rates.

Rationalizing and Addressing Aging Infrastructure

The 2019 Canadian Infrastructure Report Card found that approximately one-third of Canada's sports and recreation facilities (including arenas and pools) were considered to be in fair to very poor condition (ranking only behind bridges and roads) and in need of revitalization and expensive repairs.[43] Many of these facilities were built in the 1970s or earlier and, due to the era of construction, have various design and age-related deficiencies that are impacting their operational efficiency and ability to adequately serve their patrons.

Facility renewal and reinvestment projects have been a focus for local governments for some time, often requiring alternative funding sources such as senior government grants, naming rights, operating partnerships, land swaps, and more. Due to the current economic situation and resultant cost escalations, many communities will require increased financial commitments from all levels of government to facilitate the redesign, development and retrofitting of parks and recreation facilities. The infrastructure deficit provides an opportunity not only to modernize facilities by making them more multi-use, but also to consider facility conversion or adaptive re-use options that accommodate emerging activities.

Designing Facilities to be Sport-Friendly

Organized sport in general – but particularly at high-performing levels – requires access to specialized facilities such as aquatic centres, arenas, and sports fields. Increasingly, athletes and organizations

[42] Statistics Canada. Table 11-10-0222-01. Household spending, Canada, regions and provinces. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1110022201
[43] Monitoring the State of Canada's Core Public Infrastructure: The Canadian Infrastructure Report Card 2019. http://canadianinfrastructure.ca/downloads/canadian-infrastructure-report-card-2019.pdf

serving the competitive sport market are seeking recreation infrastructure that is built to be "competition-ready" in order to accommodate elevated training and sport tourism opportunities.

In evaluating the needs of sport in the design of new and redevelopment of existing recreation facilities, municipalities must factor in existing and future demand, as well as opportunities for sport tourism. Sport tourism offers a number of economic benefits, supporting amenities such as hotels, restaurants, and parking, among other industries. "Tourna-cations" – families of athletes scheduling family vacations to coincide with athletic tournaments – is a recent trend and means that facilities must consider the needs of both participants and spectators (e.g., Wi-Fi, charging stations, higher-end concessions, family entertainment options, wayfinding kiosks, pet-friendly public spaces, etc.).

There are many ways for recreation facilities to support the needs of all users along the sport spectrum. This process can be informed by a comprehensive sport plan that identifies opportunities and priorities and further informs the facility design and partnership work that is critical in serving the sport tourism community.

Recreation Capacity

The Great Resignation – Significant Turnover in Recreation Programming Staff

Since the beginning of the pandemic, many parks and recreation departments have experienced a decline in their number of employees, particularly part-time staff and seasonal workers. This time period – "The Great Resignation" – has seen many staff leave their jobs for a multitude of reasons, resulting in an increased workload for remaining employees and decreasing opportunities for people to participate in activities.[44] For example, pandemic restrictions led to a reduction in training opportunities for many municipalities, which is currently impacting the number of lifeguards and program instructors, leading to program cancellations. These workers are integral to the recreation services that keep their community engaged.

Due to the low availability of qualified workers and rising operating and staffing costs, there is concern that non-profit agencies may stop offering affordable programming (e.g., before- and after-school programs, summer camps, etc.). For example, several YMCAs in Ontario have permanently closed due to significant membership losses during the pandemic, leaving a void in many communities.

Declining Volunteerism

Volunteers are critical to the delivery of community-based parks and recreation activities and events. Two-fifths (41%) of all Canadians aged 15 years and older are considered active volunteers across all sectors (not just recreation and sport), giving an average of 131 hours per year in 2018. However, the number of volunteers and their commitment are declining. In 2018, Canadian volunteers devoted about 1.65 billion volunteer hours, down from 1.96 billion in 2013 – a 16% decrease in only five years.[45] The pandemic has further accelerated this trend, as older generations more likely to limit and self isolate from volunteer activities than younger generations.

Additionally, COVID-19 has imposed volunteer challenges for sport activities. One-quarter (27%) of Canadian adults reported volunteering in a sport activity, spending approximately 105 hours per year on average. The most important factor preventing individuals from volunteering in sport was "time or busy schedule" (58%). The primary reasons for volunteering in sport consist of contributing to the community, meeting people, and social networking. More adults volunteer in an informal capacity (especially young adults), compared to a formal capacity (which is more common amongst older adults). The role of

[44] Roth, K. NRPA Parks Snapshot: 2021 Year-End Survey Results. 2021. https://www.nrpa.org/blog/nrpa-parks-snapshot-2021-year-end-survey-results/.
[45] Statistics Canada. 2018 General Social Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating.

younger volunteers is vital to the sustainability of sport, especially in light of the pandemic and its greater impact on older populations.[46]

Pandemic Challenges for Canadian Recreation Sport Organizations

Sport organizations have been significantly affected as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. A report from early 2022 finds that 52% of Canadian sport organizations say that it will take until at least 2024 to reach their pre-pandemic state. Further, 75% of sport organizations indicate that the costs of running sport programs have increased and 94% are concerned that youth will be particularly impacted. [47] A previous survey of Canadian sport organizations from 2021 found that one-third (33%) of organizations were bankrupt or are nearing having to file for bankruptcy and 30% of organizations had temporarily or permanently closed during the pandemic.[48]

Many communities rely on organizations and spaces provided by third parties (e.g., schools, non-profits, private sector) to support programming. Service reductions and closures can create program gaps, sometimes with an expectation for municipalities to step in and fill the void. Recognizing that this situation is evolving, service providers must closely monitor demand, participation, and usage levels to adjust resource allocations as necessary. Working with local community organizations will be critical as we emerge from the pandemic to ensure programming continues to be successful over the long-term.

The Necessity of Partnerships

Municipal parks and recreation departments throughout Ontario are increasingly challenged to provide and maintain top quality facilities, programs and services within defined budget envelopes. As financial pressures mount and the need for cost containment rises, communities are examining new and creative service delivery models, including developing relationships with third-party entities or adjacent municipalities. With municipalities facing increasing demands for new amenities, many are turning to partnerships with non-profits and community groups to bring local expertise, new programming, and new funding.

Partnerships can offer a number of benefits such as the sharing of costs and risks, as well as economies of scale and shared expertise. Most municipalities have a long history of working with public libraries, school boards, service clubs, or other providers to maximize resources.

Looking ahead, the sector is likely to see more partnerships than fewer. Sport for Life reported that 72% of organizations have reached out to work with others and/or support one another in starting initiatives.[49] The pandemic has also strengthened existing and created new forms of collaboration with other sectors, something that may carry forward into the future. Many of these new roles – including community-based supports (e.g., food security, health service coordination, homelessness, etc.) –will require additional policy direction, training, and support.

Data, Technology and Digital Transformation

Data is becoming more accessible and mainstream, with increased data literacy enabling more informed decision-making. Parks and recreation departments are gaining access to growing amounts of data geared specifically towards the sector. Many municipalities are also using mobility data and drone

[46] CFLRI. Monitoring & Tracking the Field: Volunteering in Sport. 2022.
[47] Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities. Jumpstart State of Sport Report. 2022.
[48] Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities. Jumpstart State of Sport Report. 2021. https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0122/8124/9892/files/Jumpstart_State_of_Sport_Report_March_2021.pdf?v=1616793836.
[49] Sport for Life. Impacts of COVID-19 on Local Sports Organizations Nationwide Survey Results. Sport for Life, June 2020, https://sportforlife.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/National-Report-Impacts-of-COVID-19-on-Local-Sports-Organizations-1.pdf.

technology to gather information such as topography and geographical distribution, to surveillance of parks.[50] These advanced analytics allow for more in-depth analysis on trends and tendencies that can support predictive modelling.

Technological advances are also enabling service providers and users to be more aware of leisure opportunities in their communities. From online services (e.g., online registration, mobile outdoor games such as Pokémon GO or Biba, etc.), virtual programming (which was vital for many during the pandemic, including subscription-based activities that allow people to participate individually while being connected to a larger community virtually), and mobile and wearable technologies, the integrated application of technology in recreation service delivery can assist in enhancing client experiences and engaging a wider segment of the population.

Digital technology is becoming pervasive in the public realm, enhancing client experiences beyond the walls of community facilities. In a recent study of the Government of Canada's Smart Cities Challenge[51], many applications to the Round One award pool proposed using some kind of digital technology in public spaces, such as:

- Public Wi-Fi / hot spots
- Device charging stations / hubs
- Digital screens / kiosks
- Smart transportation infrastructure (e.g., smart traffic signals, pedestrian crossings, smart sidewalks, parking sensors)
- Smart street furniture (e.g., smart lamp posts, smart benches)
- Digital public art
- Digital wayfinding

Evolving Financial Challenges

Parks and recreation department budgets were significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, as facilities were closed and revenue streams dried up. Now, as operations resume and ramp up to pre-pandemic levels, most municipalities are experiencing escalating cost factors and staffing shortages that are leading to rapidly rising capital and operating budget needs, along with delays in much-needed capital projects.

The effects of the current economic situation – compounded by Bill 23 that is expected to accelerate growth but reduce growth-related funding sources – will be felt for some time and are likely to cause most communities to more actively seek out alternative funding sources. Some options include grants, naming rights, and innovative partnerships. The recreation sector has a history of "doing more with less" and finding creative ways to ensure that residents are able to participate and engage fully in these essential services.

[50] National Recreation and Parks Association. Parks & Recreation. 2022.
[51] Lenarcic Biss, Danielle and Pamela Robinson. Parks and Open Spaces: Challenges and Opportunities of Smart Technologies. February 2021.

DRAFT

Appendix C: Status of Recommendations from 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan

	Recommendations	Comments (2021)	Status
Community Centres			
1	Undertake an architectural facility fit and concept design exploring the feasibility associated with expanding the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex to include a gymnasium, multi-purpose program spaces and/or a full-service fitness Centre (the latter subject to Recommendation #8). Implementation of this recommendation depends on the Town of Aurora's chosen course of action for indoor aquatics (see Recommendation #4) as expansion of the S.A.R.C. is only a plausible consideration if not proceeding with a new multi-purpose community centre.	Preliminary concept plan and cost estimate provided in 2019 budget for a single gymnasium/program space/office space/storage. Alternative of 2-story gymnasium suitable for tournaments costed but additional parking would be required. Considerations pending other land acquisitions discussions. Updated cost estimates provided for the 2021 budget considerations. Funding approved for single gymnasium, program space and office space. RFP for Design Architect to be awarded Fall 2021, Construction to commence in 2022, proposed project completion 2023.	Completed
2	Existing municipal facilities should be evaluated for ways to improve comfort and facilitate opportunities for informal interactions and socialization to take place (including within lobbies and other common areas) among all residents, including but not limited to families, youth and older adults.	Furniture (couches and chairs) have been placed in upper lobby at AFLC and are well utilized particularly among older adults. Space is limited at the SARC, but considerations will be made when new furniture is required. Town Square design includes social gathering opportunities both indoor and outdoor. COVID 19 has had an effect on furthering this goal.	Ongoing
Ice Pads & Curling Sheets			
3	Maintain a supply of five ice pads over the next five years with a greater emphasis placed on tracking user registrations (particularly among residents of Aurora) along with monitoring arena bookings and utilization rates.	Formal monitoring is extremely time consuming, however, informal monitoring continues to indicate 90% or higher utilization during all prime-time periods. Ice scheduling continues to be a challenge during peak season periods, with numerous requests for additional/alternate ice time during prime-time hours.	Review Required

