



PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURE

master plan

Final Report | July 2019





Township of Centre Wellington

Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan

July 19, 2019

Prepared by:



Acknowledgements

Township of Centre Wellington Council

Mayor Kelly Linton
Councillor Ian MacRae, Ward 1
Councillor Kirk McElwain, Ward 2
Councillor Bob Foster, Ward 3
Councillor Neil Dunsmore, Ward 4
Councillor Stephen Kitras, Ward 5
Councillor Steven VanLeeuwen, Ward 6

Project Steering Committee

Pat Newson, Managing Director of Community Services
Brian Detzler, Managing Director of Community Services (*retired*)
Bruce Parkin, Manager of Community Programs & Customer Service/Aquatic Supervisor
Brett Salmon, Managing Director of Planning & Development
Dorothy Smith, Manager of Community Development, Festivals, Tourism & Culture
Matt Tucker, Manager of Facilities
Elizabeth Bender, Cultural Coordinator
Eric Goudie, Theatre Coordinator
Jeremy Machin, Parks Lead Hand
Kendra Martin, Communications Coordinator

Consulting Team

Monteith Brown Planning Consultants Ltd.
Tucker-Reid & Associates
Landscape Planning Limited

Executive Summary


The Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan identifies needs and priorities for the Township of Centre Wellington and its partners to consider to the year 2028. Over the course of this ten year period, Centre Wellington's population is forecasted to grow from 31,000 to 40,000 or 28%. Changes that have and will continue to occur as it relates to population and evolving interests among residents is the reason that the Township is updating this Master Plan, which was last prepared in 2008.

The Master Plan's methodology involved extensive research, consultation and assessment efforts. The Master Plan's community engagement strategy resulted in direct participation from over 700 individuals speaking on behalf of hundreds more people in their households and community organizations. The Master Plan leveraged awareness through the Township's ConnectCW online engagement platform while utilizing open houses, workshops, interviews, surveys and a design charrette to inform its analysis. Common themes expressed during consultations included placing a greater emphasis on the arts and culture sector as well as opportunities for youth that are not involved in sports, pursuing stronger alliances and partnerships with others in the community, and embedding principles of inclusion within the way services are delivered (e.g. activities that appeal to many ages, interests, cultural backgrounds, abilities, income levels, and servicing rural and urban residents).



Compared to previous Master Plans, this iteration focuses attention on fewer recommendations in recognition of the Community Services Department's resourcing capabilities. As such, there are 23 recommendations spanning municipal delivery of parks, recreation and culture facilities and services. The following synopsis summarizes most pressing actions for the Township to implement in the coming years (not presented in any particular order of priority or timing).

1. Targeting 120 hectares of parkland in total by the year 2028, approximately **23 hectares** more than the current supply. This will be partially addressed through new parks presently identified in six future development plans along with parkland dedications permitted under the Ontario Planning Act.
2. Undertaking a consultation and business planning process with local field sport organizations to explore the feasibility of municipal involvement in the **indoor artificial turf** market. Investment on the part of the Township should be contingent upon securing a qualified partner(s) that contributes capital and/or operating resources.
3. Undertaking architectural and needs assessments for the **Elora Community Centre** to address lifecycle issues of existing components, accessibility, and ways to accommodate a greater range of use including indoor turf sports, indoor walking, personal fitness and



wellness, as well as programs for children, youth and older adults.

4. Continuing to provide direct and indirect support to cultural programs, services and festivals/events through allocation of resources (including a sustainable Funding Strategy), marketing and communications, volunteer development and/or the provision of space.
5. Conducting **architectural and needs assessments for the Victoria Park Seniors Centre** to explore the costs associated with further expansion to address its growing demands for 55+ programs.
6. Hosting **annual focus groups with volunteers and volunteer groups** to make volunteerism more accessible and meet the needs of a time strapped community.
7. Preparing an update to the Centre Wellington **Cultural Action Plan**, with a stronger focus on emphasizing as many quantitative and qualitative benefits of the sector to inform decision-making.
8. Developing a **Pricing Policy** based on the true costs to deliver parks, recreation and cultural programs and services.
9. As parks age to a point where reinvestments are required, exploring opportunities to rejuvenate them to meet the needs of residents and visitors.

Over the course of the Master Plan's development, the Township has initiated a number of actions that support principles and analyses that are contained herein. For example, the Township has taken steps to form a Youth Council to provide advice relating to local parks, recreation, culture (and other) services and is proceeding with a new skateboard park in Elora.

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Appendix A: Listing of Township Parks



Section 1: Introduction

The Benefits of Parks, Recreation & Culture

Centre Wellington's parks, recreation and culture system influences residents in many ways, providing countless physical, health, economic psychological, and environmental benefits. Not only does participation in recreation, culture, and park activities offer opportunities for a healthy lifestyle, it facilitates greater cognitive development and self-esteem among individuals, social interaction, economic spending, conservation of natural lands, and community vibrancy.

The field of parks, recreation and cultural planning has emerged to position decision-makers and service providers to meet the needs of a community in a sustainable manner. Centre Wellington regularly undertakes assessments of its parks, recreation and cultural system to develop policy frameworks, and quantify benefits and needs through performance measures.

Purpose of the Master Plan

The Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan (the "Master Plan") identifies the Township of Centre Wellington's high-level needs, opportunities and priorities for the local parks, recreation and cultural system. Since the year 2000, the Township has prepared two such Master Plans to identify an appropriate mix of facilities, programs and services so that residents can engage in meaningful social and physical activities. This is the Township's third Master Plan. It provides a renewed opportunity to engage Township Council and staff, community stakeholders, and the general public to understand collective needs and priorities. Recognizing that investments by the Township of Centre Wellington need to be fiscally responsible and sustainable, the Master Plan prioritizes directions to address the most pressing needs in a timely manner.

Recreation is the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative, and spiritual pursuits that enhance individuals and community wellbeing.

A FRAMEWORK FOR RECREATION IN CANADA, 2015

The parks continuum refers to places reserved for conserving and experiencing Nature, with varying but important complementary goals [including] land trusts and private preserves, urban streams, community and regional parks, city parks, playgrounds, trails, ravines, local parks, territorial and provincial parks, marine parks, protected areas...Indigenous protected and conserved areas, national parks, and wilderness areas

PARKS FOR ALL: AN ACTION PLAN FOR CANADA'S PARKS COMMUNITY, 2017

Culture is the lifeblood of a vibrant society, expressed in the many ways we tell our stories, celebrate, remember the past, entertain ourselves, and imagine the future. Our creative expression helps define who we are, and helps us see the world through the eyes of others. Ontarians participate in culture in many ways—as audiences, professionals, amateurs, volunteers, and donors or investors.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN OF THE CULTURE SECTOR: ONTARIO CULTURE STRATEGY BACKGROUND DOCUMENT, 2016

A Vision for Parks, Recreation & Culture in Centre Wellington

Based upon consultations with the public, Township staff and Council, the Vision statement used to guide the Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan is:

“Residents and visitors to Centre Wellington are inspired by the beauty of our **natural surroundings** and **cultural vibrancy**, motivating them to lead **active**, **healthy** and **engaged** lifestyles.”



Methodology

The Master Plan guides future decision-making with respect to parks, recreation and culture opportunities for the ten year period spanning 2018 to 2028. The scope of the Master Plan includes indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, parks and open spaces, cultural facilities, programs, and services. Changes in demographics, trends, interests, aging infrastructure, and other factors have necessitated the need to update the 2009 Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan. In updating the Master Plan, the Township has a document that responds to on-going community needs and strives to ensure that residents are healthy, active, and engaged in their daily lives.

The Master Plan is based on several inputs and was prepared through a three-phase process. It is intended to be consistent with other related plans, policies and procedures in place for the parks, recreation and culture system unless an update or change in direction is required. For example, trails and cultural services are included in the Master Plan due to their complementary nature with the parks and recreation system, however, the Township already has a Council-endorsed Trails Master Plan and a Cultural Action Plan in place. It is not the intent of the Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan to duplicate methodologies or assessments of other long-range planning documents but rather to ensure that synergistic elements are of prime consideration so that the Township continues to make decisions in an integrated and holistic manner.

Process Methodology





Section 2: Master Plan Inputs

Alignment with Council's Priorities and Initiatives

Council's Priorities and Initiatives for the 2015 to 2018 term identify the key objectives to focus upon based upon the finite resources (namely time and funding) available to the Township. Five broad goals were identified: Reliable Infrastructure, Healthy Growth, Economic Prosperity, Pride of Place, and Good Government.

The Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan and other activities of the Community Services Department support the goals of:

- Reliable Infrastructure by providing needed spaces and facilities to foster parks, recreation and culture opportunities;
- Healthy Growth by enabling services that promote physical activity, mental health, community vibrancy, and connections between people;
- Economic Prosperity by advancing community and economic development principles, especially with employers placing value on locating in communities with strong parks, recreation and cultural systems;
- Pride of Place by supporting community recreation and cultural events in parks and facilities; and
- Good Government by providing programs and services in an effective, financially-responsible manner through proactive planning.

Reliable Infrastructure

- The Township will manage and upgrade the community's infrastructure assets in an environmentally responsible way

Healthy Growth

- The Township will plan now for its inevitable growth, so that we retain a vibrant and accessible community and our high quality of life in the future

Economic Prosperity

- The Township will help the business community to excel and expand and to create jobs, so that Centre Wellington's economic vitality keeps pace with its population

Pride of Place

- Acting responsibly, the Township will continue to support community initiatives that foster pride in our community and enhance its amenities

Good Government

- As a government, the Township will make well-informed decisions, operate efficiently, get results, communicate openly, and engage the public in all important decisions

Alignment with the Framework for Recreation in Canada

One of the most recent national studies and determination of priorities in recreation, culture and parks is the Framework for Recreation in Canada (FRC). The FRC was developed over the course of three years and involved significant consultation with Canadians as to their thoughts on the benefits and importance of recreation. The Canadian Parks and Recreation Association in collaboration with the Interprovincial/ Territorial Governments – through the Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council and the Provincial /Territorial Recreation and Parks Associations – developed a framework that rejuvenates the definition of recreation and parks, articulates the economic impacts of recreation and parks as well as the benefits and key goals and strategies that should be evident in each community across Canada. The advancement of the five key goals has been well researched and are evidenced-based. This FRC is relevant to the Township of Centre Wellington context and will be utilized to develop key directions for the future.



Table 1: The Framework for Recreation in Canada

The Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015 - Pathways to Wellbeing We envision a Canada where everyone is engaged in meaningful, accessible recreation experiences that foster: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual wellbeing • Community wellbeing • The wellbeing of our natural and built environment 				
Goal #1: Active Living Foster active living through physical recreation	Goal # 2: Inclusion & Access Increase inclusion and access to recreation for population that face constraints to participation	Goal #3: Connecting People & Nature Help people connect to nature through recreation	Goal #4: Supportive Environments Ensure the provision of supportive physical and social environments that encourage participation in recreation and build strong, caring communities	Goal #5: Recreation Capacity Ensure the continued growth and sustainability of the recreation field
Examples of Supportive Initiatives and Strategies				
Recreation for All Ages Increasing Residents Frequency, Duration & Intensity of Physical Activity Participation in Recreation Throughout One's Life Physical Literacy Sport Development Sport Tourism Universal/Free Play Opportunities Active Families	Equitable Participation for All, Regardless of Socio-Economic Status, Age, Culture, Race, Aboriginal Status, Gender, Gender identification, Ability, Sexual Orientation or Geographic Location at a Minimum Specific Efforts to Include Marginalized Populations Community Engagement Initiatives	Natural Spaces and Places Outdoor Play Challenging Play Comprehensive System of Parks and Trails Public Awareness and Education Interpretation of the Natural Environment Minimize Negative Impacts on The Environment	Provide Essential Spaces & Places Flexible Structures & Spaces for Multiple Purposes Renewed Infrastructure Active Transportation Partnerships & Sponsorships Assessment Tools Aligned Community Initiatives Addressing Priorities as a Collective with Community	Collaborative System Quality Assurance Service Standards Knowledge Management Business Supports Marketing / Communications Organizational Effectiveness Performance Management Economic Impact Community Capacity Building Community Engagement & Leadership Volunteerism

Input from Community Consultations

The master planning process offered several consultation opportunities for the public and stakeholders to become involved and provide input. Branded under the Township's "Connect CW" platform, several consultation tools were used to develop the Master Plan by engaging a broad range of residents, community organizations, Township staff, Councillors, and other relevant representatives. Consultations included the following activities:

- Project Portal (www.connectcw.ca)
- Open Houses (in conjunction with other Township projects)
- Community Services Advisory Committee Feedback
- Community & Stakeholder Surveys
- Victoria Park Seniors Centre Drop Box and Feedback from the VPSC Advisory Board
- Council Interviews
- Design Charrette
- Departmental Staff Workshop
- School Board Engagement



The consultations were designed to seek input from residents, stakeholder groups, Township staff, and Council. Some common themes used to inform the Master Plan (listed in no particular order of importance or priority), together with other key inputs, included:

- Need to place greater emphasis on the arts and culture sector, including ensuring arts and culture space is available.
- More facilities and programs are needed for youth that are not involved in sports.
- Pursuit of stronger alliances between institutions, agencies, user groups and the Township.
- Principles of inclusion must be embodied in the delivery of service for all, regardless of income, age, disability or ethnicity.



PRC Master Plan Open House, October 2017

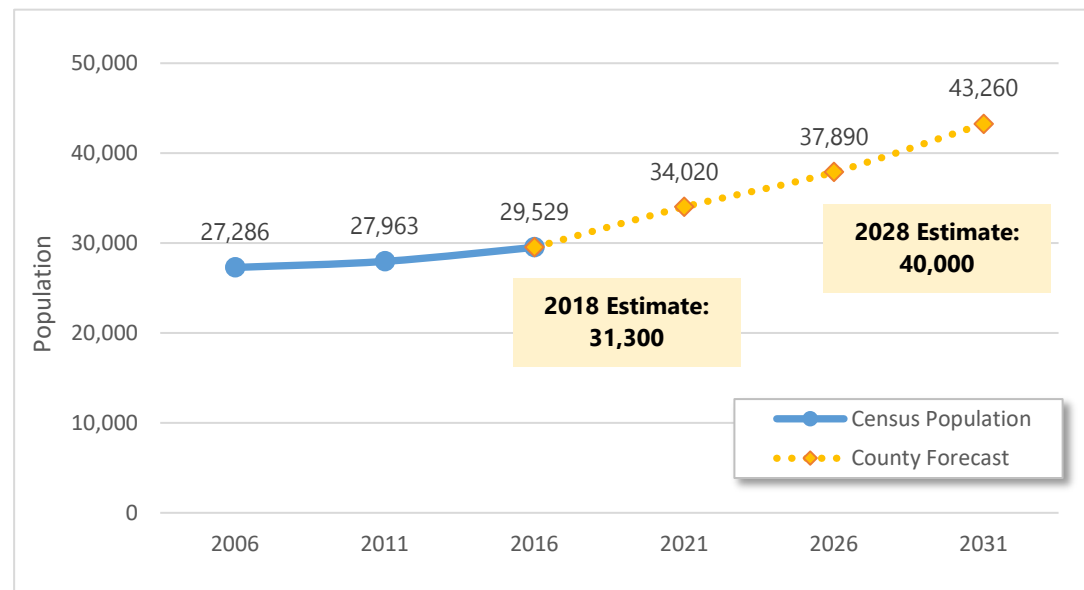
Selected Trends in Parks, Recreation & Culture

Implications of Population Growth

Centre Wellington’s population is estimated to be 31,300 (rounded to the nearest 100 persons) based upon census data and growth forecasts being used in conjunction with other municipal planning documents. During the master planning period, Centre Wellington is expected to undergo considerable population growth with the County of Wellington Official Plan Amendment No. 99 forecasting growth of approximately 28% by 2028, reaching a population of 40,000.¹

The level of growth being forecasted will place pressures on Centre Wellington’s parks, recreation, and culture services. There will be a need to ensure that the Township is well positioned to respond to the needs of its residents over the planning period and beyond.

Figure 1: Historical and Forecasted Population in Centre Wellington, 2006-2028



Source: Statistics Canada 2006 – 2016 Census and Wellington County Population, Household and Employment Forecast Update, 2016

¹ 2018 population is estimated using a straight-line extrapolation between the 2016 Census and 2021 population forecast contained in the Wellington County Population, Household and Employment Forecast Update as amended January 8, 2016 (and rounded to the nearest 100 residents) while 2028 population is estimated using a straight-line extrapolation between the 2026 and 2031 forecasts of the same report.

Distribution of Population

With the Township’s spread across an expansive land base, there are different scales of localized pressures for parks, recreation and culture services. Geographic distribution is important to achieve strong and balanced participation rates, but funding makes it necessary to strategically target investment in a manner that delivers facility and services in a financially sustainable manner.

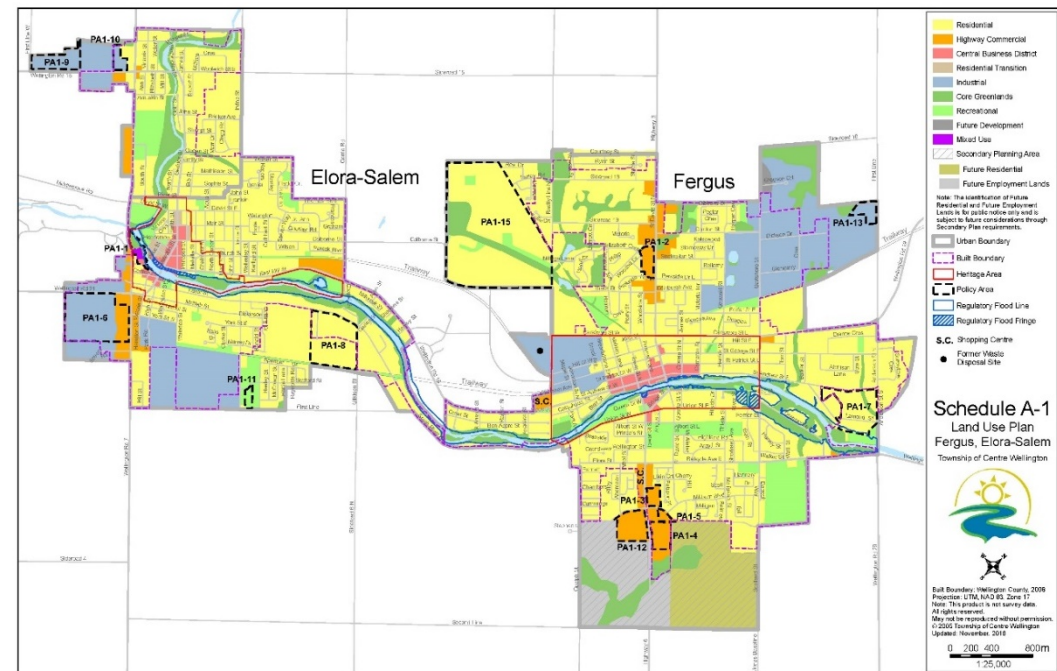
Fergus is the largest settlement area in the Township and that community is expected to attract the majority of population growth over the ten-year planning period. Wellington County’s OPA No.99 forecasts 15,400 people in Fergus as of the year 2016, growing by 12% (13,000 persons) to the year 2031.

Elora-Salem – located immediately west of Fergus - is the Township’s second largest settlement area where OPA No. 99 estimates that the approximately 7,400 residents in that community is projected to exceed 12,000 persons by 2031. The balance of Centre Wellington’s population live in rural areas of the Township. County OPA No. 99 estimates that the approximately 7,400 residents in these areas will remain fairly stable over the planning period.

Table 2: Estimated Population by Settlement Area, 2016 – 2031

Settlement Area	2016	2031	Growth (%)
Fergus	15,440	28,780	12%
Elora-Salem	7,410	12,080	29%
Remaining Rural Areas (including Belwood)	7,360	7,660	3%

Source: Wellington County Population, Household and Employment Forecast Update 2011-2041, May 5, 2015 (as amended January 8, 2016)



Influences of the Community Age Profile

Centre Wellington’s age structure can provide insights that may be gleaned into the types of activities desired by residents. For instance, children and youth populations often create demands for minor sports such as soccer, ball and hockey whereas older adults and seniors may take interest in arts and cultural services, low impact recreation opportunities, and activities that facilitate social interaction and intellectual stimulation.

Centre Wellington’s median age is four years older compared to Wellington County and three years older in comparison with the Province. At 35%, more than one in three Centre Wellington residents are over the age of 55, which is higher than Wellington County (29%) and Ontario (30%). As a result of Centre Wellington’s older median age and larger proportion of older adults, it is important that parks, recreation and cultural services for this age group be carefully considered.

Changes to the community age cohort structure between the 2011 and 2016 Census periods are also indicative of an aging community. During this period, the number of youth in Centre Wellington (age 10 to 19) declined by 6% whereas the number of older adults (age 55 to 69) and seniors (age 70+) increased by 20% and 21%, respectively.

These aging trends are consistent with trends observed across Canada, which are driven in part by the Baby Boomer generation moving into older age cohorts, and is expected to continue in Centre Wellington for the near future. Nonetheless, the number of people within each age group will drive the provision of parks, recreation, arts and cultural opportunities throughout the planning period.

Figure 2: Population by Age Cohort, 2016 Census

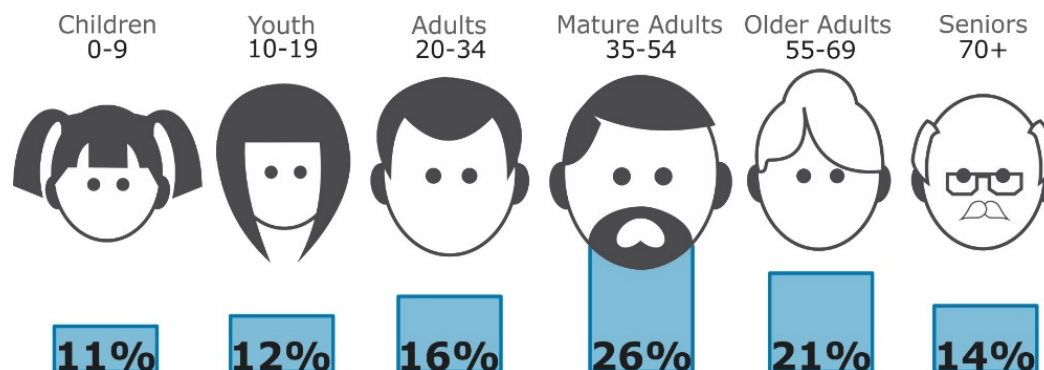


Table 3: Population Growth by Age Cohort, 2011-2016 Census

Age Group	2011	2016	Growth (#)	Growth (%)
0-9 years	3,125	3,195	70	2%
10-19 years	3,650	3,445	-205	-6%
20-34 years	4,040	4,440	400	10%
35-54 years	7,710	7,275	-435	6%
55-69 years	4,975	5,975	1,000	20%
70+ years	3,195	3,860	665	21%
Total	26,695	28,190	1,495	6%

Note: Age Cohort Forecasts were not available at this time.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 and 2016 Census

Increasing Levels of Physical Inactivity

The prevalence of physical inactivity can result from an individual's tendency to participate in sedentary activities such as using the internet, playing video games, and watching television. Research revealed that Canadian high school students spend an average of 8 hours a day engaged in screen-based sedentary behaviour.² The Canadian Health Measures Survey (2014-2015) found that only 8% of children and youth ages 5 to 17 met the current guidelines for physical activity of at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day, while 18% adults met their current guideline of 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity per week.

Canadian children received a D- on the 2016 ParticipACTION Report Card. The study revealed that only 14% of 5-11 year olds and 5% of 12-17 year olds are meeting the guidelines of 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day. This is despite the fact that 77% of 5-19 year olds participate in organized physical activities or sport.³ The Canadian Health Measures Survey also indicated that most children and youth are not meeting recommended activity levels, showing that fewer than 1 in 10 Canadian children and youth (8%) are getting the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity.⁴ In regards to moderate and vigorous physical activity levels nationally, almost 1 in 5 (or 20%) of adults meet recommended activity levels of 150 minutes per week. National activity levels were lower among older adults (60-79 years) when compared to younger adults (18- 39 years). Approximately 21% of adults 18 to 39 years met the recommended guidelines, compared to 17% of 40 to 59 year olds and 13% of 60 to 79 year olds.⁵ Through this comparison, adults in Centre Wellington were more active on average than other Canadians.

² The ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth. 2016. Results from the 2016 Report Card. Retrieved from <https://www.participaction.com>

³ Ibid. The ParticipACTION Report Card, 2016.

⁴ Canadian Health Measures Survey: Activity Monitor Data. 2017. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca>

⁵ Ibid. Canadian Health Measures Survey, 2017.

Multi-Purpose Facilities and Parks

In an era of user convenience and cost recovery, municipalities are centralizing multiple facilities across fewer sites. There is a growing expectation that facilities contain something for everybody, rather than being designed solely for singular uses. Co-location of complementary facility components often creates convenient, centralized activity centres and generates operating efficiencies. The provision of high quality, multi-use and multi-generational facilities encourages physical and social engagement among all age groups, while also creating opportunities for sport or cultural tourism at a regional scale. Parks can also be designed in a manner that they become “outdoor community centres” offering a variety of recreation and cultural activities and spaces within a single setting.

Multi-purpose facilities help to address time constraints and mitigate pressures that keep people away from physical activity. Facilities such as the Centre Wellington Sportsplex and Elora and District Community Centre provide opportunities for multiple family members to participate in different types of recreation and cultural activities. However, one drawback of multi-purpose facilities is that they are inherently more centralized compared to smaller neighbourhood facilities, increasing the need for more distant users to drive, rather than being able to bike or walk.

Contributions to Local Tourism

The provision of high quality parks, recreation and cultural amenities is an effective strategy to draw users and visitors from external markets through sports games and tournaments, festivals, special events and cultural heritage experiences. While parks may not generate significant revenues and profits, they are often a destination for visitors. In particular, their ability to accommodate festivals and special events often generates a ‘multiplier effect’ from tourism spending but also creates a sense of local pride, builds community spirit, and offers tourists and residents alike with a variety of leisure opportunities. Examples of local events include the Fergus Scottish Festival and Highland Games, Music at the Museum, Santa Clause Parades, and Riverfest Elora. There may also be opportunities to align with RTO4 initiatives and Township Council’s Priorities and Initiatives in this regard.



