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Town of Aurora
Committee of the Whole Report
No. CMS25-013

Subject: Sport Plan Update 2025-2029 – Additional Information

Prepared by: Lisa Warth, Manager, Recreation and Hailey Jones, Specialist, Sport and Community Development

Department: Community Services

Date: May 13, 2025

Recommendation

1. That Report No. CMS25-013 be received; and
2. That Council endorse the recommendations contained in the attached Sport Plan update.

Executive Summary

At the February 11, 2025, Committee of the Whole meeting, consultants from Optimus SBR presented the Sport Plan update. Some members of Council had questions at that time that required further information. This report addresses those questions.

- The scope of the update was limited due to resource constraints
- The consulting firm was vetted through the approved procurement process
- The process and communication of building the Sport Plan was extensive
- A detailed work plan includes strategies and tactics broken down into timeframes

Background

In June 2024, staff began the process of procuring a consulting firm to help with the update of the Sport Plan. The initial sport plan was intended to provide guidance from 2015 to 2020 and was overdue for an update. Through a proper procurement process,

the Sport Plan update was awarded to Optimus SBR, a consulting firm based in Toronto, and work on developing the sport plan update took place from August 2024 to January 2025.

Report CMS25-004 was brought forward to Council on February 11, 2025 to share the Sport Plan Update. At that time, additional information was requested by Council, and this report serves to provide that information.

Analysis

The scope of the update was limited due to resource constraints

The sport plan update focuses on enhancing the foundational framework for sport in Aurora by building on the existing Sport Plan. This update aims to ensure inclusivity, sustainability and growth within the Town's sport community, by engaging local stakeholders and interested parties to align priorities effectively.

The key components of the update include:

- Grounding the 4 pillars (Leadership Development & Volunteer Support, Sport Participant Engagement, Community Sport Sustainability and Sport Tourism) that have been previously validated through community engagement and expert consultations.
- Addressing emerging issues and trends affecting local sport organizations (LSO's) and community sport organizations (CSO's).
- Strengthening alignment between community stakeholders and interested parties, municipal policies and national sport development strategies such as the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the Facility Allocation policy, the Sport Tourism policy and others.
- Ensuring that the plan remains applicable to all sport participants, from athletes and coaches to volunteers and administrators.
- Leveraging existing data, expert analysis and community engagement to maintain the validity of the plan while staying within the defined scope and resources.

Unfortunately, the scope and budget did not allow for in depth demographic data (beyond what was collected through census data), investment tracking, economic impact assessments or facility needs. Facility needs are addressed in the Parks and Recreation master plan, the facility allocation policy and the Sport Field Development strategy.

The consulting firm was selected through the approved procurement process

Through the procurement process, proponents for this project were scored in various areas including:

- Corporate Profile
- Experience of Project Team
- Experience with similar projects
- Project Understanding and approach/methodology
- Project work schedule
- Pricing

Optimus SBR was selected as the successful proponent. They are one of the largest independently owned professional services firms in North America. They have skilled consultants with various areas of expertise including sport planning, research methodologies and community engagement. In addition to the lead consultants on this project, a sport management consultant and DEI consultant were part of the team. Optimus SBR has experience in working with municipal governments on similar projects.

The methodology and expertise applied to this update was rigorously vetted to maintain the integrity and validity of the Sport Plan.

Staff found Optimus SBR extremely professional and knowledgeable to work with and feel the Town got exceptional service and value from this firm.

Engagement and communication of building the Sport Plan was extensive

A robust engagement and communication strategy was implemented to ensure that all relevant stakeholders and interested parties were given ample opportunity to provide input. Key communication activities included:

- Invitations to LSO's and CSO's, equity committees and community groups to participate in consultation discussions. A specific discussion guide was developed to engage with each of these groups. The questions differed in the discussion guides depending on which group was being consulted because it's known that these different groups are going to have different perspectives on the role of sport in the community. The invitation to participate in these discussions was extended multiple times and offered based on LSO and CSO schedules.

- A general community wide survey was distributed through various platforms including email, social media and enewsletter listservs. Additionally, LSO's and CSO's were asked on multiple occasions to distribute this survey on the Town's behalf to their membership and contacts. Some LSO's and CSO's received a personalized email with a request to distribute. To ensure adequate response time, the survey end date was extended beyond original deadline.
- Virtual collaborative sessions were held with organizations upon request, to get feedback and clarify any questions or concerns.
- Specific outreach to Sport Equity & Inclusion committees and cultural consultants to ensure diverse representation in the discussions.
- The discussion guides and the community wide survey were validated by an internal team to ensure language was clear, the intent of the questions were clear and that there was a clear link to the scope of the project.