DRAFT

Recommendations		Comments (2021)	Status
Indoor Aquatics			
4	In the event that the Town of Aurora is not interested in maintaining the status quo regarding provision of indoor aquatics centres, cannot secure an acceptable partnership agreement with a third party to access new pool times, and is comfortable with the level of risk associated with adding new aquatic infrastructure, one new 25 metre, 6 lane rectangular pool tank should be explored in the following order of priority:	Aquatic Feasibility Study and Business Plan to look at feasibility of new pool (size/location) and programming of existing pools. Feasibility study complete and community survey being conducted. Final results, findings and recommendations will be presented to Council in November 2020. Study complete - results presented to Council in February 2021.	Review Required
4a	Undertake an Architectural and Engineering Study to determine the feasibility and costs associated with adding a 6 lane, 25 metre pool tank to the existing Aurora Family Leisure Complex through expansion of the building envelop to the east of the existing aquatic centre space. This Study should also include the feasibility and costs associated with renovation of the existing hot tub and conversion of the leisure/lane hybrid tank to a warmer water leisure tank.		
4b	Should the Study (noted above) deem the expansion of the Aurora Family Leisure Complex aquatic space not feasible or too costly, undertake a site selection process (as per Recommendation #38) for the provision of a new indoor aquatic facility containing a 6 lane, 25 metre tank, a warmer water leisure/therapeutic tank. The provision of this aquatic facility should include a gymnasium, multi-purpose program rooms and possibly a fitness centre (in-lieu of facilities being added at the S.A.R.C.). In tandem with this recommendation, explore alternative uses for the existing aquatic facility space at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex as this facility would become redundant.		
5	Reclassify Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning and afternoon time slots as prime time pool hours to encourage greater use of remaining pool capacity, possibly through a review of the Town of Aurora Pool Allocation Policy.	Considered as part of Aquatic Feasibility Study	Completed
Gymnasiums			
6	Undertake architectural concept plan and costing exercise to determine the feasibility of constructing a gymnasium at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex (also refer to Recommendation #1). The design of this gymnasium should be 'sport friendly' to facilitate objectives congruent with the Sport Plan and provide the necessary features to facilitate locally based sporting activities to occur. Implementation of this recommendation will depend on the Town of Aurora's chosen course of action for indoor aquatics (see Recommendation #4) as expansion of the S.A.R.C. is only a plausible consideration if the Town does not proceed with a new multi-purpose community centre.	Preliminary concept plan and cost estimate provided in 2019 budget for a single gymnasium/program space/office space/storage. Alternative of 2-story gymnasium suitable for tournaments costed but additional parking would be required. Considerations pending other land acquisitions discussions. Updated cost estimates were provided for the 2021 budget considerations. 2021 Prime architect hired for design of gymnasium.	Completed

DRAFT

Recommendations		Comments (2021)	Status
7	Conduct an operating performance review of the Aurora Family Leisure Complex's gymnasium after it has completed a minimum of two full years of operation whether programming and rental opportunities are being maximized, along with any operational adjustments or improvements required to this end.	The gymnasium schedule at the AFLC is evaluated on a sessional basis. Demand for use of the space is high and staff are regularly re-scheduling to maximize use. Gymnasium time is well utilized for Town run activities, little time is left for community use	Completed
Fitness Centres			
8	Proactively monitor membership, program participation, member retention/satisfaction and other appropriate performance metrics associated with the rejuvenated Club Aurora for a minimum of two years in order to inform a subsequent business planning process that explores the viability and suitability of expanding the Town's full-service fitness centre model to another location(s).	A draft Business Plan for Club Aurora was completed in 2019. Preliminary findings recommend new membership and pricing structure which will be considered in the User Fee Review (complete Feb 2021). Additional fitness facilities not recommended at this time.	Completed
Indoor Racquet Courts			
9	An indoor tennis facility should only be pursued using an operating model that is consistent with the Town's existing practices, whereby the Town could be a partner in the provision of land but would assume no operating responsibilities or financial costs of operation, instead placing such responsibilities on a third party that demonstrates a capability to sustainably do so. This will require a Council decision to be made.	Completed.	Completed
10	Continue to promote membership and program opportunities through the Aurora Family Leisure Complex squash courts in order to optimize use of these facilities, provided that there continues to be market support and that the level of use justifies the financial costs of operations.	Utilization and scheduling are regularly monitored. The continuous use and demand for the courts supported the capital improvements to the floors within each court (completed in 2020).	Completed
Multi-Purpose Rooms			
11	Multi-purpose program rooms located within existing community centres should be evaluated for improvement to increase their appeal and flexibility that expands usage.	I.T. has a project planned for upgrades to various rooms. SARC Program room was refurbished in 2018. Auditorium at ACC was refurbished in 2019.	Completed
12	New multi-purpose rooms should be assessed through the proposed expansion of the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex (see Recommendation #1) and other appropriate projects, as well as explored as part of private land development projects in areas of intensification.	Refer to Rec. #1, also additional Multi-Purpose Programs rooms are included in the Town Square Project. SARC gymnasium expansion will allow for expanded programming space.	Completed