Photo Credit: Riverfest Elora



Section 3: Parks System

Importance of Parkland

Parks are an oasis within built-up environments, providing a connection to nature and green space that humans instinctively crave. Increasing urbanization has underscored the importance of parkland in providing an array of vital recreation, cultural and social opportunities. Although less than 0.5% of Centre Wellington's land base is attributable to the municipal parks system, woodlots account for 15% of the land area while the tree canopy cover is estimated between 14% and 17%.⁶

The value of parkland within communities is immense – parks offer environmental, economic and health benefits while beautifying the urban landscape. Green spaces in urbanized areas provide places of respite, improved air quality, venues for physical activity, and conservation of natural and cultural heritage landscapes. Many studies and land development trends suggest that proximity to parks and open spaces can increase property values. Depending upon size, location and functional characteristics, parks have multiple applications and can act as:

- Facilitators of "placemaking" and high quality urban design;
- Catalysts for community improvement and revitalization;
- Hubs for special events and social interaction;
- Venues for programmed or spontaneous forms of physical activity;
- Educators and stewards of the natural environment; and
- Spaces for gathering and relaxation.

The following points – which have been excerpted from "*The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space*", written by Paul Sherer for The Trust for Public Land in 2006 – summarize the many ways that parks contribute to personal and community wellness.

⁶ Township of Centre Wellington. October 2017. Public Forest Policy (DRAFT).



Templin Gardens

Health Benefits

“City parks and open space improve our physical and psychological health, strengthen our communities, and make our cities and neighborhoods more attractive places to live and work.”

“Strong evidence shows that when people have access to parks, they exercise more. Regular physical activity has been shown to increase health and reduce the risk of a wide range of diseases, including heart disease, hypertension, colon cancer, and diabetes. Physical activity also relieves symptoms of depression and anxiety, improves mood, and enhances psychological well-being. Beyond the benefits of exercise, a growing body of research shows that contact with the natural world improves physical and psychological health.”

Social Benefits

“City parks also produce important social and community development benefits. They make inner-city neighbourhoods more livable; they offer recreational opportunities for at-risk youth, low-income children, and low-income families; and they provide places in low-income neighbourhoods where people can feel a sense of community. Access to public parks and recreational facilities has been strongly linked to reductions in crime and, in particular, to reduced juvenile delinquency.”

“Parks contribute to neighbourhood character and identity acting as gateways and landmarks. They can also enhance neighbourhood and community aesthetics by providing visual relief and landscape variation within the urban framework.”

Economic Benefits

“Numerous studies have shown that parks and open space increase the value of neighbouring residential property. Growing evidence points to a similar benefit on commercial property value. The availability of park and recreation facilities is an important quality-of-life factor for corporations choosing where to locate facilities and for well-educated individuals choosing a place to live.”

Environmental Benefits

“Green space in urban areas provides substantial environmental benefits. Trees reduce air pollution and water pollution, they help keep cities cooler, and they are a more effective and less expensive way to manage stormwater runoff than building systems of concrete sewers and drainage ditches.”

Hierarchy of Parkland

Centre Wellington's hierarchy of parkland guides park development by directing usage, size, form, function, and/or level of amenity found within different types of parks. The Township's hierarchy allows the public to understand what a park might include and positions parks to be compatible with adjacent land uses. The Township's Development Standards Manual (presently in draft form)⁷ articulates a classification system of three active forms of parkland plus a separate typology for open space linkages as shown in Table 4.

The draft parks classification system specifies the provision of Neighbourhood Parks within an 800 metre radius of the majority of residents within a local neighbourhood, without crossing any arterial roads or natural barriers. This generally equates to a 10 to 12 minute walk time. For the purposes of this Master Plan, an 800 metre radius is applied to all parks in order to illustrate the geographic distribution that exists for the parks system as a whole. The distribution of parkland reflects a healthy parks system. The two primary settlement areas continue to achieve strong coverage with most areas served by some form of active and passive parks within 500 to 800 metres. The contribution of Conservation Areas and greenspaces attributable to other civic facilities (e.g. libraries) also bolster service coverage in most urban and rural settlements.

Recommendation

- #1. At the time of a comprehensive Official Plan Review, ensure consistency with park classifications established in the Development Standards Manual for Centre Wellington.



Elora Lions Park

⁷ Township of Centre Wellington. DRAFT Development Standards Manual for Centre Wellington. April 2018.

Table 4: Centre Wellington Parks Classification

Classification and Function
<p>Neighbourhood Park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – To be provided at the rate of 1.0 hectares per 1,000 population. – Shall not normally be less than 1.6 hectares in size except where smaller parks and local greens are Township-approved within a development. – Optimum size 2.0 hectares for provision of 1 unlighted athletic facility will be encouraged. – Neighbourhood Parks are intended to serve the local neighbourhood with walk-to playground facilities. – To be located centrally within the neighbourhood they are intended to serve, and within an 800 metre walking distance for the majority of residents within the local neighbourhood, without crossing any arterial roads or natural barriers. – To have frontage on a local or collector road, minimum 60 metres continuous frontage. – Will generally be integrated, where deemed appropriate, with one elementary school, except local greens or smaller parks as may be approved in the community design of a plan area, and where possible with natural features to assist in the conservation and protection of those features through the design of park program and landscape. – Where possible, include clearly defined entrances to the trail system integrating trail-head locations into the park design.
<p>Community Park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – To be provided at a rate of 1.2 hectares per 1,000 population. – May be between 2 to 8 hectares in size but not normally be less than 4 hectares in size to facilitate efficient complexes of at least 2 athletic facilities. – Community Parks are intended to serve a greater community or series of neighbourhoods. – To be situated with appropriate separation to other Community Parks. – May contain illuminated major sports fields, field houses, indoor recreation facilities and parking. – To have frontage on an arterial road with minimum 100 metres of continuous frontage. – Shall generally be integrated with one secondary school or up to 2 elementary schools where possible. – Where possible to be integrated with Stormwater Management ponds – Where possible will be integrated with natural features and will assist in the conservation and protection of those features through the design of park program and landscape. – Where possible include clearly defined entrances to the local trail system integrating trail head locations into the designs of the park.



Classification and Function

Township-Wide Park

- Provided as may be required to meet special community-wide needs and serving Township-wide functions such as a fairgrounds or major indoor and outdoor recreation complexes.
- Intended to serve as unique destination points drawing residents from the Township-wide urban and rural populations as well as visitors from beyond the boundaries of the Township.
- No defined size but likely to be large blocks of land. Park size will vary depending upon intended program and function of facilities to be included. Size of Township-wide Parks to be determined through future studies undertaken by the Township in partnership with community stakeholders.
- May feature civic, historic, cultural, recreational and heritage significance

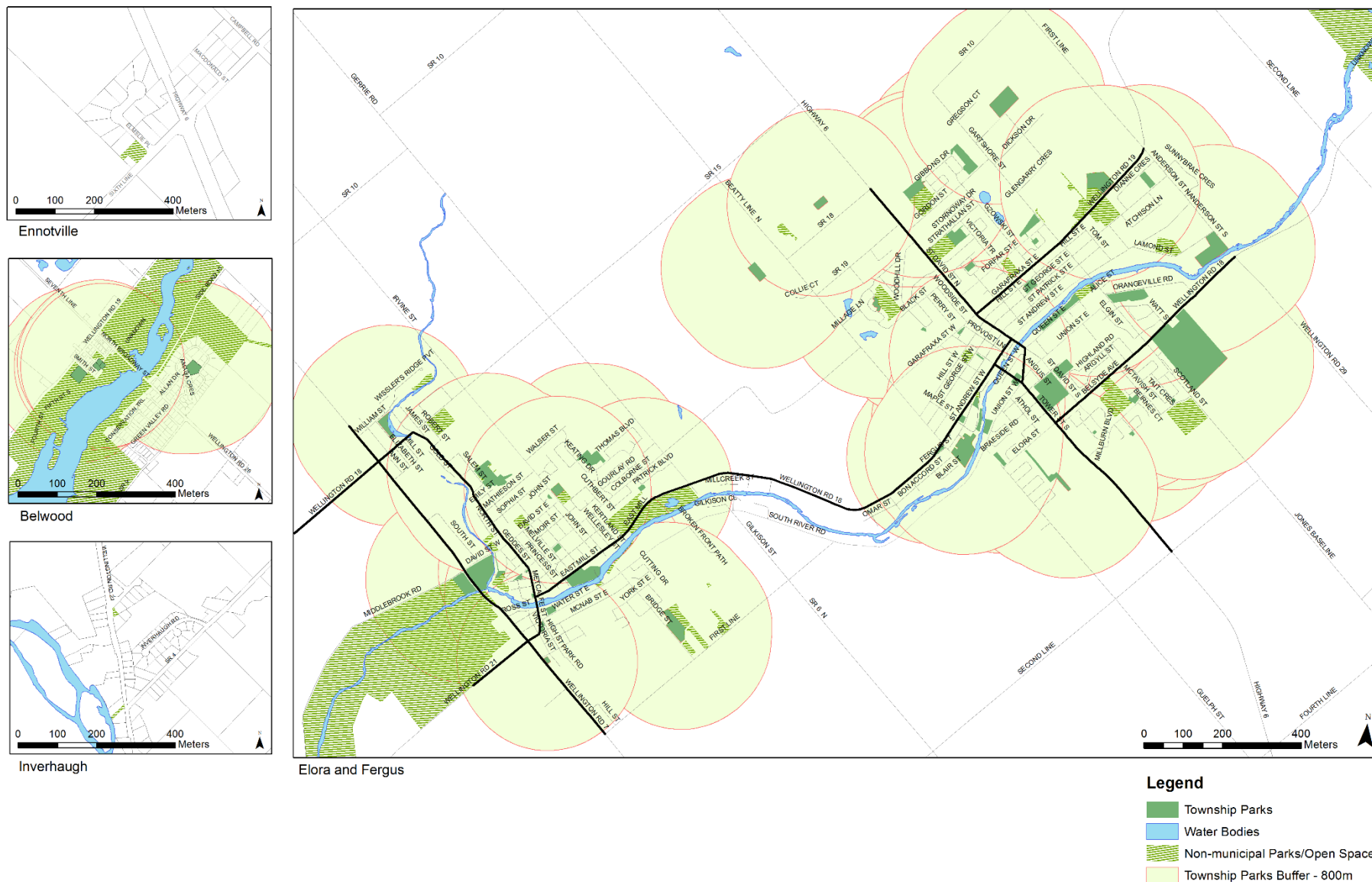
Open Space Linkages

- Parkland shall be linked directly with open space (including storm water management facilities) and preserved environmental areas wherever appropriate, and the design of such parkland is to be environmentally responsible and is to reflect the context of the surrounding natural landscape.
- Although natural landscapes occur throughout the valley lands, wetlands and non-urban areas of the municipality; passive natural areas, woodlands, environmentally sensitive areas and other natural heritage features may also occur on tableland property. Such tableland natural landscapes may be protected through mechanisms of Official Plan policy and through policies of the Regional Municipality and Conservation Authority thereby not requiring dedication as parkland under the provisions of the Planning Act. Parkland conveyance is encouraged to further protect such valuable natural assets through the sensitive and thoughtful dedication of parkland in community planning and land use design.
- It is the objective of the Township to provide walkway linkages and trail systems for pedestrian and bicycle use connecting parkland with valley-lands and other open space greenways wherever practicable and compatible with environmental conditions.

Source: Development Standards Manual for Centre Wellington, April 2018 (Draft)



Figure 3: Parkland Coverage using an 800 metre Service Radius



Future Parkland Needs

Centre Wellington’s parkland system consists of 96.9 hectares (240 acres) of land located at 60 sites. These parks contain a variety of activity spaces, and amenities and facilities including sports fields, playgrounds, seating, pavilions, and passive spaces for informal gatherings or activities. The Township has not yet applied the parks classification system in its Draft Development Standards Manual to its master inventory (Appendix A); therefore, parks are categorized for master planning purposes as being ‘active’ or ‘passive’ in terms of the intensity of recreational use that they have been designed for, as well as ‘open space’ that reflects properties where recreational uses are secondary.

Table 5: Township-Wide Supply of Parkland

Parkland Type	# of Sites	Supply (ha)	Avg. Park Size (ha)	Service Level*
Active	14	53.5	3.8	1.7 ha per 1,000
Passive	46	43.4	1.1	1.4 ha per 1,000
TOTAL	60	96.9	1.6	3.1 ha per 1,000

* Based on 2018 population estimate of 31,300 persons
 Source: Township of Centre Wellington



Based on Centre Wellington’s 2018 population estimate of 31,300 persons, the Township is achieving an overall parkland service level of 3.1 hectares per 1,000 residents as shown in Table 5. The supply reflects an addition of nearly 20 hectares of parkland compared to 2008 levels and has in fact raised the service level per 1,000 residents since that time which has resulted in the Town meeting its target.

In targeting a similar parkland target over the course of the next 10 years, the Township of Centre Wellington would need to provide 120 hectares of parkland in total. There are presently park sites identified in six future development plans that are expected to contribute 7.2 hectares of land which would result in the need to obtain another 15.9 hectares over and above the current supply.

The Township can expect a portion of that requirement to be addressed through parkland dedication received through the Ontario Planning Act, in accordance with its policies which are discussed in the following sub-section. While the amount of future parkland dedications will not be known until plans of subdivision/development are submitted, historical experiences suggest Centre Wellington could receive 8 to 10 hectares of parkland based on future growth projections. Therefore, the Township may need to obtain 6 to 8 hectares of parkland outside of Planning Act dedications in order to attain a total park supply of 120 hectares.

Table 6: Projected Parkland Requirements, 2018-2028

	2018	2021	2026	2028
Projected Population	31,300	34,020	37,890	40,000
Existing Parkland Supply	96.9 hectares			
Existing + Future Supply*	104.1 hectares			
Official Plan Target	3.0 hectares per 1,000			
Targeted Park Supply	93.9 ha	102.1 ha	113.7 ha	120.0 ha
Surplus (Deficit)	7.5 ha	2.0 ha	(9.6 ha)	(15.9 ha)

* Future supply includes 7.2 hectares presently identified in development plans for the Beaty Hollow/Farley, Granwood, Haylock + Youngblood, Storybrook East, Storybrook West, and Summerfields and assumes all will form part of the supply by the year 2021

Recommendation

- #2. Target a total parkland supply of 120 hectares by the year 2028, which would necessitate the acquisition of 16 hectares of parkland over and above parkland presently identified in future development plans. Future parks should preferably consist of typologies that are conducive to active recreation and/or cultural uses.

Parkland Acquisition

There are several provincial and municipal regulations, policies, and guidelines governing the acquisition and location of parkland, notably Sections 42 and 51.1 of the Ontario Planning Act and the Township of Centre Wellington Official Plan. The Draft Development Standards Manual for Centre Wellington and Section C.12.1 of the Centre Wellington Official Plan reflects parkland dedications prescribed under the Planning Act whereby the conveyance of parkland is permitted as a condition of the land development or redevelopment process.

Known as parkland dedication, the Township is entitled to receive lands for park or other public recreational purposes in the amount of 5% for residential lands and 2% for all other lands being developed or redeveloped. By way of the Planning Act, Centre Wellington's Official Plan also permits the conveyance of land for park and other recreation purposes at a rate of up to one hectare for every 300 dwelling units proposed as an alternative to the fixed percentage calculation. The Planning Act also permits municipalities to waive the land conveyance requirement and may require cash-in-lieu of parkland (or a combination of land and cash). In line with best practices, Section C.12.3 of the Township's Official Plan states that acceptance of cash-in-lieu is permitted:

- If the required amount of parkland dedication would inhibit the development or redevelopment potential of the remainder of the site
- If the required amount of parkland dedication would be insufficient to satisfy municipal objectives
- If additional parkland is not needed, or if other more suitable parcels of land are available for park purposes
- Where an area is adequately served by municipal or other open space lands,
- Where the Township wishes to combine the parkland dedications of a number of small developments to provide for one large park area.

Support for Public Spending in Various Categories



86%
Nature Trails



81%
Acquisition of
Parks and Open
Space



80%
Space for Youth
Programs



79%
Arenas



74%
Playgrounds

Source: Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan Online Survey, 2017

Amendments to the Planning Act through Bill 73, as they relate to acceptance of cash-in-lieu of parkland under the alternative conveyance rate, are noteworthy. While a municipality continues to be entitled to receive one hectare of physical parkland per 300 dwelling units, it is no longer entitled to the same cash-in-lieu amount for the land. If accepting cash-in-lieu of parkland under the Planning Act's alternative rate, a municipality may do so based on the value of land for one hectare per 500 dwelling units and thus less cash is received than was historically granted. More recently, Bill 108 has also proposed a number of changes to the Planning Act that have the potential to affect the way parkland or cash-in-lieu is collected. Recognition of the new legislative requirements will need to be reflected in any comprehensive review, update and/or amendment to the existing Centre Wellington Official Plan.

Given that the amount of parkland that can be required through new subdivision development is finite or that cash-in-lieu receipts may be lower than in the past, creativity will be required in certain instances where the Township needs to augment its parkland dedications. There are a number of alternative acquisition strategies that could be utilized in order to ensure that sufficient parkland is available to support active and passive recreational uses such as:

- Municipal land purchase or lease (e.g., school closure, sale of brownfield lands, etc.).
- Land exchange or swaps, particularly if development is to occur in natural areas highly valued by the community.
- Establishment of a Parks Foundation (e.g., community, corporate, or municipal donations towards parkland acquisition).
- Reallocating surplus municipal lands to park use.
- Partnership / joint provision of parkland with local partners (e.g., G.R.C.A., school boards, utility corporations, etc.).

Consideration of such acquisition tools will be a part of making up any difference between the 19 hectares of parkland targeted by the Master Plan and what is received through Planning Act dedications.

Trails System

Centre Wellington's trail connections are an important part of its off-road active transportation system, complementing other infrastructure such as sidewalks and pathways that promote connectivity throughout the Township. Active transportation is defined by the Public Health Agency of Canada as any form of human-powered transportation (i.e. walking, cycling, etc.) for utilitarian and leisure purposes. In addition to economic and environmental benefits (e.g., reduced motorized vehicle use, road congestion, and greenhouse gas emissions, lower road maintenance costs, etc.), there are many other inherent benefits to trails and the rest of the active transportation network, particularly with regards to human health. For example, the trails system is effective in combating chronic diseases related to physical inactivity and obesity and has also been found to heighten community and social vibrancy by encouraging compact developments and more liveable communities where people are more likely to have personal contact with each other.



Bissell Park Trail

According to the Trails Master Plan,⁸ the Township maintains 12 recreational trail connections, using a combination of natural surface, gravel, asphalt and boardwalk to facilitate easy to more challenging levels of difficulty.

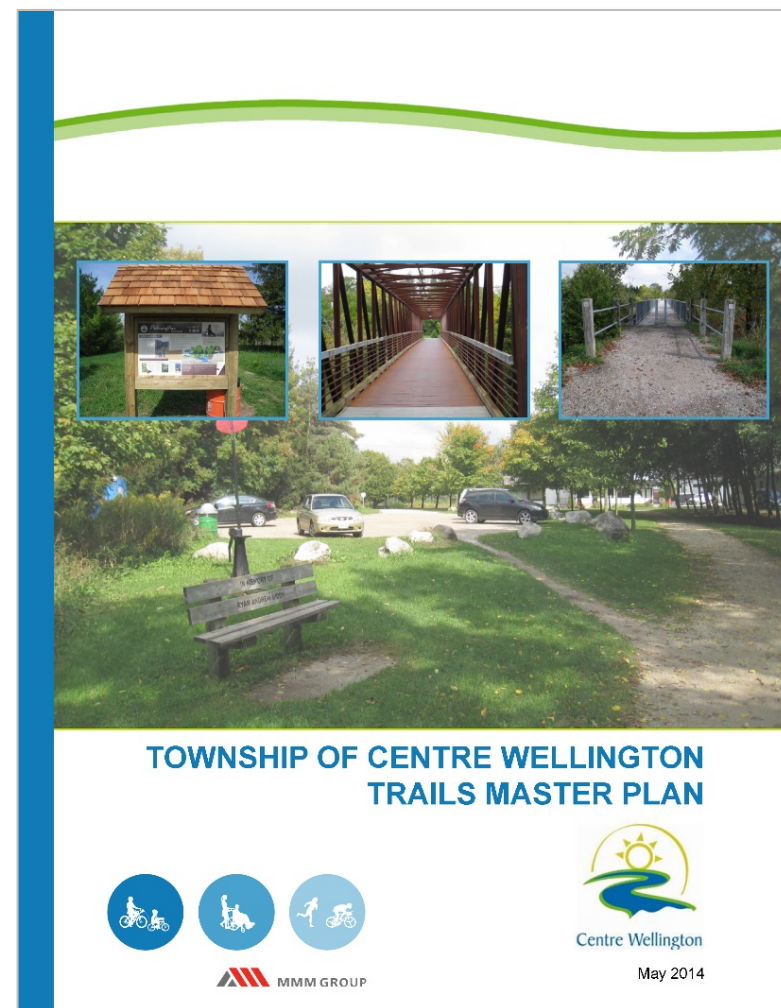
- Benham Tract
- Bissell Park Trail
- Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex Trail
- Confederation Trail
- Cumnock Tract
- Elora Cataract Trailway
- Elora Gorge Conservation Area Trails
- Grand Valley Trail
- Museum Trail
- Templin Garden Trail
- Trestle Bridge Trail
- Victoria Park Trail

⁸ Township of Centre Wellington. 2014. Trails Master Plan.

Opportunities to enhance modes of active transportation are largely dependent on the proximity between residential areas and community destinations, as well as corridors that can be leveraged for active transportation purposes (e.g. bike lanes, walkways, recreational trails, etc.). Research has shown that residents in rural areas are less likely to use active transportation methods given the spatial distribution of destinations and the lack of supporting infrastructure (e.g. sidewalks), resulting in a greater reliance on automobiles. However, many of the Township’s residents live in or near urban settlement areas, creating opportunities to enhance active transportation networks and connecting key destinations in Centre Wellington.

The Trails Master Plan establishes a vision to “Build upon the success of the Elora-Cataract Trailway, and connect neighbourhoods, schools, work places, recreation facilities in Centre Wellington while linking the municipality to communities with the county and surrounding municipalities.” This vision is congruent with that of the Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan in the sense of inspiring people by Centre Wellington’s natural beauty (many trail sections are situated in natural areas) and fosters active/healthy lifestyle goals of individuals.

The Trails Master Plan is a Council-approved document that was created with targeted consultations and comprehensive assessments. As such, the Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan does not provide recommendations specific to the trails system but supports the general intent and principles advanced in the Trails Master Plan. A total of 23 recommendations are contained in that document that, if implemented, will complement objectives advanced for parks, recreation and culture in Centre Wellington.



Natural Areas

Centre Wellington’s recreational park system is complemented by many naturalized or other “green” areas owned by the Township and other landholders. Section C.3 of the Township’s Official Plan deals with Natural Heritage Lands and contains policies applicable to wetlands, habitats of endangered or vulnerable species, hazard lands, woodlands, areas of natural or scientific interest, and other significant natural areas.

This Master Plan encourages integration of natural heritage lands wherever possible into parkland design as a means to preserve ecosystem function through the parks planning process. The Master Plan also is supportive of the Township’s efforts in preparing its Public Forest Policy (currently in draft form) as the parks system is a major source of the municipality’s tree canopy cover. As noted in that document, the public forest offers an incredible number of health and social benefits including:

- Reducing the physical and mental symptoms of stress and increasing overall mental wellbeing;
- Moderating the heating effect of pavement and buildings by providing shade, evaporative cooling, and windbreaks, thereby reducing power consumption and energy costs and making public spaces more comfortable;
- Improving air quality by capturing airborne pollutants, producing oxygen, and sequestering carbon;
- Improving water quality by stabilizing soil, reducing erosion, intercepting run-off and attenuating peak stormwater flow;
- Providing habitat and food sources for wildlife such as birds, insects, and small mammals;
- Creating an appealing environment for consumers in commercial areas;
- Increasing property value, and
- Increasing the overall aesthetics of streetscapes and the public realm in general.⁹

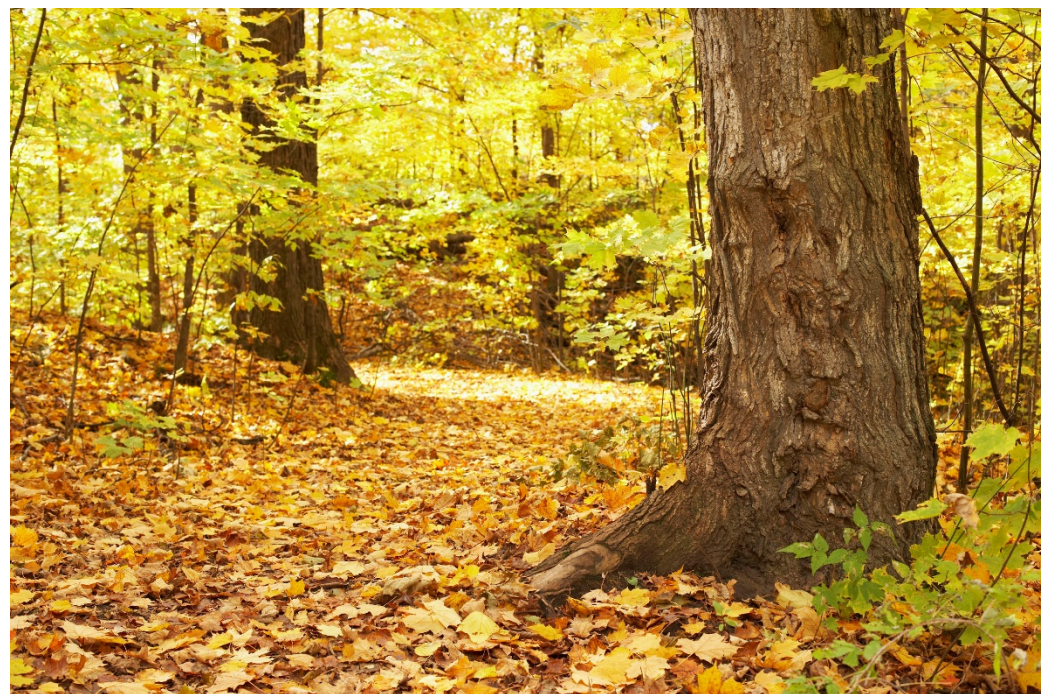
The pages that follow highlight selected roles and trends of natural areas as general information to consider.

⁹ Centre Wellington. October 2017. Public Forest Policy (DRAFT).

Environmental Sustainability and Park Naturalization

The importance of environmental protection is being increasingly recognized by Canadians, with public opinion polls often ranking the environment as the number one priority.¹⁰ As our environmental conscience grows and urbanization increases, demand for passive settings that connect people to nature is on the rise. Many communities are placing a greater emphasis on the provision of passive space (e.g., woodlots, prairie grasslands, flower gardens, civic gathering spaces, etc.), often ensuring that portions of new or redeveloped parks remain in a natural state. Naturalization typically involves reduced grass cutting, planting of native species, and public education to create awareness in the community (e.g., interpretative signage).

Naturalized park spaces – whether achieved through ‘maintaining’ a site in its natural state or ‘returning’ a site to its natural state – are consistent with many principles related to environmental sustainability and stewardship. These strategic policy planning documents have recommended greater civic engagement through volunteer programs – such as Adopt-A-Park and Communities in Bloom partnerships – along with focused communications to residents and businesses. Accordingly, there is an opportunity to engage residents and leverage naturalization initiatives and park improvements within broader park redesign and redevelopment processes. By facilitating education, interests, and understanding of natural processes through stewardship opportunities, Centre Wellington is able to promote sustainable development and reimagine communities through land use planning, revitalization exercises, and stewardship programs.



¹⁰ The Centre of Environmental Stewardship and Conservation Inc. 2009. The State of Stewardship in Canada.

Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

Intricately linked to sustainability and environmental goals are efforts to promote urban design features that integrate climate change mitigation and adaptation. Municipalities are increasingly becoming involved in a number of climate change and sustainability initiatives, often in partnership with their County/Regional governments, Conservation Authorities, and neighbouring municipalities. This focus on sustainability is motivated by growing concerns over rising greenhouse gas emissions and near-term impacts of climate change such as more frequent extreme weather events and increased precipitation intensity. The toll of climate impacts on human health, infrastructure, and natural habitats is considerable and cities across the world are taking measures to both mitigate their environmental footprint and adapt to climate change impacts.

Parks play an important role in creating sustainable urban environments, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change impacts. The Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) has developed programs targeted to the general public, volunteers and municipalities in its watershed. In conjunction with use of new technologies, GRCA has a goal of promoting awareness and understanding the effects of climate change.

From the perspective of climate change mitigation, parks are integral to the Township's urban forest canopy and in conjunction with local woodlots represent some of the highest concentration of trees in urban and rural areas. Trees, plants, and soil have the ability to sequester and store carbon (and other pollutants)¹¹ that not only helps to reduce greenhouse gases, but also cleans the air and improves air quality in urban environments. Parks support ecosystem-based climate change adaptation by counteracting the effects of artificially higher temperatures caused by the urban heat island effect, defending against ultraviolet radiation through tree canopies, absorbing and directing intense rainfall and snowmelt, and generally creating a more resilient landscape. Once complete, the Township's Public Forest Policy will assist in efforts to combat climate change through local-level protection.

¹¹ MacDonald, J. A. (n.d.). How Cities Use Parks for Climate Change Management (City Parks Forum Briefing Papers #11). Retrieved March 18, 2016.

Healing Forests

Healing Forests are gaining in popularity in Japan and South Korea. It is believed that they have healing powers as evidenced in the way that our brain reacts differently when people experience natural settings. Walks in forests are promoted to help people relax, be in awe of nature, be calm and rejuvenate. Communities are beginning to place interpretive signs in greenspaces and forests to promote the benefits to individuals, families and the community.

Green Infrastructure

Environmental stewardship objectives can be achieved by incorporating sustainable design features into parks. Green infrastructure designs help to create carbon sinks, offer shade to park users and surrounding residences, provide habitat opportunities for select wildlife, and contribute to naturalization or reforestation objectives. It also contributes to the overall greening of the community and showcases leadership in addressing environmental issues.

Where practical, there may be many opportunities to explore sustainable applications through park redevelopment projects, including:

- harvesting rain water to reduce the use of potable water;
- implementing “xeriscaping” or landscaping in a manner that efficiently conserves water;
- including carpool parking spaces and bicycle parking;
- pursuing natural and renewable energy sources, such as wind, solar and geothermal;
- restoring and creating wetlands to increase flood control and to enhance water quality;
- reducing water pollution by treating storm water through the use of bioswales, stormwater planters, rain gardens, polishing areas, infiltration trenches and ecoroofs /green roofs;
- reducing impervious surfaces through the use of porous concrete, porous asphalt, permeable pavers and granular/wood chip surfacing;
- considering turf substitutes to reduce the amount of mowing needed;
- specifying organic fertilizers and compost;

- enhance pedestrian, bicycle, transit and universal accessibility modes of access into park and open space facilities;
- providing bicycle and pedestrian linkages between parks and open spaces;
- providing waste and recycling bins for park users, ensuring that the location and alignment of bins allows for easy maintenance and pick-up services; and
- specifying quality products and materials that are durable and can be recycled (e.g., synthetic materials, engineered wood products, vegetable fibers, reclaimed metals and concrete, etc.) and materials with low production costs (e.g., recycled components and alternative material/construction types).

Parkland Design and Amenities

Parkland revitalization is thus an important part of attracting continued use over time. Rejuvenation efforts can be major in scale, ranging from complete park redevelopments to renewal of major amenities or adding new facilities where space permits. Rejuvenation can also take more basic or minor forms as will be discussed in subsequent pages. Often, redevelopment of a park is initiated because of population growth pressures or an evolution that has occurred in demographics of surrounding areas (e.g. a greater proportion of older adults and fewer children), in response to volunteer initiatives (e.g. fundraising or service club contributions), or multiple park-based facilities approaching the end of their lifecycle.

There are a number of park design trends that are relevant to this Master Plan given preceding discussions surrounding new park development and renewal of existing parks. Several key trends and best practices are identified below noting that while recommendations have not been advanced for certain topics, they are considerations worth noting for the Township's ongoing parks construction and redevelopment projects.

Recommendation

- #3.** As parks age to a point where reinvestments are required, explore opportunities to rejuvenate them to meet the needs of residents and visitors. Doing so should involve the community as well as examining additional resourcing requirements (e.g. staffing, maintenance, equipment, etc.) required to support a reimagined park.

Accessibility

Technical standards relating to the accessibility of parks facilities are governed by Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and its regulations, as well as local guidelines. Standards for playgrounds, trails, and boardwalks are established by the Province's Design of Public Space Standard. An easy to read guide prepared by Parks and Recreation Ontario entitled *Pathways to Recreation: Learning About Ontario's Design of Public Spaces Standard*, interprets the Design of Public Space Standard and provide practical examples of its application, as well as links to resources. Centre Wellington and its partners have made strides in providing barrier-free environments within indoor and outdoor spaces, ranging from accessible playgrounds (such as at Stait Park and Southridge Park) to barrier-free features within community centres.

Aging Infrastructure and Changing Design Standards

Aging infrastructure is a growing issue for most communities. There are many challenges with older parks, including (but not limited to) the following:

- many were designed to different construction and design standards;
- many have antiquated components and lack modern amenities;
- many are unable to accommodate evolving requirements and standards of play; and
- many may not be barrier-free for persons with disabilities.

Innovation in design and construction is a must. This may mean different things to different municipalities. In progressive communities such as Centre Wellington, this may manifest itself through continued advancements in the provision and design of resilient and environmentally sustainable park spaces.

High Quality Amenities

Compared to past generations, people today are seeking more choice and better quality amenities and experiences. As the quality of park amenities increases, so too does the cost to build and maintain them. Residents province-wide are requesting parks that contain a greater number of hardscape surfaces that can withstand more intense use (e.g., paved pathways), support buildings (e.g., washrooms), extended use facilities (e.g., lit and artificial turf sports fields), higher cost amenities (e.g., skate parks and splash pads), and unique elements (e.g., gateway features), all of which are leading to higher park construction and maintenance costs. Modifications to make parks more physically accessible to persons with disabilities will also place increased pressure on existing budgets.

Variety and creativity in park design is important as it encourages unique spaces that foster a sense of place and community pride. However, this too can have an impact on costs due to enhanced design features, use of non-traditional materials, and challenges in securing replacement parts (e.g., for unique playground features or site furniture). Some level of standardization is required to ensure consistency with Centre Wellington's quality assurance guidelines and branding.

Park Activation and Diversity

The movement toward "complete communities" suggests that people are spending more time in their local areas, which is increasing the importance of equitable access to quality parks and facilities. Public use of parkland is not only increasing along with the Township's population, but is also diversifying. Furthermore, with infill beginning to drive parts of the Township's future growth, the ability to apply traditional forms of neighbourhood and community parks will be limited. The result is a greater need for a wider range of public spaces that fulfill the many roles of parks.



Elora Green Space

In new and established areas, there may come a time when traditional, sport-oriented parks transition toward the establishment of more creative, multi-functional urban parks that serve a range of ages and interests. In the new urban form, parks and public spaces will be key elements in 'placemaking' for their contributions to community greening, aesthetically pleasing spaces, enlivened streets, and healthy, social communities. Even small parks can make a big difference.

Traditional park uses include organized activities (such as sports) and unorganized pursuits (such as informal play; e.g., playground use). Increasingly, park spaces are being animated through programming and new forms of community engagement. Some examples include (but are not limited to) tai chi, food trucks and cultural events such as music, concerts, and theatre in the park. Viewing parks as "outdoor living rooms" helps to expand the scope of use and engages a broader range of residents and visitors, leading to experiential learning, participation and community mobilization.

Connectivity

Parks that are visible and accessible to the surrounding community are well used. Park redevelopment initiatives should be reflective of the Township's broad objectives relating to healthy, active community designs. One objective is to enable physical activity to take place on the way to the park as well as within the park. To achieve this, the Township could explore external connections through sidewalk and trails connections in tandem with a park redevelopment project; as one example, Confederation Park in Fergus could be an opportunity to consider.

Pathway systems within parks are growing more popular and encourage walking and other active forms of transportation. Several municipalities (such as Middlesex Centre and Petawawa) have placed outdoor fitness equipment within parks and along pathways or trails to create a more robust outdoor exercise experience; outdoor fitness equipment is discussed further in Section 4's Fitness Centre discussion.

Co-location

In Centre Wellington and elsewhere, many parks are connected to other civic uses (e.g., community centres and libraries and schools), sometimes with agreements to provide enhanced public access to associated school fields. Designs that maximize public lands are desired and help to provide value to taxpayers, although active management and communication between partners is essential. Unfortunately, schools are facing many of the same challenges as municipalities in managing their outdoor spaces, including barrier-free accessibility, antiquated designs, aging infrastructure, overuse, and maintenance. Parks associated with schools and those that are used for special events (e.g. Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex, parts of the Elora Gorge) are especially well used and prone to deterioration.

Multi-Use, Multi-Generational and Multi-Seasonal Parks

There is a growing demand for parks and facilities that contain something for everybody, rather than those designed solely for singular uses. While single use parks have merit in appropriate locations, parks that provide opportunities for a range of ages, family types, and abilities are viewed as spaces for inclusive recreational activity. Furthermore, there has been a province-wide trend towards participation in non-programmed outdoor activities such as pick-up sports, picnicking, family gatherings, special events, etc. In this sense, Centre Wellington's parks should optimally be viewed as "outdoor community centres" or "outdoor living rooms" that combine varying degrees of programmed and non-programmed uses (in keeping with the hierarchy of parkland discussed on Page 18).

The provision of high quality, multi-field parks and open spaces such as those found at the Township's larger Local and District Parks not only encourage physical activities among all age groups, but are of high quality that provide opportunities for attracting tournaments and events. When developing new or existing parks with sports fields, municipalities are considering the needs of local users and spectators with supplementary amenities such as washroom



Aerial view of the CW Community Sportsplex Site
Image Credit: Google Maps

facilities, covered shelters, Wi-Fi, sport-friendly features, etc. Incorporating more non-programmed spaces and natural areas, as well as linkages to the trail network, will also become increasingly important.

While the majority of park usage occurs in the summer months, many communities are creating formal and informal year-round opportunities within their parks, recreation and cultural systems. Recreational infrastructure such as hard surface courts (e.g. tennis or basketball) can be flooded during the winter to provide outdoor ice skating, berms and hills can be used for tobogganing, while areas in/around parks and trails can be used for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Throughout the park design process, consideration should be given to positioning parks as year-round destinations to maximize Centre Wellington's physical activity goals, as well as factoring any increased operational cost implications (e.g. greater wear and tear on infrastructure, increased staffing and maintenance).

The Open Streets Movement

The concept to close a stretch of road for active and family related pursuits (walking, biking, rolling, etc.) began in Bogota, Columbia. The movement is gaining in popularity in cities across North America such as Waterloo, Toronto, Midland and many more. Toronto calls their Open Street the 'Paved Park" and dubs it Canadas largest recreation experience. Many Open Streets applications have vendors and community booths as well as planned fitness classes, massages, food, etc. The Town of Whitby hosted an event on Highway 407 just before it was opened in the Durham area to allow the community access to the highway on foot or bike.

The Open Streets opportunities promote family activities in the outdoors, promote walking and reduce screen time. Many of the natural features, festivals and events in Centre Wellington provide this outdoor walking experience.

Outdoor Yoga/Exercise in Parks and Public Spaces

Animating outdoor spaces is responding to the recognition that it is important to be active and outdoors. Opportunities are advertised as casual and drop-in but seem to gain a following given enough promotion and time. Some communities are permitting private yoga instructors in parks and sharing revenues for the use of the space.

Outdoor Play & Nature Deficit Disorder (NDD)

Children are given fewer opportunities to engage in outdoor and 'challenging' play as compared to previous generations. Children spend less time outdoors due to parental fear for safety, more time spent indoors engaged in sedentary behaviours and most likely in front of screens.

Richard Louv authored two books specific to outdoor play; 'Last Child in the Woods' and "The Nature Principle – Human Restoration and the End of Nature Deficit Disorder". In these publications, Louv (who completed extensive research across North America) contends that Nature Deficit Disorder is becoming increasingly evident in people who do not get outdoors often enough. It is not positioned as a medical diagnosis but a health issue with possible symptoms of anxiety, depression, aggression, sadness and negative emotions. His research demonstrates that parents are allowing children to spend more time indoors in front of screens and are ignoring the merits of free play in an outdoor setting. Outdoor play is critical to children's development; they need outdoor and unstructured play to master new skills, be active, learn new things and become in awe of their natural environment.

ParticipACTION has recently released a position statement on Outdoor Play in increasing physical activity in children. The position centres upon children/youth being less active when they are indoors engaged in sedentary behaviours. The key statement reads: *"Access to active play in nature and outdoors—with its risks—is essential for healthy child development. We recommend increasing children's opportunities for self-directed play outdoors in all settings—at home, at school, in child care, in the community and in nature."*



Comfort and Safety

Ensuring that parks provide attractive and comfortable experiences to the user are paramount in ensuring successful utilization and attracting a broad range of uses. Multiple elements go into contributing to user safety, comfort and convenience, such as signage, comfort amenities, and parking.

The presence of informative signage and attractive gateway features is the first impression that a user will have of the park and park system. The presence of consistent and effective signage is an important element in promoting recognition and stewardship in the community. Without proper signage, park users may be confused about the property's ownership and boundaries. Signs develop a sense of place and combined with good urban design, can create unique districts and foster aesthetic development. They also provide interpretive information that connects a user to the park and may encourage the person to take further interest in their surroundings. Centre Wellington's parks are well signed, though reflecting different design standards often based on the era of when parks were originally constructed.

There is evidence that suggests that people will follow directions shown on community signage such as "take the stairs", "1 Km to the next bus stop" as well as signage that captures distances on trails and sidewalks. This interpretive form of signage can be used to advance physical activity goals while providing information regarding natural or cultural heritage features in a park can lead a person to taking a greater interest in their surroundings.

The provision of parking is a convenience that many users look for in accessing parkland though there is a careful balance given the objectives of designing healthy, active and sustainable communities. Off-street parking is best suited for parks that are intensively used, such as those containing community centres or multiple sports fields, typically for larger parks. Whatever the philosophy for parking within parkland, alignment is necessary with the parkland classification system and land use regulations.



MacDonald Square Park

Once inside a park, patrons often seek out convenience and comfort-based features. In non-programmed or passive parks where social activities such as picnicking, family or social gatherings and/or cultural events take place, users might be looking for amenities such as treed areas, shade structures, picnic tables, benches or washrooms. Similarly, users at active parks such as sports field may be looking for similar amenities as well as features such as designated seating, change rooms, and concessions. Where necessary, and where demand is high, the use of locational guidelines may be necessary. An example of this is the City of Brampton's 'Shade Structure Locational Guidelines' and 'Shade Structure Implementation Protocols' that lend guidance and objectivity regarding the placement of shade structures, though Centre Wellington has historically provided shade structures by way of pavilions, gazebos, and steel shelters at strategic parks, sometimes in partnership with local service clubs. Many parks also have mature trees that provide respite from the sun.

Park development projects should be designed with user safety in mind through the application of CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) and other design principles. High volume areas should be well lit, low visibility areas should be limited, and local parks should be configured so that surrounding residents and streets have "eyes on the park", thus discouraging undesirable users and activities. Maintenance of parks is now accepted in the industry as a key component of perceived "safety" and in deterring inappropriate behavior. Considering CPTED principles in the park design stages will achieve safer, user-friendly parks in Centre Wellington.

Urban Agriculture and Horticulture

Community Allotment Gardens

Gardening is one of the most popular forms of leisure activity in Canada and visits to public gardens and historic sites is expected to increase as the population ages and demands more passive types of outdoor leisure activities. Furthermore, trends towards higher density forms of housing are resulting in more residents living with smaller yards thereby restricting their ability to plant and maintain their own gardens. Allotment gardens (e.g., community garden plots, “Plant a Row – Grow a Row” programs, etc.) have been embraced by municipalities to beautify their communities and supplement a growing reliance on the public realm for personal use. These gardens encourage social interaction, horticultural education and awareness of the benefits of healthy diets, while they can also enhance safety within public spaces due to the presence of gardeners throughout the day.

There are eight community gardens in Centre Wellington that are overseen and promoted by organizations such as the Community Garden Network, Centre Wellington Social Justice Group, Wellington Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, and local churches. There are also community organizations such as the Elora Public School Community Gardeners that work with local schools to educate children about urban agriculture.

With such a strong base of community partners specializing in urban agriculture, the Township’s role is primarily one of support if/where needed. Community gardens fit well with the Township’s creative and cultural populations, objectives surrounding food security, and its aging population as older residents may be more inclined to participate in such activities. Support from the Township does not necessarily need to be financial – Department staff with expertise in park design, maintenance and horticulture could lend their insights to organizations or the Township could provide space within parks to establish new community gardens. The Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex site is an opportune location to consider a more robust community allotment garden and/or



St. James Community Garden

horticultural displays as part of a potential site redevelopment process; in doing so, a community partner(s) could be leveraged to tie into existing capacity and programming that is already in place.

Horticultural Displays

Many principles related to progressive land use planning movements such as New Urbanism, Creative Cities, etc. involve centering residential and commercial areas around key focal points, including public/horticultural gardens and landscaped parks. By creating such destinations, people can be drawn to the public space, thus fostering vibrancy and economic prosperity through socialization and creating a positive ambiance in a community node. Centre Wellington and its community partners have supported horticultural displays throughout parks and other civic spaces.

The Township also provides floral beds and other plantings as part of its land development and placemaking initiatives through boulevard buffer strips, entrance gardens in subdivision entrances, etc. The Township's commitment to beautification through plantings is laudable as it helps to define a 'sense of place' and helps foster community pride. The Township has been involved with the Fergus and Elora/Salem Horticultural Associations, NeighbourWoods and "Doors Open" events that have benefited Centre Wellington through greater community involvement and awareness for local environmental and horticultural entities.

The Township takes on the majority of maintenance efforts for its horticultural gardens, though from time to time it partners with certain organizations for special or unique projects. Some municipalities have had success in developing community-based partnerships with horticultural organizations, neighbourhood associations, B.I.A.'s, etc. to plant and maintain horticultural displays while providing a means for sponsorship, cost sharing, and volunteer assistance. The key to such partnerships is to sustain a strong, committed base of volunteers and partners in place. Gardens can become unsightly areas if partners can no longer fulfil their duties which can happen for a number of reasons including losing internal expertise if a volunteer moves to another municipality, lack of future interest or succession within an organization, etc.

The Township's practice of providing horticultural displays remains appropriate at destinations including major parks, recreation and cultural facilities, library branches, high profile or high visibility intersections, etc. as part of a continued commitment to civic beautification. However, such a continued pursuit of this commitment and an expansion of horticultural sites could require the Township to devote additional human and financial resources towards the ongoing maintenance since Departmental resources are already stretched.

Off-Leash Parks

The Fergus Dog Park is a 4 hectare open space with a naturalized buffer and features such as a mulched trail and agility course where pet owners can meet others with a common interest and run their dogs off-leash. The Township funds the operation of the park while the volunteer-based Centre Wellington Dog Owners Group (CWDOG) takes an active role in maintenance, help to promote appropriate conduct by park users, and acts as a representative for all dog owners using the park.

At this time, the Fergus Dog Park is expected to meet the needs of the Township over the next ten years. Located on Glengarry Crescent in north Fergus, the Dog Park is fairly accessible to most residents living in the two largest settlements; most Elora pet owners can reach the park in 10 to 15 minutes by car while the Elora Cataract Trail is located within walking distance to the south. The Master Plan's community survey recorded two out of every five respondents as having walked a dog in the past 12 months. The survey also placed the lowest priority on developing additional off leash parks with a support level of 46% which may suggest that survey participants feel the Fergus Dog Park is generally satisfying needs for the time being (or that dog parks are not a priority relative to other needs). As a possible indication of the Fergus Dog Park's popularity, there are presently over 650 "likes" on CWDOG's Facebook page.



Fergus Dog Park

AEROBICS ROOM

Triton Engineering

Fitness



A bulletin board titled "Fitness" is mounted on a wall. It features several colorful posters and notices. One prominent poster is for "KIDS KABATI-CAMP" with a date of "2015". Other posters include "UP TO APE" and "100 in motion". The board is set against a wall with a grid-like pattern.



The entrance to the Aerobics Room features a glass door and windows. The glass is covered with posters for "GROW YOUNGER" and "GROW YOUNGER OUTSIDE". The posters show people exercising and are in various colors like blue, orange, and green. To the left of the door, there is a white hand sanitizer dispenser mounted on the wall.

Section 4: Indoor Recreation Facilities System

Centre Wellington's Indoor Recreation Facilities

Community centres in Centre Wellington provide valuable space through which the Township and community organizations deliver programs that help keep residents of all ages active, healthy and engaged. The Centre Wellington Sportsplex and the Elora and District Community Centre are the two major multi-use indoor recreation facilities in the Township that are supported by facilities such as the Victoria Park Seniors' Centre and Belwood Hall. Assessments of indoor recreation facilities are provided in the pages that follow, noting that the intent of this Section is to focus primarily on "capital" or infrastructure requirements (service delivery is explored in Section 7).

Table 7: Summary of Indoor Recreation Facilities

Recreation Facility	Municipal Supply	Service Level*	Location/Comments
Ice Pads	3	1 : 10,443	Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex (2), Elora and District Community Centre
Indoor Aquatic Centres	1	1 : 31,330	Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex
Community Centres	4	1 : 7,832	Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex, Elora and District Community Centre, Victoria Park Seniors' Centre, Belwood Hall
Gymnasium	0	0	n/a
Senior's Space	1	1 : 31,330	Victoria Park Seniors' Centre
Youth Space	0	0	n/a
Multi-Purpose Rooms	11	1 : 2,848	Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex (5), Elora and District Community Centre (2), Victoria Park Seniors' Centre (3), Belwood Hall (1)

* Based on 2018 population estimate of 31,300 persons

Ice Pads

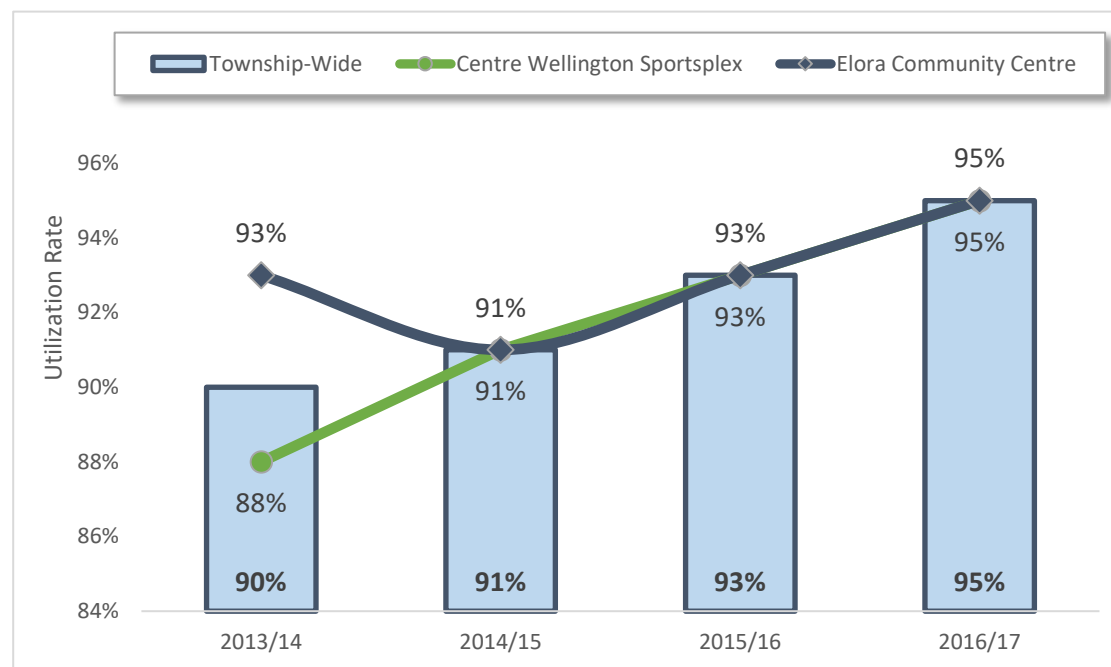
Centre Wellington provides three ice pads at two arenas. The Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex contains a twin pad arena. Pad A measures 85' x 200' with a seating capacity of 1,200 spectators while Pad B is slightly smaller at 85' x 190' and seating for 250 spectators. The Elora and District Community Centre is a single pad arena with an 85' x 185' rink and seating for 600 spectators. Both arenas are equipped with various amenities including change rooms, concessions, storage spaces, and other ancillaries. During the off-season, the ice is removed from both arenas for dry land activities such as lacrosse.