The results of the community consultations and discussions, along with the general community wide survey were validated with stakeholders and interested parties during a validation step to ensure the data collected and resulting strategies resonated with those who could be impacted by the work and direction of the sport plan update.

A detailed work plan includes strategies and tactics broken down into timeframes

A supplementary document to the Sport Plan update (attached) has been developed that makes up a work plan for staff. This document is formatted to include 11 strategic initiatives under 4 pillars as follows:

Pillar 1 – Leadership Development and Volunteer Support

Strategic initiatives include:

- 1.1. Identify, source and help provide community sport leadership training for all LSO leaders, including under resourced and underrepresented groups.
- 1.2. Support the creation of leadership empowerment programming for those groups not traditionally represented in sport leadership.
- 1.3. Create and provide administrative support tools and templates for LSO's to support leadership with operations and governance.

Pillar 2 – Sport Participant Engagement

Strategic initiatives include:

- 2.1. Identify and create opportunities for feedback to pinpoint the most prominent barriers to enter sport in Aurora, across various resident and participant groups.
- 2.2. Collaborate with LSO's and community partners to trial new flexible programming options.
- 2.3. Develop a comprehensive communications strategy to increase sport participation.

Pillar 3 – Community Sport Sustainability

Strategic initiatives include:

- 3.1. Develop a governance training program in collaboration with LSO's.
- 3.2. Create an online, self serve resource hub for LSO's and community partners that will support the operations of organizations.

Pillar 4 – Sport Tourism

Strategic initiatives include:

- 4.1. Develop a structured review process to help determine and examine potential sport tourism opportunities.
- 4.2. Build a partnership with a national leader (s) values-based sport to ensure a positive experience and enhance Aurora's exposure across the sport tourism landscape.
- 4.3. Engage other community partners to identify if/how they can support one off or continuous sport tourism opportunities.

Each outcome includes strategic initiatives, tactics, milestones and timelines for implementation, these can be found in the attached Action Plan.

The action plan is fluid and may require adjustments as staff work through implementation with various partners. Staff will continue to bring status updates to Council on the progress made on the implementation of the Sport Plan throughout the life of the plan.

Advisory Committee Review

Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee

September 19, 2024 – consultation with Optimus SBR

At this meeting, consultants from Optimus attended and gathered feedback from the

committee on the distinction between sport and recreation, current support for local sport organizations, the pillars of the sport plan update and ensuring the plan is updated with a lens on diversity, equity and inclusion.

November 21, 2024 – Sport Plan Refresh – Status Update

At this meeting, staff presented the preliminary findings of the community consultation. The committee and staff discussed the management strategies, themes and implementation of the recommendations.

Legal Considerations

None.

Financial Implications

This Sport Plan update, including any associated consulting costs, are funded through Project No. SO0076 – Sport Plan Update which currently has a total of \$40,000 in budget authority.

Communications Considerations

None.

Climate Change Considerations

The actions from this report do not impact greenhouse gas emissions or impact climate change adaptation.

Link to Strategic Plan

The Sport Plan Update supports the following Strategic Plan goals and key objectives: Supporting an exceptional quality of life for all in its accomplishments in satisfying requirements in the following key objectives

- Invest in sustainable infrastructure
- Celebrating and promoting our culture
- Encouraging an active and healthy lifestyle
- Strengthening the fabric of our community

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

1. Council may provide other direction.

Conclusions

Staff feel confident with the Sport Plan update. The process and validation have resulted in a document that will help not only sustain sport but grow sport in the Aurora community over the next five years. The ultimate goal of the Sport Plan is to facilitate greatest possible participation. By continuing to work with our LSO's, CSO's and other community partners, the Sport Plan update provides the guidance needed to achieve that goal.

Attachments

1. Sport Plan Update – 2025-2029
2. Sport Plan 2025-2029 Action Plan

Previous Reports

CMS25-004 – Sport Plan Update 2025-2029, February 11, 2025

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on April 24, 2025

Approvals

Approved by Robin McDougall, Director, Community Services

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer