

Meeting Date: January 17, 2022
Department: Building, By-law and Planning
Report No.: BBP-2022-11
Submitted by: Jennifer Huff, Director of Building & Planning
Approved by: Fred Tranquilli, Chief Administrative Officer / Clerk
SUBJECT: **Presentation of Official Plan Background Reports – Parks and Recreation Master Plan**

RECOMMENDATION: THAT: Council receive Report BBP-2022-11; and further, THAT: Council endorse the Parks and Recreation Master Plan - November 2021.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This matter is in accord with the following strategic priorities:

- Economic Development: Strathroy-Caradoc will have a diverse tax base and be a place that offers a variety of economic opportunities to current and prospective residents and businesses.
- Growth Management: Strathroy-Caradoc will be an inclusive community where growth is managed to accommodate a range of needs and optimize municipal resources.
- Destination Building: Strathroy-Caradoc will provide distinct experiences that celebrate its past and future by prioritizing innovative new ideas that set the community apart.

Specifically, the 5-Year update to the Official Plan was identified as one of several short-term tactics necessary to achieve the above-noted strategic priorities.

BACKGROUND:

The purpose of the subject report is to present to Council the final draft of the [Parks and Recreation Master Plan \(PRMP\), November 2021](#). This report was completed by Monteith Brown (a sub-consultant hired by WSP) and is one of the eight studies and master plans that were required as part of the larger Official Plan review project, Growing Together. It is available for review on the website, growingtogether.ca.

This report presents a high-level summary of the PRMP and its recommendations. It is noted that consultants from Monteith Brown and WSP will attend the January 17th, 2022 Council meeting to provide a power-point presentation and to be available to answer any questions.

COMMENTS:

The PRMP is based on an extensive consultation program as described in Chapter 3 of the report. The consultation program included a series of virtual consultation sessions, open houses, on-line surveys / questionnaires, and open-ended idea comment box, stakeholder and technical advisory committee consultation sessions, as well as input from Municipal Council. The Municipality provided notice of these consultation opportunities by way of: radio ads, mail outs in tax notices, community newsletters (to every household), social media, emails to stakeholder groups and on the Municipal website.

During the early part of the consultation process the public, stakeholders and Council were asked to build a vision statement to reflect their interests and desires for future parks and recreation planning in the community. Accordingly, the following vision statement was drafted:

“Strathroy-Caradoc will support a diverse range of accessible parks and recreation opportunities that contribute to personal health and community well-being, enrich quality of life for all ages, promote partnerships and volunteerism and sustain the integrity of the natural environment.”

In turn, the vision statement was translated into 4 guiding principles:

1. Supporting Participation and Social Interaction – we will support affordable opportunities for physical activity, wellbeing, and social interaction for residents of all ages and abilities.
2. Building Capacity & Relationships – we will collaborate with the community to build capacity to respond to the diverse needs of our growing municipality.
3. Activating our Parks – we will build up a high quality parks system by offering distinct experiences that encourage residents to get outside and enjoy our parks
4. Renewing & Diversifying – we will respond to demonstrated community needs by planning ahead and investing strategically in our recreation facilities.

The Vision Statement and Guiding Principals have been used to shape the recommendations of the PRMP.

The recommendations of the plan also respond to information about the existing parks and recreation context in the Municipality, key trends in demand for park and recreation amenities and programming, facility needs / trends, as well as design and operational trends.

The intent of the PRMP is ultimately to provide a road map to the Municipality showing how it could grow its park and recreation planning over a 10 year planning horizon (and beyond for some items).

It is noted that the analysis and recommendations contained within the Parks and Recreation Master Plan also reflects and builds on the analysis and findings of the Recreation Facilities Infrastructure Renewal Strategy. The broad community engagement confirmed the theme which has been consistent with previous stakeholder input processes the strong desire for a greater variety of experiences, programs and amenities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The PRMP contains in total 63 recommendations (See Table 1 below). These recommendations will be used to guide:

- policy changes to the Official Plan and various parks related by-laws (i.e. parkland dedication by-law),
- capital planning decisions,
- parks and recreation operational planning,
- park and facility design decisions,
- the acquisition of land for park and recreation purposes,
- financial planning / cost-sharing decisions, and
- community engagement opportunities.