Assessment of Need

The Township of Centre Wellington's arenas are used well with 93% of prime-time hours¹² having been booked during the 2016-2017 ice season. A review of ice usage data revealed the following for the three year period between the 2013/14 and 2016/17 ice seasons:

- Aggregate prime time usage for all three ice pads increased from 90% to 95%, representing an increase of 75 booked hours (rentals and programs).
- Weekday prime time usage increased from 88% to 97%, representing more than 205 booked hours.

Figure 4: Arena Usage, 2013 – 2017



Source: Township of Centre Wellington

¹² For the purposes of the Master Plan, prime time hours are defined as 5 pm to 10 pm on weekdays and 8 am to 9 pm during the weekend.

- Weekend prime time usage declined by 130 booked hours though the utilization rate remained largely unchanged (from 91% to 92%) as the Township adjusted its weekend hours of operation to increase operating efficiency.
- Usage at the Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex increased from 88% to 95%. During the 2016/17 season, over 2,700 hours were booked at this arena, which is an average of 1,350 hours per ice pad.
- Usage at the Elora and District Community Centre arena increased from 93% to 95% over the past four ice seasons. In 2016/17, 1,350 hours were used in Elora which is a slight decline from the 1,366 hours used in 2013/14, however, the increase in utilization rate is associated with fewer hours being available for bookings at the arena. Operating hours were further reduced in 2017/18 while hours booked for rentals and programs continued a decreasing trend with slightly more than 1,300 hours being used.
- While prime time usage has been increasing across the board, “shoulder” hours that have historically been well booked in Centre Wellington are being used less. Notably, just half (53%) of weekday slots between 10pm and 11pm were used and the number of bookings dropped by 25% compared to 2013/14. Similarly, just half (52%) of weekend 6am to 8am time slots were filled which was 11% lower than 2013/14. Therefore, ice sport users are making greater use of the most convenient times but booking fewer of the shoulder hours.

In terms of input from consultations, hockey, ringette, figure skating or ice skating were the most popular activities among responding households a 65% participation rate over the past 12 months. 79% of online respondents supported additional investment in arenas, ranking fourth while over a dozen requests for ice pads were also received through the Public Open House. Input from the stakeholder survey yielded requests from ice groups for improving current arenas as well as additional ice times, earlier ice times for younger teams, more equipment storage and an



Figure Skater

updated sound system. It is also noteworthy that arena floor users (e.g. lacrosse) are securing less time at the CW Sportsplex due to ice sports extending their play into the spring shoulder season.

Reported registration for the past season stands at over 1,775 players/skaters, of which approximately 1,600 are residents of Centre Wellington. The level of registration has been stable for the past three years for most groups but as a total, it has dropped from the 1,975 players/skaters reported in 2008 (-10%). That said, CW Minor Hockey's registration has grown from 500 to 780 players over the past ten years whereas girls' hockey, figure skating and ringette have lower registrations compared to 2008. It is also noteworthy that the current registration may be inflated due to inclusion of all Honeyharp Sports program registrations including non-ice users.

Lower overall ice sport registrations that have been reported are consistent with a national and provincial trend. Participation rates across Canada are being impacted by a number of factors including, but not limited to, the escalating costs of equipment, travel, and ice time as well as greater concerns over safety and a greater share of immigration from countries where ice sports are not commonly played.

Centre Wellington has historically adopted a standard of providing one ice pad per 700 registered participants, consistent with many municipalities in Ontario. Based on registration of resident and non-resident groups, the Township would require the capacity equivalent of 2.5 ice pads, re-affirming the surplus capacity demonstrated through the utilization rate. Assuming that ice sport registrations recover and stabilize over the next ten years, the projection model predicts approximately 2,250 players/skaters in the year 2028 based upon forecasted population growth. Therefore, the 1:700 standard would result in a need for the capacity equivalent of one-fifth (0.2) of an additional ice pad which would not warrant a new arena in the 10 year timeframe of the Master Plan; assuming capture rates stabilize, a fourth ice pad could be required between 2031 and 2036 (subject to confirmation through an update of this Master Plan or other arena market assessment).

With registrations and shoulder hour bookings falling over the past ten years, both of which are consistent with broader trends across Ontario, constructing a new ice pad during the current master planning period is deemed to be premature. Given the multi-million dollar expenditure required to construct an ice pad, ideally the Township would seek ways in which to reverse the declining level of use at the Elora and District Community Centre and see overall registrations revert to a growth scenario prior to expansion of arena infrastructure. While such a strategy would likely result in continued pressure being placed on ice and dry floor users at the CW Sportsplex, the expectation is that better uptake in Elora will alleviate stressors elsewhere.

Accordingly, no changes to the net supply of ice pads is recommended in Centre Wellington at this time. However, the Township should continue to track utilization, participation levels, and population growth (particularly in the under 13 age group who tend to require earlier ice time slots). As such, a five year review of ice pad needs is appropriate in order to provide a better medium to long term indication of needs based on market conditions at that future time. It is noted that continued pressures at the Sportsplex could continue to be a challenge for shoulder season users such as box lacrosse, though further decreases in ice registration could somewhat mitigate this. Any shoulder season usage concerns should be explored through scheduling and allocation at both arenas rather than through expansion of arena infrastructure as the latter would be cost prohibitive.

From a facility renewal perspective, the Elora and District Community Centre is in an advanced lifecycle state having been in operation for more than 40 years. While the Township has maintained this facility to a high standard, major structural and mechanical components will need to be replaced in the near future including the roof and concrete slab for the arena floor while also improving the building's accessibility for persons with disabilities. Given that these are significant undertakings, it provides an opportunity to re-imagine the community centre and explore ways that it could potentially accommodate a greater range of recreational, social and/or arts and cultural programs. At a minimum, its ability to accommodate indoor turf (see discussion in the Indoor Turf assessment in subsequent pages), indoor walking, personal fitness and wellness programs should be investigated through architectural and/or engineering assessments prior to initiating any major capital renewal of the community centre (beyond those required to address health and safety, and/or emergency issues).

Recommendation

- #4.** Undertake an architectural and needs assessment for the Elora Community Centre to address lifecycle issues of existing components and accessibility. The assessments should concurrently explore ways and costs of accommodating a greater range of recreational uses including (but not limited to) indoor turf sports, indoor walking, personal fitness and wellness, pre-school and youth programs, older adult activities, and other municipal programs and user opportunities.

Indoor Aquatic Centres

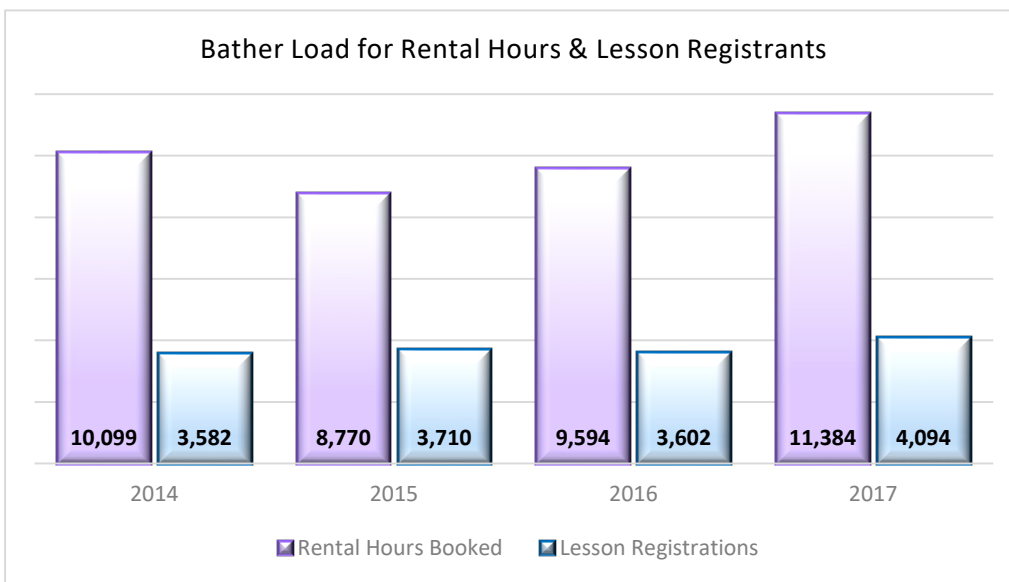
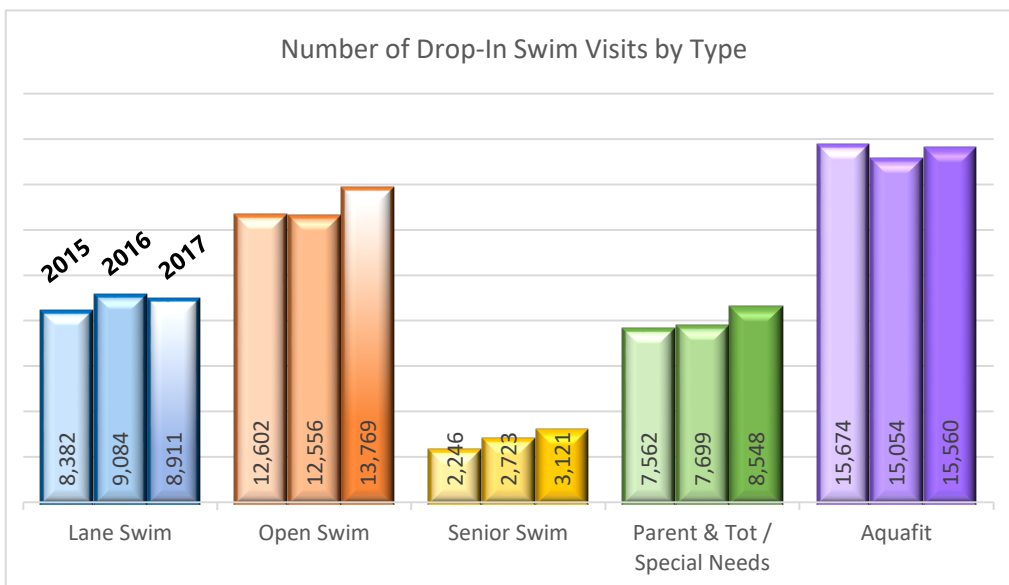
The Township provides one indoor aquatic facility at the Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex, also known as the Rotary Aquatic Centre. The pool is a 25 metre, 6 lane rectangular tank with a water slide, water jet sprays, and a water umbrella. Adjacent to the pool is a 12-person whirlpool while other amenities include a viewing gallery and family change rooms.

The Township delivers many aquatic programs geared to different ages and interests through its indoor pool. Examples include learn-to-swim and leadership programs, lane and leisure swims, water walking and aquatic fitness, and therapeutic swims.

Assessment of Need

The CW Community Sportsplex pool has been used to a greater extent, with a 9% increase in its total calculated bather load over the past three years. For the year 2017, rentals, drop-in swims and program registrations have peaked compared to recent years.

The pool is being increasingly used for drop-in swimming with almost 50,000 visits in 2017, driven largely by growth in lane swimming (+1,200 swims compared to 2015), parent and tot (+1,000 visits) and senior swims (+875 swims). Notable is the fact that drop-in swims appear to be more attractive to residents compared to their registered counterparts, likely due to the greater convenience and flexibility that is afforded. Overall registrations in lessons have generally remained stable in recent years, sustained by growth in children’s learn-to-swim programs that have offset modest decreases in other program areas such as pre-school private and semi-private lessons.



The Township's overall aquatics program registration fill rate stands at 53% with all program offerings having capacity to accommodate more registrations (aggregated throughout the week and various times of the day). That said, the aquatics centre is fully utilized in terms of operating hours during prime time periods (generally weekday mornings and evenings, as well as mid-day on weekends) and is also operating two-thirds of available non-prime hours; however, this should not be construed as capacity of the pool as the number of people in the pool during these times will vary and goes back to earlier points about fill rates. However, it does show that there is ongoing usage at certain times on any given day.

Over the past 12 months, 40% of online survey respondents had at least one household member participate in recreational swimming, while 29% had participated in instructional swimming or aquafit. 70% of responding household support additional public investment in swimming pools, ranking seventh out of 22 activity types.



Aquatfit Class

Centre Wellington's provision standard of 1 indoor aquatic facility per 35,000 population remains appropriate to guide planning over the next ten years as it is generally consistent with that of other small to mid-size municipalities. While the Township's population is expected to grow to 40,000 persons by the year 2028, that population would not meet the threshold required to construct a new indoor aquatic facility particularly in light of available capacity in lesson registrations. Accordingly, no recommendations are made for additional indoor aquatic space in Centre Wellington at this time.

Fitness Centres

The Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex contains a weight-room and a group fitness studio that allows the Township to deliver a wide range of drop-in and programmed fitness activities. Notable activities include weight-training, circuit-training, a number of group fitness options, spin/cycle programs, and personal training to members (Township-offered fitness classes are offered separate from access to the weight room).

Assessment of Need

As with many communities large and small, private sector fitness providers (e.g., Anytime Fitness, Snap Fitness, Fitness Kickboxing Fergus Inc., Awareness Yoga, etc. in the case of Centre Wellington) offer a broad range of studio-based active living programs in private spaces. Equipment-based fitness centres (e.g., Goodlife, etc.) can be found within driving distance to area municipalities including Kitchener and Guelph. The emphasis being placed on personal health is resulting in growing participation across Ontario for physical fitness activities. This is translating into increasing use of private and public-sector fitness services including active living programming centred on general health and wellness, cardiovascular training and stretching activities (e.g., aerobics, yoga, Pilates, etc.). Group fitness programming is one of the fastest growing segments of the sector, more so than traditional weight-training, given that these programs are designed to be fun, social activities ('Zumba' is a notable example).

The CW Community Sportsplex's fitness spaces strongly complement the facility's other components, namely the indoor aquatics centre (programming is synergistic from the perspective of active living) and the arena (from a dryland training perspective). Centre Wellington's integration of fitness space in the multi-use community model was in fact progressive as it was one of the first municipalities to adopt fitness as a core level of service to enhance the facility user's experience as a 'one-stop' destination for personal wellness. The Master Plan's community survey reported 41% of responding households as having participated in aerobics, fitness or weight-training activities over the past 12 months. 61% of survey respondents supported additional spending on fitness centres, ranking thirteenth out of 22 activity types.



Aerobics Room at the CW Community Sportsplex

With no other major indoor facilities being recommended through this Master Plan and modest level of priority assigned to fitness centres through community consultations, there is little impetus for the Township to construct additional fitness space over the master planning period. Instead, the Township's efforts would optimally be spent on continuing to explore interest in outreach group fitness programming at the Elora and District Community Centre Hall and Belwood Hall to potentially target a broader market that may not be able or inclined to drive into Fergus for such programs. This may require consideration of improved amenities in these spaces such as flooring, sound systems, storage, etc.

Another cost effective way to increase physical fitness is to provide outdoor fitness equipment within a selected park(s) or trail route. These pieces of equipment provide low-impact, body-weight activities that focus on mobility, flexibility and strength-training. Outdoor fitness equipment complements the Township's philosophy and service mandate relating to personal fitness, and are excellent options for exercise among all age groups including older adults. Although outdoor fitness training was not explicitly heard through community engagements, there is evidence that outdoor fitness experiences are growing in popularity particularly as it pertains to long distance endurance with many residents pursuing personal goals for full/half marathon or biathlon/triathlon activities.

Through parkland design/redesign processes and consultation with the community, the Township should explore the provision of outdoor fitness equipment. Potential sites include parks where a trail passes through (e.g. Confederation Park or Bissel Park), and/or through the redesign of the Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex site.

Recommendation

- #5.** Through the park design or renewal process, select a municipally-owned park or trail route to install outdoor fitness equipment.



Example of a park path with outdoor fitness equipment in Whitby, Ontario

Gymnasiums

The Township presently does not own or operate gymnasium space. Gymnasium access for Centre Wellington's sports teams and organizations is facilitated by the Upper Grand District School Board through the Provincial Community Use of Schools initiative.

Gymnasiums provide space to facilitate a wide assortment of indoor sports and recreation activities that require open space, a hard surface and high ceiling. Gymnasiums are effective in facilitating drop-in and organized activities such as volleyball, badminton, pickleball, fitness classes and other active programming. Various non-recreational activities can also be accommodated such as craft and vendor shows, gatherings and other events.

Assessment of Need

Participation in sports frequently undertaken in gymnasiums (e.g. basketball, volleyball, and pickleball) was fairly low among the Master Plan's community survey respondents at 12% and less. Support for additional municipal spending on gymnasiums stood at 63%, falling just within the top ten priorities of respondents. Through in-person discussions with members of the public, Township Staff and Council, certain individuals mentioned a desire for gymnasiums or other multi-purpose, drop-in space, especially to meet the needs of youth and seniors. Stakeholder input from surveys did not suggest needs for gymnasium (possibly because most were arena and sports field organizations).

Gymnasium space in municipalities where school access is limited tends to be targeted in the range of 1 municipal gymnasium per 40,000 population. This would suggest that a gymnasium could be required towards the end of the master planning period, though recognizing that there is likely a degree of latent demand in the community as some input from consultations has suggested school gymnasiums sometimes have scheduling or type of use restrictions that can inhibit local groups from delivering their programs as desired. With no other major indoor recreation facilities being recommended in the Township through this Master Plan, construction of a gymnasium would not be able to leverage any economies of scale which further challenges the economic feasibility.

An expansion might be possible to the Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex that could integrate a gymnasium, however, the preferred strategy would be to explore the ability to meet certain gym programs within multi-purpose spaces such as the CW Sportsplex Hall and the Elora and District Community Centre Hall. The Township has successfully facilitated a drop-in pickleball program at the Sportsplex which is a positive way to maximize use of that existing asset

and there may be additional types of active programs that could be accommodated should a need be expressed to do so.

The ceiling height at the hall in Elora may preclude groups from delivering certain sports. It is understood from discussions with certain officials that the Township has been contemplating improvements to hall space in Elora community which, if pursued, may increase potential for a wider range of uses to take place in that community. The Township should also continue to engage in dialogue with non-municipal gymnasium providers such as schools, faith-based organizations, etc. to determine if access can be negotiated to provide cost-effective way to address community programming needs.

Indoor Turf

The Township of Centre Wellington does not own or operate an indoor turf field. Sports field users that are looking for indoor space - such as soccer, field lacrosse and rugby groups - must rely upon school gymnasiums and indoor turf fields in nearby municipalities of Guelph-Eramosa (Marden), the City of Guelph and Halton Hills (Acton).

Assessment of Need

While there are no set service levels for the provision of indoor turf facilities, they are generally common in communities with more than 50,000 residents, although Guelph-Eramosa is an example of a municipality with lesser population but it is important that it relies heavily on users from other municipalities in the region to sustain it. While some municipalities own and operate their own facilities, the most common approach to provision has been through partnerships between municipalities, non-profit sport associations and/or other public institutions (such as school boards).

For a municipality such as Centre Wellington that is undergoing a transition in its recreation user profile (notably an aging population) and the financial resources that are associated with maintaining a number of parks and facilities, having a negotiated partnership agreement in place should be a precursor to any decision to add indoor turf field house to the Community Services Department portfolio. Fergus Elora District Soccer and the Fergus Highland Rugby Club have indicated a willingness to partner with others with the hopes of securing an indoor (or outdoor) artificial turf field in Centre Wellington. The minor lacrosse organization has also expressed an interest in using an indoor field.

In the absence of existing local opportunities, however, it is difficult to quantify the need or projected level of use for such a facility without first undertaking a comprehensive business planning exercise that involves local stakeholders to fully understand:

- the type/size of field required;
- the number of hours that might be used each week and how they will be allocated to various users;
- the capital and operating costs of the facility;
- potential partners and the respective roles of each;
- the degree of completion that can be expected with Guelph and Guelph-Eramosa; and
- the ongoing funding strategy.

A business plan investigating these noted considerations, at a minimum, should be prepared prior to rationalizing any decision as to whether the Township would enter into this new level of service. Part of the investigation should include whether to construct a permanent field house structure versus installing an air-supported structure (i.e. dome or bubble), the latter of which could be a multi-seasonal specification that allows for outdoor use during the spring, summer and fall months.

At a very high level, demand can be estimated based on the number of outdoor soccer players in Centre Wellington. There are 850 players registered with Fergus Elora District Soccer, the largest soccer organization in the Township. Applying an assumption that 25% of outdoor players participate in indoor soccer results in an estimate of about 200 indoor soccer players residing locally. The average indoor soccer program requires one hour per week on an indoor field for approximately every ten players; this ratio can vary slightly depending on the age of the participant (the field can be divided in two for games involving smaller children) and the level of competition (rep teams require more practice time). Based on this metric, there could be demand of 20 hours per week, which is far below the capacity of an indoor turf field. Factoring in usage by adult soccer players and other field sports such as lacrosse, football and rugby would still challenge the economic feasibility of the operation, likely result in the need for the Township to compete with area municipalities to draw regional users as a means to recover costs.

Accordingly, the Township should be open to entertaining discussions should a qualified partner(s) express interest in collaborating on the development and operation of an indoor turf field. Examples of partners could include, but not necessarily be limited to, school boards and private schools, postsecondary education institutions, area municipalities and/or local sports field organizations (either an individual group or a collective) provided they have demonstrated financial capacity to be involved in operations. The Township's role in the relationship should be reviewed through the aforementioned business plan as there are many different examples across Ontario if the Township could support such a project. For example, the Township could provide the financial backing to secure land and/or the initial cost of construction with a partner possibly repaying the investment back over time, or it could contribute towards all or a portion of capital requirements and have the partner be fully responsible for facility operations (or vice versa) provided suitable community access is permitted.

Another cost-effective strategy would be to approach the Town of Guelph-Eramosa to determine if an agreement can be reached whereby Centre Wellington residents can secure affordable and guaranteed times in exchange for a set rate or services from Centre Wellington that are returned in kind. This approach would save the Township and its partners from having to recover the costs of constructing and operating its own indoor field.

Recommendation

- #6.** Undertake a consultation and business planning process with local field sport organizations to explore the feasibility of municipal involvement in the indoor artificial turf market. Opportunities to explore include a permanent versus air-supported structure along with any complementary facilities (e.g. indoor track, indoor tennis or pickleball, etc.). Any investment on the part of the Township should be contingent upon securing a qualified partner(s) that contributes predetermined capital and/or operating resources and that such investment is first rationalized through the comprehensive business planning exercise.

Older Adult Space

Centre Wellington operates the Victoria Park Seniors Centre in Fergus. Opened in 1992, the facility contains several activity rooms including a craft room, meeting room, multi-purpose room with adjacent kitchen, computer lab, library space, fitness area, foot clinic, shuffleboard, games room and an additional multi-purpose space in the lower level. The Centre is run by an elected Advisory Board that acts as a liaison between the membership and the Township of Centre Wellington, working with the Community Services Department to provide quality programs for older adults. It is noteworthy that Centre Wellington has been historically progressive in terms of providing a high quality, dedicated seniors centre as these types of facilities are provided by a handful of smaller to mid-size municipalities (but are very valuable to the populations they serve).

Best Practice

As a result of Centre Wellington's older median age and larger proportion of older adults, it will be important for parks, recreation and cultural services to be carefully considered for this age group.

Assessment of Need

As the Township's population continues to age, it is important for older adults to remain engaged in healthy active lifestyles. Centres for older adults/seniors are typically geared towards adults in the 55+ age group, with the goal of supporting healthy habits and socialization for older adults through a range of social, health, recreational and educational activities and programs. As a result of the many physical and social benefits produced by older adult centres, these important community assets are generally regarded as an important part of the health care and recreation sectors. However, only about 10% of Ontario's older adult population make use of their services. The target market for older adult centres in Ontario is the 65+ age group, although membership tends to be available to those 50 or 55 years of age and older. Because older adult centres are designed to appeal to such a wide age range, members tend to stay involved for a very long time. Members of older adult centres are also very healthy and have strong activity patterns that help them remain physically well (55% of members described their level of physical activity as fair/moderate, and 33% as good/excellent).¹³

Membership at the Victoria Park Seniors Centre has been steadily growing since 2015. As of the 2016/17 term (the membership year runs from June 1st to May 31st of the next year), there were 992 members compared to 930 members the year prior, and 860 members the year before that. Year-to-date memberships for the seven months of the 2017/18

¹³ Older Adult Centres' Association of Ontario. 2010. Building Bridges to Tomorrow: User Profile of Older Adults Centres in Ontario.

year presently stand at 928 members. The Victoria Park Seniors Centre membership therefore amounts to approximately 10% of the 55+ population in Centre Wellington (using census data), consistent with the aforementioned average noted for Ontario, though when isolating the percentage based on the older adult population in Fergus where the facility is located, the capture rate increases to 14% (though it is acknowledged not all members are residents of Fergus).

By all accounts, the Seniors Centre is a bustling destination and a key hub within the community. When factoring in the entire scope of services available through the Victoria Park Seniors Centre (i.e., all registered programs, drop-in groups, clinics, bus trips, and services), there are 110 programs available on a weekly basis. Within this complement, the Seniors Centre:

- offers offer 45 weekly drop-in activity groups with 564 people attending per week, amounting to total annual attendance of 25,385;
- served over 1,800 persons annually for its weekly congregate dining program;
- registered 511 participants in 10 bus trips, an increase of nearly 40% compared to the year prior; and
- averages 191 people through its door every day.