DRAFT

Recommendations		Comments (2021)	Status
13	Consistent with the Aurora Public Library Facility Needs Assessment, the Town should initiate discussions with the Aurora Public Library to discuss the merit of reassigning responsibility of the Magna and Lebovic Rooms to the Library, and/or redefining the programming focus in collaboration with Library Staff to service mutually complementary objectives.	Transfer of rooms to APL completed and APL commenced booking as of 2019. With the recent approval of 2 new program rooms part of Town Square, the management of the spaces is under review through the Town Square Governance Review. July 2021 - confirmed 2 new programs rooms and Magna and Lebovic will be deemed part of the Town Square operating model and bookings will be managed by the Town.	Completed
14	Pending outcomes of the Aurora Cultural Precinct Plan and other formal studies within the Aurora Promenade, undertake a potential use study of the former public library on Victoria Street to determine its suitability, capability and associated costs for delivering services offered by the Parks & Recreation Department or other municipal departments in order to address the needs of intensifying populations that are expected to arrive shortly after the master planning period in the Aurora Promenade.	Repurposing study complete. Demolition of former public library and former seniors centre complete to make room for Library Square Project.	Completed
Dedicated Youth Space			
15	Continually assess, and augment where necessary, the delivery of 'youth-friendly' services and programming within the Town of Aurora's existing multi-use community centres and other civic destinations (e.g., Aurora Public Library, former public library, etc.) by considering opportunities to improve spaces such as multi-use program rooms, studio space, common areas and other appropriate areas (also refer to Recommendation #2).	Town achieved Platinum Youth Friendly community status in March 2019. Refer to Rec: #1 - proposed new gymnasium and program rooms for SARC. New creative spaces included in the Town Square Project will offer enhanced Youth programs. Instagram account has been very active during COVID.	Completed
Dedicated Older Adult Spaces			
16	Continue to position the Aurora Senior's Centre as the primary hub for 55+ programming while exploring ways to extend the reach of services into neighbourhoods through use of existing multi-use community centres, parks and other civic destinations (e.g., Aurora Public Library, the former public library branch, etc.).	Some decentralizing taking place with 55+ programming taking place at the AFLC and Brookfield residence. New program titled "Seniors Centre without Walls" offers a 'call-in' option for seniors to participate and socialize from home. Activity and Wellness Packs offered for seniors who register (delivered to their homes).	Ongoing

DRAFT

Recommendations		Comments (2021)	Status
Rectangular Fields			
17	Establish a sports field complex containing a minimum of three lit full-size rectangular fields and supported by appropriate facilities oriented to further the player and/or spectator experience. One of these fields should be designed as a 'multi-use' field capable of accommodating field sports beyond soccer.	One multi-use artificial turf field has been constructed at Sheppard's Bush. Discussions currently underway regarding potential partnership opportunities for the development of two artificial turf rectangular sports fields. Potential completion in 2024 and 2025. In 2021, Town acquired ownership of the Sports Dome, which will enable increased access to this indoor artificial turf field. Outdoor Sports Field Development Strategy completed (2020), confirms future sports field needs and provides recommendations.	Review Required
18	Construct one outdoor artificial turf field at Stewart Burnett Park, as per current municipal plans, to service a broad range of field sports while providing the Town with flexibility to accommodate future needs. Any additional artificial turf fields beyond this one should be subject to confirmation through municipal business planning exercises as per current practice.	Soccer specific field constructed at Stewart Burnett, and multi-sport field constructed at Sheppard's Bush. (See #17)	Completed
19	Continue to work with educational, industrial and other suitable partners to provide rectangular sports fields on non-municipal lands. Any adjustment to the supply of non-municipal fields should be considered and appropriately reconciled by the Town of Aurora using existing and/or future parks, and potentially through field capacity improvements such as lighting and/or artificial turf.	A five-year extension (2021 - 2025) was approved for the continued use of the Stronach Fields (19 soccer fields). Ongoing discussions with YRDSB, YCDSB and private industry regarding future field partnership opportunities. Although both school boards are willing to partner with increased use of existing school fields, Parks Operations is not currently resourced to take on any additional field maintenance.	Ongoing
Ball Diamonds			
20	In consultation with local ball associations, construct one new ball diamond that is designed to be 'sport-friendly' and employs a larger design template in order to accommodate use by adult leagues and/or hardball users.	Council approved construction of two senior softball diamonds on the Hallmark lands - currently under construction with anticipated use to begin 2023.	Completed
Tennis Courts			
21	Construct two additional outdoor tennis courts, preferably located in the northeast to bolster geographic access across the Town.	Courts constructed in Thomas Coates Park 2018.	Completed
22	Create opportunities for outdoor pickleball through use of a multi-use court template (e.g. lining new or existing tennis courts for both tennis and pickleball) and providing a minimum of two courts that are preferably located in an area having a high concentration of older adults.	Two pickleball courts installed at both Thomas Coates Park and Trent Park.	Completed

DRAFT

Recommendations		Comments (2021)	Status
Basketball Courts			
23	Explore the integration of multi-use courts through park renewal and revitalization projects in areas where geographic gaps exist.	Combination basketball and pickleball courts incorporated into Trent Park and Edward Coltham Park. Continue to look for opportunities west of Yonge when parks are revitalized.	Ongoing
Board and Bike Parks			
24	Integrate minor skateboarding and biking zones within appropriate community-level parks undergoing renewal and revitalization activities, largely consisting of one or two basic elements similar to the Town's existing model.	Funding added to 10-year capital for inclusion at Summit Park in 2020 - project has been deferred to 2023 to meet Reserve targets.	Ongoing
Splash Pads			
25	Construct an urban water feature employing a dual-purpose design that facilitates recreational use and lends itself to Town's urban design and civic placemaking objectives, potentially through revitalization project within the Aurora Promenade.	Included in the Town Square Project design for the Outdoor Square.	Ongoing
26	Integrate two 'minor' splash pads consisting of basic cooling elements (designed to a smaller scale than the existing municipal template) to service residential areas located west of Yonge Street, north and south of Wellington Street.	Couple sites included in the 10-year capital, including Confederation Park Reconstruction in 2026.	Ongoing
Off-Leash Dog Parks			
27	The provision of additional off-leash parks in Aurora should be evaluated using a model similar to that used at Canine Commons, whereby a community organization is primarily involved with the establishment, general maintenance and ongoing operation of the off-leash area.	Potential locations in Highland Gate Development and Non-Programmed Park met with opposition from residents. Location has been identified off Englehard Dr. and has been placed in the 10-year capital plan in 2024.	Review Required
Playgrounds			
28	Playgrounds should be provided in new and existing residential areas where geographic gaps exist, generally calculated through application of an 800-metre service radius that is unobstructed by major pedestrian barriers.	7 playgrounds added between 2016-2020.	Ongoing
29	Through the playground inspection and renewal process, evaluate opportunities in which to incorporate barrier-free components to facilitate access to, and use within the playground apparatus for persons with disabilities.	Complete: Fully assessable playground installed at Queens Diamond jubilee Park in 2017. Ongoing inclusion of barrier free amenities in all playground revitalization projects and new designs.	Ongoing
Outdoor Skating Rinks			
30	An outdoor artificial rink, either in a new location or by upgrading an existing natural surface, should be a consideration when undertaking civic planning, urban design and/or economic development analyses given the sizeable costs to construct and operate refrigerated rinks.	Included in the Town Square Project design for the Outdoor Square.	Ongoing

DRAFT

	Recommendations	Comments (2021)	Status
Lawn Bowling			
31	Remain apprised of trends and usage at the McMahon Park lawn bowling green through continued collaboration with the Aurora Lawn Bowling Club.	Bowling Green upgrades completed in 2016. Aurora Lawn Bowling Club exploring grant opportunities to fund conversion to LED lighting for bowling green.	Ongoing
Other Recreation Facilities			
32	Requests for facilities presently not part of the Town of Aurora's core parks and recreation service mandate should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, after first considering the municipality's role in providing the service in relation to quantified market demand and cost-effectiveness of such services, while also identifying potential strategies to address long-term need for such requests should a sufficient level of demand be expressed.	One special request for a facility was received. Disc Golf is being considered; staff report to return to Council Fall 2021. No other special requests for facilities have been received at this time.	Review Required
33	To supplement decision-making and performance measurement exercises supporting investment in facilities falling within and beyond the Town of Aurora's core recreation facility service mandate, collect registration information from user groups regularly booking time in arenas, indoor pools, sports fields and other major recreational facilities including through implementation of allocation policies and other appropriate means.	Staff perform inquiries and data collection when needed to support a specific objective. More specific research can also be conducted through the engagement of an outside consultant (i.e., Outdoor Field Study and Aquatic Feasibility Study).	Ongoing
Parkland Form & Function			
34	Re-examine and adjust, where necessary, the municipal parkland classification system through the next Official Plan Review process based upon envisioned land use forms and densities. In particular, the service level for Community Parks should be revised downwards in the range of 1.0 to 1.5 hectares per 1,000 residents to better reflect current rate of provision, programmed and unprogrammed space needs, and recognizing the limited availability of land as the Town reaches build out of greenfield lands. Similarly, the Neighbourhood Park/Parkette designations should also collectively target provision between 1.0 and 1.5 hectares per 1,000.	Official Plan Review currently underway. Master Plan review will examine future parkland needs.	Review Required
35	Through the Town of Aurora Official Plan Review and participation in the Provincial Review of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, explore and integrate policies that prescribe the ability to situate permitted active parks and outdoor recreational uses within the Oak Ridges Moraine, where such parks and recreation uses cannot be accommodated within the designated built-up or greenfield areas.	Official Plan Review underway with completion 2023.	Ongoing

DRAFT

Recommendations		Comments (2021)	Status
Parkland Needs			
36	At a minimum, target between 10 and 16.5 hectares of developable tablelands within the quantum of parkland required to meet the parkland service ratios articulated in the Town of Aurora Official Plan (as revised per Recommendation #34), in order to accommodate active recreational facilities. The balance of outstanding parkland requirements can be satisfied at the Town's discretion through either active or passive recreational and/or cultural purposes.	To be addressed as part of the Official Plan Review and Master Plan review.	Review Required
37	Acquire larger Neighbourhood Parks and Community Parks as a priority to ensure future populations have sufficient access to spaces that are capable of accommodating a broad range of active recreational pursuits. Partnerships with area municipalities should be explored as a means to bolstering active parkland supplies since few opportunities remain to cost-effectively acquire and develop larger tracts of parkland for active recreational use.	To be addressed as part of the Official Plan Review and Master Plan review.	Review Required
38	Utilize a land banking approach to explore the potential acquisition of land(s) for a future indoor and/or outdoor recreation facility complex that may be required to service needs beyond the current five-year master planning timeframe.	To be addressed as part of the Official Plan Review and Master Plan review.	Review Required
39	Should the Town of Aurora decide to retain Mavrinac Boulevard Land Block 208 as parkland, it does so on the basis that if developed as active parkland this will result in a higher level of service being provided relative to most other neighbourhoods in Aurora and in a manner that is unlikely to service the most pressing recreational needs of the Town as a whole. If retained as passive open space to minimize conflicts on adjacent and nearby residential dwellings, the park could complement municipal naturalization goals and/or facilitate a modest degree of passive usage. Should the Town consider disposal of Block 208, it is recommended that a parcel of land better suited to accommodating active/intensive recreational use be obtained (using the proceeds of this chosen course of action), including consideration of a land swap agreement or purchase of a parcel of land.	Land developed into Thomas Coates Park (Mavrinac Park).	Completed
40	Work with the land development industry to innovatively address the need for parks such as developing publicly accessible lands on private land. At a minimum, this may include providing enhanced pedestrian/cyclist infrastructure, encouraging condominium developments that contain rooftop gardens and courtyards, etc. through use of the Planning Act's Section 37 provisions and other creative tools.	To be addressed as part of the Green Development Standards Study.	Review Required

DRAFT

Recommendations		Comments (2021)	Status
Trails Network			
41	Augment the system of trails and pathways through continued implementation of the Town of Aurora Trails Master Plan, explore barrier-free accessibility-related improvements, and prioritize resurfacing and other required remediation activities according to short, medium and long-term priorities.	Various 2C trail connections installed by developers to connect to Wildlife Park and connection from Bayview Ave to Tim Jones Trail from Strawbridge Development made in 2016. Significant amount of trail acquired through Highland Gate Development not identified on trails master plan. Wildlife Park construction Phase 1 completed fall 2020.	Ongoing
42	Continue to pursue partnerships and funding opportunities with the Region of York Transportation Department for the inclusion of barrier free access of regional road crossings.	2 underpass crossings being constructed in 2018/19 under Leslie St, allowing for connection of trails - completion fall 2021	Ongoing
Community Gardens			
43	The Town should implement a community allotment garden program on a trial basis that consists of at least one site – if deemed successful by the Town, additional sites should be secured in partnership with interested community groups.	Community Gardens to be included in Non-Programmed Park, currently out for tender, construction in 2022.	Ongoing
Natural Environment Lands			
44	Implement the Wildlife Park Master Plan to create a unique environmental area within the Aurora Northeast 2C lands to showcase natural heritage and provide opportunities for nature education and interpretation among residents.	Phase 1 completed in fall 2020, Phase 2 construction to start in 2022.	Ongoing
Acquisition Policies & Guidelines			
45	Supplement parkland acquisition policies prescribed in the Town of Aurora Official Plan with other appropriate means of acquisition, particularly with an emphasis towards securing suitably sized and quality tableland parcels oriented to active recreational uses.	To be addressed as part of the Official Plan Review.	Review Required

DRAFT

Appendix D: Community Survey Data Tables

See following pages.

DRAFT

Participation in Parks and Recreation Activities

1 Since 2019, in which of the following activities did you or anyone in your household participate, in Aurora or elsewhere?

Participation refers to situations where you or a member of your household actively take part (not as a spectator), either at home or in public. (select all that apply)

	#	%
Walking or Hiking for Leisure	370	81%
Running or Jogging	152	33%
Cycling	195	43%
BMX or Mountain Biking	34	7%
Swimming (indoor)	183	40%
Swimming (outdoor)	108	24%
Fitness, Yoga or Weight-training (in-person)	132	29%
Fitness, Yoga or Weight-training (virtual)	70	15%
Use of Outdoor Fitness Equipment	66	15%
Hockey, Figure Skating, or Ice Sports (indoor)	103	23%
Hockey, Figure Skating, or Ice Sports (outdoor)	98	22%
Curling	23	5%
Baseball or Softball	57	13%
Soccer (indoor)	42	9%
Soccer (outdoor)	103	23%
Football	3	1%
Rugby	23	5%
Cricket	3	1%
Lacrosse (box – indoor)	3	1%
Lacrosse (field – outdoor)	3	1%
Tennis (indoor)	28	6%
Tennis (outdoor)	84	18%
Pickleball	48	11%
Basketball	79	17%
Volleyball (beach)	18	4%
Volleyball (indoor)	14	3%
Badminton	31	7%
Use of Playground Equipment	175	38%
Use of Splash Pad	139	31%
Skateboarding or Scootering	58	13%
Disc Golf / Frisbee Golf	118	26%
Golf	100	22%
Bocce	25	5%
Lawn Bowling	17	4%
Gymnastics	40	9%
Dog Walking (on leash)	160	35%
Dog Walking (off-leash park)	62	14%
Special Events in Parks	204	45%
Town of Aurora Recreation Programs or Camps	100	22%
Other (please specify)	21	5%
answered question	**455**	
skipped question	0	

Other (open-ended) - Top responses	#	%
Ultimate Frisbee	4	19%
Cross Country Skiing	2	10%
Special Olympics Activities	2	10%
Picnic	2	10%
Trails	2	10%

2 Are you and members of your household able to participate in parks and recreation activities as often as you would like?