Table 1: Recommendations of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Recommendations	Priority	Timing	Comments
Supporting Participation & Social Interaction (Section 5)			
1. Align service delivery initiatives and decision-making with the vision and guiding principles of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan , which include: (1) Supporting Participation & Social Interaction; (2) Building Capacity & Relationships; (3) Activating our Parks; and (4) Renewing & Diversifying our Facilities.	High	Ongoing	--
2. As part of the planning for a new arena and multi-use facility in Mount Brydges , examine the service delivery model (e.g., municipal, third-party operator, etc.) to determine the most effective and efficient approach for parks, facilities and programs in this community.	High	Short-term	Determination of operating cost implications will require further study
3. Continue to expand affordable drop-in and registered programming with an emphasis on under-served groups such as children/youth, older adults, and lower-income households. Program planning should be done in coordination with community partners and in response to local needs, with an emphasis on services that promote physical activity and social inclusion.	High	Ongoing	--
4. Seek to expand multi-use programming space through major infrastructure renewal and development projects.	High	Ongoing	See also recommendations 49-51

Recommendations	Priority	Timing	Comments
5. Support expanded year-round park use, outdoor education and programming through community development activities, special event coordination, and challenging play opportunities.	Medium	Ongoing	--
6. Collect participation data from primary rental groups (such as arena and sports field users, including residency) as part of the annual contract booking process. This data will help to inform the analysis of trends/community needs and to ensure the fair and transparent application of access policies.	Medium	Ongoing	--
7. Formalize cost recovery rates and establish rental and program fees that are transparent, reflect the level of service, and are competitive within the region. Facility and sports field rental rates should be comprehensively reviewed every three years, with appropriate phase-in provisions.	High	Ongoing	--
8. Establish a uniform rental and program rate schedule for locations in Strathroy and Mount Brydges when the new arena/multi-use facility is built in Mount Brydges.	Medium	Short-term	--
9. Review the rate for summer ice rentals to better reflect the cost of delivering this service.	Lower	Short-term	--
10. Increase promotion of financial assistance programs in order to bolster awareness of opportunities for universal access to parks and recreation activities.	Medium	Ongoing	--
11. Expand the online booking system to facilitate facility/space bookings.	Lower	Short-term	--
12. Continue to encourage long-term financial sustainability through the cost-effective and efficient management of resources, appropriate application of user fees and the securement of external funding.	High	Ongoing	See also recommendation 59
Building Capacity & Relationships (Section 6)			
13. Continually review Departmental staffing levels to ensure alignment with levels of service. Additional staff will be required as the Municipality grows, including parks operations, programming, and customer service. Through future budgets, specific consideration should be given to the creation of two new positions: (1) events and booking coordinator (posted in late 2021); and (2) parks and open space coordinator.	High	Short- to Medium-term	Refer to annual budget process
14. Undertake regular reviews of municipal parks and recreation policies and guidelines to ensure that they are up-to-date, accurate and appropriate. Steps should be taken to address gaps in policies and procedures, where applicable.	High	Ongoing	--

Recommendations	Priority	Timing	Comments
15. Identify key performance indicators and targets that illustrate the value of parks and recreation services. This includes (but is not limited to) participation data and satisfaction levels for activities offered by the Municipality and community.	Lower	Ongoing	--
16. Continue to work with partners to reduce reliance on tax dollars in providing quality parks and recreation services in Strathroy-Caradoc. Use a standard set of criteria to evaluate municipal participation in proposals from outside interests, informed by the guiding principles and recommendations of this Master Plan.	High	Ongoing	--
17. Continue to engage adjacent municipalities and public sector agencies (e.g., health unit, public library, school boards, YMCA, etc.) on initiatives that improve access to recreation services for Strathroy-Caradoc residents.	Medium	Ongoing	--
18. Continue to actively support volunteer-led community organizations and facilitate municipal volunteers in the development and delivery of parks and recreation programs and services.	High	Ongoing	--
19. Continue to utilize and enhance a variety of communication tools to promote and gather feedback on parks and recreation services and initiatives. Options for expanding printed materials, such as seasonal Community Guides, should be considered.	High	Ongoing	--
20. Host annual forums and information sessions with community organizations and service providers to enhance community awareness and discuss topics of interest.	Medium	Ongoing	--
Activating our Parks (Section 7)			
21. Through the Official Plan Review, update the parkland classification system to align with the hierarchy proposed in this Master Plan (neighbourhood, community, and major parks). This hierarchy should be used to guide the development or redevelopment of parks according to park type, size, service level and the amenities that they provide.	High	Short-term	--