There were lower levels of participation in organized senior's programs (e.g. luncheons, cards, special interest courses) among community survey respondents, with 4% of respondents stating that they had participated over the past 12 months. In terms of satisfaction, 56% of respondents were satisfied with parks and recreation opportunities for older adults (55-69 years of age), while 18% were not satisfied. Similar levels of satisfaction with parks and recreation opportunities for seniors (70+ years of age) were noted, with 51% of respondents stating that they were satisfied with current opportunities and 8% of respondents stating that they were not satisfied.



Victoria Park Seniors Centre

With regard to current arts and culture opportunities offered by the Township, 54% of respondents were satisfied with current opportunities for older adults, while 8% were not satisfied. On the other hand, 51% of respondents were satisfied with arts and culture opportunities for seniors, while 8% were not satisfied.

In terms of additional municipal spending, there were higher levels of support for enhanced spending on space for seniors programs, with 64% of survey respondents supporting additional public spending (5% opposed spending) on seniors programs, ranking as the eighth highest priority.

With the Township having added a 4,000 square foot expansion to the Victoria Park Seniors Centre just three years ago, it has added capacity and the ability to broaden the range of programming. Due to its success, there is every indication that membership and utilization of the facility will continue to grow over the next ten years. However, further expansion could be limited due to site constraints (i.e., encroachment on remaining parking and the track/sports field). The possibility of additional expansions should be more fully understood along with the costs of doing so in order to make an informed decision as to how best to expand the capacity of senior's space in the community. There is also a broader trend that new older adult spaces and 55+ programs are being integrated within multi-generational community centres given the reluctance of some Baby Boomers to be labeled as "seniors" which should be rationalized against any costs that are associated with further expansions of the Victoria Park Seniors Centre.

The Township and the Advisory Board should continue to explore 55+ program delivery through its existing community centres in Fergus, Elora and Belwood. In doing so, it would be ideal to leverage the Victoria Parks Seniors Centre brand to maximize awareness and membership recruitment potential at the Seniors Centre. The potential redevelopment of the Elora and District Community Centre also presents an opportunity through which to bolsters older adult programs and services to that area.

Recommendation

- #7.** Undertake architectural and needs assessments for the Victoria Park Seniors Centre to explore the costs associated with increasing its gross floor area (including the possibility of adding a second storey) in order to address growing demands for 55+ programs there.

Youth Space

The Township does not currently provide dedicated youth space but rather facilitates certain youth-oriented programming through its community centres including arenas, the indoor pool, multi-purpose rooms as well as within its parks system. Such a model is consistent with many municipalities across the province. A faith-based organization operates The Door that is a youth centre located in Fergus offering drop-in activities and various programs.

Assessment of Need

The provision of dedicated community space for youth offers a number of benefits, particularly given that they are often considered as under-represented segments of the population. This age group has specific needs and desires, resulting in the need to ensure that youth spaces are designed to respond and adapt to a variety of interests. Research has revealed that youth prefer unorganized and self-structured activities, prompting the emergence of drop-in youth spaces that allow users to engage in their desired activities on their own schedule. These spaces also function as a safe environment to facilitate positive reinforcement to combat concerns surrounding mental and physical health among youth. The 2016 Census recorded 3,445 youth and teens between the age of 10 and 19 in Centre Wellington, representing 12% of the Township's population.

Various in-person discussions taking place during the consultation spoke to the need to provide opportunities for local youth and teens to engage in positive activities. In the past 12 months, 12% of responding households had at least one member participate in organized teen programs. There were higher levels of support noted for youth programs; 80% of respondents supported additional municipal spending on youth programs, ranking third out of 22 activity types.

The trend in the majority of municipalities has been to shift away from providing dedicated, stand-alone youth centres in favour of integrating youth rooms or youth-priority space within multi-generational community centres. It is recommended that the Township's youth focus should continue to be on developing and facilitating a robust range of programming for the pre-teen and teen age groups by leveraging arena, aquatic, and park space as well as exploring greater access to non-municipal gymnasiums as recommended earlier in this Section.

The 2009 Master Plan had recommended reconfiguring existing space within the Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex, however, this did not end up coming to fruition but remains an appropriate approach moving forward. Concurrently, youth-priority space(s) should be investigated (with a focus on multi-purpose rooms) within existing facilities to support programming to this age group. For example, additional youth programming at the Elora and District Community Centre would be highly logical if that site is selected for a new skateboard park.



Multi-Purpose Rooms

The Township offers nine multi-purpose rooms throughout Centre Wellington, sub-categorized as boardrooms and community halls. It achieves a balanced distribution of rentable facility space in Fergus, Elora, and Belwood.

Historically, stand-alone community spaces were constructed as small single-purpose facilities generally for passive activities (such as social gatherings and meetings). The construction of stand-alone facilities is generally discouraged in current facility planning exercises due to a number of factors such as programming limitations, operational costs, and other variables.

Multi-purpose spaces and meeting rooms are typically incorporated within facility designs as complementary spaces to other facility components as they can accommodate a broader range of uses, including community programs to supplement rental revenues. With the exception of Belwood Hall, the multi-purpose spaces within the Township's facilities are examples of co-locating multiple recreation facility components to facilitate cross programming opportunities, while achieving efficiencies in maintenance and management.

Assessment of Need

Just less than half of online survey respondents supported additional municipal spending on community halls, ranking as the 18th highest priority out of 22 choices. This suggests that municipal spending on community halls is less of a priority among survey respondents.

Centre Wellington's multi-purpose rooms are moderately used. In 2016, these spaces were used for approximately 9,700 hours, which translates into a usage rate of 25%. This level of usage is typical compared to other municipalities as they are not high demand spaces. Usage of these spaces increased by 5% between 2014 and 2016, translating into over 2,200 more booked hours. While these results suggest that the Township has improved



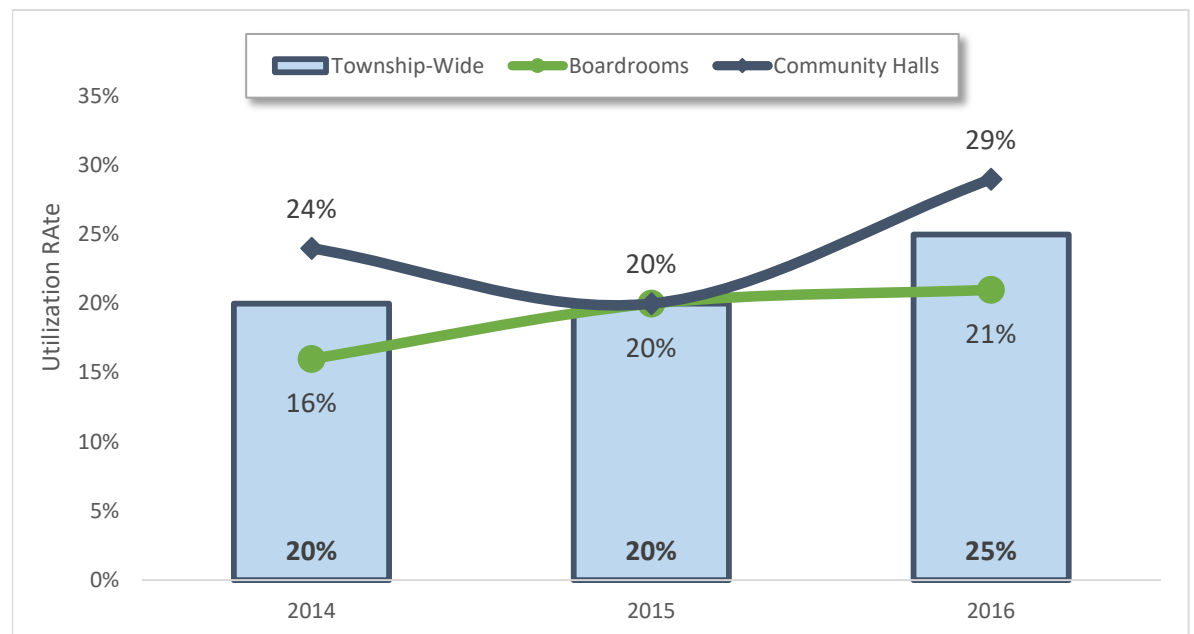
Belwood Hall

how these spaces are used, there are nearly 30,000 surplus hours available for booking. The following trends were also observed:

- **Boardrooms** were used for 4,288 hours in 2016, resulting in a usage rate of 21%. This level of use is an increase of 5% (1,100 hours) compared to 2014. Boardroom A at the Sportsplex was the most used space with 1,715 hours booked in 2016.
- **Community Halls** were used for 5,443 hours in 2016, translating into a usage rate of 29%. This is an increase of 5% (1,107 hours) from 2014. The Community Hall at the Centre Wellington Sportsplex was the most used space with 2,435 hours booked in 2016.

With substantial capacity available in its multi-purpose room supply and no major indoor facilities being recommended for construction through this Master Plan, the existing multi-purpose room supply is deemed to be sufficient. It is understood that the Township regularly evaluates how existing rooms can be improved, especially as it receives requests for new types of programming in those areas.

Figure 5: Multi-Purpose Room Usage, 2014 – 2016



Source: Township of Centre Wellington



Section 5: Outdoor Recreation Facilities System

Centre Wellington's Outdoor Recreation Facilities

Centre Wellington provides a wide range of outdoor recreation facilities, many of which are found within the parks system. Facilities include sports fields, splash pads, hard surface sport courts, playgrounds and more. These facilities help to turn many parks into “outdoor community centres” or destinations that encourage residents to enjoy the beauty of the outdoors in either naturalized or manicured settings, aiding the Township’s efforts to keep its populace active, healthy and engaged. Assessments of outdoor recreation facilities are provided in the pages that follow, noting that the intent of this Section is to focus on “capital” or infrastructure requirements (service delivery is explored in Section 7).

Table 8: Summary of Outdoor Recreation Facilities

Facility	Municipal Supply	Service Level*	Location/Comments
Soccer Fields Senior – Lit Senior – Unlit Intermediate – Unlit Non-Municipal	12 1 (1.5) 6.5 1 3	1 : 2,610	Each lit field is equivalent to 1.5 unlit fields due to added capacity for evening play. Senior (lit): Victoria Park Senior (unlit): Fergus Victoria Park (1.5 including rugby pitch), Centre Wellington Sportsplex (3), Southridge (2) Intermediate: Strathallan Park <u>Note:</u> Non-municipal fields at Centre Wellington District High School and St. Mary's Catholic School are permitted to user groups
Ball Diamonds Baseball - Lit Softball Senior – Lit Junior – Unlit Neighbourhood	9 (11.5) 1 (1.5) 4 (6) 2 2	1 : 2,721	Each lit diamond is equivalent to 1.5 unlit diamonds due to added capacity for evening play. Baseball (lit): Centre Wellington Sportsplex Senior Softball (lit): Belwood Sports Fields, Elora and District Community Centre, Elora Lions Park, Highland Park Junior Softball: Highland Park (2) Neighbourhood: Forfar Park, Webster Park

Facility	Municipal Supply	Service Level*	Location/Comments
Tennis Courts	5	1 : 6,226	Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex (2), Fergus Tennis Courts
Basketball Courts	4	1 : 7,832	Each half court is equivalent to 0.5 full courts
Half Courts	1		Half Courts: Douglas Park
Full Courts	1		Full Courts: Elora and District Community Centre Park
Multi-Use	2		Multi-Use Courts: Bissell Park (2)
Waterplay facilities	2	1 : 15,665	Millburn Boulevard Park, O'Brien Park
Skateboard Parks	1	1 : 31,330	Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex
Playground Apparatus	26	1 : 1,205	Located at 23 municipal parks.
Off-Leash Dog Areas	1	1 : 31,330	Fergus Dog Park
Outdoor Ice Skating Rink	7	1 : 4,471	Bissell Park, Beatty Park, Belwood Ball Diamond, Drimmie Park, Elora Community Centre, Highland Park, Strathallan Park and Stait Park
Rugby Fields	1.5	1 : 20,886	Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex, Fergus Victoria Park (0.5)

* Based on 2018 population estimate of 31,300 persons

Rectangular Sports Fields

The Township provides five unlit soccer fields, one lit soccer field, one lit rugby field and one unlit rugby field. Centre Wellington's soccer field supply is considered to be 5.5 unlit equivalents (adding 50% capacity to the lit field to account for evening play) plus one field at St. Mary School where the Township has reached an agreement. There are five other school fields and the private Simpson Field that are also included in the inventory as groups have historically run programming at those locations with the permission of the landholders. This results in a total of 12 soccer field capacity equivalents available for use in the Township soccer groups.

Assessment of Need

The following points from consultations were noted with respect to the various rectangular field sports in Centre Wellington:

- 20% of survey respondents stated that a member of their household had participated in soccer over the past 12 months, while 14% reported playing rugby and 10% had played lacrosse.
- 62% of online respondents supported additional public spending on soccer fields, ranking tenth out of 22 activity types.
- Additional consultation with lacrosse stakeholder groups revealed that there were some challenges with the ability to use an arena floor during playoffs and early in the lacrosse season, the quality of the arena floor and the availability of an outdoor field in the early spring. Community survey respondents recorded higher levels of support for additional spending on arenas, with 79% of respondents supportive of additional investment, ranking fourth out of 22 activity types.
- Rugby and soccer users from the online survey expressed a desire for improved field conditions, field drainage and the potential for an indoor sports field within the Township.

Soccer experienced enormous growth in participation and popularity during the 1990s when it overtook baseball and hockey as the most popular organized sport among Canadian youth. Coupling this trend with its worldwide appeal, high fitness quotient, and relatively low cost to participate, soccer fields remain in high demand in many municipalities. According to the Ontario Soccer Association (OSA), participation in the sport peaked in 2007 with 385,000 participants.

Since this time, registration levels among sanctioned clubs declined by 12% due to factors such as demographic shifts and the emergence of clubs that are not affiliated with the OSA. Locally, The Fergus Elora District Soccer Club is the Township's primary field user, which has 850 participants for 2017; this is substantially lower than the 1,400 players recorded in the year 2008. Through its survey submission, the Soccer Club emphasized a desire for improved field quality/maintenance as well as a hope to partner with others to construct an indoor turf or outdoor artificial turf field.

Using a standard of providing one soccer field per 80 registrants would necessitate a supply of 10.5 unlit equivalents and imply a surplus of one field. Population growth to the year 2028 has the potential to bump registrations to 1,100 players but that would assume the substantial decline that has occurred over the past ten years would entirely reverse. The Township would require three additional fields under a best-case scenario, however, the preferred approach is to monitor registration trends prior to undertaking any new field developments to ensure capital investments are directed efficiently.



Rugby is not seen as a growth sport in most parts of Ontario, although it tends to be stable in communities with strong programs. The rugby season typically begins in May and continues through the summer. The Fergus Highland Rugby Club is the Township's local organization, which reported 315 players in 2017. The Rugby Club, similar to input received by soccer, emphasized that their priority is on developing an indoor turf field.

Nationally, there has been a greater emphasis on box lacrosse (arena-based) over the years. Currently, there are nearly 80,000 participants registered with the Canadian Lacrosse Association, with only a fraction representing field lacrosse players. Of the three lacrosse organizations operating within the Township, only Centre Wellington Minor Lacrosse runs a field program with 90 registrants (growth by 25 players from three years earlier). The organization notes that the existing rectangular field supply is unable to accommodate their programs due to their mid-May start to the season (thus competing with soccer) and thus must travel to other municipalities for games.

While it would appear that the supply available to soccer and rugby is satisfactory for the time being, the pressures faced by field lacrosse users is understandable. With the Township likely to obtain parkland dedication as its land base develops, at least one rectangular field could be constructed. This would provide the Township with a degree of flexibility should soccer registrations improve in the coming years but more importantly should be designated as a "multi-use" field whereby it is understood that no one field sport necessarily has priority over another. In this way, the local field lacrosse program will have an opportunity to grow and host games while also potentially alleviating pressure on the Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex fields. That said, Minor Lacrosse also notes that if provided with access to an indoor turf field, outdoor programs could be transitioned to that facility thereby avoiding the need for the Township to construct a new outdoor field unless required by soccer or another field user.

Accordingly, the Township should await the outcomes of the recommended business planning process for an indoor turf field, including the potential of constructing an outdoor artificial field that could be bubbled in the winter (per Recommendation #6). A five year review of rectangular field needs, potentially through an update to this Master Plan, will also provide a better indication of needs based on market conditions at that future time. At this moment, municipal resources are more prudently focused towards exploring ways in which to enhance existing field quality, monitoring participation trends, and engaging in discussions regarding an indoor turf field to be consistent with input provided by Fergus Elora District Soccer, Fergus Highland Rugby Club and other sport field users.

Ball Diamonds

Centre Wellington currently provides a total of 9 ball diamonds including 5 lit diamonds and 4 unlit diamonds which are located at the Centre Wellington Sportsplex, Forfar Park, Highland Park, Webster Park, Belwood Sports Fields, Elora Community Centre and Elora Lions Park. For the purposes of this analysis, lit ball diamonds are equivalent to 1.5 unlit ball diamonds because of their ability to accommodate additional evening play; when lit fields are factored in, the total supply of diamonds is the equivalent to the capacity provided by 11.5 unlit ball diamonds.

Assessment of Need

Provincially, Baseball Ontario identifies that participation in the sport increased by 22% over the past decade. The popularity of baseball is driven by a number of factors such as greater focus in skill development and grassroots programs that engage children and youth at a young age to participate in the sport. The popularity of the Toronto Blue Jays is likely a contributing factor. Regionally, participation in baseball is inverse to provincial trends as player registration over the past ten years has declined by 15%. At the local level, the Centre Wellington Minor Softball Association reported 698 players.

Minor Softball was the only diamond user to submit a survey and indicated that their needs are largely met apart from certain quality/maintenance concerns from time to time. Further, 20% of online survey respondents indicated that at least one household member had participated in baseball or softball (or other forms) over the past 12 months. Support for additional municipal spending was lower for baseball and softball diamonds, with 47% of respondents supportive of additional investment and 15% in opposition, ranking twenty-first of 22 activity types.

The Township's previous Master Plan applied a service level target of one ball diamond per 4,000 that aligns with averages throughout Southwestern Ontario and elsewhere in the G.T.A., while considering factors such as continued aging population trends and limited input through consultations. With a projected population of 40,000 at the end of the master planning period, the present supply would be able to accommodate needs based upon targeted level of service. As a result, no new capital recommendations are advanced for ball diamonds in the community.

Tennis and Pickleball Courts

The Township provides five tennis courts. Two tennis courts are located at the Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex, which are available to the public and members of the Fergus Tennis Club. Three tennis courts are located at the Fergus Tennis Club (located on the west corner of Tower Street South and Union Street West) that are owned by the Township but are only available to Fergus Tennis Club members. Additionally, there are three tennis courts owned and operated by the Elora Tennis Club on their lands.

A 2016 study found that more than 6.5 million Canadians played tennis at least once over a 12-month period, a growth of more than 12% since 2015. This study found that the popularity of tennis is growing among Canadians as 57% of the population indicated that they are somewhat or very interested in the sport, which is an increase from 38% in 2012. In 2016, two in ten Canadians said they played tennis in the past year, up significantly from 2015 (18% vs. 16%).¹⁴ This trend is on par with research that suggests that the sport is experiencing a resurgence over the past several years since the popularity of tennis peaked in the 1970s.

As with many municipalities, the Township does not have any dedicated outdoor pickleball courts as the sport is still considered to be an emerging activity in most parts of the province; however, drop-in indoor pickleball is played locally in the hall at the Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex and it is generally well attended. There is evidence that baby boomers are creating a small boost in other tennis related racquet sports as participation trends suggest that older adults have a greater desire to remain physically active in their retirement years. This age segment has driven the sport of pickleball to become one of the fastest growing sports in Canada, which is a lower intensity paddle sport that can be played on modified tennis courts (it requires a badminton-sized court and a net that is slightly lower than tennis height). Pickleball's popularity continues to spread across the country while its prominence is further bolstered as an event at the Canadian 55+ Games and the Ontario Senior Games.

¹⁴ Tennis Canada. 2016. Canadian Tennis Brand Health Study. Prepared by Charlton Strategic Research Inc., November 2016.

Assessment of Need

Growth in tennis is driven by a number of factors such as the growing segment of active baby boomers that seek social, low impact activities. Increasing participation among baby boomers has also driven the rising popularity of pickleball, which is a similar form of racquet sport as tennis. There is also a growing focus on promoting the sport at the youth level through club memberships for youth and programming opportunities that emphasizes the Long Term Athlete Development model.¹⁵ Tennis Canada reported that in 2013, more than 600,000 children between the ages of six and 11 played tennis.¹⁶

The Master Plan's community survey revealed that 17% of respondents had at least one household member participate in tennis over the past 12 months whereas only 2% of survey respondents had household members participating in pickleball. Half of survey respondents (50%) supported additional spending on tennis and pickleball courts, ranking sixteenth out of 22 activity types. Other survey questions indicated some respondents' desire for indoor tennis courts within the Township. A request for tennis courts in Elora and a couple of requests for indoor tennis courts were also received at the Public Open House.

A service level of 1 tennis court per 5,000 population is being recommended in Centre Wellington, slightly revised from historical targets due to limited feedback received through consultations and continued aging of the population. By 2028, this would mean that the Township should construct three new tennis courts to reach a supply of eight tennis courts in total. It is suggested that two of these courts be



CW Community Sportsplex Tennis Courts

¹⁵ Tennis Canada. 2012. 2012-2015 Tennis development strategic plan. <http://www.tenniscanada.com>.

¹⁶ Ibid. Tennis Canada, 2014.

constructed in Elora (given that there are presently no public tennis courts in that community) and construct the third court in Fergus, potentially by adding to the existing courts located at the CW Community Sportsplex.

To reflect growing interest in pickleball locally and within the province, the Township should line the two new courts proposed for Elora to accommodate both tennis and pickleball play, thereby creating a multi-use court. While pickleball has generally focused on indoor opportunities in the Ontario market, this is slowly evolving to increasing demand for outdoor opportunities during warmer weather months; the multi-use court approach has been employed in many communities and is considered a best practice for less competitive forms of play. Existing and/or new tennis courts at the CW Community Sportsplex could also be redesigned as multi-use courts.

It is understood that the Fergus Tennis Club has been exploring possibilities of adding programs for pickleball. This makes sense, especially since a number of tennis clubs across the province have moved in that direction as a means to reinvigorate their membership base. The Fergus Tennis Club location also has the benefit of being close to the Victoria Park Seniors Centre which could potentially result in stronger levels of interest. It would be prudent for the Township to discuss ways in which it might be able to assist the Tennis Club in accommodating pickleball.

Recommendation

- #8.** Construct three multi-use courts that are suitable for tennis, pickleball and/or other activities as appropriate.



Lined Tennis and Pickleball Court
Photo Credit: All Lined Up

Basketball Courts

The Township provides a full court at Irvine Park (Elora Community Centre) and half court at Douglas Park; a full multi-use court exists at Bissell Park which is used for basketball and ball hockey. In total, there are thus 4 basketball courts in Centre Wellington. There are also 5 “hoop toss” areas, primarily located in Elora, which consist of single hoops but no paved or marked courts, thus they are excluded from the supply calculation.

Assessment of Need

Basketball courts are flexible outdoor recreation facilities as they can accommodate many informal and unstructured activities that require a large, hard surface. Research reveals that basketball courts are primarily used by male youth and the sport continues to be a popular pastime activity due to its national appeal and low barriers to participation. Compared to other sports such as hockey, basketball is easy to learn, safe, affordable to play, and can be played with one person or in small groups. 12% of online survey respondents had at least one household member participate in basketball over the past 12 months. In regard to additional spending on basketball courts, 54% of survey respondents supported additional spending, while 8% opposed, ranking fourteenth out of 22 activity types. Very few other comments were received through consultations regarding basketball courts.

A standard of 1 basketball court per 800 youth between the ages of 10 and 19 remains appropriate in Centre Wellington along with the consideration of geographical distribution and the inventory of school courts. With slightly more than 3,400 youth recorded through the 2016 Census, there is a need for 4 outdoor basketball courts and aligns with the Township’s existing supply though geographic distribution is also a consideration as will be discussed. Despite aging trends and a ten year decline in the number of youth, if applying an assumption that the proportion of youth as a percentage of the population (done because there are no age cohort population forecasts presently available) would increase the total supply requirement to 6 courts, thereby necessitating a minimum of two new courts.

Geographic distribution is strong in Elora and Belwood, however, there are presently no municipal basketball courts in Fergus thus making this a logical candidate through which to construct a new court(s). With proposed redevelopment of the Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex and the existence of a skateboard park there, a basketball court is well suited at that location (or a suitable alternative). Ideally the design should encourage multiple

Recommendation

- #9. Integrate an outdoor basketball/multi-use court as part of a future park development or redevelopment in Centre Wellington.

uses to take place, such as ball hockey, in addition to providing basketball nets. A second basketball/multi-use court could be contemplated within a future park developed as part of a new residential area in Fergus if such an area is anticipated to target households with children and teens (i.e. families).

Playgrounds

The Township provides playground equipment at 24 municipal parks. Most of these sites contain standard create play equipment and swings. Additionally, there are various playgrounds located on school properties that increase access to neighbourhoods.

Assessment of Need

Playgrounds serve as neighbourhood-level amenities that benefit early childhood development and fosters cognitive and social skills, and physical activity. Playgrounds are typically provided within a reasonable walking distance of built-up residential areas, without having to cross major barriers such as arterial roads, railways, and waterbodies. Almost half (45%) of survey respondents had at least one household member use a playground over the past 12 months. The majority of survey respondents (74%) supported additional public investment in playgrounds.

Playgrounds are typically provided on the basis of geographic distribution, targeting an 800 metre services radius within major residential areas in built-up areas (i.e., excluding rural areas). On that basis distribution appears strong though the Township will need to determine whether new residential developments also have sufficient access to a park and playground through its subdivision review process.

Furthermore, it is recommended that the Township build upon the playground theme at Westminster Highland Park by exploring a more robust “adventure” or “natural” playground design at a new or redeveloped park. This practice is consistent with an emerging trend being observed in other municipalities across Canada as well as in the U.K. and U.S.A. The City



Westminster Highland Park Playground

Calgary and City of Toronto are engaged in researching and experimenting with the merits of “risky play” and testing various applications, while the Lawson Foundation launched an Outdoor Play Strategy in 2016 that provides \$2.7M in funding to support risky outdoor play initiatives across Canada.