	#	%
Yes	255	56%
No	200	44%
answered question	**455**	**100%**
skipped question	0	

3 Why are you and members of your household not able to participate parks and recreation activities as often as you would like? (select up to 3 responses)

	#	%
Lack of personal time / Too busy	56	28%
Lack of desired facilities or programs	120	60%
Program not offered at a convenient time	53	26%
Program/Activity is often full	67	33%
Lack of money / Too expensive	18	9%
Lack of information / Unaware of opportunities	23	11%
Lack of transportation / Facility too far away	14	7%
Lack of or inadequate parking	9	4%
Health problems / Disability / Age	24	12%
Language / Cultural Barrier	0	0%
Lack of Child Care	5	2%
Activity has not resumed since the start of the pandemic	6	3%
Don't Know	1	0%
Other (please specify)	23	11%
answered question	**201**	
skipped question	254	

Other (open-ended) - Top responses	#	%
Lack of Disc Golf Course	9	39%
More Pool Times Needed	5	22%
Seeking more opportunities for Pickleball / Tennis	2	9%
Inclusion Programs desired	1	4%

Importance and Satisfaction

4 In general, how important are the following items to your household?

	Not at all Important		Somewhat Unimportant		Somewhat Important		Very Important		Don't Know / Don't Use		Answered		Skipped
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Indoor recreation facilities, such as arenas, pools and seniors' centres	25	6%	20	5%	120	27%	265	61%	8	2%	**438**	**100%**	17
Outdoor recreation facilities such as sports fields, tennis or pickleball courts, and skate parks	22	5%	25	6%	100	23%	274	63%	15	3%	**436**	**100%**	19
Parks for casual use, such as walking, picnicking and unstructured play	10	2%	21	5%	85	19%	317	73%	3	1%	**436**	**100%**	19
Recreation programs (registered and drop-in)	30	7%	51	12%	140	32%	197	46%	13	3%	**431**	**100%**	24

5 What is your level of satisfaction with the following parks and recreation services in Aurora?

	Not at all Satisfied		Somewhat Dissatisfied		Somewhat Satisfied		Very Satisfied		Don't Know / Don't Use		Answered		Skipped
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Indoor recreation facilities, such as arenas, pools and seniors' centres	23	5%	59	13%	225	51%	91	21%	40	9%	**438**	**100%**	17
Outdoor recreation facilities such as sports fields, tennis or pickleball courts, and skate parks	43	10%	69	16%	194	44%	70	16%	61	14%	**437**	**100%**	18
Parks for casual use, such as walking, picnicking and unstructured play	25	6%	53	12%	200	46%	148	34%	12	3%	**438**	**100%**	17
Recreation programs (registered and drop-in)	23	5%	57	13%	194	45%	67	16%	90	21%	**431**	**100%**	24

Program / Activity Gaps

6 If the Town were to provide additional programs or activities, which age groups should be a priority? (select all that apply)

	#	%
Pre-School (4 years and under)	84	19%
Children (5 – 12 years)	191	43%
Teens (13 – 18 years)	190	43%
Adults (19 – 54 years)	219	49%
Older Adults (55 – 69 years)	174	39%
Seniors (70 years and over)	120	27%
Families	133	30%
answered question	**444**	
skipped question	11	

7 Are there any parks and recreation activities that you or members of your household would like to see offered in the Town of Aurora that are not currently available?

	#	%
Yes	230	51%
No	71	16%
Don't Know	139	31%
answered question	**440**	**97%**
skipped question	15	

8 What activities would you like to see offered?

	#
answered question	**223**
skipped question	232

Open ended response

Top Activities (open-ended)		% of sample
Disc Golf	84	19%
Swimming	30	7%
Pickleball	12	3%
Accessible Programming	10	2%
Skating	9	2%
Frisbee Golf	7	2%
Trails	7	2%
Basketball	6	1%
Outdoor Fitness	5	1%
Curling	5	1%

Facility Priorities

9 To assist the Town in prioritizing spending, please indicate the level of priority that you feel should be placed on improving or developing each of the following facility types?

	Not a Priority		Low Priority		Medium Priority		High Priority		Don't Know / Don't Use		Answered		Skipped
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Swimming Pools (indoor)	37	9%	63	16%	103	25%	173	43%	28	7%	**404**	**100%**	51
Fitness Centres	57	15%	89	23%	138	35%	75	19%	32	8%	**391**	**100%**	64
Arenas	48	12%	77	20%	139	36%	77	20%	46	12%	**387**	**100%**	68
Gymnasiums	49	13%	90	23%	142	36%	58	15%	53	14%	**392**	**100%**	63
Halls and Multi-use Space	57	15%	95	25%	135	35%	49	13%	49	13%	**385**	**100%**	70
Space for Older Adults (e.g., Seniors Centre)	33	8%	53	13%	159	40%	121	30%	36	9%	**402**	**100%**	53
Baseball or Softball Diamonds	74	19%	98	26%	105	27%	44	11%	62	16%	**383**	**100%**	72
Soccer Fields (indoor)	71	18%	113	29%	96	25%	44	11%	61	16%	**385**	**100%**	70
Soccer Fields (outdoor)	47	12%	91	24%	126	33%	70	18%	52	13%	**386**	**100%**	69
Multi-use Fields (football, rugby)	47	12%	85	22%	128	33%	56	15%	69	18%	**385**	**100%**	70
Lacrosse Fields	93	24%	120	31%	66	17%	12	3%	92	24%	**383**	**100%**	72
Cricket Fields	106	28%	109	29%	56	15%	9	2%	102	27%	**382**	**100%**	73
Outdoor Running Tracks	68	18%	82	21%	116	30%	49	13%	67	18%	**382**	**100%**	73
Playgrounds	33	9%	51	13%	95	24%	181	47%	28	7%	**388**	**100%**	67
Splash Pads	43	11%	60	16%	103	27%	149	39%	32	8%	**387**	**100%**	68
Basketball Courts (outdoor)	42	11%	72	19%	142	37%	61	16%	66	17%	**383**	**100%**	72
Tennis Courts (outdoor)	49	13%	82	21%	137	36%	55	14%	61	16%	**384**	**100%**	71
Pickleball Courts (outdoor)	75	19%	81	21%	100	26%	58	15%	78	20%	**392**	**100%**	63
Beach Volleyball Courts	71	19%	104	27%	95	25%	34	9%	77	20%	**381**	**100%**	74
Outdoor Ice Rinks	42	11%	52	13%	120	31%	142	37%	33	8%	**389**	**100%**	66
BMX or Bike Parks	84	22%	98	26%	86	22%	36	9%	80	21%	**384**	**100%**	71
Skateboard Parks	73	19%	94	24%	105	27%	36	9%	76	20%	**384**	**100%**	71
Parkland Acquisition	26	7%	44	11%	96	25%	187	48%	37	9%	**390**	**100%**	65
Multi-Use Fitness Trails	22	6%	48	12%	131	34%	169	43%	20	5%	**390**	**100%**	65
Nature Trails	13	3%	28	7%	101	26%	242	62%	9	2%	**393**	**100%**	62
Disc Golf / Frisbee Golf	74	19%	69	18%	47	12%	114	29%	88	22%	**392**	**100%**	63
Fitness Equipment (outdoor)	68	18%	105	27%	116	30%	35	9%	58	15%	**382**	**100%**	73
Community Gardens for growing vegetables	46	12%	66	17%	107	27%	125	32%	49	12%	**393**	**100%**	62
Off-Leash Dog Parks	85	22%	74	19%	103	26%	78	20%	49	13%	**389**	**100%**	66
Park Washrooms	15	4%	28	7%	120	30%	231	57%	11	3%	**405**	**100%**	50
Other high priorities (please specify)	63												