Recommendations	Priority	Timing	Comments
<p>22. Through the Official Plan Review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) seek to create alignment between the Master Plan’s guiding principles and the overall goals and objectives for the parks and recreation system; b) update the provision targets for each park type, with the goal of maintaining a municipal-wide supply of 2.0 hectares of active parkland per 1,000 residents to be applied to future growth; c) establish a single policy regime for Parks and Open Space that applies across the entire Municipality; d) ensure that natural areas/open space are not accepted as part of the required parkland dedication; e) ensure alignment with current Planning Act and recent changes via Bill 197 relating to parkland dedication; f) include language to allow for parkland cash-in-lieu valuation to be via Section 42 (day before building permit); and g) consider introduction of the alternate parkland dedication rate (this also requires an updated parkland dedication by-law and consultation with school boards). 	High	Short-term	--
<p>23. Through the Official Plan Review, update the provision targets for each park type, with the goal of maintaining a municipal-wide supply of 2.0 hectares of active parkland per 1,000 residents applied to future growth. Approximately 22.5 additional hectares of active parkland will be required to achieve this target by 2046.</p>	High	Short-term	--
<p>24. Identify and secure one additional Community Park site (3+ hectares) in both Strathroy and Mount Brydges to address long-term growth; this is in addition to the parks planned for North Meadows. Acquisition will likely require a mix of cash-in-lieu reserves, tax levy, donations, and/or non-acquisition-based strategies (e.g., partnerships, leases, land exchanges, etc.).</p>	High	Longer-term	Specific sites and funding sources to be determined
<p>25. In the future, should the Municipality consider declaring any small park parcels as surplus (in whole or in part) and disposing of them, this should follow a prescribed process and be evaluated using the criteria identified in this Master Plan, including a transparent public consultation process. Any revenue generated from a sale of surplus parkland should be allocated to investments in the parks and recreational system.</p>	Lower	Ongoing	--
<p>26. Include the conditions and processes proposed in this Master Plan for parkland development and conveyance within subdivision agreements to ensure that new parks comply with municipal standards.</p>	High	Ongoing	--

Recommendations	Priority	Timing	Comments
<p>27. Maintain a commitment to universal accessibility, safety and comfort within the Municipality’s parks system. This includes, but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Regularly consulting with the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee and ensure compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), recognizing that some parks may include areas of natural terrain that are more difficult to access. b) Undertake and incorporate accessibility audits into the Municipality’s asset management planning to identify a multi-year strategy for addressing barrier-free compliance. c) Engaging local police services to undertake a review of all parks using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to identify safety concerns relative to access and sightlines (surveillance). 	High	Ongoing	--
<p>28. Emphasize the provision of amenities such as benches/seating areas, bike racks, shade (structures, tree canopy, etc.), and washrooms in appropriate park types to address the needs of all age groups.</p>	High	Ongoing	--
<p>29. Provide a variety of active and passive spaces within the parks system to support all-season usage, including recreation and sports, casual use and unstructured play, special events and cultural activities.</p>	High	Ongoing	--
<p>30. Undertake park amenity condition assessments on a regular basis to inform the Municipality’s asset management plan and long-term capital plan.</p>	Medium	Short-term	--
<p>31. Establish consistent and high-quality signage at all municipal parks to enhance branding and wayfinding.</p>	Medium	Medium-term	--
<p>32. Ensure the adequate provision of space for parks staff and equipment by exploring the feasibility of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) converting the existing garage in Yorkview Community Park to a year-round works building; and b) establishing a municipal park maintenance/equipment building in Mount Brydges, as recommended in the RFIRP. 	Medium	Short-term	Determination of capital cost implications will require further study
<p>33. Establish a playground replacement fund as an annual capital budget line item to address ongoing asset management needs, including accessibility upgrades (equipment, pathways, seating, etc.).</p>	High	Short-term	\$50,000 annually would support replacement of two playgrounds every 3 years