Adventure and natural playgrounds are becoming more popular encouraging children and youth to take more risks through climbing, exploring, moving vigorously, and creating their own activities using their imagination. These styles of play are popular in This may be beneficial for children across the Township, particularly given that the most recent ParticipACTION report card identified that the over-protection of children (due to the perceived need to ensure that they are healthy and safe) is negatively impacting their ability to be physically active and develop valuable skills. The Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex site would be an ideal testing ground for this design concept and should be considered if the Township proceeds with the redevelopment of the site.

Other play-oriented approaches seen in municipalities in Ontario include the addition of large plastic toys within playgrounds i.e. kitchens, dump trucks, tricycles etc. to capture children’s imaginations and increase their outdoor play time. In Toronto, the City added a simple dirt pile at Trinity Bellwoods Park where children and caregivers alike augment their time at the playground by playing in the sand pile and digging, building, climbing, sliding down, etc. This solution is a simple low cost one to get caregivers and children to stay outside longer and engage in creative play.

Recommendations

- #10.** Investigate the application of Challenging Play opportunities within future playground developments, the use of larger toys in playgrounds, and animating parks spaces in Centre Wellington’s outdoor settings to encourage a greater degree of play.



Natural Playground at Huron Natural Area, Kitchener
Photo Credit: Earthscape

Splash Pads

Centre Wellington has two splash pads, located at Milburn Park in Fergus and at O'Brien Park in Elora. Both locations feature a range of spray functions and are complemented by associated park amenities such as picnic tables, washrooms, and playgrounds.

Assessment of Need

Most municipalities have shifted to the provision of splash/spray pads as an alternative to outdoor swimming pools and wading pools. Splash pads have proven to be more cost effective than traditional outdoor aquatic facilities to build and operate as they can be integrated into most park settings and do not require regular staffing as there is no standing water to supervise. Splash pads have gained in popularity in over the years to become one of the most sought after amenities for young families seeking affordable, accessible and social opportunities to cool down on a hot day.

30% of survey respondents had at least one household member utilize splash pads over the past 12 months. Support for municipal spending on playground was moderate (30%) with 7% of survey respondents opposing additional spending, ranking eleventh out of 22 activity types.

Centre Wellington provides an excellent level of service through its rate of 1 splash pad per 1,600 children under the age of 10. A geographic gap exists in north Fergus, however, particularly considering that the new residential developments there are attracting young families into that area. Accordingly, the provision of a splash pad in north Fergus is recommended to strengthen geographic distribution.



O'Brien Park Splash Pad

Recommendations

- #11.** Construct a splash pad in north Fergus to strengthen geographic distribution and address growth-related demands within these developing residential areas.

Skateboard Parks

The Township provides a single outdoor skatepark located at the Centre Wellington Sportsplex in Fergus. While once considered a fad, skateboarding has demonstrated sustained longevity. With research revealing that youth are gravitating towards more unstructured and low-cost activities such as skateboarding. Skate parks for skateboards and other action sports (e.g., scooter, roller blades, etc.) are now considered a core recreation facility in most municipalities across Ontario. Historically, skateboarding and other action sports were viewed by many as supporting negative youth behaviour; however, it has now become a mainstream, positive activity that municipalities have embraced.

Provision of skate parks often provides youth with a safe and positive atmosphere to engage in outdoor physical activities, while socializing with others who share common interests. With the introduction of skateboarding as a part of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, lending further credibility to the sport, this has the potential to drive interest and participation in skateboarding even higher which in turn could lead to greater demands and varying experiences for future skateboarding in Centre Wellington.

Assessment of Need

During consultation with stakeholders and staff, the potential for a second skate park in Elora was brought forth largely on the basis that access to the Fergus skate park is a barrier to certain children/teens in Elora due to the distance and lack of public transit options. Participation among community survey respondents was relatively low at 8% and there was moderate support for municipal investment in skate parks, with 47% of survey respondents supporting investment which ranked in the bottom third percentile.

Direction from the 2009 Master Plan remains appropriate in that a skateboard park should be targeted in both Fergus and Elora in order to eliminate the spatial

Recommendation

- #12.** Construct a skateboard park in Elora, considering outcomes of the consultation and site selection process undertaken in 2016.



Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex Skateboard Park

inequality that presently exists between them, much in the same way that the Township has done with its splash pad supply. The community appears invested having raised over \$53,000 through a crowdfunding campaign (givefun.ca) and service club contributions at the time of writing. The Township also undertook a consultation and site selection process that short-listed candidate sites as Bissell Park, Elora Lions Park, Elora and District Community Centre, and Southridge Park.

Other Recreation Facilities

The Township of Centre Wellington may be pressed for additional indoor and outdoor facilities which are not currently of sufficient demand to warrant a specific recommendation in the Master Plan. However, the Township must be prepared to appropriately respond to future requests. These demands may arise for existing activities / facilities or for those that evolve according to future trends and preferences. Examples may include, but not be limited to: curling rinks, bocce courts, cricket pitches, fields for Ultimate Frisbee, multi-media arts venues, radio-controlled car racing tracks, etc.

When requests are brought forward for investment in non-traditional, emerging and/or non-core municipal services, the Township should evaluate the need for these pursuits on a case-by-case basis. This should involve an examination into (but not be limited to):

- local/regional/provincial trends pertaining to usage and popularity of the activity/facility;
- examples of delivery models in other municipalities;
- local demand for the activity / facility;
- the ability of existing municipal facilities to accommodate the new service;
- the feasibility for the Township to reasonably provide the service / facility as a core service and in a cost-effective manner;
- the willingness and ability of the requesting organization to provide the service / facility if provided with appropriate municipal supports.



Section 6: Arts and Culture System

The Role of Culture in the Community

In 2006, the Harcourt Commission's landmark document for the Government of Canada identified culture as being one of four pillars of community sustainability.¹⁷ Observations across Canada and around the world demonstrate the multi-faceted benefits that a thriving arts, culture and heritage system can bring. Although the sector is commonly associated with performing arts centres, museums and galleries, or studios, culture at its core is about the shared experiences between people that connects a community. The availability of arts and culture opportunities is very desirable, fostering vibrant and liveable communities, contributing to local knowledge and supporting the local economy. Arts and culture can include a wide-range of activities including visual and creative arts (e.g. music and dance), festivals and special events and local heritage.

Since the Harcourt Commission's recognition of culture as a core component of sustainability, more and more municipalities have approached cultural planning in a strategic manner. Culture has become a greater part of municipal land use planning, economic development, community improvement and revitalization processes, and so on. Furthermore, many communities in southwestern Ontario have cultural plans in place in order to create a shared vision and establish strategic priorities aimed at advancing the arts and cultural sector within a municipality.

In 2013, Centre Wellington developed a Cultural Action Plan to engage the community in meaningful conversations and establish a clear direction for the Township's cultural future. Consultation from the Cultural Action Plan highlighted the high degree of importance placed on local culture by residents. The Plan defines culture as being "broad and all encompassing, including everything from arts and agriculture to festivals and events, quaint downtowns, natural and cultural heritage to sport and recreation."¹⁸

The Cultural Action Plan and Centre Wellington Official Plan are the main documents guiding arts and culture in Centre Wellington. These documents provide the Township with the authority and



Art fixture in Elora

¹⁷ Government of Canada. From Restless Communities to Resilient Places: Building a Stronger Future for All Canadians. (2006). Final Report of the External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities.

¹⁸ Township of Centre Wellington. 2013. Culture Matters: Centre Wellington Cultural Action Plan.

strategic directions to strengthen the role that arts, culture and heritage play in enhancing the local quality of life. To assist with ongoing planning, the Township currently provides a cultural mapping tool on its website that allows users to access a database of cultural groups, individuals, businesses, spaces and events. Cultural mapping is a way of gathering information about cultural assets in Centre Wellington and presenting this data in a visual way. The maps contain various layers of information to assist with planning and guide decision making by outlining cultural clusters, gaps, and areas of opportunity. This mapping tool provides residents, visitors and decision-makers with information about cultural activities and places within the Township and its broader area.

Arts and Cultural Assets in Centre Wellington

A common theme emerging out of the Master Plan's consultation process was a need for the Township to place more emphasis on the arts and culture sector. The Township provides arts and cultural opportunities through multi-purpose spaces in community centres. There are two main centres for the arts located in Centre Wellington - the Fergus Grand Theatre and Elora Centre for the Arts. Built in 1928, the Fergus Grand Theatre is a premier live performance venue that showcases a diverse line up of events. The Elora Centre for the Arts is a former school house turned into a community arts organization and gallery exhibiting local, provincial and national artists, as well as offering arts related classes for people of all ages. In addition to the available arts centres, the Wellington County Museum and Archives hosts various exhibits and local events to the public.

Apart from physical arts and culture spaces, there are numerous local artisans that exhibit their work through independent galleries along streets and within the community. It is anticipated that over time the demand for arts and culture activities will increase along with population growth and as the overall population ages. This Master Plan's community survey recorded 21% of responding households had participated in or were involved with performing arts during the past year, while 48% of respondents had attended a special event (e.g. Riverfest Elora, etc.). Participation in visual arts was slightly lower, with 11% of survey respondents participating in visual arts (e.g. painting, sculpture) over the past year.

A Definition of Culture

"Our definition of culture in Centre Wellington is broad and all encompassing including everything from arts and agriculture to festivals and events, quaint downtowns, natural and cultural heritage to sport and recreation."

Centre Wellington Cultural Action Plan. 2013.

The Township is fortunate to have a strong community-based arts and cultural sector that delivers several spaces, programs and events to residents of Centre Wellington. The Wellington County Museum and Archives, Elora Centre for the Arts and the Fergus Grand Theatre are notable due to the scale of their operations though the Cultural Action Plan recorded over 1,300 cultural assets in Centre Wellington (given the sheer number, these assets have not been identified for the purposes of this Master Plan but their contribution is recognized). Additionally, the Township has many artists, musicians, writers, designers, etc. that may or may not necessarily make a living in the creative industries.

In addition to cultural planning, municipalities such as Centre Wellington have become more active in their coordination and policy support for the arts and culture sector over the past decade. Some directly fund programs, services and festivals/events while others indirectly support community-based organizations through marketing, communications, volunteer development, and/or provision of space. Centre Wellington's Cultural Resource Centre is a good example of a direct approach by providing a centralized hub that coordinates municipal and community-based supports for event organizations to leverage. The Township also provides funding in the form of annual grants and Community Impact Grants to benefit a number of cultural (and recreational) organizations including the Elora Centre of the Arts, the Elora Arts Council, a number of festival and events, and other community stakeholders.

In addition, certain municipalities are able to utilize funding mechanisms permitted through the Municipal Act and/or Planning Act through incentives such as Section 37 density bonusing (this is typically applicable to larger municipalities) and tax incentives such as Heritage Tax Relief programs, etc. The Centre Wellington Urban Centre Community Improvement Plan is an example where the conservation of cultural heritage resources and landscapes is a core objective through which cultural assets could leverage funding through property improvement/renovation financial incentive (among other tools). The Township has also incorporated various forms of public art in its parks and open spaces such as the Elora Greenspace. The Centre Wellington Art Program, Policy and Guidelines document outlines ways in which public art can be acquired and sold through prescribed policies surrounding donations, acquisition and de-acquisition.



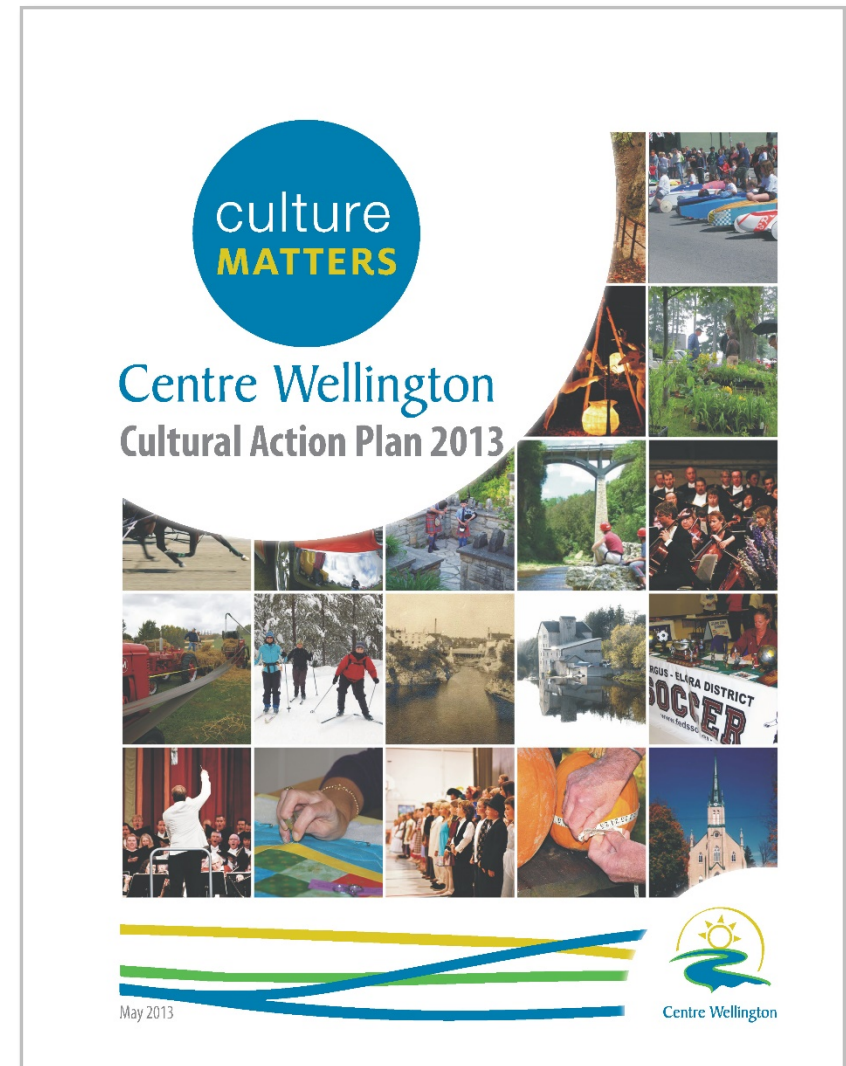
Fergus Grand Theatre - The Township completed extensive renovations to the Theatre in 2017 to improve its accessibility, functionality and patron experience. Ticket sales and revenues reached 10-year highs in 2018.

Culture Matters: The Cultural Action Plan

The Cultural Action Plan is a Council-approved document that was created with the input of over 2,000 people and supported through cultural mapping and comprehensive assessments. As such, the Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan does not provide an extensive set of recommendations specific to the arts, culture and heritage system but rather supports the general intent and principles advanced in the Cultural Action Plan.

The Cultural Action Plan includes a vision, principles and an action strategy that focuses on arts, agriculture, festivals/events, tourism, natural and cultural heritage, sport, recreation and quaint downtowns. The Plan is organized into three broad themes: People, Places and Potential. The Township is approaching implementation of the Plan's recommendations in a systematic way with the assistance of the community, the Festivals Working Group and the Community Services Advisory Committee. One-third of the Plan's 33 recommendations have been completed to date,¹⁹ consisting of the following:

- A Launch of the Cultural Action Plan to engage and build momentum for the plan amongst the community.
- Creation of a Cultural Directory (built upon the Cultural Map) to provide a self-serve tool where community and cultural groups can manage their own listings.
- Adding webpages dedicated to arts and culture within the new municipal website including pages dedicated to the Cultural Directory, the Cultural Resource Centre and the Cultural Action Plan.



¹⁹ Township of Centre Wellington. April 2017. Cultural Action Plan Report Card.

- An online calendar of events has been created to communicate event specific information while the Township promotes events, updates and opportunities via its social media channels.
- Arts and cultural granting processes have been reviewed and revised by the Community Services Advisory to allow for fair and equitable decision-making.
- A Community Improvement Plan was prepared and is being implemented with an intent of promote downtown cores as destinations and encouraging investment. Tools notable for the arts, culture and heritage sector include: a Heritage Property Tax Relief Program under the Municipal Act; Façade, Building and Property Improvement Grant/Loan; and a Tax Increment Equivalent Grant program to defer tax assessment increases where properties have been substantially improved;

Other recommendations of the Cultural Action Plan are presently ongoing. Those which may have particular relevance or alignment with the Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan include:

- Offering professional development opportunities using in house and external resources to cultural and community groups (supports community development philosophies of this Master Plan);
- Playing a leadership role in researching and communicating new partnering and funding opportunities to increase the capacity and financial viability/ sustainability of cultural groups (supports this Master Plan's focus on research, monitoring, and data collection to remain a high performing enterprise);
- Strengthening the relationship with Volunteer Centre and explore local service needs to increase number and capacity of community volunteers (aligns with efforts to increase and sustain volunteerism among parks and recreation organizations);
- Reviewing existing municipal facilities and spaces for ways to improve user experience (e.g. benches, washrooms, recycling, picnic tables, plantings etc.);

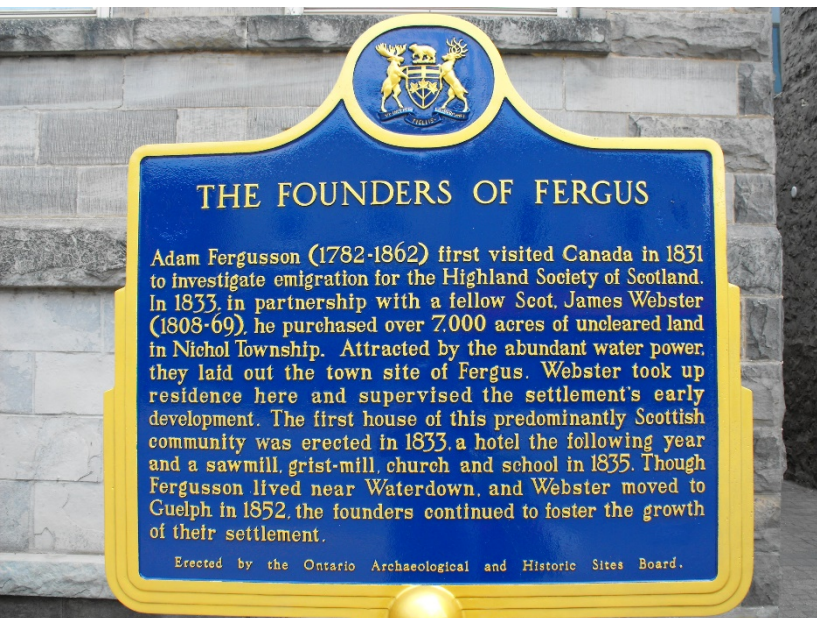
- Exploring cost effective options for additional space for use by community/cultural groups with priority consideration given to the creation of a mixed use space containing meeting and administrative space, storage, rehearsal and event areas;
- Providing support in the development of existing non-Municipal cultural spaces/facilities to improve function and viability, including but not limited to capital investment, grant support, in kind support and partnership opportunities; and
- Developing and promoting shoulder season programming to encourage year-round attraction of visitors as well as ongoing local participation and engagement (can leverage Community Services Department staff involved in program development and/or delivery).

In terms of current thinking, the Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan's consultations generated substantial discussion regarding Centre Wellington's arts and cultural sector:

- A number of comments received in-person suggested a need for the Township place more emphasis on the arts and culture sector through continued support for the community-based providers as well exploring opportunities to enhance the number of spaces and program options. Conversely, the Master Plan's community survey placed a lower degree of importance on arts and cultural facilities and a higher than average level of satisfaction.
- Recognition that arts, culture and heritage are an important part of the Township's economic prosperity by attracting new residents and making significant contributions through local tourism. Many people believe that arts and culture is part of the Township's "brand" or something that Centre Wellington is renowned for. Certain individuals noted the need to undertake an economic analysis of the contributions of the sector so that decision-makers have quantifiable information to consider when making continued investments.



- Nearly half of the Master Plan’s community survey sample attended a special event, making these the third most popular parks, recreation or cultural activity undertaken. The most requested arts and culture activities consisted of gallery/exhibition space, theatres, additional concert events, and general arts and crafts programs.
- Two out of three community survey respondents were too busy to participate in arts and cultural activities as often as they would like while one out of every three respondents were unaware of what opportunities exist in the sector.
- Appreciation for the Township’s investments in the Fergus Grand Theatre and suggestions that additional financial and staff resourcing has the potential to increase awareness and usage of the Theatre.



There is support from the community to increase cultural programming from those who have been engaged in the development of the Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan. The analysis of the provision of children and youth opportunities shows that there is an opportunity to provide visual and performing arts opportunities to these age cohorts and, at the very least, better coordination and promotion of existing opportunities. The Cultural Action Plan indicates that if the actions are completed, the intended outcomes for the community will have been met. While this is accurate to a certain extent, it would be timely to begin to measure some cultural incomes as listed in the Plan such as economic impact, participation, a sense of belonging etc. to allow Centre Wellington better to understand and quantify these intended outcomes.

Accordingly, one point stands out strongly and could assist the Township with making informed decisions as it implements its Cultural Action Plan and other investments in the sector. The idea of undertaking a market analysis of the economic impacts that are derived from the local arts and cultural sector is an excellent one. In doing so, the Township can build upon its previous cultural mapping endeavour to better understand the contributions of the sector as a whole, quantify the economic benefits associated directly with opportunities and their resulting economic multipliers, and have information at hand that can be used to help determine the type and degree of investments in specific areas of the arts and cultural system. Given that the Cultural Action Plan is now five years old, there is merit within the next five years to update that document and determine whether its ongoing recommendations remain relevant in the future. Through that update, the Cultural Action Plan should include the noted economic analysis.

Recommendation

- #13.** Continue to implement the Centre Wellington Cultural Action Plan, and annually report to Township Council and the public to inform them of progress and achievements.
- #14.** An Update of the Centre Wellington Cultural Action Plan should be undertaken by the year 2021. An economic analysis quantifying the benefits and costs of the local arts, culture and heritage sector should be integrated within the Update to the Cultural Action Plan.
- #15.** Continue to create opportunities for Centre Wellington to provide direct and indirect support to cultural programs, services and festivals/events through allocation of resources (including the development of a sustainable Funding Strategy), marketing and communications, volunteer development and/or the provision of space.



Section 7: Community Services Delivery System

Service Analysis Overview

The Township of Centre Wellington prides itself in its natural environment and the ability to provide and facilitate a full range of parks, recreation and cultural services for the residents. There is a network of service providers that work to engage as many citizens as possible regardless of age, ability or background. Strong participation levels result in healthy individuals and a vibrant community. The focus continues to be to strengthen a delivery system that provides programs and services by the Township organizing and providing programs and services directly and supporting community driven organizations. The emphasis is to collectively provide a full range of opportunities that are engaging, safe and enable some form of skill mastery.

The Service Review to support the development of the Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan must ensure that quality services can be sustained over the plan horizon. It is cognisant of Council's 2015-2018 Priorities as any consideration for future recommended actions must ensure that the current and future needs of the residents are met, include quality management practises and continue to engage and strengthen the community and its: "small town feel".

The service review responds to the following strategic and operational priorities:

- The current service delivery model and any suggested improvements;
- Alignment with Centre Wellington priorities, relevant national, provincial and local priorities and trends;
- Inputs received through community/staff engagement efforts and analysis of service related policies/data;
- Consideration of specific service delivery principles such as quality management, access and inclusion, community engagement, organizational capacity and performance measurement; and
- Relevant and realistic funding mechanisms.

The Service Review complements the findings of the facility and park provision assessments. It ensures that residents continue to receive a wide range of quality services within facilities and parks utilizing the most effective / efficient methods that respond to community needs. The work includes a comparison of existing policies and practices in Centre Wellington to those in similar jurisdictions as well as current industry practices and includes consideration for community expectations and corporate priorities.

The review and assessment process is illustrated as follows:

Step One: Review of 2009 Master Plan and Results

The 2009 Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan outlined a Vision, Mission, Departmental Service Objectives, Service Priorities and subsequent action plans. A review of actions taken, current relevance of the content is an appropriate starting point in the development of a current state analysis.

Step Two: Review Input, Research and Best Practises

An assessment of all community and staff inputs including, but not limited, to data analysis, community and staff engagement efforts, practices in other jurisdictions, and related industry standards is required to synthesize current and future priorities.

Step Three: Departmental Vison, Mission, Guiding Principles and Key Areas of Focus

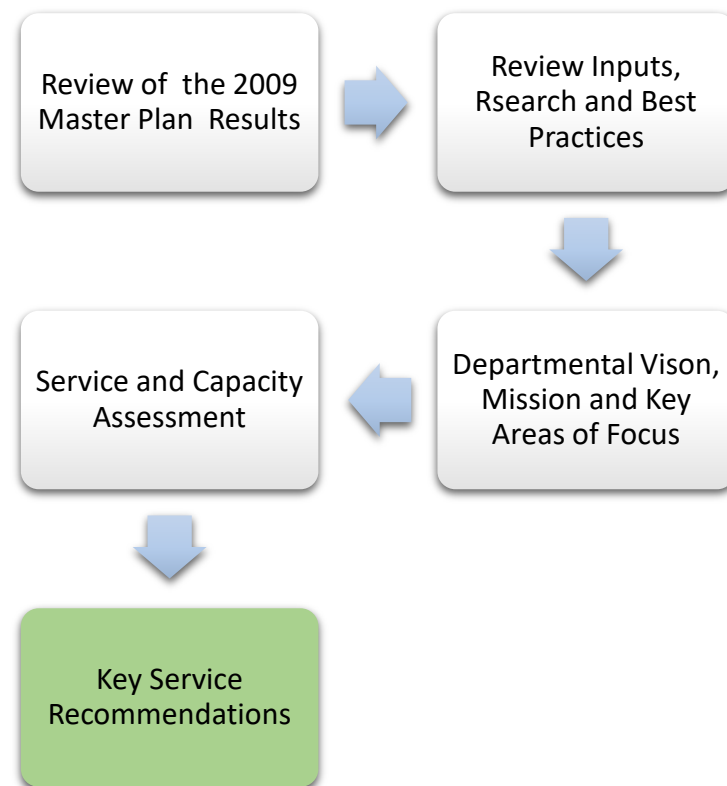
These foundational elements of the Service Review will inform the future departmental focus, resource allocation and specific priorities over the course of Master Plan horizon.

Step Four: Service Capacity and Assessments

The service assessment will serve to ensure the continued sustainability of recreation, culture and parks service delivery that embraces community priorities.