Other (open-ended) - Top responses	
Accessible Walkways	10
Swimming	5
Accessible Programming	5
Lawn Bowling	4
Accessible Playgrounds	3
Trails	3

Statements

10 Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Don't Know		Answered		Skipped
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Parks and recreation services are important to your quality of life.	6	1%	2	0%	78	19%	332	79%	2	0%	**420**	**100%**	35
The Town's parks and recreation facilities are conveniently located for you and members of your household.	19	5%	61	14%	221	52%	113	27%	7	2%	**421**	**100%**	34
The development of new parks and recreation facilities should be a high priority.	5	1%	25	6%	118	28%	263	63%	9	2%	**420**	**100%**	35
Upgrades to existing parks and recreation facilities should be a high priority.	9	2%	17	4%	142	34%	242	58%	10	2%	**420**	**100%**	35
The Town's parks and recreation facilities are clean and well maintained.	9	2%	45	11%	253	60%	89	21%	24	6%	**420**	**100%**	35
The Town's parks and recreation facilities provide good value for your tax dollars.	12	3%	61	15%	202	48%	115	27%	30	7%	**420**	**100%**	35
The Town should work with other service providers such as schools, libraries, and non-profit agencies to provide parks and recreation facilities.	8	2%	18	4%	172	41%	188	45%	34	8%	**420**	**100%**	35
The Town should work with the private sector to provide parks and recreation facilities.	24	6%	59	14%	154	37%	146	35%	37	9%	**420**	**100%**	35
You feel well informed about the Town's parks, facilities, programs, and events.	26	6%	79	19%	226	54%	68	16%	21	5%	**420**	**100%**	35

Comments

11 Please provide any additional comments you may have regarding parks and recreation in the Town of Aurora. (Maximum 100 words)

	#
answered question	216
skipped question	239

Top Themes (open-ended)	#	% of sample
Disc Golf	40	9%
Additional Pool	24	5%
Trail Maintenance	22	5%
Additional Programming	20	4%
Playground Maintenance	17	4%
Washroom Servicing	7	2%
Additional Ball Diamonds	6	1%
Splash Pad	5	1%
Add Pickleball Courts	5	1%
Add Outdoor Fitness Equipment	4	1%

Demographic Information

12 How many people, including yourself, live in your household?

	#	%
1	26	6%
2	113	28%
3	70	17%
4	126	31%
5	53	13%
6	12	3%
7	2	0%
8+	0	0%
answered question	**402**	**100%**
skipped question	53	
Total Persons	**1,317**	
Average Person per Household	**3.3**	

13 Please indicate the total number of persons within your household that fall into the following age categories.

	# of HH's	% of HH's	# of People	% of People	2021 Census
9 years and under	141	31%	222	16%	11%
10 – 19 years	123	27%	194	14%	13%
20 – 34 years	121	27%	189	14%	17%
35 – 54 years	244	54%	437	32%	29%
55 – 69 years	119	26%	197	15%	20%
70 years and over	73	16%	108	8%	11%
			1,347	**100%**	**100%**

14 This survey asks about interest in off-leash dog areas. Do you own a dog?

	#	%
Yes	155	38%
No	258	62%
answered question	**413**	**100%**
skipped question	42	

15 How long have you lived in the Town of Aurora?

	#	%
Less than 5 years	88	21%
5 to 10 years	75	18%
More than 10 years	254	61%
Don't live in the Town of Aurora	0	0%
answered question	**417**	**100%**
skipped question	38	

Note: non-resident responses removed due to over-sampling

16 In which Town Ward area do you live?

	#	%	2021 Estimated Households
Ward 1	78	20%	17%
Ward 2	66	17%	19%
Ward 3	82	21%	22%
Ward 4	50	13%	11%
Ward 5	63	16%	19%
Ward 6	26	7%	12%
Don’t Know	22	6%	n/a
answered question	**387**	**100%**	**100%**
skipped question	68		