Recommendations	Priority	Timing	Comments
34. Ensure that playgrounds are provided in new development areas based on a 500-metre service area . Playground development should be a priority for most new park sites in Strathroy. Residential infill opportunities within gap areas should also be evaluated for potential playground installation.	High	Ongoing	--
35. Require that the playgrounds planned for the North Meadows Secondary Plan area be installed within the initial phases of subdivision construction to address gaps in north Strathroy.	High	Medium-term	--
36. Upgrade the outdoor fitness equipment in Cuddy Park to support the use of this site as a “fitness park”, including outdoor fitness program opportunities.	Lower	Short-term	Estimate \$50,000
37. Include two (2) tennis courts in the community park proposed for the North Meadows area.	Medium	Medium-to Longer-term	Estimate \$250,000 (DC-eligible)
38. the development of a pickleball court complex (e.g., 6 courts) through the design and development of a future community park.	Medium	Medium-term	Estimate \$250,000 (DC-eligible)
39. Construct basketball courts within new parks in Mount Brydges (half court – site to be determined), North Meadows Community Park (full court), and west Strathroy (half court – site to be determined) within the next ten years.	High	Short- to Medium-term	Estimate \$250,000 (DC-eligible)
40. Establish an outdoor rink program to support volunteered ice rinks in appropriate park sites.	High	Short-term	Estimate \$10,000 for equipment
41. As a longer-term recommendation, pursue the development of a multi-use pad (non-refrigerated) to support ball hockey and winter skating within a future community park site in Strathroy. Options for community fundraising, operation, boards, roof system (open-air), and support infrastructure (washrooms, etc.) may be considered.	Medium	Longer-term	Estimate \$300,000 (DC-eligible)
42. Develop the proposed all-wheels park at the Fair Grounds Recreation Complex in the short-term.	High	Short-term	Estimate \$700,000 (funding partially secured)
43. Consider the replacement of the skate park in Mount Brydges in the longer-term. A modestly-sized facility that focuses on younger youth and introductory to intermediate skills may be considered if supported by community fundraising.	Medium	Longer-term	Estimate \$250,000
44. Consider the installation of smaller-scale skateboard/scooter amenities such as ramps, rails and bicycle/walking loops within selected new parks.	Medium	Ongoing	Costs dependent on scale and design