Step Five: Key Recommendations and Performance Measures

Recommendations are offered to ensure that the key results are achieved over the life of the Master Plan. An implementation plan will ensure recommendations with the most urgency are dealt with in the short term and other recommendations would be implemented over mid and longer-range timeframes. Performance measures are also recommended and serve to compare results of actions taken year to year. As the Master Plan is implemented, this data will serve to summarize and report out on annual / incremental successes and achievements. Performance measures can also be used to determine where there are shortfalls and where corrections may be needed.



The focus of parks, recreation and culture services should embrace three key focus areas including:

1. Service Expansion and Quality Management
2. Access, Equity and Inclusion
3. Strengthening Community and Departmental Capacity

These three focus areas are based on the summary of inputs, national priorities such as those expressed in the Framework for Recreation in Canada (see Section 2), strategic priorities within Centre Wellington, key trends and social issues.

Key Area of Focus #1: Service Expansion and Quality Management

Goal Statement

Parks, Recreation and Culture will ensure that programs and services are delivered by embracing quality management and safety measures and respond to community growth, trends and responding to key social challenges.

Delivery of Centre Wellington Recreation, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Programs and Services

Centre Wellington uses many different service delivery methodologies to attract users and increase participation in parks, recreation and cultural services. The most prevalent is the programs and services offered by the municipality and the other is to support community driven organizations to thrive. The service delivery method for the major programs and services are demonstrated in Table 9 followed by some observations.

There is a range of stakeholders that deliver recreation, sport and cultural programs and opportunities using publicly-owned and private sector infrastructure. Increased coordination and ensuring that residents of all ages, regardless of their background, enjoy a range of barrier-free choices should hold priority over the next 10 years.

A Broad Range of Opportunities for Everyone

The role of the municipality is to ensure that there is a broad range of parks, recreation and cultural opportunities for all ages and abilities. An annual analysis is suggested to ensure that there are cultural (visual and performing arts), outdoor, active and general interest programs and opportunities. Centre Wellington's predominant provision strategy is to support community groups and partners, and to assess and deliver where there are gaps. This is an appropriate approach in such an active and engaged community.

Table 9: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Opportunities in Centre Wellington in 2018

Key Services / Service Delivery Methodology	Aquatics	Arenas	Fitness	Programs & Camps (Active, Creative and General Interest)	Sport Delivery	Older Adults	Youth
Directly Offered Registered Programs	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-
Directly Offered Drop-In Opportunities	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-
Self-Organized Stakeholder Groups	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓
Facility Rentals – Private & Commercial	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓

Observations

- There are several service providers in parks, recreation and culture that should be working more collectively to provide a range of creative, active and general interest programs for all ages and abilities.
- One in three residents in Centre Wellington is over the age of 55 years and this trend will continue as the population increases. Any considerations for program and services changes or expansion must take the older population into consideration and look to include community partners in expansion efforts.
- The children and youth population will not witness significant changes, while the 20-34 age cohort will increase by 10%. Any additional programs and services should involve discussions with this age cohort.

- Most Canadians are not meeting the required levels of physical activity to sustain or improve healthy outcomes and there is a need to include community partners in promoting and accommodating increased activity.
- There is support in the community for more unstructured play opportunities such as walking, hiking, special events, playgrounds and drop in casual fitness;
- Outdoor play is critical for the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and the community at large;
- There is a recognition that parks, recreation and cultural facilities and opportunities are important; 88% of those who participated in the Master Plan's community survey felt that these facilities and opportunities are important.
- There is an average satisfaction level of 55% by all age cohorts in Centre Wellington for parks and recreation opportunities, while there is an average satisfaction level of 54% by all age cohorts for arts and cultural opportunities; note that these figures are not to be considered statistically representative of the population but give an indication of needed areas of focus. This level of satisfaction is low compared to similar surveys in other communities in Ontario.
- The survey conducted to determine Council priorities and initiatives in Centre Wellington from 2015 – 2018 indicated that residents have medium satisfaction levels for sport facilities, arts and cultural activities, heritage buildings and community organizations;
- There is general agreement that there is a need to keep more youth engaged to encourage them to stay within the community.
- Greater Coordination with all related groups is required to provide quality experiences.



Increasing Levels of Physical Activity

The busy lifestyles of many Canadians makes it difficult to find time for physical activity throughout the week. The Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute found that the proportion of Canadians (age 20 and older) who are considered active had increased slightly from 49% of individuals in 2003 to 53% in 2013. Based on 2013 data, more men (55%) than women (51%) are active. Activity levels were found to decrease with age, with lower activity levels recorded for both men and women (60% of 20-34 year olds, 52% of 35-44 year olds, 51% of 45-64 year olds, and 48% of those 65 years and older are at least moderately active).²⁰

Although limited free time can be a barrier to participation, there are strategies that the municipal sector can use to allow residents to engage in parks, recreation and culture activities at one's convenience. Activities that are unstructured and/or drop-in offer busy residents convenient opportunities to participate. Additionally, multi-purpose facilities provide opportunities for all ages to meet many of their parks, recreational and cultural needs at one location. Flexible and affordable program options provide opportunities to further engage Centre Wellington residents in parks, culture and physical activity.

The University of Guelph conducted a study in concert with Harry Cummings and Associates in 2008 to understand the levels of self-reported physical activity of Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph residents. The study adopted the "in motion" principles and best practises as provided through this Centre of Excellence in Saskatoon. 1,159 residents completed

²⁰ CFLRI. 2014. Bulletin 1: Physical Activity Levels of Canadians.

Top Barriers to Participating in Parks & Recreation Activities in Centre Wellington



Top Barriers to Participating in Arts & Culture Activities in Centre Wellington



Source: Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan Online Survey, 2017

the survey or 31% of the adults over 28 years that were randomly contacted. There is a caution offered in the results of self-reported physical activity levels as people tend to over report. The results show that:

- approximately 40% of residents in Guelph and Wellington and 31% in Dufferin did enough moderate or vigorous physical activity to achieve health benefits; and
- Only 28% of the respondents consumed vegetables and fruits 5 or more times per day.

The study concluded that there is a need to adopt community-based strategies to increase resident's physical activity levels and consumption of vegetables and fruits recommended by Canada's Physical Activity and Food Guides. And further that more in-depth analysis of the current barriers is needed to fully understand and plan for effective preventive measures.²¹

Centre Wellington provides a trail system, a myriad of parks and parks amenities, infrastructure and active programs to encourage residents to be active. There are few intentional actions as a full community in place to encourage residents to be physically active more often (duration, intensity and frequency) and to reduce their screen time.

Best Practice

Meet with surrounding communities and like-minded partners to discuss meaningful interventions to increase physical activity levels among residents.



Beaty Park

²¹ University of Guelph & Harry Cummings and Associates. May 2008. Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph in motion Physical Activity Survey Report - Findings for Adults 18 Years of Age and Over.

Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines

The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines is based on over four years of research analysis funded by several groups including the Public Health Agency of Canada. The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines are consistent with the World Health Organization's guidelines and provide advice on how much physical activity is generally recommended to realize health benefits among various age groups.²²

Age Group	Frequency and Duration	Intensity	Types of Activity
Early Years (0 to 4)	180 minutes throughout the day (toddlers)	Any intensity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A variety of activities in different environments – Activities that develop movement skills
Children (5 to 11)	60 minutes per day	Moderate to Vigorous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Vigorous activities at least 3 times per week – Activities that strengthen muscle and bone at least 3 days per week
Youth (12 to 17)	60 minutes per day	Moderate to Vigorous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Vigorous activities at least 3 times per week – Activities that strengthen muscle and bone at least 3 days per week
Adults (18 to 64)	150 minutes per week, in bouts of 10 minutes or more	Moderate to Vigorous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Add muscle and bone strengthening activities using major muscle groups, at least 2 days per week
Older Adults (65+)	150 minutes per week, in bouts of 10 minutes or more	Moderate to Vigorous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Add muscle and bone strengthening activities using major muscle groups, at least 2 days per week

Source: Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines, 2011

²² Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology. 2011. Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines and Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines.

Canadian Sedentary Guidelines

Daily participation in physical activity is critical to one's well-being, and residents must consider how sedentary behaviours can have a detrimental effect on healthy outcomes as well. The Canadian Sedentary Guidelines developed by the Canadian Society of Exercise Physiology²³ set about to minimize the amount of time that Canadians are inactive in a typical day (the guidelines themselves focus on children and youth under 18 years of age). Sedentary behaviours are defined as "postures or activities that require very little movement" and can be described as time spent in front of a computer, electronic game or television, extended sitting, time spent in motorized transport and in the case of 0 – 4 years old being restrained in a stroller or car seat. Setting limits on the amount of daily screen time is also suggested including less than 1 hour per day for early years children, and no more than 2 hours per day for older children and youth.

World Health Organization

The World Health Organization (WHO) has developed a guide that captures best practises and evidenced-based approaches in increasing physical activity. The document entitled "A Guide for Population Based Approaches to Increasing Levels of Physical Activity" is versatile as it can be utilized for national, provincial and local strategy development. The following list captures the relevant principles and can be utilized as a checklist for increasing physical activity levels in Centre Wellington.

Intervention Type:

- High Level Political Commitment
- Alignment with National Policies & Initiatives
- Identification of National Health Goals & Objectives
- Specific Objectives Relevant to the Community
- Funding
- Support from Stakeholders
- Cultural Sensitivity
- Relationship with Other Related Sectors
- Interventions at Different Levels within the Local Reality
- Target the Whole Population as well as Specific Target Groups
- A Coordinating Team
- Multiple Interventions Strategy
- Clear Identity for the Strategy
- Leadership & Workforce Development
- Dissemination

²³ Ibid

Trends and Promising Practices for Different Age Groups

There are several trends and promising practices that are relevant to this Master Plan that are identified for different age groups. While recommendations have not been advanced for all topics, they are considerations worth noting for the Township's ongoing service delivery efforts.

Children (Ages 0-9)

Exposure to Recreation and Cultural Experiences

Many community centres, libraries and cultural centres are offering open gym/community room times for children and their caregivers during the day. Often this is a time when gymnasium space is not maximized and little supervision is required. Children enjoy the opportunity to meet others and discover what is possible with the equipment that staff leave out for them. Caregivers often organize games and well supervise their children, or a facilitator is provided and costs shared by the participants. These casual drop-ins also provide caregivers the opportunity to meet others in the neighbourhood, strengthen community ties and increase their sense of belonging.

Communities in Ontario recognize the importance of cultural experiences in creating a sense of community, belonging and in some case skill mastery and cultural appreciation. This is particularly crucial in the early and formative years in order to introduce children to arts and cultural experiences. Many communities offer casual, drop in and formalized opportunities to learn about the culture of a community and specifically in performing and visual arts. In Centre Wellington, this exposure largely comes in the form of festivals and events, as well as community and private offerings of these experiences.

Drowning Prevention

Municipalities offer swim lessons in a progressive continuum so that individuals can learn at their own pace (participation rates are highest in children). The municipality has a role to ensure that families are safe in and around water to prevent water incidents. The Swim-to-Survive program was developed by the Lifesaving Society to teach children how to survive should they fall into water. All Grade 3 children are eligible to participate, and schools can receive funding to offset costs to the municipality.

According to the Drowning Report produced each year by the Lifesaving Society, there are just under 100 unintentional water-related deaths in Ontario each year. Most incidents occur on the weekends (45%) around lakes. The age group most likely to experience an incident are males from 20 to 34 years and 50-64 years old. There is some belief that newcomers to Canada experience water-related incidents at a greater rate, but this research is still underway. The need

to ensure that children and families are safe in and around water remains a core focus of the municipal aquatic program.

Youth/Teens' (Ages 10 – 19 Years)

Parks, recreation and cultural opportunities that are offered by varying agencies and institutions throughout Centre Wellington play a role in empowering youth and assisting them to:

- Be active in safe supportive environments;
- Experience mentorships and caring leaders who encourage self-efficacy and discovery;
- Participate in a range of activities that are self-directed;
- Gain leadership opportunities through addressing social issues, getting engaged in community service and volunteerism;
- Advocate on behalf of youth needs within the community; and
- Assist youth with the skills needed to be successful in future endeavours.

The Door is a youth centre in Fergus that is run and operated by a non-profit agency to assist marginalized youth predominantly to have promising life outcomes. The centre offers afterschool and weekend programs, and places focus on opportunities to strengthen physical, mental, social and spiritual outcomes. The Township has augmented youth-focused opportunities available through community organizations by offering certain youth-centric opportunities of its own in the CW Community Sportsplex. Unfortunately, the Township has observed minimal success and thus there is a need to engage youth in order to determine what programs and services would augment existing opportunities and increase participation.

Activity Councils for Youth

Many communities have developed and support Youth Councils that regularly meet to listen to youth needs within the community and assist in developing activities. These Councils/Committees are supported by staff and youth mentors that assist in self-organizing events and programs, as well as advocating for youth-centric issues. As part of their participation with a Youth Council or through related programs/events run through it, volunteer hours can be earned by youth toward the community hours required to graduate from secondary school.

Youth Workers

The use of Youth Workers to engage youth has been a promising practice employed throughout Ontario for the last 25 years. Youth Workers seek to engage youth wherever they congregate. The Ministry of Children and Youth Service's Youth Action Plan strongly emphasizes the importance of Youth Workers within communities. Youth Workers engage youth to assist with any related issues by connecting them with the right resources but also work with youth to engage them in recreation, culture, sports to attain positive outcomes and embrace active lifestyles.

Adults

Welcoming Spaces in Community Centres and Public Spaces

Families and adults alike are enjoying the use of community centre lobby spaces like they would a coffee shop. Municipalities are placing comfortable furniture in community centre spaces and welcoming residents to use it as a social space. Many centres as space allows have installed pool tables and table tennis which are available for all hours that a community centre is open. The lobby spaces have become very animated with many adults and youth alike being active and socially engaged. This often results in increased engagement in recreation, sport and cultural activities.

Recreational Leagues

Recreation departments and community organizations are responding to a desire by adults to be active in varying sports but not wanting to volunteer to organize the group activities. Volleyball, basketball, pickleball seem to be popular sports offered through the organizational skills of the municipality.

Recommendation

- #16.** Form a Youth Council to provide advice to the Township relating to local parks, recreation, culture and other related services.

Older Adults

Self-Governance

Self-organized older adult clubs continue to be a strong practice in the provision of recreation and cultural pursuits. Municipalities play a role to assist groups form, provide space, assist with governance advice and augment these opportunities where there are gaps.

Often staff are employed to assist within older adult spaces or senior's centres.

Community Hubs

Facilities that house seniors and older adult clubs are expanding their resources to broaden access to all related services to support older adults. Information on retirement planning, health-related issues, community resources, etc. are included to provide a centralized place where older adults can be supported and learn more about healthy and active lifestyles.

Quality Management

There are over 440 municipalities in Ontario and most offer/enable recreation, culture and sport opportunities through direct and indirect programming models. Residents expect an emphasis on quality assurance in service delivery. Provincial and national organizations have developed quality assurance frameworks to enable service providers to train, audit and make adjustments to service delivery based on common evidenced-based standards.

Best Practice

Review program and service offerings annually in concert with all service providers and community organizations to ensure that there is a balance of opportunities for all age groups between active, creative/cultural, outdoor and general interest opportunities. The Township of Centre Wellington should look to address any gaps directly or through partnerships.



HIGHFive – A Children’s Quality Assurance Framework – The Best Way To Play

Parks and Recreation Ontario HIGH FIVE quality assurance framework was implemented in 1994 to ensure that people working with children in a recreation and sport setting were trained in child development. HIGH FIVE is grounded in research and developed by experts in child development in sport and recreation. The five principles HIGH FIVE in providing programs and services to children include:

- **Participation** – Children are empowered have their say about the activities they participate in;
- **Play** – Children are encouraged to use their imagination, can resolve their own conflicts and can be self-directed;
- **Skill Mastery** – Children learn new and age appropriate skills in an encouraging environment;
- **Friends** – Children get to know others in a group in a safe setting; and
- **Caring Adult** – Children receive the benefit of a caring adult role model who ensure that safety is paramount.

The two key phases of the quality assurance framework centre on Quest 1 – To train relevant staff and volunteers, test policies, procedures, communications and adherence to practices. Quest 2 – A program assessment and improvement tool. Centre Wellington respects the HIGH FIVE quality assurance program in children’s programs in ensuring that parents are guaranteed programs that are age appropriate, meet safety and supervisory needs are enjoyable and offer some skill mastery.

Parks and Recreation Ontario - Older Adult Quality Assurance Program

Parks and Recreation Ontario is in the process of finalizing a HIGH FIVE Quality Assurance Framework for the provision of recreation programs and services for older adults possibly named HIGH FIVE - Active Aging. Preliminary research in the development of the framework has indicated that there is no common quality assurance framework in place in Canada for the provision of recreation services specifically. There are other accreditations in place such as the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), the International Standards Organization (ISO) and Accreditations Canada. Further findings indicate that the current HIGH FIVE framework for children is appropriate for the most part for use for older adults. Parks and Recreation Ontario is in the process of piloting and refining the Quest 1 & 2 tools and designing a governance model and a national distribution strategy.

Recommendation

- #17.** Adopt the quality management principles of High Five for children's programs, the Playworks Partnership for Youth, and Active Aging for Older Adults to ensure quality assurance in service delivery. Share the Club Excellence Program developed by True Sport with sport user groups for their consideration.



Key Area of Focus #2: Access, Equity and Inclusion

Goal Statement

All residents will have access to parks, recreation and cultural programs and services; specific efforts will be made to reduce barriers to participation for marginalized groups.

Observations

- The role of the municipality to ensure that all residents have access to services and to make specific efforts to include those who face barriers;
- Over 9,700 or 31% of the population in Centre Wellington have low incomes and may be experiencing barriers to participation in recreation, sport and cultural opportunities;
- Approximately 15.4% or over 4,300 residents have some form of a disability;
- There is support in the community to ensure that all residents have access to services regardless of income, age, ability or ethnicity;
- Affordability was cited as one of the barriers to participation; and it is felt that there is a general need to increase opportunities for access; and
- While children from Centre Wellington are provided subsidies through the Children's Foundation of Guelph Wellington; it is not understood the percentage of children that are provided free/subsidized access from low income backgrounds from all sources.

Trends and Promising Practices

Best practices dictate ongoing communications with representatives of resident groups and representatives of diverse backgrounds is a winning formula to ensure that a municipality is understanding and addressing needs. This ongoing dialogue and relationship building is to ensure that Centre Wellington is offering meaningful programs and activities and creating an overall sense of belonging. The following paragraphs note efforts of municipalities, agencies and other service providers to create a spirit of inclusiveness in the parks, recreation and cultural sector.

Affordability

Participation in physical activity is proportional to a household's income. For example, the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute found that children between age 5 and 19 who live in higher income households (\$80,000 or more) are more likely to participate in organized physical activities and sports compared to their counterparts who live in lower income households (\$30,000 a year or less). According to the 2016 Census, Centre Wellington's median after-tax income of \$73,819 was higher than the Ontario average of \$65,285 and the Canadian average of \$61,348. Despite having a higher median income level, however, nearly one in three Centre Wellington households (31%) are classified as low-income (total after-tax income of \$30,000 a year or less).

There are a few local programs that offer assistance to low income households including the Township through selected free programming, as well as the Centre Wellington Resource Centre which provides funding, and Canadian Tire Jumpstart and The Children's Foundation of Guelph and Wellington that collectively provide financial assistance to children in need to participate in sports, cultural and recreational activities. The Children's Foundation of Guelph Wellington has developed a regional "Free to Play" program that provides subsidies to children who are experiencing barriers to participation due to low incomes. Last year 1,160 children were subsidized to participate in cultural programs camps and sports through the efforts of 145 social workers that referred the children to the Foundation – in addition to increasing participation, the program is an excellent method of seamless means testing and promoting access to recreation, culture and sports. Additionally, local businesses in Centre Wellington have sponsored public swimming for children.



PRC Master Plan Design Charrette,
November 2018

There are also countless other opportunities that are being explored across Ontario. An approach to increasing participation for low income families is to offer no fee/low fee programs locally in predominantly low-income areas. This approach eliminates the need for transportation which can often be a barrier to participation, thus many communities are providing this range of programs and are finding sponsors to fund the cost. In Durham Region, municipalities and related partners are working together to study the results of providing free recreation and supports to randomly selected Ontario Works recipients. Durham Region will promote this research project to its Ontario Works clients. This study has been funded by the Poverty Reduction Office of the Provincial Government and will be under study for the next three years. This initiative is part of a collective that strives to increase access to recreation by low income residents in Durham by working as a collective.

Persons with Disabilities

In 2012, the Canadian Survey on Disability reported that approximately 3.8 million Canadians were living with a disability which equated to 13.7% of Canadians and 15.4% of Ontarians at the time. While the number of persons with disabilities in Centre Wellington has not been quantified, applying the provincial average to Centre Wellington's 2016 Census population suggests that approximately 4,340 residents could have some form of disability. Given these statistics and the aging of the population, it is important that Centre Wellington consider universal design and barrier-free features wherever possible to maintain inclusivity.

Physical access to recreational facilities is a legislative requirement in Ontario as baseline criteria in treating all residents equitably. The development and delivery of recreation programs and services for persons with disabilities should be a collective responsibility within the community. Often, municipalities take a leadership role in bringing support agencies together to begin a more holistic discussion on the strengths, challenges and gaps of program and service provision. These discussions often are the impetus in developing priorities and strengthening the ability of the collective to share resources, increase penetration and to develop innovative and meaningful programs. The City of Hamilton developed a recreation plan for persons with disabilities by engaging all support organizations and agencies and by reaching out to residents with disabilities and has seen stronger relationships and increased participation as a result.

Recommendations

- #18.** Engage representatives from organizations serving persons with disabilities, low-income populations, diverse cultural groups, females and the LGBTQ+ community. Discussions should seek to better understand the needs of such groups, and how to develop, deliver and promote services to under-represented populations.

Centre Wellington's multi-year accessibility plan outlines strategies to remove barriers throughout the Township. The Township is also a part of the Wellington Accessibility Partnership, which is a collaboration with the County of Wellington, City of Guelph, Homewood Health Centre and the Upper Grand District School Board. This partnership has led to the development of the Wellington County Facility Accessibility Design Manual which is applied to all new construction and renovation projects. From a program/service perspective, Centre Wellington introduced the PAL (Personal Assistant for Leisure) program that ensures that residents requiring assistance to participate can bring along a personal aide at no additional cost. An application and subsequent approval allows an aide to accompany a resident with disabilities in the surrounding communities of Guelph, Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo as well.

LGBTQ2S Community

While there is no definitive percentage of the population that identifies as part of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Two-Spirited (LGBTQ2S) community, varying polls and studies estimates centre in the 3.5 – 5% range. Homelessness, suicide and harmful practises are reported in this community because of exclusion, bullying and resultant mental health issues. The role of the municipality is to ensure that these residents are welcomed, included and free from harassment, hatred or bias within safe public spaces

The LGBTQ2S community often experiences exclusionary behaviours. The introduction of 'Safe Spaces' is one way of welcoming this community to public places. Safe Spaces was developed by Safe Spaces Canada whereby a symbol on the front door of a community space indicates that staff have been trained in reducing homophobic gestures and slurs and in creating welcoming environments.

The Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants developed the Positive Spaces Initiative through Citizen and Immigration Canada to denote public spaces that are safe for and welcoming to the LGBTQ community. Signage including the Pride flag in the graphic denotes that the space is positive for the LGBTQ2S population.

Girls and Women

Participation by girls and women often decline as females reach 10+ years and older. The Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport (CAAWS) has a purpose to support and enable women in pursuing sport and active lifestyles and keep women actively engaged in building community capacity. CAAWS' 55 to 70+ Project for

Best Practice

Public spaces should be safe and positive spaces for the LGBTQ2S Community. Further, participation rates in community driven and Township offered programs and services should be equally accessible for those who identify as females and males.

“Young Senior” Women is a recent initiative aimed at keeping the young senior female engaged in sport and physical activity. 35 pilot projects were undertaken to enhance opportunities in soccer, pickleball, Nordic pole walking, synchronized skating and many other active opportunities. The project seeks to develop and support sustainable models where women are trained to lead and promote active opportunities in concert with community partners such as municipalities.

Key Area of Focus #3: Community Building and Organizational Capacity

Goal Statement

We will continually strengthen our ability to deliver a high level of service and will work well together with community partners to be efficient and effective.

Observations

- Centre Wellington works in partnership with other organizations to decrease the cost of services, increase volunteerism and reduce duplication. For example, there is a partnership with Tim Hortons to allow no-cost entry to some public skating and swim opportunities;
- Key opinion leaders engaged in the master planning process felt that there is a need to strengthen partnerships (school boards, conservation authorities) to better serve the public by working collectively;
- There is support in the community to increase and strengthen the alliances between community groups and the Township;
- Lack of personal time and lack of information were cited as the top 2 barriers to participation in recreation, arts and cultural activities;
- Community groups expressed challenges in attracting and retaining volunteers as well as promoting the opportunities that their groups are offering;

- There are 132 special events offered annually in Centre Wellington; strengthening capacity through volunteerism and engagement will be key to their future success; and
- Creating efficiencies begins with understanding the true costs to offer programs and services.

Trends and Promising Practises

The delivery of parks, recreation and cultural services in Centre Wellington involves both administrative expertise and acumen to provide leadership and efficient/effective services. Ongoing public engagement, partnerships, and volunteerism are in place to ensure that all programs and services are current and reflective of community needs. Strengthening community capacity will address partnerships and volunteerism while organizational effectiveness evaluates the capacity of the internal structure, service levels and other supports.

Volunteerism

Volunteerism is an inherent part of the parks, recreation/sport and cultural delivery system in Centre Wellington. It is one method of increasing the number of opportunities for the public while engaging qualified residents in meaningful unpaid work. The effort to attract, train, retain, supervise volunteers requires certain competencies and the dedication of time. The Township of Centre Wellington values its volunteers and provides recognition, while the volunteer sector also benefits from other agencies such as the Volunteer Centre of Guelph Wellington that promotes volunteer opportunities with parks, recreation and culture. Opportunities are listed on their website so that residents can consider their skill sets and interest as aligned with any given volunteer position that is available.

Centre Wellington's volunteer groups support local teams and programs and are critical to the operation and delivery of high quality services. Volunteers are utilized to a great extent in Centre Wellington with 175 volunteers at the Victoria Park Seniors Centre alone. In addition, the Fergus Grand Theatre promotes volunteer opportunities to operate the theatre at an affordable rate while the Aquatics section offers volunteer training.

In the 2013 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 44% of Canadians participated in some form of volunteer work, which was a decrease from 47% reported in 2010. Declining volunteerism is a consistent trend in many

municipalities as many groups are struggling to retain volunteers²⁴. The input garnered to develop the Master Plan emphasized that it is increasingly difficult for local groups to attract, train, supervise, retain and recognize volunteers.

Older adults are primarily the most active volunteer group, however, many in this age group may soon move on from volunteering resulting in more pressures on park, recreation and cultural opportunities in Centre Wellington. There are a number of strategies that can be adopted to recruit and retain volunteers such as maintaining an online database of volunteers, having volunteer recruitment sessions, orientation and training. There is a Volunteer Coordinator located at the Victoria Park Seniors Centre that is available to assist with volunteer recruitment.

Engaging youth as volunteers and “community leaders in training” is also important. In the future, it will be critical to engage youth in volunteer work so they can succeed older volunteer members. The Volunteer Centre of Guelph/Wellington offers a website where youth can find local opportunities to get involved while the 40-hour volunteer requirement for secondary school students can also introduce some to the local parks, recreation and cultural sector. To attract interest in camp counsellor positions, the Township offers a ‘Leader in Training’ program where individuals can shadow and receive training from a current camp leader.

In recent years the development of Volunteer software applications has made volunteering more streamlined and has served to increase the number of volunteers in some communities. Typically, the software applications list all volunteer opportunities and match the



Recommendation

- #19. Host annual focus groups with volunteers and volunteer groups to make volunteerism more accessible and meet the needs of a time strapped community.

²⁴ Statistics Canada. Volunteering and charitable giving in Canada. 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca>

skill sets needed with those who are interested in volunteering. Volunteers are still required to obtain Police Reference Checks and take the required training. The advantage of these software applications is that they manage a database of volunteers, match skills sets required, track volunteer hours and provide online training modules.

Partnerships

Partnerships and strategic collaborations allow communities to efficiently and effectively utilize resources while benefiting from vast expertise found within the community, whether through private corporations, volunteers, other municipalities, or government partners. The Township has several examples of working partnerships within its parks, recreation and cultural services portfolio including those with local volunteers to care for the many parks and facilities in Centre Wellington. Fitness services are an example of an area where the Township leverages the expertise of individuals in the community with formal training/experience in personal and group training who deliver certain group fitness classes within community centres. There are also corporate initiatives such as the Tim Horton's swims and holiday free skates, while seniors' offerings benefit from services delivered by partners in the healthcare sector. These are but a few of the types of agreements between the Township and others that exist locally.

The most successful partnerships are derived from common objectives, utilizing the skills and strengths of each group in delivering access while sharing responsibilities and minimizing costs. Resource-sharing helps to ensure the long-term viability of Township facilities and programs. Centre Wellington works with partners to provide the highest level of service to the public while considering sharing of resources and reducing duplication. The Township is open to working with community partners and has numerous arrangements in place. Private and specialized recreation providers are contracted to provide their services using public facilities with revenue sharing in place. Each partnership arrangement is considered on its own merits and documentation in place. Centre Wellington is to be commended for maximizing the assets and capabilities that the community utilizes in increasing affordable services at a shared or reduced cost.

In all partnership arrangements, specifications and requirements must ensure that the partner respects and aligns with the Department's vision, mandate, values, strategic priorities and service standards. The value in seeking out partnerships is to provide a net benefit to both organizations and essentially reduce costs to the municipality.

Best Practice

Expand partnerships with a view of better sharing resources and creating efficiencies in providing recreation, culture and parks services.

Table 10: Partnership Types

	Description	Formalized Relationship
Not-for-Profit Community Groups	Community groups exist to provide services, leagues, education etc. utilizing volunteers for the most part and are not-for-profit. They may require assistance in forming as a group but most likely require space and consideration for a not-for-profit rate for rental fees.	Community groups are typically governed by an Affiliation Policy or a Community Development Policy and thrive more effectively through sharing of information, cross-marketing of opportunities and regular communications to enhance the delivery system.
Complementary Institutions & Agencies	Working more effectively with school boards, conservation authorities, hospitals and other agencies such as the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Clubs can benefit the community through the development of joint programs and initiatives and sharing of resources including facilities. This will broaden the reach of like programs and services and reduce duplication.	Requires a Service Level Agreement or a Reciprocal Agreement that outlines the rights, obligations and deliverables of each agency.
Private Service Providers	Private service providers have a for-profit mandate and may provide specialized programs and services not necessarily in the municipal mandate. Often profit sharing can provide an alternate form of revenue to the municipality.	A contract will articulate the rights, obligations and deliverables of each party. Specific consideration must be given to ensuring that quality assurance, risk management and service levels are equal to that of the municipality.

Municipal Partnership Principles

Each partnership must be considered with the following guiding principles in mind:

- a) The outcome of the partnership is aligned with the municipal values, mandate and priorities;
- b) There is an articulated need for the proposed service in the community;
- c) The financial and liability risks to the municipality is shared or reduced;

- d) The partner is equipped and qualified to co-deliver the service through identified efficiencies, and the ability to reach an identified segment of the population;
- e) The quality of the program or service provided through the partnership meets municipal quality assurance and risk management requirements and complies with legislation;
- f) Unsolicited for-profit partnership proposals are dealt with transparently and through a competitive process as identified in the Township's procurement process;
- g) Accountabilities and responsibilities are clearly defined and complied with; and
- h) Annual reporting requirements capture participation numbers, expenditure reduction or revenue enhancements and alignment with departmental objectives.

Internal Departmental Capacity

Efficiencies - Pricing Programs and Services

Centre Wellington complies with the provincially legislated requirement to post rates and fees on its website. A review of the methodology used to determine the pricing of programs and services revealed that the pricing of rates and fees is based on historical pricing plus inflation and a comparison to the market. This approach relies on historical practices and does not reflect cost recovery based on the true cost of providing the service. Current best practices in parks, recreation and culture pricing methodologies suggest that a municipality must first understand the cost to deliver the service, including both direct and indirect costs (i.e. program costs along with administration and operations). This is valuable information in determining where efficiencies could be made, especially through reductions to indirect costs. A Pricing Policy could then be developed to determine the value of the program or service to the "individual" and "community" good along with the percentage of the program or service that must be cost recovered to ensure fiscal sustainability over time. This approach sets an equitable and transparent process in the setting of fees.

The following table provides a summary of a sampling of programs and services as compared to the related fee structure in surrounding municipalities (where data was available). The information compares the fees of some programs and services available for varying age groups. The data demonstrates where Centre Wellington's fees are higher or lower than the average fee level. This is relevant when setting fees by only comparing to the market. A more accurate and meaningful approach is to understand Centre Wellington's true costs of delivery before setting fees in order to provide transparent rationale to the public. After true costs are determined and a recovery rate is set, a comparison to the market would subsequently be undertaken to ensure that participation/rentals would not be lost to other municipalities due to significantly higher fees.

Recommendation

#20. Develop a Pricing Policy based on the true costs to deliver parks, recreation and cultural programs and services.

Table 11: Comparing Related Fees in Surrounding Communities

Service	Centre Wellington	Wellington North	Woolwich	Orangeville	Guelph	Average	CW above /below average
Prime Youth Ice	145.00	120.00	160.00	200.00	n/a	156.00	Below
Child Public Skate	3.10	2.50	2.00	3.00	3.20	2.76	Above
Lit Ball Diamond	79.00	67.00	38.00	n/a	n/a	61.00	Above
General Day Camp	169.00	n/a	170.00	167.00	n/a	169.00	At average
Swim lessons level 5	78.00	61.00	79.00	67.00	70.00	71.00	Below
Aquafit Adult	7.55	4.50	5.00	8.75	6.50	6.46	Above
Aquafit - Senior	6.80	4.50	5.00	7.00	5.20	5.70	Above

Note: Fees over \$10.00 are rounded to the closest dollar

Capital Funding Sources

Centre Wellington's 2014 Asset Management report (i.e., excluding water/ wastewater facilities), indicated that the Township owns \$579 million worth of roads, bridges and buildings. The report indicates that *"By the conservative estimate, the Township faces a \$61 million cost to repair/replace these assets over the next 10 years and a \$214 million cost over the next 20 years"*.

There are limited sources through which municipalities can fund the development and refurbishment of capital assets. Possible funding sources and a description of these sources is presented below with respect to their potential use in funding the Township's parks, recreation and cultural infrastructure assets.

Reserves and Reserve Funds

Reserves and reserve funds are typically comprised of the compilation of tax and user fee revenue that has been set aside for future capital projects. Funding is first collected and put in a reserve fund before the capital projects are undertaken. The Municipality of Clarington and the Town of Oakville are two municipalities who fund their reserves either by allocating a levy on facility rentals or setting aside funds from operating each year to varying degrees of success.

Development Charges

Development Charges articulate a fixed dollar value per lot or area levied on property developers to fund municipal infrastructure in the area to be developed. These fees are passed onto buyers of new homes and are based on specific legislation. The basis for development charges is that new growth should pay for itself and not burden existing taxpayers. The capital amounts required addressed in the Township's 2013 Development Charges Study.

Debt Financing

Long-term borrowing is restricted to the financing of long-term capital expenditures and has been a common element of most municipal capital budgets. This capital funding mechanism has been utilized to the greatest extent to fund parks, recreation and cultural infrastructure throughout Ontario.

Donations, Partnerships and Sponsorships

This funding source refers to partnering with private, non-profit and community stakeholders for the provision, maintenance, and renewal of municipal assets. Many municipalities (Ajax, Whitby, Toronto, and Mississauga) have employed staff with expertise to seek out alternate sources of revenue to offset both capital and operating costs to maintain parks, recreation, and culture facilities while reducing the fiscal impacts on residents. Many municipalities are partnering with not-for-profit corporations such as the YMCA to offset some capital impacts and often ongoing operational costs. The City of London has developed a unique partnership whereby both agencies program the facility as a collective and registration for programs and memberships are offered by both organizations.

Property Taxes

The property tax levy allows for the funding of capital assets directly in the year that the capital work is initiated and/or completed. The use of the property tax levy is not commonly utilized in Ontario to avoid fluctuation of taxes due to a levy for specific capital projects.

In summary, there are few options that municipalities can rely on to adequately fund their municipal capital program without the use of Debt Financing and Development Charges. The needs outlined in this Master Plan must be weighed against the current financing commitments and address the full breadth of capital budget requirements in a corporate context considering other municipal capital programs, plans and commitments.

Internal Capacity - Organizational Effectiveness

Organizational effectiveness is an approach to continuous improvement to organizational design and structure, organizational culture, group and individual planning, systems, performance, communications, service delivery and performance measures. The elements of organizational effectiveness require evaluation and refinement on an ongoing basis. The purpose of the review of the organizational effectiveness to support the Centre Wellington Community Services Department is to ensure that there is the capacity to deliver on the recommendations housed in the Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan. While the input by the public and key opinion leaders did not probe deeply into organizational effectiveness and structural design, there were comments that are instructive along with the analysis.

Recommendation

- #21. Formalize a Sponsorship Program based on the program and service needs identified in the Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan including (but not limited to) free and low fee opportunities, larger toys in playgrounds, Challenging Play opportunities, animating parks spaces, etc.

Organizational Design and Structure

Organizations have different structures depending on the need for formalization and accountability. In a public setting, there is a need for an equitable distribution of work, clear delineation of responsibilities/accountabilities and transparency in all policies, communications and work efforts.

The current organizational structure meets common public sector organizational design standards:

- The department reflects a centralized operation, and this is appropriate given the size of the operation, the number of facilities and the population of Centre Wellington;
- Job descriptions are formalized and reviewed as required;
- There is a clear chain of command with autonomy and authority delineated where possible;
- Cross functional teams work as collectives in areas of common focus, although there is a need to increase this approach to implement the recommendations in the Master Plan;
- There is a flow of information that relies on technology, regular one on one meetings as well as team and full staff meetings;
- The structure is relatively flat with 3 to 4 layers of staff between the Managing Director and the public;
- The span of control (number of direct reports) ranges between 3 and 6 direct reports which is suitable given the size of the operation and scope of responsibilities. There is some variance in the number of direct reports with the maximum number resting with the Managing Director of Community Services with 6 direct reports (current design standards suggest 5 to 10 direct reports per supervisor/manager);
- There is specialization and specific training and educational requirements in each of the disciplines (Parks /Facility Operations, Community Programs and Customer Service, Community Development, Festivals, Tourism and Culture, Landscapes, Urban Forestry and Horticulture.)

Best Practice

Articulate the levels of services and the respective resources to provide each service type to ensure that resource allocation is equitable and based on the approved levels of service.

From this review, the organizational structure is sound and is appropriate should the scope of responsibilities remain the same in the future.

What is not clear or articulated are the approved levels of service provided by each discipline number of cuts per season, number and scope of horticultural displays receive what level of care, number of swim sessions per year etc.). While many of these are understood, a formalized analysis is required to determine if the right staffing levels are in place. This exercise would assist in determining the work processes, work efforts and lead to potential efficiencies through reducing duplication and better sharing of resources etc. There were concerns raised about the distribution of work and the ability to serve the public with adequate resources. This is of specific concern as the population increases and the need for programs and services to expand.

Group and Individual Performance

Staff's focus has been very clear over the course of the last few years and that has been to meet the public's expectations around fiscal sustainability, quality, safety and service delivery. Priority has been given to the provision of quality services and facilities, cost containment efforts and overall public satisfaction. Training and professional development efforts are in place to identify and execute needed areas of training and keep staff current of innovations and developments within their fields.



Communications

Internal communications seem to be strong although the staff functions and disciplines are varied and the opportunities for joint planning sessions should increase due to the need to work collectively with respect to the Master Plan recommendations and initiatives. Communications to engage community groups and better promote opportunities will be a focus in the future, embracing the use of social media to augment traditional communications vehicles. The Township's coordinated digital communications strategy by way of its "Connect CW" platform is an excellent step in this direction.

Performance Measurement

The Township of Centre Wellington measures the utilization of programs, services, facilities and parks to determine how well community is engaged. This data serves to inform staff within the various units as to where programs and services need to be adjusted to either accommodate underutilization or address pent up demands. A broadened data set is critical to the sustainability of strong service delivery and facility usage. Consideration is given to reaching all residents, offering a variety of choices and experiences and including all residents, especially marginalized ones.

Typically, performance is measured in four ways in a municipal setting including:

- **Inputs** – the investment in the program or service in facilities, parks, funding and human resources
- **Outputs** – the return on the investment in participation rates, utilization of facilities, attendance at special events
- **Efficiencies** – the cost to deliver services or cost reductions due to increased efficiencies i.e. the value of volunteerism/sponsorships, increased revenues
- **Effectiveness** – customer satisfaction levels within service and facilities

Recommendation

- #22. Develop an annual Communications Plan that promotes the benefits of participating in parks, recreation and cultural programs and encourages participation in programs and events.

The value in measuring performance captures the progress made on the Master Plan and service delivery priorities in general and allows staff, the public and Council the ability to compare progress year over year. Annual reporting strengthens communications within the community, with stakeholders and Council. Measuring performance holds staff accountable for their work, ensures that staff efforts are focussed on addressing priorities and gaps in service delivery.

Table 12 contains a set of performance measures that are recommended to be implemented to report out on the priorities within the Community Services Department. These will also assist with transparency, priorities, annual planning, communications and accountability.

Table 12: Sample Performance Measures

Performance Measure Type	Definition in a Parks and Recreation Context	Measure
Inputs	The investment that the community makes toward recreation, parks and culture. Annual resources including gross operating budget, human resources, and the inventory of assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operating budget by facility type • Number of full-time equivalents • Inventory of assets
Outputs	Capacity and utilization of facilities, programs/services and events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity and use of programs and facilities • Attendance at special events • Casual users of facilities and outdoor facilities • Penetration rate per age group and for marginalized populations
Efficiencies	Cost to provide various services and programs per attendee/participant. The percentage of costs recovered by facility and program type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost avoidance through sponsorships, partnerships and volunteerism • Cost recovery levels by facility and program type
Effectiveness	User and visitor satisfaction rates by program type, rating safety, customer service, program quality and facility cleanliness at a minimum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User satisfaction levels by facility and program type

Monitoring & Updating the Master Plan

The Township should continue to review and assess the Recommendations set out in this document in order to ensure that they remain relevant. This will require monitoring of parks, recreation and cultural activity patterns, conducting annual review of the achievements of the plan, tracking satisfaction levels of residents and customers, and updating the Master Plan within the next ten years to reflect future conditions and progress that has been made.

Reviewing the Master Plan requires commitment from staff, Council, stakeholders, and the public. An appropriate time for this is prior to, or during, the annual budgeting process. The following steps may be used to conduct an annual review of the Master Plan:

- Review of the past year (recommendations implemented, capital projects undertaken, success/failure of new and existing initiatives, changes in participation levels, etc.).
- Tracking regional and local trends in participation, operating performance as well as broader best practices in the sector to inform implementation.
- Review the Master Plan to identify short-term projects and priorities based on staff review and consideration (e.g., financial limitations, public input, partnership/funding potential, etc.).
- Identification of issues or constraints anticipated for the coming year.
- Communication to Township staff and Council regarding the status of projects, criteria used to prioritize projects, and upcoming projects.
- Budget requests/revisions, as necessary.

Recommendation

#23. Undertake an update to the Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan in the year 2028.



Belwood Cenotaph



Section 8: Implementation

The following pages contain a summary of Recommendations contained within the Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan. They are organized broadly in terms of the park or type of facility in which they are expected to occur. Furthermore, these action plans are differentiated into facility-specific and programming/policy-related tables.

Priority is generally synonymous with timing – the higher the priority, the sooner the recommendation should be implemented. All recommendations are important and, if properly implemented, will provide the community with enhanced parks, recreation, and culture services in Centre Wellington. The priority/timing of recommendations is organized into the following categories:

- **Short-Term** – 2019 to 2021
- **Mid-Term** – 2022 to 2025
- **Long-Term** – 2026 to 2028
- **Ongoing** – over the entire course of the planning period (2019-2028)

Costs are identified in 2019 dollar estimates and include costs associated with construction, contingencies, design fees, common spaces, furnishings and equipment, and site development. Identified costs are considered to be preliminary and subject to change given future market conditions. Figures do not reflect cost of land acquisition.



Parks System Recommendations

Rec. #	Recommendation	Estimated Timing	Resource Implications
#1	At the time of a comprehensive Official Plan Review, ensure consistency with park classifications established in the Development Standards Manual for Centre Wellington.	At the time of next Official Plan Review)	Staff / Consultant Time
#2	Target a total parkland supply of 120 hectares by the year 2028, which would necessitate the acquisition of 16 hectares of parkland over and above parkland presently identified in future development plans. Future parks should preferably consist of typologies that are conducive to active recreation and/or cultural uses.	Ongoing	To Be Determined based on parkland dedications received, future market land values, etc.
#3	As parks age to a point where reinvestments are required, explore opportunities to rejuvenate them to meet the needs of residents and visitors. Doing so should involve the community as well as examining additional resourcing requirements (e.g. staffing, maintenance, equipment, etc.) required to support a reimagined park.	Ongoing	To Be Determined after subsequent consultations and design

Recreation Facility System Recommendations

Rec. #	Recommendation	Estimated Timing	Resource Implications
#4	Undertake an architectural and needs assessment for the Elora Community Centre to address lifecycle issues of existing components and accessibility. The assessments should concurrently explore ways and costs of accommodating a greater range of recreational uses including (but not limited to) indoor turf sports, indoor walking, personal fitness and wellness, pre-school and youth programs, older adult activities, and other municipal programs and user opportunities.	Short-Term	Consulting Fees for architectural and/or engineering services (actual building costs to be determined after scope of design is confirmed)

Rec. #	Recommendation	Estimated Timing	Resource Implications
#5	Through the park design or renewal process, select a municipally-owned park or trail route to install outdoor fitness equipment.	Short-Term	To Be Determined after site / scope of design is confirmed
#6	Undertake a consultation and business planning process with local field sport organizations to explore the feasibility of municipal involvement in the indoor artificial turf market. Opportunities to explore include a permanent versus air-supported structure along with any complementary facilities (e.g. indoor track, indoor tennis or pickleball, etc.). Any investment on the part of the Township should be contingent upon securing a qualified partner(s) that contributes predetermined capital and/or operating resources and that such investment is first rationalized through the comprehensive business planning exercise.	Short-Term	Staff Time and/or consulting fees to undertake consultation and feasibility assessments
#7	Undertake architectural and needs assessments for the Victoria Park Seniors Centre to explore the costs associated with increasing its gross floor area (including the possibility of adding a second storey) in order to address growing demands for 55+ programs there.	Short to Medium Term	Consulting Fees for architectural and/or engineering services (actual building costs to be determined after scope of design is confirmed)
#8	Construct three multi-use courts that are suitable for tennis, pickleball and/or other activities as appropriate.	Short to Medium Term	\$120,000 (assumes \$40K per court)
#9	Integrate an outdoor basketball/multi-use court as part of a future park development or redevelopment in Centre Wellington.	Short-Term (or at time of site redevelopment)	\$40,000 (actual cost may vary based upon design)
#10	Investigate the application of Challenging Play opportunities within future playground developments, the use of larger toys in playgrounds, and animating parks spaces in Centre Wellington's outdoor settings to encourage a greater degree of play.	Short to Medium Term	To Be Determined after scope of implementation is confirmed
#11	Construct a splash pad in north Fergus to strengthen geographic distribution and address growth-related demands within these developing residential areas.	Medium-Term	To Be Determined after site / scope of design is confirmed

Rec. #	Recommendation	Estimated Timing	Resource Implications
#12	Construct a skateboard park in Elora, considering outcomes of the consultation and site selection process undertaken in 2016.	Short-Term	To Be Determined after site / scope of design is confirmed, and community fundraising contributions are collected

Arts & Culture System Recommendation

Rec. #	Recommendation	Estimated Timing	Resource Implications
#13	Continue to implement the Centre Wellington Cultural Action Plan, and annually report to Township Council and the public to inform them of progress and achievements.	Short-Term	As per the Cultural Action Plan and supporting works
#14	An Update of the Centre Wellington Cultural Action Plan should be undertaken by the year 2021. An economic analysis quantifying the benefits and costs of the local arts, culture and heritage sector should be integrated within the Update to the Cultural Action Plan.	Short-Term	Staff Time and/or consulting fees to undertake economic analysis
#15	Continue to create opportunities for Centre Wellington to provide direct and indirect support to cultural programs, services and festivals/events through allocation of resources (including the development of a sustainable Funding Strategy), marketing and communications, volunteer development and/or the provision of space.	Ongoing	Staff Time and financial resources to be determined depending upon scope and scale of implementing activities

Community Services Delivery System Recommendations

Rec. #	Recommendation	Estimated Timing	Resource Implications
#16	Form a Youth Council to provide advice to the Township relating to local parks, recreation, culture and other related services.	Ongoing	Staff Time
#17	Adopt the quality management principles of High Five for children's programs, the Playworks Partnership for Youth, and Active Aging for Older Adults to ensure quality assurance in service delivery. Share the Club Excellence Program developed by True Sport with sport user groups for their consideration.	Short to Medium Term	Staff Time
#18	Engage representatives from organizations serving persons with disabilities, low-income populations, diverse cultural groups, females and the LGBTQ+ community. Discussions should seek to better understand the needs of such groups, and how to develop, deliver and promote services to under-represented populations.	Ongoing	Staff Time
#19	Host annual focus groups with volunteers and volunteer groups to make volunteerism more accessible and meet the needs of a time strapped community.	Ongoing	Staff Time
#20	Develop a Pricing Policy based on the true costs to deliver parks, recreation and cultural programs and services.	Short-Term	Staff Time
#21	Formalize a Sponsorship Program based on the program and service needs identified in the Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan including (but not limited to) free and low fee opportunities, larger toys in playgrounds, Challenging Play opportunities, animating parks spaces, etc.	Medium-Term	Staff Time
#22	Develop an annual Communications Plan that promotes the benefits of participating in parks, recreation and cultural programs and encourages participation in programs and events.	Ongoing	Staff Time
#23	Undertake an update to the Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan in the year 2028.	Long-Term	\$85,000

Appendix A: Listing of Township Parks

Active Parkland	
1. Belwood Sports Fields	8. Irvine Park & Elora Greenspace
2. Bissell Park	9. Millburn Boulevard Park
3. Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex	10. Southridge
4. Elora Lions Park	11. Strathallan Park
5. Fergus Tennis Courts	12. St. Mary School (under agreement)
6. Forfar Park	13. Victoria Park (Fergus)
7. Highland Park	
Passive Parkland	
14. Arboretum	38. Keating Family Park
15. Belwood Cenotaph	39. Maple Park
16. Bellwood Hall Grounds	40. Mcdonald Park
17. B.T. Corner	41. Milligan Street Park
18. Beatty Park	42. Norman Craig Square
19. Blair Park	43. O'Brien Park
20. Confederation Park	44. Orangeville Road Wetlands
21. Douglas Park	45. Pattison Street Park
22. Drimmie Park	46. Pier Point Park
23. Elora Meadows	47. Revel Drive Park
24. Fergus Dog Park	48. Ryan Park
25. Fergusson Park	49. Stait Park
26. Ferrier Park	50. Station Square Park
27. Fire Hall Site	51. St. James Square
28. Foote Park	52. Tait Crescent Park
29. Gibbons Drive Park	53. Templin Gardens
30. Glencoe Park	54. Terry Fox Park
31. Gow Park	55. Veteran's Park
32. Graham Park	56. Victoria Park (Elora)
33. Greenspace Elora (under lease)	57. Webster Park
34. Harold Chambers Park	58. Westminster Highland Park
35. Harper Crescent Park	59. Willkie Park
36. Hoffer Park	60. Wilson Flats
37. Holman Park	

Future Parks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beatty Hollow (Farley) • Granwood • Haylock and Youngblood • Storybrook East • Storybrook West • Summerfields