Recommendations	Priority	Timing	Comments
45. Subject to sufficient demand, consider the creation of an off-leash dog park in Mount Brydges in the longer-term. This initiative should be supported by a community association that would take responsibility for day-to-day operations, as well as the securement of a suitable location.	Lower	Longer-term	Estimate \$50,000 (DC-eligible)
46. Encourage the establishment of community gardens in new developments and work with local community groups to explore opportunities to integrate community vegetable garden plots in parks, where appropriate.	Medium	Ongoing	--
Renewing & Diversifying our Facilities (Section 8)			
47. Continue with plans to replace the Tri-Township Arena with a multi-use facility containing one indoor ice surface in Mount Brydges.	High	Short-term	Financial implications examined in RFIRS; see also recommendation 49
48. Continue to maintain the West Middlesex Community Complex arena until such time that a funding strategy is established to replace the WMMC ice pad at the Gemini Sportsplex , creating a three-pad complex that will offer operational efficiencies and tournament benefits.	High	Medium-term	Financial implications examined in RFIRS; see also recommendation 50
49. Repurpose the Caradoc Community Complex into more versatile, active, multi-use space as part of the proposed arena and multi-use facility in Mount Brydges.	High	Short-term	Financial implications examined in RFIRS; see also recommendation 47
50. Initiate an expansion project at the Gemini Sportsplex to add a double gymnasium, walking track, and multi-use programming space that will serve as a central destination for seniors' activities (among others). Timing and needs may be dependent upon decisions related to the potential replacement of the WMMC arena at this site, as well as funding and potential partnerships.	High	Short-term	Financial implications examined in RFIRS; see also recommendation 48
51. When a decision is made to decommission the arena at the West Middlesex Memorial Centre , consider opportunities to reimagine the space as an indoor turf field or gymnasium.	High	Medium-term	Costs dependent on future use; will require further study
52. Prepare a feasibility study for an indoor swimming pool when the municipality reaches a population of 30,000 (currently forecasted for 2031). The study should examine costs, locations, potential partners, funding strategies, etc.	High	Longer-term	Estimate \$75,000 for Study (DC-eligible)
53. Add lights to one existing ball diamond at Yorkview Community Park to address any unmet demand in the short-term.	Medium	Short-term	Estimate \$80,000 (DC-eligible)
54. Establish a capital replacement strategy for ball diamond lighting and supporting infrastructure, with the goal of upgrading one field every two to three years until all lit fields are complete.	High	Short-term	Costs to be determined through future study

Recommendations	Priority	Timing	Comments
55. Consider the development of lit ball diamonds through future community park development in Strathroy and Mount Brydges if supported by demonstrated needs.	Medium	Longer-term	Costs to be determined through future study (DC-eligible)
56. Monitor usage and demand for soccer fields in order to guide long-term provision strategies. The existing supply should be sufficient to address needs for some time, although consideration may be given to adding lights to existing fields (e.g., Mount Brydges), installing an outdoor artificial turf field (in partnership with others), and/or establishing multi-field complexes within future community parks.	Lower	Ongoing	Costs to be determined through future study (DC-eligible)
57. Require an evaluation of unsolicited requests for facilities that are not part of the Municipality's core mandate. Proponent-led business plans should be developed to determine demand, alignment with Master Plan goals, the net benefit to the Municipality, and the degree of municipal involvement (if any).	High	Ongoing	--
Master Plan Implementation (Section 9)			
58. Use this Master Plan as a resource in developing the Municipality's annual budget documents, Development Charges, secondary plans and related studies.	High	Ongoing	--
59. Where appropriate and consistent with municipal policies and priorities, consider alternative funding and cost-sharing approaches such as (but not limited to) surcharges, capital reserve contributions, fundraising, grants, sponsorships, and various forms of collaboration to provide the best value to residents.	High	Ongoing	See also recommendation 12
60. Establish a capital reserve to fund the repair and replacement of major capital infrastructure. This reserve should be an annual line item in the budget that could be linked to overall asset replacement value (up to 2%) or a percentage of Department revenues (5% to 10%).	Medium	Short-term	Determination of cost implications will require further study
61. Develop a system for the regular monitoring, ongoing implementation and reporting on the progress of the Master Plan, such as the collection of participation data and annual reports to Council and/or the community.	High	Short-term	--
62. Engage the Community Development Advisory Committee in the implementation of this Master Plan, including the identification of priorities on a year-to-year basis.	High	Ongoing	--

Recommendations	Priority	Timing	Comments
<p>63. Undertake a comprehensive review and update of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan between 2026 and 2031. Consideration may be given to accelerating the timeline to coincide with the other major studies, such as updates to the Official Plan or Development Charges By-law. Exact timing may also be adjusted based on the pace of implementation and changes in the community.</p>	High	Medium-term	Estimate \$75,000 (DC-eligible)

NEXT STEPS

It is requested that Council endorse the final draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan. This will allow the consulting team to begin the task of incorporating its recommendations into the Official Plan, as well will allow staff to begin to operationalize the recommendations as opportunities provide.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

It is noted that capital and operational funding decisions remain subject to Council’s and approval through the annual budget review process.

ATTACHMENTS:

- [DRAFT PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN \(LINK\)](#)